

Stereo Review

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Cover

Equipped for home theater: Atlantic Technology's Model 151 LR satellite speaker, 153 C center-channel speaker, and 152 PBM powered subwoofer (see page 44 for more on these speakers), a 27-inch Zenith TV set, Panasonic LX-900 combi-player, a Pioneer VSX-D901S A/V receiver, and a Mitsubishi HS-U82 Super VHS Hi-Fi VCR. See page 52 for how to put together an A/V system.

Photograph by Roberto Brosan

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LETTERS

Blaupunkt Cheyenne

We were pleased to see such a positive review of our Cheyenne CM42 cassette receiver in November, but we were surprised at Ken Pohlmann's comments on its ergonomics. For decades, Blaupunkt has employed leading design authorities, doing research with off-the-street volunteers along with man-machine studies, in order to consistently design products that are extremely user-friendly.

The faceplate of a car stereo head unit is a limited piece of real estate. The design objective is to maximize access to functions used on a day-to-day basis. Our multifunction four-way cursor allows for seek and manual tuning while doubling up to allow disc- and track-selection and cue/review functions when a CD changer is connected. The SRC (source) button, which allows one-touch toggling between the three possible audio sources, is dominantly placed in the upper right-hand corner. The loudness button is also easily accessible for activation/deactivation when changing between music and speech. Other buttons are used less frequently or set only once.

FRANK HONOLD
Manager, Car Audio Planning
Blaupunkt Car Audio
Broadview, IL

American Music

In "Discovering American Music" in November, William Livingstone spoke of obviously familiar composers with some insight, but his complete omission of the American avant-garde struck me as both unrealistic and inappropriately bucolic. Sadly, in a year that marked the passing of America's most original "inventor" of music, there was nary a mention of John Cage. I disagree with Mr. Livingstone's assertion that Americans are "somewhat romantic, somewhat sentimental people who like pretty melodies . . ." Heaven forbid. We are a nation of pioneers. We prize explorers, bold adventurers, and brash experimenters—creative titans like Cage, Harry Partch, Charles Ives, Frank Zappa, Charles Wuorinen, and, yes, Elliott Carter, to whom I listen for pleasure.

CARL BAUGHER
Oceanside, CA

Beta Diehard

I enjoy Ian Masters's writing, but in his November "Buying Time" on VCR's and camcorders, he was too quick to write off the Beta format. He is right that VHS, though inferior, has become the most popular format, but not only are Betamax recorders still being made (Sony's new SLHF-2100 is a wondrous machine), so are Beta-format movie releases. (Several shops here in Portland still rent new Beta tapes.) And for personal taping, Beta is much better than VHS.

My guess is that within ten years or so VHS will be as dead and gone as eight-track stereo

is today. Though laserdiscs and 8mm videotape will probably prevent Beta from making a resurgence, there will still be many Betamaxers in daily use at that time.

ERIC NORBERG
Portland, OR

Go Fish

I need to take issue with Steve Simels's review in November "Quick Fixes" of the album "Internal Exile" by Fish, the former leader of Marillion. Mr. Simels says that Fish "goes solo" with "portentous synthesizers" and "bad poetry," leading to "predictable results." In fact, Fish has kept with the style that he and Marillion cultivated together for all too few years. "Internal Exile" far surpasses his previous solo effort, "Vigil in a Wilderness of Mirrors," which Mr. Simels does not even acknowledge as existing. Fish, in his own words, is "Born to fight out of the tightest corner," and "entrenched opinions / On the border of arrogance" will "not put him down no matter how they try."

CRAIG WAX
Bridgeton, NJ

Surround Speakers

In "Choosing Speakers for Surround Sound" in September, Peter Mitchell correctly recognizes the correlation between the presence of lateral reflections and listeners' impressions of spaciousness, but he failed to point out that side-wall-mounted dipolar speakers, such as those meeting Home THX standards, do not provide a strong lateral component to listeners seated near the characteristic null in the radiation pattern of such speakers (the recommended seating position). By implication, they cannot sound as spacious as speakers that do provide strong decorrelated lateral reflections.

As one of the chief designers of RCA's Video Acoustics line of home theater speakers, a photo of which appears in the article, I was disappointed that Mr. Mitchell did not mention the unique operating principle of the six-transducer, single-enclosure RCA VA-1200 Surround. When positioned above ear level behind the primary seating area, it simultaneously provides both spaciousness and the subtle directional cues for correct localization of surround effects. Its complex multipolar directional pattern features a wide, deep null oriented toward the listening area, thus accounting for the relatively high level of decorrelated lateral energy received by the listeners.

BRAD STAROBIN
Cambridge, MA

Having read Peter Mitchell's "Choosing Speakers for Surround Sound" and his follow-up letter about surround-channel low bass in November, I am wondering about the proper frequency response of the surround speakers in a surround-sound system. Should they be 20 to 20,000 Hz, 100 to 7,000 Hz, or what? Without this information, it's difficult to



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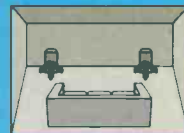
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CLIFFORD HEILMAN
Totowa, NJ

Surround-channel response of a Dolby Surround receiver, amplifier, or processor is typically pretty flat at the low end, with a gentle high-frequency rolloff starting at about 7,000 Hz. Signals below 100 Hz in the surround channel will be in the front channels, too, so restricted low-frequency response in surround speakers is not a fatal flaw. Also, surround hardware with a subwoofer output normally derives the signal for it by summing the left- and right-channel input signals before surround decoding, so if you use a subwoofer, it will usually

reproduce the deep bass for all output channels, including surround.

Jazz Greats

Calling Louis Armstrong "the greatest jazz musician of all time," as Chris Albertson did in his November review of "The California Concerts," is enormously to overvalue a man who was charming, affable, accessible, infectious, and predictably solid when he performed. But even to rate him among the top ten "greatest jazz musicians" would be presumptuous. In order of importance, I would say that Art Tatum and Charlie Parker were probably the greatest all around. A smidgen

behind these giants would be early Dizzie Gillespie and the quintessential Oscar Peterson. One could then talk about others such as Clifford Brown, Sonny Stitts, and Nils Pederson, but poor old Louis Armstrong could never have played in such company without embarrassment.

DONALD J. MANGUS
Chico, CA

The Laughing Mikado

In reviewing the Telarc CD of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (November), Robert Ackart said that Donald Adams's performance in the title role is "tarnished only by bursts of demonic laughter in 'My object all sublime.'" Every performance of *The Mikado* that I have heard since the 1936 D'Oyly-Carte recording has included maniacal laughter in that aria. Indeed, it's such a tradition that I wouldn't consider buying a recording without it.

PAUL A. ALTER
Hyattsville, MD

I agree with Robert Ackart's review of *The Mikado*, except that he should have mentioned the recording does not include the overture, a cut presumably mandated by Telarc's desire to release the work on a single CD.

KLAUS HALM
Peachtree City, CA

According to Telarc, the overture was dropped not only for that reason but also because it is not by Sullivan.

Movie Music

I was very pleased to see the review of the *Alien 3* soundtrack in September ("Quick Fixes") because it's about time this form of music gets recognition. But Steve Simels seems to have forgotten that the primary function of a film composer is to trace and enhance the dramatic line of the film. He says, "The bad news about Elliot Goldenthal's defiantly modernist score for *Alien 3* is that it's dark, joyless, and off-putting, much like the disappointing film itself." *Alien 3* is a dark film that calls for a dark score; anything else simply wouldn't work.

COREY WITTE
Aurora, IL

Corrections

Our test report on the Optimus DCT-2000 DCC recorder in December erroneously stated that the deck could not find the shortest path to a track selected on the opposite side of the tape from the one being played. We seem to have been misled by a faulty table of contents on the tape we initially used to test this feature.

In the "Dealer's Choice" article in December, the price given for the Definitive Technology BP10 loudspeaker should have been \$1,100 a pair. Also, the name of one of the dealers, Ford Montgomery of Chelsea Audio/Video in Beaverton, Oregon, was misprinted.

The caption for the Yamaha integrated amplifier pictured on page 53 in the August issue misstated the model number, price, and power rating. The model shown is the DSP-A1000, which lists for \$1,499 and is rated for up to 80 watts in each of the three front channels. □

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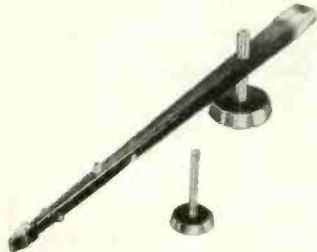
BY STEVE SIMELS



30 years ago

In the January 1963 issue, Furman Hebb's editorial noted that the acoustics of New York's new Philharmonic Hall [now Avery Fisher Hall] were being discussed in terms usually reserved for high-fidelity components. One critic, he observed, "wished he had a bass control handy so he could have turned it up."

The People's Choice: Twelve albums were picked by STEREO REVIEW's readers as the best of the previous year. Among them were Igor Stravinsky's own version of *The Firebird*, the soundtrack of *West Side Story*, Billie Holiday's "The Golden Years," and Judy Garland's "Judy at Carnegie Hall," which was described as "mesmeric." Later in the issue, the editors chose the best album covers of the year, including John Coltrane's "Olé," the Modern Jazz Quartet's "The Comedy," and a best-selling (NOT!) Caedmon spoken-word LP of *Beowulf*.



Technical Talk: Julian Hirsch reviewed the Shure M222 Stereo Dynetic integrated tonearm and cartridge, which

had a tracking force of 1/4 to 1 1/2 grams. He also put Concord's Model 880 portable stereo tape recorder through its paces, concluding that the \$400 unit was "excellent in many respects," although he recommended that buyers carefully check it to "ascertain that the hum level is not too high for comfort."

Huh? A back-cover ad for Audiotape open-reel recording tape contained the oddly unsettling observation, "Those crunching noises reverberating through your head are exciting."



20 years ago

The Basic Repertoire: Contemplating versions of Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini* on the hundredth anniversary of Rachmaninoff's birth, the critic Martin Bookspan recommended the composer's own performance on RCA, a London LP featuring Vladimir Ashkenazy, a Gary Graffman/Leonard Bernstein version on Columbia, and the RCA Arthur Rubinstein/Fritz Reiner collaboration, which he thought "makes much of the music's wit and fancy."

New products noted this month included the Thorens TD-125 Mk II turntable (available in a version able to play 16-inch transcription discs); the Sylvania AS85W speaker system, an acoustic-suspension design with an 8-inch woofer and 1 1/2-inch dome



tweeter; and the Arp Odyssey music synthesizer, complete with white-noise generator (price: \$1,295 without stand).

A feature on the history of the Metropolitan Opera on radio uncovered a strange response to the broadcasts' long-time announcer, Milton Cross. "I'm not fond of Milton Cross's voice," one Met listener was quoted as saying, "but my dog loves it. As soon as I turn on the radio and Cross comes over the airwaves, the pooch becomes glued to the set. When the music starts, he leaves."

Why not? Seven of *SR*'s classical-music critics pondered the burning question, "Why Alexander Scriabin?" David Hall summed up the consensus by quoting Janis Joplin: "cheap thrills."

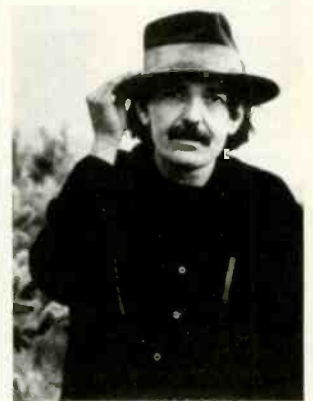


10 years ago

Bill, Meet Herb: After presenting a Record of the


Year Award to the conductor and early digital audio enthusiast Herbert von Karajan, Editor in Chief William Livingstone pondered Karajan's claim that eventually all recordings would be video. "PolyGram is promoting the compact disc with the slogan 'Hear the Light,'" he noted, "but will we always want to see the source of the sound?"

Best of the Month: George Jellinek, acknowledging that a perfect performance of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* was "elusive," nonetheless gave high marks to London's digital recording featuring Samuel Ramey and conducted by Georg Solti. On the pop



side, Mark Peel was cuckold for Cocoa Puffs over "Ice Cream for Crow," a Captain Beefheart album that proved to be his last. Elsewhere in the review section, Eric Salzman made a case for Alois Hába's quarter-tone opera *The Mother* ("Strangely, it works"), Steve Simels hailed Tonio K.'s "La Bomba" as "the greatest EP since the Rolling Stones' 'Five X Five,'" and Noel Coppage, unaccountably turned off by Don Henley's seemingly inoffensive "I Can't Stand Still," dismissed the ex-Eagle's latest album as "derivative as Milton Berle's jokes."

Thanks a lot: In "Audio Q. And A.," reader Larry Weiss, of Boston, asked Technical Director Larry Klein if it was a good idea to get an equalizer for his car stereo. Klein's response: "It all depends." □



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Michael Smolen
User's Evaluation,
CAR STEREO REVIEW
Summer 1988

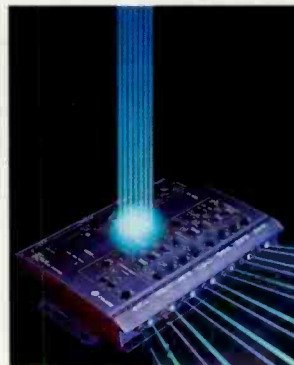


AMP-460 Power Logic
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The first of Coustic's **Power Logic** Component automotive power amplifier line, the AMP-460 was honored as "one of the most innovative consumer products of 1990" at the **Innovations '90 Design & Engineering Exhibition**.

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Ken C. Pohlmann
Test Reports,
CAR STEREO REVIEW
May/June 1990



XM-7 Multi-Function
Mobile Electronic Crossover
(Patent Pending)

The "reference standard" for electronic crossover design technology, the XM-7 was recognized as another "one of the most innovative consumer products of 1990" at the **Innovations '90** event.



RTA-33 30-Band One-Third
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(Patent Pending)

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Ken C. Pohlmann
User's Evaluation,
CAR STEREO REVIEW
Jan/Feb 1992



RX-739 Car Radio/Cassette

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NEW PRODUCTS

▼ SOUNDSTREAM

The DAC-1 digital-to-analog converter from Soundstream features what the company calls Dual Process conversion, which is said to yield low noise and excellent linearity, a discrete

Class A analog output section, and three separate, isolated power supplies. Price: \$695. Soundstream, Dept. SR, 120 Blue Ravine Rd., Folsom, CA 95630.

• Circle 120 on reader service card



▼ SOTA

Sota's newest Time Domain loudspeaker, the three-way, 40-inch-high Model 2 (left in photo), uses the same Kevlar drivers as the Model 4 (right) and the Panorama "midi-monitor" (center). Rated response of the

Model 2 is 37 to 22,000 Hz \pm 3 dB. Price: \$3,000 a pair in rosewood or ebony finish, \$2,200 in oak. Sota, Dept. SR, 1318-B Marquette Dr., Romeoville, IL 60441.

• Circle 121 on reader service card



◀ BANG & OLUFSEN

The 43¼-inch-high Beolab 6000 powered loudspeaker system from B&O is magnetically shielded for use in home theaters. It features Adaptive Bass Linearization, which reduces bass output at high volumes to limit distortion. Price: \$2,000 a pair. Bang & Olufsen, Dept. SR, 1150 Feehanville Dr., Mount Prospect, IL 60056.

• Circle 122 on reader service card



▲ QUAD

The Quad 66FM FM-only tuner is designed to match the Quad 66 preamplifier and to be operated with the preamp's remote control. Features include nineteen station presets and auto-search in 25- or 50-kHz steps. Capture ratio is

rated as 1.5 dB; 50-dB quieting sensitivity as 28 dBf in stereo, 8 dBf in mono, and image rejection as 100 dB. Price: \$1,200. Quad U.S.A., Dept. SR, 111 South Dr., Barrington, IL 60010.

• Circle 123 on reader service card

NEW PRODUCTS



▲ HAFLER

The MSE 88*m* four-channel car power amplifier, rated for 22 watts per channel, features Haller's TransNova circuitry, which uses grounded-source MOSFET output transistors for a wide bandwidth, low distortion and noise, and thermal stability. Price: \$329. Haller Mobile Electronics, Dept. SR, 613 S. Rockford Dr., Tempe, AR 85281.

• Circle 125 on reader service card

▼ AVALON ACOUSTICS

Avalon's two-way Avatar speaker system has a 1-inch titanium-dome tweeter and a special long-throw, 8-inch Nomex/Kevlar cone woofer. The cherrywood-finish

cabinet is 34 inches high. Price: \$3,950 a pair. Avalon Acoustics Inc., Dept. SR, 2800-B Wilderness Pl., Boulder, CO 80301.

• Circle 126 on reader service card



▶ JVC

The JVC XL-P30 portable CD player can play while its lid is open. It also features twenty-two-track programming and Compu-Link compatibility with JVC home receivers. Accessories include a carrying bag, AC adaptor, rechargeable batteries, and headphones. Price: \$220. JVC, Dept. SR, 41 Slater Dr., Elmwood Pk., NJ 07407.

• Circle 124 on reader service card



▶ PIONEER

The CT-WM70R, Pioneer's latest dual-well, autoreverse cassette changer, can play up to seven tapes nonstop or dub a sequence from up to six tapes. Price: \$510. Pioneer, Dept. SR, 2265 E. 220th St., P.O. Box 1730, Long Beach, CA 90801-1720.

▶ EVEREADY

The compact 5 Hour Charger from Eveready recharges four AA or AAA batteries in 5 hours, giving users of battery-operated portables an environment-friendly alternative to throwing away batteries. Other Eveready rechargers can handle up to eight batteries. Prices: \$12 to \$18. Eveready Battery Company, Dept. SR, Checkerboard Sq., St. Louis, Missouri 63164.

• Circle 127 on reader service card



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Starting this fall, Maxell audiotapes will appear in packaging designed to revolutionize audiotape selection. While you probably know that the different bias levels in today's audiotapes are meant for different recording requirements, you may not be sure which one to choose for each taping need. To simplify the selection, we created a coding system as easy as 1-2-3.

● Tape with a blue dot denotes the first category of bias level: "Normal." It's great for general taping purposes. Like music off portable audio equipment or clear FM broadcasts. Even a spoken lecture.

■ A red square stands for the second and most popular category of our tapes: "High" bias. It includes XLII and XLII-S, which has Black Magnetite, and is the perfect choice for capturing the high energy music of CDs.

▲ The purple triangle symbolizes the third and final category of bias level: "Metal." It's excellent for recording powerful, full-spectrum digital source music, live or studio. Before buying one make sure your tape deck has a "Metal/Type IV" setting.

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NEW PRODUCTS



◀ MITSUBISHI

Mitsubishi says the HTS-100 Dolby Pro Logic decoder/amplifier provides "Instant Home Theater." It connects to a TV set and can deliver up to 50 watts to left and right front speakers, 25 watts each to one or two center speakers, and 25 watts each to two surround speakers. Price: \$499. Mitsubishi, Dept. SR, 5665 Plaza Dr., Cypress, CA 90630-0007.

• Circle 128 on reader service card



◀ CERWIN-VEGA

The VS-120 from Cerwin-Vega, next to the top of the new VS Series, has a 12-inch woofer, a 4-inch midrange, and a 1-inch dual-magnet tweeter. The 32-inch-high cabinet is finished in walnut-grain vinyl. Price: \$345 each. Cerwin-Vega, Dept. SR, 555 E. Easy St., Simi Valley, CA 93065.

• Circle 130 on reader service card



▲ ADCOM

The Adcom GFP-565 preamplifier features three sets of outputs so speakers can be easily bi- or triamplified. It has five high-level inputs, a phono input, and a

processor loop. Price: \$800 in black, \$850 in white. Adcom, Dept. SR, 11 Elkins Rd., East Brunswick, NJ 08816.

• Circle 129 on reader service card

▼ YAMAHA

Yamaha's DSP-E200B surround processor/amplifier features a large number of digitally generated ambience modes as well as decoding for Dolby Pro Logic surround sound. It can

deliver 25 watts each to one center and two surround speakers. Price: \$499. Yamaha, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 6660, Buena Park, CA 90622.

• Circle 131 on reader service card



▲ GENEVA

Geneva's Portable Compact Disc Traveler has a nylon exterior, Velcro inner dividers, and zippered compartments to hold a Geneva CD tote, a portable player, headphones, and a book. Price: \$25. Geneva Group, Dept. SR, 9909 S. Shore Dr., Plymouth, MN 55441.

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Kris Kross—Totally Krossed Out. *Warm It Up; Jump*; etc. (Ruffhouse/Columbia) 435•743

Eric Clapton—Unplugged. *Layla; Tears In Heaven*; plus more. (Reprise/Duck) 446•187

Michael Bolton—Timeless (The Classics). *Yesterday; Drift Away*; plus more. (Columbia) 445•494

Billy Ray Cyrus—Some Gave All. *Achy Breaky Heart; Could've Been Me*; more. (Mercury) 441•451

Bobby Brown—Bobby. *Humpin' Around; Two Can Play That Game*; more. (MCA) 445•903

Pearl Jam—Ten. *Even Flow; Jeremy; Once*; plus many more. (Epic/Assoc.) 428•433

Extreme—III Sides To Every Story. *Rest In Peace*; and more. (A&M) 447•540

Mariah Carey—MTV Unplugged. *I'll Be There; Emotions*; others. (Columbia) 441•790

Genesis—We Can't Dance. Title Cut plus *Jesus He Knows Me*; more. (Atlantic) 448•936

"Boomerang"—Orig. Sndtrk. Featuring Boyz II Men; Johnny Gill; others. (LaFace) 442•335

Great White—Psycho City (Capitol) 447•565

Randy Travis—Greatest Hits, Vol. 2 (Warner Bros.) 448•662

Randy Travis—Greatest Hits, Vol. 1 (Warner Bros.) 448•654

Vince Gill—I Still Believe In You (MCA) 448•571

Sinead O'Connor—Am I Not Your Girl? (Chrysalis) 447•532

David Bowie—David Live (Polydisc) 438•218/398•214

Marvin Gaye's Grt. Hits (Motown) 367•565

Aretha Franklin—30 Greatest Hits (Atlantic) 350•793/390•799

Van Morrison—Moondance (Warner Bros.) 349•803

Jethro Tull—Aqualung (Chrysalis) 345•157

John Lennon—Live In New York City (Capitol) 342•774

Motown's 25 #1 Hits From 25 Years (Motown) 319•996/399•998

Best Of Carly Simon, Vol. 1 (Elektra) 291•856

Eagles—Hotel California (Asylum) 286•948

Meat Loaf—Bat Out Of Hell (Epic) 279•133

Boston (Epic) 269•209

Barbra Streisand—Highlights from 'Just For The Record' (Columbia) 444•372

Alice In Chains—Dirt (Columbia) 445•833

Suzanne Vega—99.9° F (A&M) 447•516

Collin Raye—In This Life (Epic) 447•268



"Honeymoon In Vegas"—Original Soundtrack (Epic) 444•919

Bad Company—Here Comes Trouble (ATCO) 446•203

Branford Marsalis—I Heard You Twice The First Time (Columbia) 445•460

Freddie Jackson—Time For Love (Capitol) 445•262

George Thorogood And The Destroyers—The Baddest Of The Bad (Hits) (EMI) 444•505

Megadeth—Countdown To Extinction (Capitol) 444•489

Pat Metheny—Secret Story (Geffen) 444•422

Morrissey—Your Arsenal (Sire/Warner Bros.) 444•398

Hi-Five—Keep On Goin' On (Jive) 444•331

Stevie Wonder's Orig. Musiquarium I (Tama) 314•997/394•999

Guns N' Roses—Use Your Illusion I (Geffen) 442•087

Travis Tritt—T-R-O-U-B-L-E (Warner Bros.) 445•767

Sonic Youth—Dirty (Geffen) 444•083

Ricky Van Shelton—Greatest Hits Plus (Columbia) 444•067

Foreigner—The Very Best... And Beyond (Atlantic) 447•524

Yes—Yesstory (ATCO) 446•211/396•218

Steely Dan—Gold—Grt. Hits (MCA) 435•693

Steppenwolf—Born To Be Wild (MCA) 430•678/390•674

The Allman Brothers Band—A Decade Of Hits 1969-79 (Polydor) 430•439

Rod Stewart—Downtown Train/Selections From The Storyteller Anthology (Warner Bros.) 425•322

Rush—Chronicles (Mercury) 423•780/393•785

Eric Clapton—Time Pieces (Polydor) 423•467

Lynyrd Skynyrd Band—Skynyrd's Innards/Their Grt. Hits (MCA) 381•129

Trisha Yearwood—Hearts In Armor (MCA Nashville) 444•042

Too Short—Shorty The Player (Jive) 443•788

"Mo' Money"—Orig. Sndtrk. (Perspective/A&M) 443•739

Guns N' Roses—Use Your Illusion II (Geffen) 442•038

Damn Yankees—Don't Tread (Warner Bros.) 445•759

Nirvana—Nevermind (DGC) 442•046

Kiss—Revenge (Mercury) 441•436

James Taylor's Grt. Hits (The 411?) (Uptown/MCA) 445•197

Lionel Richie—Back To Front (Motown) 441•063

Mary Chapin Carpenter—Come On, Come On (Columbia) 440•560

INXS—Welcome To Wherever You Are (Atlantic) 445•023

Firehouse—Hold Your Fire (Epic) 439•448

Kathleen Battle & Wynton Marsalis—Baroque Duet (Sony Class.) 439•372

The B-52's—Good Stuff (Reprise) 443•281

Al Jarreau—Heaven And Earth (Reprise) 439•240

Bob James & Earl Klugh—Cool (Warner Bros.) 439•232

Miles Davis—Doo-Bop (Warner Bros.) 439•224

David Sanborn—Up-front (Elektra) 438•994

The Cure—Wish (Elektra) 438•655

DAS EFX—Dead Serious (eastwest) 438•630

Best Of The Doobies (Warner Bros.) 291•278

The Steve Miller Band—Grt. Hits 1974-78 (Capitol) 290•171

Eagles—Grt. Hits, 1971-75 (Asylum) 287•003

Loggins & Messina—The Best Of Friends (Columbia) 269•605

Santana's Grt. Hits (Columbia) 24•459

Janis Joplin's Grt. Hits (Columbia) 231•670

Simon & Garfunkel's Greatest Hits (Columbia) 219•477

Bob Dylan's Grt. Hits (Columbia) 138•586

The Very Best Of The Righteous Brothers—Unchained Melody (Verve) 423•772

Lyle Lovett—Joshua Judges Ruth (MCA) 440•479

Neil Diamond—The Grt. Hits (Columbia) 439•778/399•774

Wynton Marsalis Septet—Blue Interlude (Columbia) 439•463

Jon Secada (SBK) 438•184

Temple Of The Dog (A&M) 442•780

Marty Stuart—This One's Gonna Hurt You (MCA) 442•418

E P M D—Business Never Personal (Rai/Def Jam/Chaos) 442•244

Wilson Phillips—Shadows And Light (SBK) 440•271

CLASSIC ROCK'S GREATEST HITS

Grateful Dead—Skeletons From The Closet (Warner Bros.) 378•406

Roy Orbison—The All-Time Hits, Vols. 1 & 2 (CSP) 377•945

Fleetwood Mac—Grt. Hits (Warner Bros.) 375•782

Journey's Greatest Hits (Columbia) 375•279

Best Of The Doors (Elektra) 357•616/397•612

The Police—Every Breath You Take—The Singles (A&M) 348•318

The Beach Boys—Made In The U.S.A. (Capitol) 346•445

Bad Company—10 From 6 (Atlantic) 341•313

Joe Cocker's Grt. Hits (A&M) 320•911

Creedence Clearwater Revival—Chronicle—20 Grt. Hits (Fantasy) 308•049

James Taylor's Grt. Hits (Columbia) 291•202

The Steve Miller Band—Grt. Hits 1974-78 (Capitol) 290•171

Eagles—Grt. Hits, 1971-75 (Asylum) 287•003

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Jon Secada (SBK) 438•184



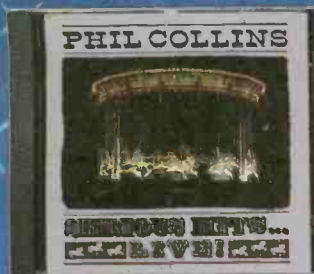
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Elton John—*The One. Title Cut plus Runaway Train (with Clapton); and more.* (MCA) **442-772**

En Vogue—*Funky Divas. Giving Him Something He Can Feel plus more.* (eastwest) **435-750**

Garth Brooks—*Ropin' The Wind. The River; Papa Loved Mama; and more.* (Liberty) **428-862**

Bruce Springsteen—*Lucky Town* (Columbia) **436-600**

k.d. lang—*Ingenue* (Wamer Bros./Sire) **435-404**

Grover Washington, Jr.—*Next Exit* (Columbia) **435-396**

Yanni—*Dare To Dream* (Private Music) **435-271**

CeCe Peniston—*Finally* (A&M) **433-805**

Tina Turner—*Simply The Best* (Capitol) **433-342**

R. Kelly & Public Announcement—*Born Into The 90's* (Jive) **433-250**

Hammer—*Too Legit To Quit* (Capitol) **433-094**

Yo-Yo Ma/Bobby McFerrin—*Hush* (Sony Mast.) **432-930**

Enya—*Shepherd Moons* (Reprise) **431-718**

Jodeci—*Forever My Lady* (MCA) **430-959**

Patti LaBelle—*Bumin'* (MCA) **430-074**

Bryan Adams—*Waking Up The Neighbours* (A&M) **429-779**

Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble—*Sky Is Crying* (Epic) **429-258**

James Taylor—*New Moon Shine* (Columbia) **429-209**

U2—*Achtung Baby* (Island) **431-213**

Bruce Springsteen—*Human Touch* (Columbia) **436-592**

Harry Connick, Jr.—*Blue Light, Red Light* (Columbia) **429-191**

Spin Doctors—*Pocket Full Of Kryptonite* (Epic/Assoc.) **428-482**

Soundgarden—*Badmotorfinger* (A&M) **428-250**



"Singles"—*Original Soundtrack* (Epic) **439-604**

Ozzy Osbourne—*No More Tears* (Epic/Associated) **428-128**

Color Me Badd—*C.M.B.* (Giant/Reprise) **426-916**

Vanessa Williams—*The Comfort Zone* (Wing) **426-510**

Carreras/Domingo/Pavarotti—*Favorite Arias* (Sony Master.) **425-470**

Boyz II Men—*Cooley-high* (Motown) **424-754**

Reba McEntire—*For My Broken Heart* (MCA) **430-090**

Wynonna Judd—*Wynonna* (MCA/Curb) **435-909**

Amy Grant—*Heart In Motion* (A&M) **424-457**

Tears For Fears—*Songs From The Big Chair* (Mercury) **423-848**

Jon Bon Jovi—*Blaze Of Glory* (Mercury) **423-400**

Natalie Cole—*Unforgettable* (Elektra) **422-279**

Leonard Bernstein Favorites—*Orchestral Showpieces* (Sony Class.) **421-610/391-615**

Spyro Gyra—*Collection* (GRP) **420-950**

Van Halen—*For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge* (Wamer Bros.) **420-273**

Paula Abdul—*Spellbound* (Virgin) **420-257**

Rolling Stones—*Flashpoint* (Rolling Stones Records) **418-715**

R.E.M.—*Out Of Time* (Wamer Bros.) **417-923**

C & C Music Factory—*Gonna Make You Sweat* (Columbia) **416-933**

The "Amadeus" Mozart (CBS) **416-123**

Gloria Estefan—*Into The Light* (Epic) **415-943**

Michael Bolton—*Time, Love & Tenderness* (Columbia) **415-711**

Brooks & Dunn—*Brand New Man* (Arista) **429-969**

TLC—*Oooooohhh...* (LaFace) **434-621**

Madonna—*The Immaculate Collection* (Wamer Bros./Sire) **414-557**

Garth Brooks—*No Fences* (Liberty) **411-587**

L.L. Cool J—*Mama Said Knock You Out* (Def Jam/Columbia) **411-165**

AC/DC—*The Razors' Edge* (ATCO) **410-662**

Jane's Addiction—*Ritual De Lo Habitual* (Wamer Bros.) **407-098**

Vladimir Horowitz—*The Last Recording* (Sony Class.) **405-985**

Kenny G Live (Arista) **401-505**

The Best Of Luther Vandross (Epic) **400-473/390-476**

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The SL-S440 portable CD player from Panasonic, only 10 ounces without batteries and 1¼ inch thick, features MASH² 1-bit D/A conversion circuitry and twenty-four-track programming. It comes with a wired remote control, AC adaptor, and rechargeable batteries. Accessories to facilitate use in a car are available. Price: \$190. Panasonic, Dept. SR, One Panasonic Way, Secaucus, NJ 07094.

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SIGNALS

BY KEN C. POHLMANN

Art and Science

LAST week I visited a hi-fi shop that prides itself on its very analytical approach to audio. A discussion arose concerning a new CD player. I was describing the technical perks embodied in the design of the digital-to-analog converters, and a saleswoman was enthusiastically cataloging the signal-to-noise ratio, harmonic and intermodulation distortion, and other specifications. Finally, an exasperated customer, trying to get a word in edgewise, burst out, "Yes, but what does it sound like?"

That question triggered a serious reality check. In our haste to describe the player's technical merits, neither of us had actually listened to it. So we did, and eventually we agreed that it sounded great. Meanwhile, the customer was long gone. I started thinking: Here we were, gloating because there was only 0.1 dB of nonlinearity at -90 dB and excited because the distortion was only 0.0025 percent, but did any of that really make any difference?

Twenty or thirty years ago, measured specifications were supremely important because the performance of audio equipment was relatively poor. Most equipment could be meaningfully evaluated, and improved, by means of measurements. But time and technology have chipped away at their importance, and with the advent of digital audio, some specifications are routinely so much better than they have to be for sonic transparency that there's seldom any reason to be concerned about them. For example, is it reasonable to say that one CD player is better than another because its total harmonic distortion is 0.0005 percent lower?

Sitting down in a quiet corner of the showroom, I contemplated what this change might imply. Have we now mastered the basic problems of audio design? Can we begin to leave the numbers behind and strive to accomplish something more? Instead of mass-producing products that all measure great, and sound the same, can we (or should we) try a different, more creative, more artistic approach? For

example, should a D/A converter or power amplifier be designed to be as linear as possible, to sound as transparent as we can make it? Or should it introduce its own signature to the sound? In other words, is distortion necessarily a bad thing? Does today's linear equipment sound too sterile? Vacuum tubes can introduce significant distortion and are beloved by some because of it. Should we design new signal-processing circuits to mimic the distortions of tube amplifiers? Or would that design approach simply lead us to wallow in pure subjectivity, trapped in the fantasy world of the golden ears?

For an alternative and possibly unconventional view on these thoughts, I whipped out my cellular phone and called Michael Yee, the designer of Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab's new UltrAmp audio components. When he designed the UltrAmp D/A converter, line amplifier, and power amplifier, he worked primarily by listening to the results instead of measuring them. The connection went through.

"Hi, Michael. Do you consider audio designing to be an art or a science?"

"It's both. It's an art in the sense that it takes much more than simple specs to come up with something musical. The science is trying to understand what you hear and translating that into objective technical decisions."

"When you're designing, which takes precedence?"

"Well, here's one example. The TDA 1541 multibit D/A converter chip in our UltrAmp converter was used in place of 'more linear' 1-bit chips strictly for its sonic characteristics, even though 1-bit chips would have provided better specs."

"In other words, instead of being linear, it's okay for a component to introduce sonic characteristics of its own?"

"Totally, we try to make the units as neutral as possible. For example, we put three line amps in series, listen for an exaggeration of sonic signature, and try to eliminate it. However, our components do have sonic characteristics in that they create a very visual soundstage with great imaging and

depth. Most opponents of sonic signatures are referring to tonal characteristics. Those should be avoided."

"It sounds like you rely on your ears as your primary test instruments."

"We focus our efforts on specs for real music, rather than specs based on test waves. Personally, I love opera. I find it impossible to make a direct correlation between a great soprano and a simple sine wave. Consequently, we use complex test waves, rather than simple ones. In order to reproduce these effectively, we use all discrete circuits. Although integrated circuits could bring us better specs for less money, we don't think they sound as good."

"Is it okay for a product to sound great and measure poorly?"

"That depends on how you define 'poorly.' In my experience, while great specs do not guarantee good sound, any design that sounds very good will have reasonable specs."

"Apparently you tip your scales in favor of art over science. But what about the people who tip them too far? In other words, how do we guard against wacky, purely subjectively designed audio products?"

"If something wacky ends up sounding extremely good, it ends up telling us our science is not good enough."

"Thanks, Michael. I have to reflect on all this."

I pocketed my phone and left the hi-fi shop. People who reject all methods of component evaluation not based on purely subjective criteria form the lunatic fringe of audio. On the other hand, progress in high fidelity depends ultimately on how technological advances are used to shape the listening experience, which has never been something that could be determined solely by the numbers. And as we move into second-generation digital audio products such as MiniDisc (MD), Digital Compact Cassette (DCC), and digital audio broadcasting (DAB)—technologies founded on perceptual encoding and psychoacoustic principles—the reliability of conventional measurements as a guide to sound quality will decrease, making critical listening more important than ever before. □

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AUDIO Q&A

BY IAN G. MASTERS

Amplifier Distortion

Q I decided not to buy a particular amplifier because its rated total harmonic distortion was a very high 0.5 percent. Then I read a review that praised the same model for its very low distortion. Why the disparity? Is it due to different measuring techniques, and if so, why would the manufacturer stick with such unflattering numbers? CHRISTOPHER M. VIDOVIC
Park Ridge, IL

A Reverse snobbery, perhaps. In any event, the way amplifier manufacturers specify their products' output is determined by a set of rules laid down a number of years ago by the Federal Trade Commission. In the dear dead days of 1970's audio, the shadier companies tended to add the channels together, devise unrealistic peak outputs, and generally come up with inflated numbers. To combat that, the FTC required that power specifications include considerable detail as to how the numbers were arrived at. The rated output had to include things like the frequency range over which it applied (the lowest and highest frequencies being the toughest to deal with), the impedance driven, the fact that both channels were operating and over a reasonably long period of time, and the distortion level for which the numbers applied. But as long as the details were laid out, the manufacturers could say what they liked.

Distortion rises as an amplifier approaches and goes beyond overload, so it's possible to claim unrealistically high output levels for an amplifier as long as you're willing to put up with high distortion. Somewhere in between, an amplifier could claim 0.5 percent distortion (virtually inaudible, actually) in order to present a high-output face. It's marketing rather than science, to be sure, but no big deal. In most situations, such an amplifier would be operating at a fraction of its "rated" output, and its distortion levels would drop to the vanishing point.

Which D/A Converter?

Q My CD player contains a 1-bit digital-to-analog converter (DAC), and I am also considering buying an integrated amplifier with its own built-in DAC, which uses 18-bit conversion. Will I still be able to get the benefits of the 1-bit system with this combination?

MATTHEW STAFFORD
El Paso, TX

A If you feed the CD player's digital output to the appropriate input on the amplifier, the player's internal DAC will be bypassed, and the amplifier's 18-bit converter will function. The only way to circumvent this is to feed the player's analog output to a line-level input on the integrated amplifier, in which case the conversion will still take place in the player.

Which option is preferable is open to debate. A 1-bit converter is not necessarily better than a 16- or 18-bit converter, except that it is possible to get very good performance at low signal levels more cheaply and consistently with 1-bit converters, and without need of any critical adjustment during manufacture. Assuming, however, that the multibit converter in the amplifier is well made and properly adjusted, there is little advantage to using the 1-bit DAC in your player, and there may be a benefit to using the amplifier's converter if it eliminates the need for converting the incoming signal to digital to feed digital processing circuits in the amplifier.

Combi Quality

Q I am considering upgrading my system by replacing my old CD player with a 1-bit combi-player that can handle laserdiscs as well. I'm not sure what trade-offs are involved in the combined unit, however. By buying one, am I likely to create a "weak link" in my system?

DALE DECKER
Spring, TX

A That's very improbable. At the most rarefied level, a premium CD-only player may outperform a combi-player, at least on paper, but not in any way you are likely to hear. Typically, combined units are used for CD's much of the time, and all of them are fine in the audio-only mode.

Record Cleaning

Q Recently I have been compiling tape collections from some of my 3,000 LP's. My experience with liquid record-cleaning systems has been that they occasionally degrade the sound and increase noise. Considering that I have taken relatively good care of my vinyl records, could I expect a sonic improvement if I were to clean them with a mechanical device such as the Nitty Gritty record cleaner?

DAVID M. CLINE
Greenville, NC

A My rule is to do as little cleaning as possible, on the theory that a clean record won't get any better by further cleaning (nor will a permanently damaged one). If you have maintained your records properly over the years, most of them will need only a dry brushing before you play them, to get rid of loose dust that has settled on the record since the last time it was played. By all means use a machine for this purpose if you can justify the cost; in most cases a simple carbon-fiber brush will do the trick just as effectively.

As for liquids, they should be reserved for truly filthy records and probably only need to be used once. Even then, it sometimes helps to wait for a day or so after wet-cleaning before you commit a record to tape. Although

I've never received a satisfactory explanation for the phenomenon, I have often heard a definite fuzziness on just-washed LP's. The first couple of times I experienced it, I actually went out and replaced the records before realizing that the effect was temporary.

Which Does What?

Q I am trying to decide how to go about assembling my home entertainment center: Should I buy an integrated amplifier with a tuner or a power amplifier with an A/V receiver? Also, when should a preamplifier be used?

MICHAEL MCNIERNY
Jacksonville, FL

A There is obviously some terminological confusion here. The central electronic components in any audio system perform three basic functions: The tuner portion pulls in radio signals, the preamplifier selects inputs and controls levels and tonal balance, and the power amplifier takes the preamp's output and boosts it to the point where it's strong enough to drive speakers. These operations can all be performed by separate components or combined in various ways. If the preamplifier and power amplifier share a chassis, they become an integrated amplifier; if a tuner is combined with that, it's a receiver. Thus, if you have an A/V receiver (which typically adds a bit of video switching and surround-sound capability to the standard audio functions), there is no need to add an amplifier unless you want to drive more channels than the receiver provides for.

Speaker Tone Controls

Q My speakers include built-in controls for tweeter levels. Should I use these controls to achieve a crisp sound, or leave them in the flat position and adjust tonal balance with the amplifier's treble control?

CLEM KAYE
Amityville, NY

A Either way will do the job, but I'd be inclined to use the controls on the speakers themselves as long as they provide adequate high-frequency output. The treble control in your amplifier works by boosting the signal sent to the speakers, and this runs the risk of frying your tweeters' delicate voice coils. The control on the speaker itself is passive—it works by reducing the high-frequency signal—and is therefore probably a safer bet, especially if you like to listen at high levels. □

If you have a question about hi-fi, send it to Q&A, Stereo Review, 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. Sorry, only questions chosen for publication can be answered.

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CIRCLE NO. 59 ON READER SERVICE CARD

by Robert Ripps, Maryann Saltser, and Steve Simels

THE young Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie has a new recording on RCA Victor featuring twentieth-century works for marimba and orchestra. Among them is the world-première recording of Richard Rodney Bennett's Percussion Concerto, which was composed for Glennie. The album, titled "Rebounds," also contains concertos by Milhaud, Ney Rosauero, and Akira Miyoshi, all performed by Glennie with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra led by Paul Daniel. This is the twenty-six-year-old percussionist's third album in her exclusive contract with RCA. Previously released were "Rhythm Song" and "Light in Darkness." A 1993 U.S. tour is planned.

THE eighty-four-year-old composer, bandleader, and inventor Raymond Scott is receiving a long-overdue recorded tribute with the Columbia release of "The Music of Raymond Scott: Reckless Nights and Turkish Twilights." Scott had many hits in

Raymond Scott and one of his early synthesizers



COLUMBIA RECORDS



Evelyn Glennie: serious percussion

the late Thirties and the Forties. His unique style was not quite jazz and not quite pop, and he was notorious for his wacky titles, such as *Dinner Music for a Pack of Hungry Cannibals*. He also did pioneering work in multitrack recording and built electronic music synthesizers and sequencers as early as 1949. Warner Bros.' house composer, Carl Stalling, licensed many Scott themes for his own classic cartoon scores. More recently, Scott's recordings with his Quintette (despite the name a six-man group) have been heard on the soundtracks of the hit animated TV show *Ren & Stimpy*. "Turkish Twilights" includes recordings Scott made for CBS between 1937 and 1940.

Pierre Boulez's first recordings in over twenty years with the Cleveland Orchestra—where he made his American professional conducting debut in 1965—are part of a new contract with Deutsche Grammophon that calls for him to record a wide variety of twentieth-century

masterworks. The first Cleveland release, last October, was devoted to Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* and *Petrouchka*. The second, scheduled for February, will offer Debussy's *Images* for Orchestra, *Printemps*, and *Prélude à l'Après-Midi d'un Faune*. And in November DG came out with Boulez's recording with the Chicago Symphony Chorus and Orchestra of Bartók's *The Wooden Prince* and *Cantata Profana*.

WE'VE heard much speculation of late about how President-elect Clinton's well-documented musical tastes might manifest themselves—specifically, which performers might be asked to play the White House, and, more urgently, who might be invited to play at this month's Inaugural Gala. Obviously, Clinton's beloved Elvis will be unavailable for the fete, but as we go to press, the frontrunners are said to include a specially reunited *Fleetwood Mac* (whose *Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow* closed the Democratic National Convention) and

saxman **Kenny G**. (Clinton is a big fan). Also rumored to be in contention for the gig are the **Rock Bottom Remainders**, the joke band put together by big-deal literary types Stephen King, Dave Barry, and Amy Tan (their motto: "We play music like Metallica writes novels"). Hmm . . . the next four years just might be interesting.

THE French pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, an exclusive London artist, had his first solo recording for the label released last fall with a two-CD set of Ravel's complete solo-piano music. Thibaudet also performed those works at two fall concerts at the Tisch Center for the Performing Arts of New York City's 92nd Street Y. In Cleveland later this season he will perform and record Rachmaninoff's Second Concerto and *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*, with Vladimir Ashkenazy conducting the Cleveland Orchestra. A tour with the same program will follow, with stops in Philadelphia, Washington, and New York, where he'll appear at Carnegie Hall. Thibaudet's future recording plans include the other three Rachmaninoff concertos and a disc of Liszt's transcriptions of themes from operas.

Dan Baird, the former leader of the **Georgia Satellites**, is back with his first solo album, "Love Songs for the Hearing Impaired," on Def American (reviewed by Parke Puterbaugh on page 81)

Jean-Yves Thibaudet



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 The Most Happy Fella/ New Broadway Cast (RCA Victor) 10463
 Al Jarreau: Heaven & Earth (Reprise) 63697
 XTC: Nonsuch (Geffen) 35406
 Linda Ronstadt: Frenesi (Elektra) 24810
 Randy Travis: Greatest Hits Vol. 1 (Warner Bros.) 21091
 Randy Travis: Greatest Hits Vol. 2 (Warner Bros.) 11125
 Robert Cray: I Was Warned (Mercury) 82335
 Larry Carlton: Kid Gloves (GRP) 02487
 Patty Smyth (MCA) 25090
 The Best Of Jay & The Americans: Come A Little Bit Closer (EMI) 72262
 Dr. John: Goin' Back To New Orleans (Warner Bros.) 53246
 Ringo Starr: Time Takes Time (Private Music) 35088

Nirvana : Nevermind (Geffen) 15600
 Battle: The Bach Album (DG) 73670
 Anne Murray: Fifteen Of The Best (Liberty) 64657
 Faith No More: Angel Dust (Reprise/Slash) 23736 †
 GRP All-Star Big Band (GRP) 63298
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 Moody Blues: Greatest Hits (Threshold) 34284
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 Madonna: The Immaculate Collection (Sire) 54164
 Peter Gabriel: Shaking The Tree-16 Golden Greats (Geffen) 11089
 Soundgarden: Bedtimefingering (A&M) 05637
 Aerosmith: Pump (Geffen) 63678
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 A Tribe Called Quest: The Low End Theory (Jive) 24809
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 Sinéad O' Connor: I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got (Chrysalis) 33512
 Erya: Shepherd Moons (Reprise) 53190

Bonnie Raitt: Luck Of The Draw (Capitol) 15567
 Bonnie Raitt: Nick Of Time (Capitol) 54410
 Daryl Hall & John Oates: Rock 'N Soul, Part 1 (RCA) 13313
 Michael Crawford Performs Andrew Lloyd Webber (Atlantic) 74128
 The Police: Every Breath You Take—The Singles (A&M) 73924
 Horowitz: The Poet (DG) 25258
 Sting: The Soul Cages (A&M) 25218
 Fleetwood Mac: Greatest Hits (Warner Bros.) 00796
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MUSIC MAKERS



of this issue). It features contributions by the former Satellites drummer, **Mauro Magellan**, **Benmont Tench** of **Tom Petty's Heartbreakers**, and country fiddle legend **Byron Berline**. Baird acknowledges that the album may not exactly break new ground, but to his way of thinking that's irrelevant: "You're dealing with twelve tones, 4/4 time, and the English language. Those are your tools. No matter how original you consider what you're doing, it's [already] been done either by Stockhausen, Bach, or Chuck Berry."

MICHAEL WILSON/DEF AMERICAN



Baird: gone solo

ADMIRATION for the songs of Stephen Foster is what brought together the baritone **Thomas Hampson** and the composer/arranger **Jay Ungar**. Hampson, best known for opera and lieder, and Ungar, the Grammy-winning composer of the soundtrack for the PBS documentary *The Civil War*, seem well suited to the bittersweet melodies of Foster's ballads. Their album "American Dreamer," released in October on Angel, contains familiar songs and some rarely heard pieces arranged for fiddle, piano, bass, flute, and voice. There are also some instrumental medleys performed by Ungar's folk group, **Fiddle Fever**.

RUTH LEITMAN/UGI

THE **Black Crowes**, still riding high on their Platinum-plus album "The Southern Harmony and Musical



Hampson and friends: American dream songs

Companion," have released their first-ever video laserdisc, "Who Killed That Bird Out on Your Window Sill—The Movie." Clocking in at 90 minutes, it features assorted music videos, clips from TV appearances, interviews with band members, concert performances (a version of *Stare It Cold* filmed live in Moscow), and heretofore-unseen behind-the-scenes footage. A VHS videotape version is also available.

THE violinist **Midori** has established a foundation with the goal of bringing music closer to children by providing free lecture-demonstrations by performing artists. In an effort to bridge the cultural gap left by cutbacks in basic

The Black Crowes: gone video



arts education, the **Midori Foundation** plans to establish residency programs at selected primary and secondary schools and also to produce music education/appreciation videos for school use. For more information, write to the Midori Foundation, 850 Seventh Ave., Suite 705, New York, NY 10019, or call 212-767-1300.

THE jazz pianist **Billy Taylor** received the National Medal of Arts, the highest award for artistic excellence the United States offers, at a White House ceremony last August. Only two other jazz artists, **Ella Fitzgerald** and **Dizzy Gillespie**, have previously received this honor. Taylor has just signed with

GRP, and a new album is expected early this year.

GRACENOTES. The pianist **Vladimir Feltsman** has signed a three-year, multirecord agreement with MusicMasters Classics. His first MusicMasters CD, *Bach's Goldberg Variations*, was recorded live at the Moscow Conservatory in 1991 and released last September. . . . The incredibly cool CD reissue label **Sundazed Records** is readying "Psychedelic Microdots Vol. III," a collection of cuts from the **Roulette Records** catalog by such obscure Sixties bands as **First Crow to the Moon**. . . . **Igor Kipnis's** latest harpsichord recording, "The Virtuoso **Scarlatti**," was released in the fall on the **Chesky** label. A Chesky CD of music by **Vivaldi**, including *The Four Seasons*, which he conducts from the harpsichord, will be released this month, and he has also recorded a collection of Baroque trio sonatas for the **Arabesque** label. . . . **Ichiban** has released "Time and Faith" by the legendary soul singer **Jerry "The Iceman" Butler** (*For Your Pre-*

EMI CLASSICS



Billy Taylor at the White House

cious Love), his first new album in several years. . . . The cable music channel **VH-1** and the Chicago PBS station **WTTW** have joined forces for a new live pop music series called **Center Stage**. Concerts will be taped before audiences and will air first on VH-1, starting in February, and later on PBS stations around the country. Artists scheduled to appear include **Neil Young**, **Keith Richards**, **k.d. lang**, **Lindsey Buckingham**, and **Michael Bolton**. □

SUSAN BIDDLE/THE WHITE HOUSE

TEST REPORTS



Sony TA-E2000ESD Digital Audio/Video Preamp

JULIAN HIRSCH
HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES

SONY'S new TA-E2000ESD is a second-generation successor to its TA-E1000ESD digital preamp, which we reviewed in October 1989. In size, appearance, panel controls, and general operating characteristics, the two are almost identical.

Like its predecessor, the TA-E2000ESD is a remarkably versatile stereo and video control center employing Sony's proprietary digital integrated circuits to process the audio signals on their way from its inputs to its output terminals. It can simulate a number of acoustic environments in a listening room, including two different concert halls, an opera house, a jazz club, a disco, a stadium, and two types of movie theaters. Ten of these acoustic environments are factory preset, and another ten can be programmed by the user and stored for recall at the touch of a button. The TA-E2000ESD

also provides all-digital Dolby Pro Logic decoding for use with Dolby Surround movie soundtracks.

Despite its apparent similarity to its predecessor, the TA-E2000ESD offers a number of major improvements. The Dolby Pro Logic decoder employs digital circuitry for its signal-steering "logic" and its noise-reduction and delay functions. It can also be used in conjunction with any of the other nine factory-preset ambience modes. For example, a concert video encoded with Dolby Surround can be decoded

in another mode, such as Stadium, to make the music performance more consistent with the visuals.

The built-in digital parametric equalizer can be used in conjunction with the Dolby circuitry to equalize the front, center, and surround channels, either independently or together. Sony points out that such equalization can be advantageous if you use a center speaker that's not identical to the left and right front speakers. The equalizer itself provides unique adjustment capabilities, with three bands and ninety-one selectable center frequencies. At any of those frequencies, the boost or attenuation is adjustable over a 12-dB range in 0.1-dB steps, with a choice of sixteen "Q" (bandwidth) values—a total of more than a million possible EQ settings. Sony claims that no perceptible noise, phase shift, or distortion is added by the digital circuitry. As in the earlier model, the EQ response is shown graphically in the display window (which is slightly larger in the new model).

A ten-step digital channel-separation control permits optimizing the separation for any room and speaker placement. Another control varies the dynamic range of the preamp's output,

Dimensions

18½ inches wide, 6 inches high,
14 inches deep

Price
\$1,200

Manufacturer

Sony Corporation of America, Dept. SR,
One Sony Dr., Park Ridge, NJ 07656

Turn Your Stereo Into An All-Out Dolby Surround Pro-Logic System.

NEW FROM CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS

Our new PL100 Dolby Pro Logic decoder with 3-channel amplifier, magnetically shielded Center Channel speaker, The Surround II dipole radiating surround speakers. Factory-direct price, \$799.



Until now, adding Dolby Surround to a stereo system has been complex and expensive. Add-on decoders were inadequate, costly, and often required separate amplifiers. We've changed all that with our affordable, high performance Pro Logic Add-On Systems.

Both systems are centered around our new PL100—a Dolby Pro Logic decoder with three channels of amplification (40 watts to the center channel, 15 watts to the surround channels) and a wireless remote. Its built-in signal generator enables precise balancing of the left, center, right and surround speakers. The signal delay applied to the surround channel is selectable for room size. Other controls include master volume, rear

\$799 Dolby Pro Logic Add-On System.

The center channel speaker in our \$799 Dolby Pro Logic Add-On System is our new magnetically shielded Center Channel (see ad on following page). The rear/side speakers are a pair of The Surround™ II. Unlike any other surround speaker in its price range, The Surround II uses advanced dipole radiator technology. Properly mounted on the side walls of a listening room, their high frequency drivers direct out-of-phase sound signals towards the front and rear of the room. The sound then reflects off the surfaces in the room, finally reaching listeners from all directions, "surrounding" them with sound.

Because the drivers are out of phase with each other, they create a null area directly in front of the speakers, so listeners can't pinpoint the source of the sound. The result is surround sound the way it was meant to be heard.

\$999 Dolby Pro Logic Add-On System.

Our \$999 Dolby Pro Logic Add-On System combines the PL100 with our new low-profile Center Channel Plus speaker and our highly acclaimed surround speaker, The Surround. Center Channel Plus is a magnetically shielded

speaker with four 3" long-throw woofers and a ring radiator tweeter. Because of its wide, low profile (25" wide, 4" high, 6½" deep), it is ideal for placement directly on top of, or, with optional support unit, *beneath* a TV. The frequency range of the outer pair of 3" woofers is intentionally limited to maintain proper dispersion. We don't know of any speaker, at any price, that outperforms Center Channel Plus.

The surround speakers in this system are The Surround, a dipole radiating speaker with higher volume level capability than The Surround II. We feel The Surround is one of the very best surround speakers made, despite the fact that it costs hundreds less than competing models.

So if you already own a fine stereo system, TV and VCR, why not create an all-out home theater with one of our Dolby Pro Logic Add-On Systems?

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CIRCLE NO. 6 ON READER SERVICE CARD



Our new PL100 Dolby Pro Logic decoder with 3-channel amplifier, low profile Center Channel Plus speaker, The Surround dipole radiating surround speakers. Factory-direct price, \$999.

and center level, and a Phantom mode enabling the use of the PL100 without a center speaker. Purchased separately, the factory-direct price of the PL100 is \$399.

TEST REPORTS



compressing or expanding the range as desired. Advanced Sony 1-bit digital-to-analog (D/A) converters and 32-bit digital processing are said to provide the highest possible linearity.

The TA-E2000ESD's operating parameters are set by several front-panel buttons and two knobs; the buttons select the parameter to be adjusted, and the knobs adjust the setting. Small red LED's on the panel identify the selected parameter, and the display window shows the setting during adjustment. A few seconds after an adjustment is made, the display changes to show only the information pertinent to the operation of the system—principally the program source, selected acoustic environment, and the equalized frequency response.

Although some of these adjustments are easily made with the front-panel controls (the knobs are especially convenient for this purpose), it is usually desirable to be at the listening location when changing parameters of the acoustic environments or setting the levels of the auxiliary speakers. The remote control furnished with the TA-E2000ESD duplicates all the essential front-panel controls, replacing the knobs with up/down pushbuttons. It also has sections labeled for controlling source components, including a CD player, laserdisc player, tuner, TV, and up to four VCR's. It can learn the commands for these components, and it comes preprogrammed for Sony components.

The TA-E2000ESD has analog inputs for phono, tuner, and CD, a digital-audio input with both coaxial and optical connectors, and a set of optical digital recording and playback connectors. Signals entering at the analog inputs pass through the preamp's internal oversampling analog-to-digital (A/D) converters before being processed, while incoming digital signals go directly to the digital signal processing (DSP) circuits. Before the output stage, D/A converters translate the processed signals back to analog form.

Other analog audio inputs are designated for TV, laserdisc, and auxiliary video sources and for four VCR's. S-video input and output connectors are also provided for two of the VCR's, and there are two composite-video outputs and one S-video output for video monitors. One set of VCR inputs (VIDEO 5), including audio, composite video, and S-video, is intended for use

with a camcorder and is located on the front panel, behind a hinged section concealing some less frequently used controls.

All input/output connectors except those for VIDEO 5 and the front-panel headphone jack are on the rear apron. These include tape-recording in/out jacks for the various video sources, outputs for the video monitors, and the usual audio tape recording and playback jacks.

The rear apron carries separate line-level audio outputs for the front, center, and rear (surround) channels and two subwoofer outputs with an 80-Hz cutoff at 18 dB per octave. Three of the four AC outlets are switched, and the total capacity is 720 watts.

The TA-E2000ESD is a handsome component equipped with woodgrain side plates that can be removed to reduce its width to a conventional 17 inches. The interior of the black metal cabinet is densely packed with circuit boards, and the unit weighs a solid 18¾ pounds.

This is such a complex component, with so many combinations of operating parameters, that it would be impossible (and unnecessary) to measure

and verify all of its performance qualities, or even a significant fraction. Our measurements were necessarily limited to verifying the characteristics of the most commonly used features in its basic role as a control amplifier in an audio/video system. Even such a straightforward matter as measuring its input sensitivity for a standard 0.5-volt output was complicated by the presence of a small input-level control (behind the front-panel door). The control's setting has a major effect on sensitivity and overload characteristics. We set it so that the analog output of a CD player could not overload the A/D converters (as indicated by a front-panel LED) and left it there for most subsequent measurement and listening tests. Otherwise, we tried to adhere to EIA measurement standards for audio preamplifiers.

We made some measurements, such as frequency response and distortion, using both analog and digital sources. The most convenient digital source was a CD player's digital output. Accordingly, we fed the digital output of a Denon DCD-1500II player through its optical output and a fiber-optic cable to the optical digital input of the Sony preamp, effectively replacing the CD player's D/A converters with those of the TA-E2000ESD.

The TA-E2000ESD has a Source Direct button that bypasses its parametric-equalizer, dynamic-range, and surround (Pro Logic) circuitry. It also disconnects the rear- and center-channel outputs, leaving only the main front and subwoofer outputs active. We measured the frequency response with this feature active and with it disengaged. The difference was insignificant (less than 0.2 dB at 20,000 Hz)—response was extremely flat at either setting and through any input. The subwoofer-output response was flat within 5 dB from 10 to 70 Hz, falling 3 dB from 70 to 85 Hz and 10 dB at 100 Hz.

MEASUREMENTS

All figures for main front channels only except as noted

Sensitivity (for a 0.5-volt output)

CD/tuner 54 to 295 mV (see text)
phono 0.7 to 4 mV

A-weighted noise

(referred to a 0.5-volt output)

tuner -87 dB
phono -81 dB
CD -86 dB

Distortion (THD at 1,000 Hz) 0.007%

Phono-input overload

(1,000-Hz equivalent levels)

20 Hz 101 mV
1,000 Hz 94 mV
20,000 Hz 45 mV

Phono-input impedance

..... 50,000 ohms in parallel with 57 pF

RIAA phono-equalization error (20 to

20,000 Hz) +0, -0.15 dB

Maximum output at clipping 6.4 volts

Channel separation (1,000 Hz)

analog CD output 62 dB
digital CD output 105 dB

Frequency response

main 20-20,000 Hz, +0, -0.02 dB
subwoofer output
..... -3 dB at 85 Hz, -10 dB at 100 Hz

NEW FROM CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS

Our new Center Channel and Center Channel Plus speakers are magnetically shielded, so they won't cause video interference, even when placed very near a TV screen.



Our New Center Channel Speakers Deliver Optimum Pro Logic Performance At Factory-Direct Prices.

We're pleased to announce two new speakers designed by Henry Kloss specifically for use as center channel speakers in Dolby Surround Pro Logic systems—the Center Channel and Center Channel Plus. Our experience with Dolby Surround Pro Logic systems has shown that the center channel is *very* important. A significant portion of movie soundtracks is directed to the center channel. It's very important to use a speaker that reproduces that material



accurately, with the proper volume level and dispersion pattern.

Center Channel by Henry Kloss.

Center Channel is a compact, two-way acoustic suspension speaker with a 4" woofer and a ring radiator tweeter. Because of its compact size (8½" x 5¼" x 4"), it's simple to place Center Channel directly on top of or below your TV screen, so that dialog and sound effects will seem to emanate from their on-screen source.

Center Channel is well shielded magnetically so that it can be placed very close to your TV without causing video interference. Acoustically identical to our Ensemble satellite speakers, it's ideal for center channel use in a Pro Logic system. The factory-direct price of Center Channel is \$149.

Center Channel Plus by Henry Kloss.

The Center Channel Plus is a larger speaker recommended for achieving theater-like playback levels in the most sophisticated and powerful home theater systems. It uses

four 3" long-throw woofers and a tweeter that perfectly matches the acoustics of our Ensemble® and Ensemble II systems. The frequency range of the outer pair of 3" woofers is intentionally limited to maintain proper dispersion characteristics.

Because of its wide, low profile (25" wide, 4" high, 6½" deep), Center Channel Plus is ideal for placement directly on top of or, uniquely for a product of its type, *beneath* a TV—with optional support unit, it can act as a base for your TV. We don't know of any speaker, at any price, that outperforms Center Channel Plus. The factory-direct price of Center Channel Plus is \$219.

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Place our low-profile Center Channel Plus above your TV or, with optional support, use it as a base for your TV.

TEST REPORTS

We plotted the frequency response of the parametric equalizer at a single frequency, 1,000 Hz. Its maximum boost or cut was exactly as rated, and the Q of the response curve was adjustable between values of 0.5 and 20. With the lowest value, the boost affected almost the full audio range, from 100 to 10,000 Hz, but with the highest Q setting it modified the response only between 800 and 1,200 Hz. Since the center frequency of the boost or cut, as well as its magnitude and Q, are adjustable over wide ranges, and three independent corrections may be applied, this feature offers limitless possibilities for correcting system or recording response deficiencies—provided that you have equally limitless patience.

For our listening evaluation, we set up the Sony TA-E2000ESD in a four-channel surround system (main and surround speakers) and used both CD's and FM as sources. The fifty-five-page instruction manual, quite complete and comprehensive, is laid out in logical blocks according to function, but it was not always easy to locate the specific information we needed. For example, we were frustrated in trying to measure the frequency response of the subwoofer outputs because the legend "subwoofer off" appeared in the display. We searched for a way to activate these outputs from the front panel. Finally, we found a reference in the manual (in the section dealing with the display panel) to a button on the re-

note control that is the only means of controlling this function.

During our listening we used as many features as were applicable. The results were excellent, with a very natural sense of ambience being generated in our 15 x 20-foot room using the Hall modes. The ambience was more suggestive of a live concert than in most of our previous experience with similar devices.

The dynamic-range adjustment offers compression or expansion with a single knob. Subjectively, the effect was surprisingly subtle, but with practice it is easy to hear the contribution of the circuit and set it as desired.

Inevitably, we have to compare the Sony TA-E2000ESD to its predecessor, the TA-E1000ESD. When we

SECOND OPINION

ALTHOUGH it is functionally a very complex product, the Sony TA-E2000ESD is relatively easy to use thanks to the large, bright, and informative display, which is readable from at least 15 feet away. The display's layout and messages take some getting used to, especially since some messages change while you're activating certain controls and then revert to something else when you're not pushing buttons.

Because of the limited display space, the names and settings of the adjustment parameters are necessarily highly abbreviated. Also, the ability to switch video and audio signals independently can create confusion both on the display and in your head. Reading the manual is thus absolutely required to get the most out of this product.

As for the performance of the digital features, it was excellent on the whole. Combining the adjustability of a parametric equalizer with the frequency readout of a graphic equalizer makes this feature extraordinarily versatile. The equalizer's 0.1-dB adjustment increments are unheard of in the analog world. Equally unusual is for such precision to match exactly between audio channels, with consequent benefits to the stereo image. Also useful is the equalizer's ability to independently alter the response of front, center, and rear channels in a surround-sound system. In particular, it can equalize the center channel in a Dolby Pro Logic surround setup to help compensate for the all-too-common response differences between a center speaker and the left and right front speakers.

But as usual with DSP-based

components, I have quibbles about some of the default settings in the sound-field ambience modes. With some program material, the two Concert Hall modes and the Church mode gave a throbbing quality to the reverberation. (This effect is easily audible if you interrupt the music with a pause control and listen to the decay of the synthesized reverb.) Altering the default parameters can diminish this throbbing effect, however.

Although the manual doesn't mention it, the Jazz Club mode is useful for a very wide range of music, from classical chamber groups to all varieties of pop. I found the two Theater modes relatively useless, however, as I have found similar modes in other devices. Their purpose is to make a surround-sound movie sound as if it were being shown in a real movie theater by applying a simulation of theater acoustics to the decoded surround-sound information. I prefer movies to sound like they did in the dubbing studios where they received their final mixdowns, and dubbing studios are usually small and acoustically dead compared with movie theaters. The ideal is to experience the ambience of the setting of the movie, not of a movie theater. If I wanted the latter, I'd pour popcorn around my listening room and make sure that my floor was good and sticky. I did enjoy the manual's description of the Theater modes, however. Theater1 is recommended for movies "with many spectacular scenes," Theater2 for films "with many silent and emotional scenes" (the Ingmar Bergman mode, in other words).

I also have some philosophical reservations about the coupling of equalization and preset ambience modes.

Equalization and ambience synthesis are two completely separate aspects of sound reproduction and should not be linked as they are here.

The Disco mode, in particular, offers a preset equalization curve that can be positively dangerous to other components in your system. The compression—meant to add "thickness" to the sound—as well as the large upper-bass and low-treble boosts applied by this mode can not only surprise the hell out of you if you switch to it by mistake but can also overload your amplifier, speakers, and your ears if the volume is set too high. I recommend altering the Disco mode to more reasonable settings, storing the results in a user preset, and thereafter using that version only. Besides, I thought disco sound was meant to have "punch," which can come from a slight dynamic-range *expansion*. The sound in the best discos here in New York City may be loud, but it is definitely not "thick."

Otherwise, the TA-E2000ESD was a joy to work with, having no untoward or unexpected behavior such as switching transients or thumps when changing modes or DSP features. The Dolby Pro Logic mode is a fine example of digital processing at its best. I do wish, however, that instead of relatively useless features like the digital compressor, Sony had seen fit to include a digital click-and-pop suppressor for those of us who have been unwilling or unable to unload our huge collections of LP's. Maybe we'll get our wish with the next model, but in the meantime the TA-E2000ESD offers a unique combination of features, with digital versatility and sound quality to match.

—David Ranada

The Powered Subwoofer That Has The Audio And Video Press Jumping Out Of Their Seats.

NEW FROM CAMBRIDGE SOUNDWORKS

A jet roaring in *Top Gun*. The heavy-footed killer robot in *Robocop*. A semi hitting concrete after a 20 foot fall in *Terminator 2*. These are examples of the substantial, very low-frequency effects on the soundtracks of today's movies. Such frequencies are rare in music, and are beyond the capabilities of most speakers designed for music.

The new Cambridge SoundWorks Powered Subwoofer by Henry Kloss was created to reproduce those ultra-low, ultra-strong bass signals with the power and impact you would experience in movie theaters with the very best sound systems. It's designed to *supplement* (not replace) the subwoofer(s) of Ensemble or Ensemble II. It will also work with speakers from other companies.

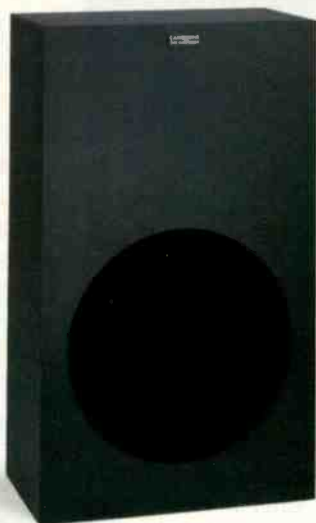
Remarkable bass performance.

The Powered Subwoofer consists of a heavy duty, 12 inch long-throw acoustic suspension woofer integrated with a 140



watt amplifier—all in a high-pressure black laminate cabinet. Its control panel includes a bass level control and an 18dB per octave, four-position electronic crossover frequency selector (to match the subwoofer to your other speakers).

Additionally, an optional electronic crossover* will provide 18 dB per octave,



Powered Subwoofer



Slave Subwoofer

high-pass, line-level filters for the main and center amplifiers. These filters allow you to keep strong, low frequencies of sound effects out of the front speakers. These signals can cause distortion, even in speakers designed for full-range music.

The Powered Subwoofer's bass performance is simply *awesome*. It reproduces accurate bass to below 30 Hz. You'll hear soundtracks the way they were meant to be heard. In fact the bass is *better* than most

Our Ultimate Home Theater Speaker System consists of our dual-subwoofer Ensemble system; our low profile Center Channel Plus speaker; a pair of our critically acclaimed surround speakers. The Surround; our Powered Subwoofer; our Slave Subwoofer. Factory-direct price: \$1,999.

theaters! At the press event when we introduced our Powered Subwoofer, we had startled members of the audio and video press literally "jumping out of their seats" during demonstrations of movie soundtracks. The factory-direct price of the Powered Subwoofer is \$599.

Optional "slave" subwoofer.

For all-out home theater performance, you can add our optional Slave Subwoofer, which is identical to our Powered Subwoofer except that it lacks the amplifier and controls. It uses the amplifier and controls built into the Powered Subwoofer. Amplifier output jumps from 140 to 200 watts when the Slave Subwoofer is connected.

The combination of the two speakers can reproduce a 30 Hz signal cleanly to a sound pressure level of over 100 dB in a 3,000 cubic foot room! That's enough clean, deep bass for the largest home theaters, and the most demanding listeners. The factory-direct price of the Slave Subwoofer is \$299.

No compromises. No apologies.

The combination of our Ensemble speaker system, Center Channel Plus speaker, The Surround rear/side speakers, Powered Subwoofer and Slave Subwoofer (see photo at left) creates a home theater speaker system that we believe is the best of its kind.

Although you can spend thousands more on competing systems, we don't know of *any* that outperform this \$1,999 package. If you'd like more information, a free catalog or our new booklet, "Getting The Most From Your Dolby Surround System," call our toll-free number any time.

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CIRCLE NO. 6 ON READER SERVICE CARD

The Critics Love Ensemble And Ensemble II. What's The Difference, Anyway?

Cambridge SoundWorks changed the audio world when we began direct-marketing Ensemble® by Henry Kloss. Ensemble is a revolutionary dual-subwoofer/satellite speaker system offering all-out performance, without cluttering up your room with huge speaker cabinets. Available *only* factory-direct from Cambridge SoundWorks, with no expensive middle-men, Ensemble is priced at hundreds less than it would have sold for in stores. *Audio* magazine says Ensemble "may be the best value in the world."

And Then There Were Two.

Now Cambridge SoundWorks has introduced Ensemble II, a more affordable version of Ensemble using only one cabinet to hold both subwoofer drivers. Ensemble II has joined Ensemble in the ranks of the country's best-selling speak-



The real difference is in the subwoofer.

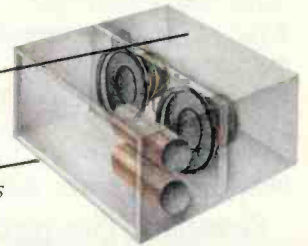
ers. We believe Ensemble II is a better system than the new Bose® AM-5 Series II. And because we sell it factory-direct, it's half the price. *Stereo Review* said "Ensemble II performs so far beyond its price and size that it can be compared only with much larger speakers at substantially higher prices." We agree with the writer who said, "It's hard to imagine going wrong with Ensemble." The question is, which Ensemble system is right for you?

The Same Satellite Speakers.

When you listen to either Ensemble system, almost 90% of the music you hear is being reproduced by the satellite speakers. Both Ensemble and Ensemble II use satellite speakers that are virtually identical.* Unlike many competing systems, Ensemble's satellites are true two-way speaker systems, each containing a high performance tweeter and a 4-inch woofer. *Stereo Review* said, "The Ensemble satellites delivered a smoother output than

True acoustic suspension, sealed subwoofer cavity.

Cavity acts as acoustic band-pass filter.



"Ensemble may be the best value in the world."
Audio



many larger and more expensive speakers."

Small (8½"×5¼"×4") and unobtrusive, they'll fit into the decor of any room. They're available in scratch-resistant gunmetal grey Nextel, or primed so you can paint them any color you wish.



Ensemble satellite speakers are available primed for painting, so they can match your decor exactly.

The Same Overall Sound.

In many rooms, Ensemble II sounds virtually the same as Ensemble, especially when Ensemble's two subwoofers are placed right next to each other. The real difference between the two systems is that Ensemble, with its two ultra-compact subwoofers (12"×21"×4½"), gives you *ultimate placement flexibility*.

The Same Attention To Detail.

Ensemble and Ensemble II are constructed with the very best materials and no-compromise workmanship. Their subwoofers use heavy-duty woofers in true acoustic suspension enclosures. The satellites are genuine two-way systems with very high quality speaker components. Individual crossover networks are

built into every cabinet for maximum wiring flexibility. Robust construction is used throughout, featuring solid MDF cabinets and solid metal grilles.

The Same Factory-Direct Savings.

Cambridge SoundWorks products are available *only* factory-direct. By eliminating the middle-men, we're able to sell Ensemble and Ensemble II for hundreds less than if they were sold in stores.

The Same 30-Day Total Satisfaction Guarantee.

Choosing a loudspeaker after a brief listen at a dealer's showroom is like deciding on a car after one quick trip around the block. So we make it possible to audition our speakers the *right way*—



Stereo systems featuring Ensemble and Ensemble II speakers with Pioneer or Philips electronics start at only \$799, including CD player. Dolby Surround Sound systems start at only \$999.

in your own home. You get to listen for hours without a salesman hovering nearby. If within 30 days you're not happy, return your speaker system for a full re-

fund. We even reimburse original UPS ground shipping charges in the continental United States.



The only difference in satellites is that the original Ensembles use gold-plated connectors that allow use of even the heaviest gauge wire.

The Real Difference: The Ultimate Placement Flexibility Of Dual Subwoofers.

Placement of bass and high-frequency speakers in a room—and how those speakers interact with the acoustics of the room—has more influence on the overall sound quality of a stereo system than just about anything. As an alternative to spending hundreds (or thousands) of dollars on this or that "latest" amplifier or CD player design, you should invest some of your time experimenting with various speaker positioning schemes. Ensemble's two ultra-slim (4½") subwoofers give you more placement flexibility than any speaker system we know of (including Ensemble II), and is most likely to provide the performance you want *in real world...in-your room*.

How To Order.

The dual-subwoofer Ensemble system is available in two versions. With handsome black-laminate subwoofers for \$599. Or with black vinyl-clad subwoofers for \$499. Ensemble II is priced at \$399. For more information, a free 48-page catalog, or to order...

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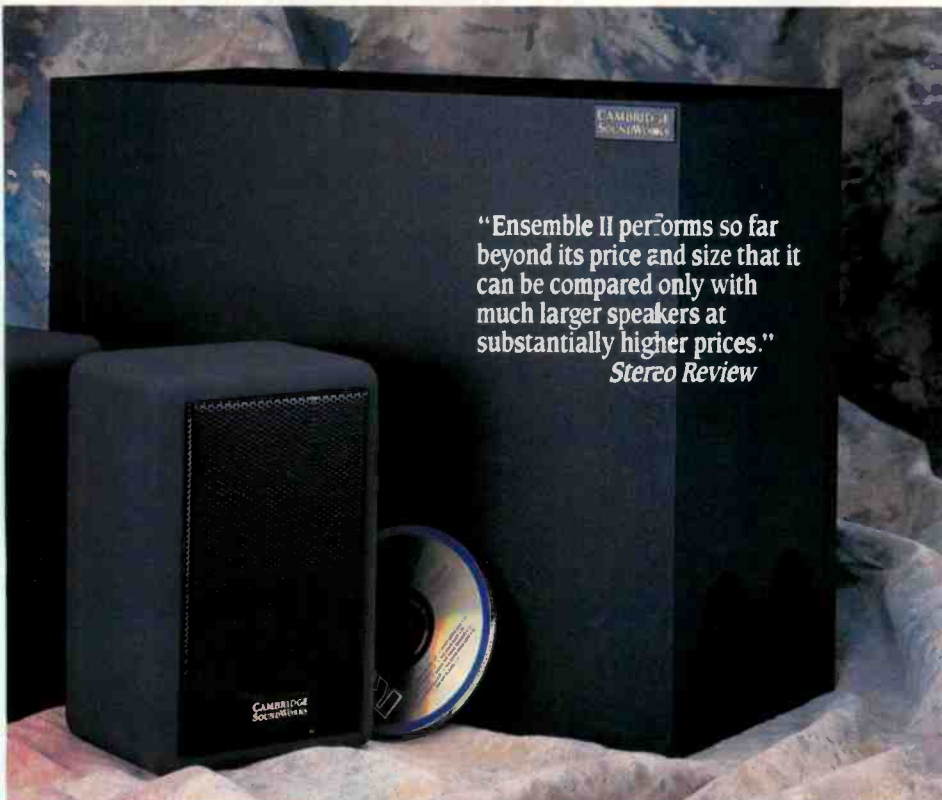
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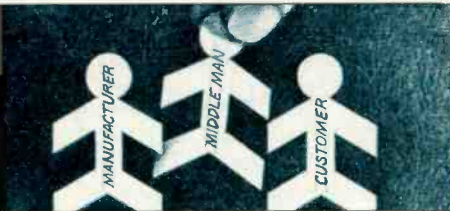
"Ensemble II performs so far beyond its price and size that it can be compared only with much larger speakers at substantially higher prices."

Stereo Review



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Cambridge SoundWorks is a new *kind* of audio company, with factory-direct savings, and much, much more...



Audio Hall of Fame member Henry Kloss.
Cambridge SoundWorks products are designed by our co-founder, Henry Kloss, who created the dominant speakers of the '50s (AR), '60s (KLH) and '70s (Advent).

We eliminated the expensive middle-men.
By selling factory-direct to the public, we eliminate huge distribution expenses. Don't be fooled by our reasonable prices. Our products are very well designed and made.



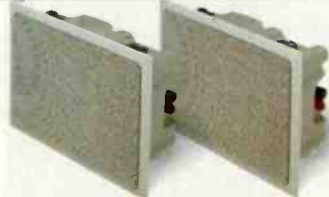
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High performance dipole radiating surround speakers.
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tested the earlier model, we did not have a final instruction manual and had to feel our way through a totally unfamiliar and very complex product. This time we were dealing with a fully engineered product that has clearly benefited from technological improvements over the past three years, and it was supplied with a very thorough manual.

Functionally, the TA-E2000ESD is virtually identical to its predecessor, although many of the functions formerly handled by analog circuits are now done digitally. The difference was not necessarily apparent from ordinary listening or use tests, especially since the control functions are virtually identical.

Our measurements clearly showed the superiority of Sony's new D/A converters—they had the best low-level linearity (down to -100 dB) that we have yet measured. The phono section of the new preamplifier was markedly better than that of the earlier model, with improved headroom and outstanding equalization accuracy.

All in all, Sony has taken an already uniquely versatile and refined component and made it even better. When we tested the TA-E1000ESD three years ago, we found it hard to imagine how it could be significantly improved. It has been, however, and at a modest increase in price that is easily justified in a product of this degree of refinement.

One price to be paid for owning a component as sophisticated as this one is the time it takes to *study* the instruction manual (not merely skim its pages). The TA-E2000ESD offers an enormous variety and range of adjustments, and their effects will not always be obvious. You'll need a lot of hands-on experience to reap all the benefits of Sony's design efforts, but the effort will be thoroughly justified.

The Sony TA-E2000ESD is one of the most refined audio/video/surround-sound control centers we have seen. Like many such products, its complexity can seem overwhelming. Just remember that you do not *have* to adjust every parameter that *can* be adjusted! In many, perhaps most, cases there will be little or no audible difference from changes in such things as the listening-seat position in the concert hall or the shape of the hall. Use this component for what it can do for *your* listening experience, and you will swiftly become addicted to it. □

TEST REPORTS



NSM Model 25 Loudspeaker System

JULIAN HIRSCH
HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES

NSM Loudspeakers manufactures its speakers in matched pairs for more accurate stereo imaging in the home listening room. Since this requires preserving and recreating the symmetry of the recorded program, NSM has gone to considerable lengths to control production tolerances in its drivers and crossover-network components.

NSM says it carefully matches every resistor, capacitor, inductor, and driver in each loudspeaker system to the corresponding part in the other speaker of the pair. High-quality components and drivers are used throughout, including metallized polypropylene and Mylar capacitors and air-core inductors. The speakers have 14-gauge internal wiring, and the drivers are mounted flush with the panel to minimize diffraction.

Like other NSM speakers, the Model 25 has a narrow (9-inch-wide) cabinet for optimum dispersion and imaging as well as high rigidity. It is constructed of 1-inch and 3/4-inch-thick fiberboard, tuned with open-cell foam

and Dacron fiber, and finished in wood veneer. The cloth grille, retained by plastic snaps, is easily removable.

Recessed into the rear of the cabinet are two pairs of gold-plated five-way binding posts on standard 3/4-inch centers. These are normally strapped together; removing the jumpers enables the system to be driven in either a biwired or biamplified mode.

The Model 25 is a two-way acoustic-suspension system using a 6 1/2-inch plastic-cone woofer constructed on a die-cast magnesium basket and a 1-

Dimensions

9 inches wide, 22 inches high,
and 10 inches deep

Finish

Natural oak veneer with tan grille or
black-ash veneer with black grille

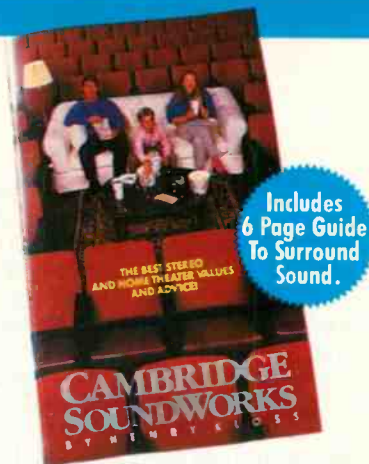
Price

\$799 a pair

Manufacturer

NSM Loudspeakers.
P.O. Box 326, Garden
City, NY 11530-0326

PHOTO: JOOK P. LEUNG



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TEST REPORTS

inch soft-dome tweeter with ferrofluid cooling. Relatively insensitive, with a rated sound-pressure level (SPL) of 82 dB at 1 meter with an input of 2.83 volts, it is recommended for use with amplifiers rated between 50 and 150 watts. Nominal impedance is 8 ohms, and frequency response is given as 35 to 20,000 Hz ± 3 dB at an 80-dB SPL.

The manufacturer suggests placing the speakers on 24-inch stands 18 inches from the wall behind them and 8 feet apart, but the user is encouraged to experiment with placement for best results (good advice with any speaker). Each NSM Model 25 speaker weighs 27½ pounds. Pairs are shipped in a single 60-pound carton.

We placed the NSM Model 25 speakers on 26-inch stands and positioned them as recommended by the manufacturer. Their room response was exceptionally flat and smooth, varying only ± 4 dB from 65 to 20,000 Hz. A close-miked measurement of the woofer response showed a maximum output between 70 and 170 Hz, falling off at 12 dB per octave at lower frequencies and more gradually at higher frequencies.

Our composite response curve, formed from these two sets of data, was flat within ± 3 dB from 50 to 20,000 Hz. For most of that range the response was extremely flat, although there were some minor irregularities between 150 and 1,000 Hz.

Response measurements with a stepping one-third-octave band of pink noise were quite similar, within ± 3 dB from 58 to 20,000 Hz. The tweeter's horizontal directivity was excellent; the on-axis and 45-degree off-axis responses diverged only 2 dB at 7,000 Hz, 3 dB at 10,000 Hz, and 10 dB at 20,000 Hz.

We also attempted frequency-response measurements using the quasi-anechoic MLS program of our Audio Precision System One test instrument. These confirmed the essential features of the midrange and high-frequency response we had measured previously (± 2 dB from 1,000 to 20,000 Hz), but they also showed a reduced and irregular output from 500 to 2,000 Hz that was completely inconsistent with what we found in the room-response measurement (or in listening tests), although a somewhat similar effect could be seen in the close-miked woofer measurement. We have no good explanation for this apparent discrep-

ancy, but we are inclined to accept the verdict of our ears and the room measurements, which were consistent with each other.

The speaker's impedance characteristics were quite unusual. For one thing, the minimum impedance, at 138 Hz, was about 9.6 ohms. At other frequencies the impedance varied between 10 and 38 ohms. The woofer's resonance frequency was at 60 Hz. Overall, the phase angle of the impedance varied smoothly between +30 and -45 degrees, with no evidence of the sharp jogs, indicating resonances in drivers or the enclosure, that we've seen from many speakers in this measurement. The acoustic phase linearity was also good, with a group-delay variation of ± 250 microseconds from just over 1,000 Hz up to 20,000 Hz.

The NSM Model 25's sensitivity was (as rated) very low, with an output SPL of 81 dB at 1 meter from a 2.83-volt input of pink noise. Since our woofer-distortion measurements are based on a nominal 90-dB SPL, we measured distortion at 8 volts input. It was very low, rising from 0.3 to 0.5 percent between 120 and 2,000 Hz to 1 percent between 70 and 100 Hz and 4 percent at 50 Hz. At the system's rated lower limit of 35 Hz, the output was down 10 dB from the upper-midrange average (instead of 3 dB), and the distortion was 20 percent.

The Model 25 was able to handle large input levels in our single-cycle tone-burst tests. At 1,000 and 10,000 Hz, the amplifier clipped at 220 to 240 watts into its 30-ohm impedance. At 100 Hz, the woofer began to sound hard well before its cone reached the

suspension limits, and to avoid possible damage to the speaker, we did not attempt to go higher than about 265 watts into its 11-ohm impedance.

The NSM Model 25 is not a product that follows all the usual patterns of loudspeaker design. It is one of the few speakers we have tested that gave seemingly irreconcilable results with some of the very different measurement techniques we use (which one would expect to yield fairly similar data). It is also an exception in its very low sensitivity, which makes the 50- to 150-watt amplifier power recommendation one to be taken seriously. The Model 25 requires four to eight times as much power as most other speakers to achieve the same output level.

The Model 25 sounded very easy, clean, and smooth. There was no apparent excess or deficiency in any part of the audio spectrum, and its soundstage was superb. You could not ask for a more listenable speaker, although it is not one that can be used to generate life-like sound levels.

It also did not achieve any miracles in the bass range. The 35-Hz claimed lower limit is unrealistic; a 50-Hz limit would be more accurate and more consistent with the size of the woofer and enclosure. Indeed, NSM makes a subwoofer for those who want or need more volume or deeper bass.

But within the limits of what it can do, the NSM Model 25 is a first-rate speaker whose sound justifies its price. To our ears it sounded as flat and uncolored as our measured response curve implied, which places it in the ranks of some far more expensive, very highly regarded speakers. □

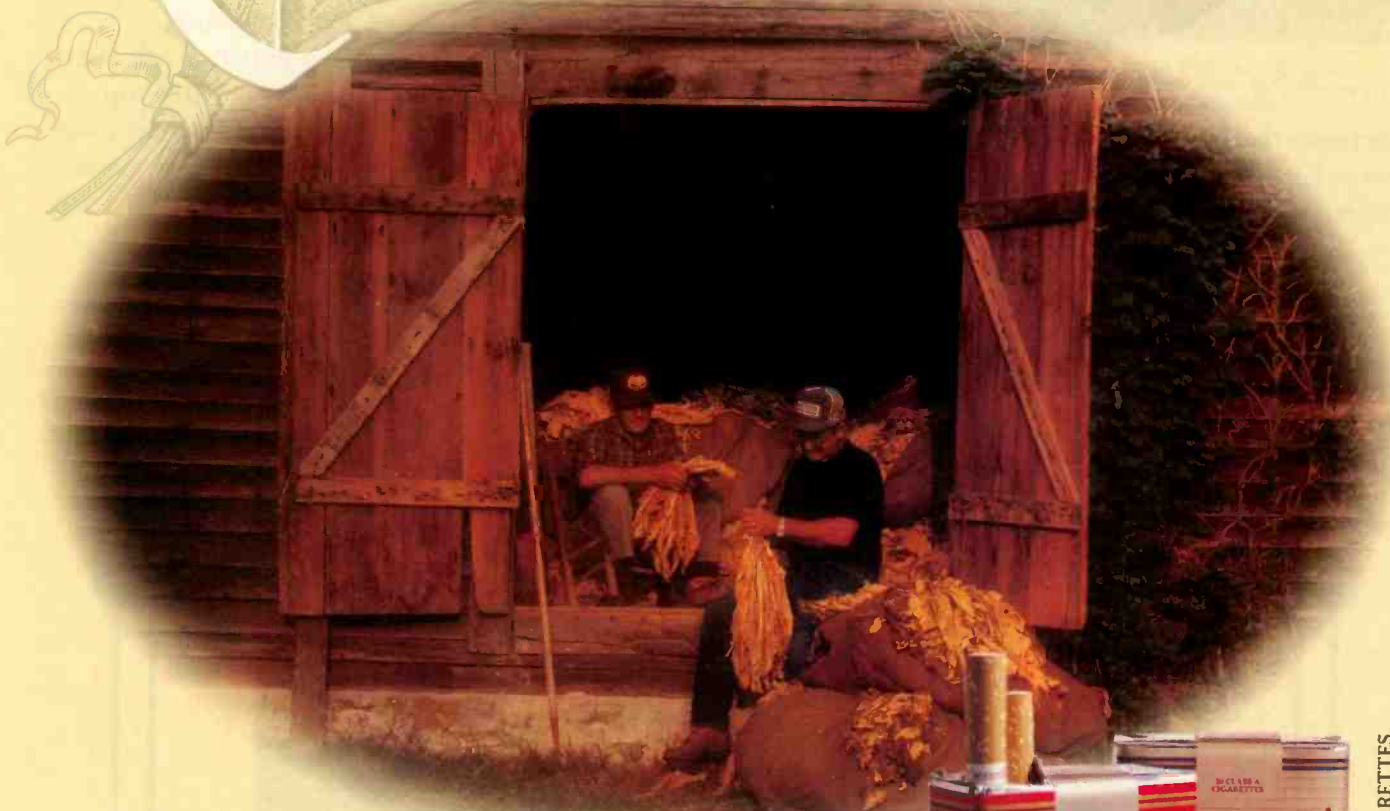


"... Look—if he wants to buy two subwoofers so he can hear them in stereo, then sell him two subwoofers!"

No. 3

No Coarse Stems

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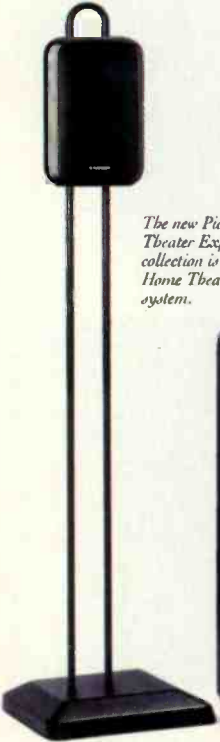
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TEST REPORTS



Altec Lansing Model 115 Loudspeaker System

JULIAN HIRSCH
HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES

ALTEC LANSING'S Model 115 is a two-way acoustic-suspension bookshelf speaker. Seventeen inches high and weighing only 18 pounds, it is attractively finished on all surfaces in an oak woodgrain vinyl veneer, with almost all of the front panel normally covered by the snap-on black grille. It is identical to the more expensive Model 105 except for its cabinet finish (the Model 105 uses wood veneer).

The Model 115's woofer operates in a sealed enclosure. Its 6-inch cone features the textured, woven-carbon-fiber construction used in most of the company's other home speakers, including higher-price models. The crossover, at about 2,500 Hz, is to a 1-inch titanium-coated polyamide dome tweeter with ferrofluid cooling. As with the woofer, the tweeter's design is widely used in the Altec Lansing line.

The speaker's specifications include a usable bandwidth of 40 to 22,000 Hz, with the -3-dB points

occurring at 50 and 20,000 Hz. Its power handling is specified as 50 watts nominal, 100 watts maximum, and it is recommended for use with amplifiers rated as low as 10 watts nominal output up to a maximum of 300 watts peak output. Sensitivity, with a 1-watt input, is rated as 91 dB sound-pressure level (SPL) at 1 meter, and the impedance rating is 8 ohms.

We placed the Altec Lansing Model 115 speakers on stands, about 26 inches high, for our room-response measurements. The averaged response,

Dimensions

9½ inches wide, 17 inches high,
and 9 inches deep

Finish

Oak-grain vinyl veneer

Price

\$137.50 each

Manufacturer

Altec Lansing, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 277,
Milford, PA 18337-0277

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measured on the axis of the left speaker, was within 5 dB overall from 800 to 11,000 Hz. There was a slight high-frequency rise, to about 5 dB above the average midrange level at 15,000 Hz, and a return to the reference level at 20,000 Hz.

Below 800 Hz, room-boundary reflections affected the response, although it showed only a 7-dB overall variation down to 120 Hz. The close-miked woofer response was a maximum between 100 and 200 Hz, falling at 12 dB per octave below 100 Hz and more gradually at higher frequencies.

**The diminutive Altec
Lansing Model 115
speaker managed to
convey a sense of real
bass without obvious
distortion.**

The composite frequency response varied only 5 dB overall from 65 to 11,000 Hz, and the high-frequency rise previously mentioned added only about 2½ dB to that variation. The shape of the curve was a little swayed, with the range from 500 to 3,000 Hz slightly depressed relative to the bass and treble octaves.

Our quasi-anechoic response measurements (valid above a few hundred hertz) agreed approximately with the room-response measurements. The output rose about 4 or 5 dB from 2,500 Hz to 4,000 Hz and remained within a decibel or two of that level up to 15,000 Hz, where there was an additional 2-dB peak.

The tweeter's horizontal dispersion was good up to about 6,000 Hz (where the response 45 degrees off-axis had dropped less than 3 dB relative to the on-axis response), but the spread increased rapidly at higher frequencies, to 7 dB at 10,000 Hz and 13 dB at 20,000 Hz.

The system's impedance curve was good, with a minimum of 6 ohms at 200

Hz and maximum readings of 30 ohms at the 70-Hz bass resonance and about 20 ohms in the 1,000- to 3,000-Hz range. The impedance was safely above 8 ohms over most of the audio range.

Sensitivity measured a very good 92 dB, slightly better than rated. With an input of 2.26 volts (corresponding to a 90-dB SPL), woofer distortion was between 0.3 and 0.5 percent from 150 to 1,000 Hz. It rose slightly at higher frequencies, to about 0.8 percent at 2,000 Hz. At low frequencies the distortion rose linearly from 1 percent at 100 Hz to 4 percent at 50 Hz and 9 percent at 30 Hz. The 6-inch woofer handled one-cycle tone bursts of 180 watts at 100 Hz into its 10-ohm impedance before it began to sound hard.

The group delay in the tweeter range (2,500 to 20,000 Hz) varied less than 100 microseconds overall. There was a jump of 200 microseconds at 2,000 Hz and a second peak of about 600 microseconds at a much lower frequency, in the woofer range. These low group-delay variations indicate very good phase linearity.

The Altec Lansing 115 sounded clean, balanced, and musical, as would be expected from its measured performance and its kinship to some of the company's much more expensive speakers. Although it is too small to do full justice to the really low bass, it never sounded thin or lacking in those frequencies. The highs were crisp, probably as a result of the slight peak well above the normal musical frequency range, but they were never shrill.

One of the best demonstrations of the Model 115's capabilities was when we teamed the test pair with a couple of Hsu Research subwoofers, whose output is principally below 50 Hz, and played organ recordings that extended to about 20 Hz. The change in sound when we cut off the drive to the subwoofers was unmistakable, but also unmistakable was the manner in which the diminutive Model 115 speakers managed to convey a sense of *real* bass in their output, without obvious distortion or any of the thinness often associated with small speaker systems. They didn't shake the room or rattle the windows, but they always sounded musical and believable. All in all, the Altec Lansing 115 is a first-rate small speaker system at a very reasonable price. □

TEST REPORTS



Mondial Acurus A250 Power Amplifier

JULIAN HIRSCH
HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES

Not only a few years, the Acurus brand of audio components from Mondial Designs, Ltd., designed and built in the U.S., has earned a reputation for high quality at reasonable prices.

The Acurus A250 power amplifier exemplifies the design philosophy behind the whole line. The amplifier circuitry is fully discrete and completely symmetrical, with relatively little global negative feedback. Precision 1-percent metal-film resistors and metalized-polypropylene capacitors are used to achieve close circuit tolerances, and high-quality circuit boards contribute to a professional look and feel.

The Acurus A250 was designed to drive low-impedance loudspeaker loads safely at high continuous power levels. Its power supply has a 1,000-VA toroidal transformer capable of delivering the high currents required for driving some of today's loudspeakers. To dissipate the considerable heat generated in a powerful but relatively

compact amplifier without resorting to a noisy fan, it is equipped with finned aluminum heat sinks on both sides of its chassis, amounting to more than 6 square feet of radiating surface.

The A250 is rated to deliver 250 watts per channel into 8 ohms, or 350 watts into 4 ohms, from 20 to 20,000 Hz with no more than 0.06 percent total harmonic distortion (THD). Its input impedance is 20,000 ohms, and its A-weighted signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) is specified as 110 dB.

The all-black front panel contains only a large rocker power switch, with

Dimensions

7 inches wide, 5 inches high,
12 inches deep

Price

\$895

Manufacturer

Mondial Designs Ltd., Dept. SR,
2 Elm St.,
Ardsley, NY 10502

a green light to indicate that the amplifier is operating. The rear panel has five-way binding-post speaker outputs, compatible with dual banana plugs as well as wires and lugs, and phono-jack input connectors. Since the input (and output) connectors for the left and right channels are 12 inches apart, some dual-signal cables may not be suitable. The amplifier weighs 35 pounds.

Although the Acurus A250 ran quite cool under normal listening conditions (never more than faintly warm), it became *very* hot during the mandated 1-hour preconditioning at one-third rated power into 8 ohms and during subsequent high-power testing. In fact, no part of the exterior could be touched for more than a second or two, and the heat sinks were hot enough to cause burns. That should not be a problem in any reasonable home listening situation, however. Although most amps run their hottest at one-third power, average power levels during even loud music are considerably lower.

We have never before tested an amplifier that became as hot as the A250 did without being damaged in some way, but the A250 never shut down, blew a fuse, or otherwise indicated its displeasure at our rather se-

TEST REPORTS

**The Acurus A250
amplifier never shut
down, blew a fuse, or
otherwise indicated
displeasure at our severe
treatment of it.**

vere treatment. Clearly, it was designed to deal with low-impedance loads, and it did that with ease.

The A250's frequency response was very nearly a demonstration of the overworked term ruler-flat. From 20 to 20,000 Hz, the output varied a mere ± 0.02 dB, falling (if that is the word) to -0.5 dB at 110 kHz and -1.5 dB at 200 kHz. Noise measurements also showed impressive performance.

Our power measurements highlighted the amplifier's conservative ratings. The clipping-level output at 1,000 Hz into 8 ohms was 300 watts per channel, and into 4 ohms it was 480 watts. With only one channel driven, those numbers increased to 350 and 600 watts, respectively. We did not make continuous power measurements into 2 ohms because of concern about possible damage to the amplifier (which became far too hot to touch on any part of its surface) and because it was not rated for use with 2-ohm loads. But the dynamic power output into 8 and 4 ohms was 400 and 700 watts, respectively (for dynamic headrooms of 2 and 3 dB), and into 2 ohms it was 485 watts.

A spectrum analysis of the distortion at 250 watts into 8 ohms, covering all harmonics up to the twentieth but excluding noise, yielded a figure of 0.012 percent. At 350 watts into 4 ohms, distortion rose to 0.023 percent. The amplifier's single-channel maximum power at 0.1 percent THD plus noise, as a function of frequency, was about 320 watts into 8 ohms from 50 to 20,000 Hz, falling slightly to 300 watts at 20 Hz. Into 4 ohms, the maximum power output was 490 to 495 watts from 100 to 20,000 Hz, falling to 470 watts at 20 Hz.

The Acurus A450 is an enormously powerful amplifier. Even without considering its modest cost, its quality, no matter how defined, is equally impressive. Clearly, its electrical performance was topnotch, and there were no unexpected glitches or anomalous characteristics to diminish our highly favorable impression.

To gain some idea of the energy storage capacity of its power supply, we switched it off while playing music at a normal room level. For almost 30 seconds, the volume and quality of the sound did not diminish.

Considering the A250's power capabilities and current reserves, we would expect very few loudspeaker loads to present any serious challenge to its performance. And although it was one of the hottest-running amplifiers on the test bench that we have ever evaluated, it was also one of the coolest in normal operation.

Almost \$900 for a power amplifier may not seem inexpensive, but one could pay many times that sum and not get any more performance than from the Acurus A250, if even as much. Not everyone needs to have several hundred watts on tap, but if you are one who does, this is an amplifier to look at, and listen to, closely. It is an outstanding product in terms of both performance and value. □

MEASUREMENTS

Output at clipping (1,000 Hz)	
8 ohms	300 watts
4 ohms	480 watts
Clipping headroom	
(relative to rated output)	
8 ohms	0.8 dB
4 ohms	1.4 dB
Dynamic power	
8 ohms	400 watts
4 ohms	700 watts
2 ohms	485 watts
Dynamic headroom	
(relative to rated output)	
8 ohms	2 dB
4 ohms	3 dB
Frequency response (20 to 20,000 Hz)	
± 0.02 dB	
Maximum distortion (THD + N at 1,000 Hz into 8 ohms)	
0.06% at 250 watts output	
Noise (A-weighted, referred to 1-watt output)	
-100 dB	
Sensitivity (for 1-watt output into 8 ohms)	
89 mV	

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USER'S EVALUATION



Atlantic Technology System 150 HT Home Theater Speaker System

BY DAVID RANADA

ANYONE wishing to explore the joys and mysteries of home theater has always faced two complex problems: selecting speakers and integrating them with an existing stereo system. Atlantic Technology has attacked these problems with its new System 150, whose components are available either separately or in various combinations to complement a wide range of audio/video systems.

The System 150 HT combination, intended for users starting home theater systems from scratch, comprises six components: a powered subwoofer (Model 152 PBM, \$499), two front-channel satellite speakers (Model 151 LR, \$149 a pair), a center-channel speaker (Model 153 C, \$139), and two surround speakers (Model 154 R, \$149 a pair). The system price is \$899, slightly less than the \$936 cost of buying the components separately. Atlantic Technology offers other combinations as well, also with some price breaks: the System 150 A (subwoofer and two satellites), the System 150 S (subwoofer, center speaker, and two surround speakers), and the System 150 CSR (center and two surround speakers). I listened to the System 150

HT with the two surround speakers mounted on Atlantic Technology's elegant speaker stands (Model 156 ST, \$99 a pair). Adjustable wall-mounting brackets for the satellite and surround speakers are also available (Model 157 WB, \$59 a pair).

By far the most intriguing of the System 150 HT components is the powered subwoofer, which is more than just a subwoofer with built-in amplification. Its internal amplifiers can be configured to drive the subwoofer alone (with 70 watts of power, no less), to drive the subwoofer *and* two satellites (30 watts each), or to drive the subwoofer and a center-channel speaker in a setup lacking a center-channel amplifier.

The subwoofer has two operating modes: powered and passive. In passive mode, the input terminals on the back panel serve only as connection points for your main receiver or amplifier's front-channel speaker signals. You connect the main speaker outputs to the subwoofer and connect the subwoofer's passive, push-connector speaker outputs to the satellite speakers. Your system's receiver then drives the satellites directly, and the subwoofer's amplifier derives its bass

signal from the music passing through on the way to the satellites. No significant load is placed on the receiver by the subwoofer.

In powered mode, instead of speaker-level signals, the subwoofer takes line-level signals through a set of back-panel phono connectors. Its internal amplifiers are then used to drive the two satellites as well as the subwoofer itself. This mode can be extremely useful, depending on your system requirements. It forms the basis of a music-only subwoofer/satellite system that can be driven from, among other things, the output of a portable CD or tape player. Or if you have a separate surround-sound decoder with built-in amplification for center and surround speakers, the powered mode will supply the amplification for the front speakers and the subwoofer—you wouldn't even need a main amplifier or receiver. (This versatility enables the subwoofer/satellite combination to be sold separately as the System 150 A.)

The molded-plastic subwoofer module, which measures 14½ x 11 x 12¾ inches and weighs 25 pounds, has vent holes on the back panel that should not be obstructed. Otherwise, the manufacturer says, placement of the module is not very critical. It contains an 8-inch woofer, and, in addition to the multipurpose amplifier, a dynamic bass-equalization circuit providing as much as 9 dB of boost at 35 Hz. This circuit is said to adjust itself by "constantly monitoring the level and frequency content of the program's lower octaves." There's also an overload-protection circuit that's claimed to have no audible side effects.

Aside from the input and output connectors, the subwoofer's back panel holds the powered/passive switch and a switch to change the crossover frequency from 80 to 120 Hz—I left it in the 80-Hz position for most of my testing. There's no power switch, but the subwoofer consumes only 12 watts when idling. The front panel has dial controls for bass, treble, and volume. In powered mode, the bass control adjusts the level of the subwoofer relative to that of the satellites while the volume control adjusts the level of the subwoofer and the satellites together. In passive mode, the volume control serves as the subwoofer's level control

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and the bass control should be left at its twelve o'clock setting. The treble control is conventional and operates only in powered mode.

The rest of the components in the System 150 HT are far more orthodox than the subwoofer. Each of the magnetically shielded Model 152 LR satellites measures 5 x 7½ x 4¼ inches and contains a 4-inch polypropylene woofer and a ½-inch soft-dome tweeter. The owner's manual suggests that the satellites can also be used as computer-system speakers or as near-field monitors. The Model 153 C center-channel speaker has two 3½-inch polypropylene woofers and a ½-inch soft-dome tweeter. This magnetically shielded speaker can be placed either above or below a video screen, and its horizontally arrayed drivers can be aimed up or down by loosening some adjustment screws on the bottom of the 10½ x 5 x 5¼-inch cabinet.

Surround speakers are meant to be heard but not localized: You shouldn't be able to tell precisely where their sound is coming from. To that end, the Model 145 SR surround speakers, which have the same enclosure size as the Model 152 LR satellites, contain instead two 3½-inch "mid-woofer" drivers aimed 105 degrees apart for widest dispersion. Through a "cross-over" network each driver receives a slightly different frequency balance, and the drivers are also driven out of phase with each other, all to increase ambience and decrease localization.

PHYSICALLY, the System 150 HT was easy to set up. The only problem I encountered was that the stands for the surround speakers required two different Allen wrenches for assembly, one for the bolt holding the stand to the base and another for the bolt holding the speaker on the stand. The speaker cable, if it isn't too thick, can be fed from the back of the speaker down through the hollow stand to emerge at the base. The same stands are also suitable for elevating the main front speakers.

The manual for the subwoofer was the only one to give instructions and diagrams for hooking up the system as a whole. Four hookups are shown, and I tried three of them: one music-oriented setup using just the subwoofer in passive mode (that is, with its internal

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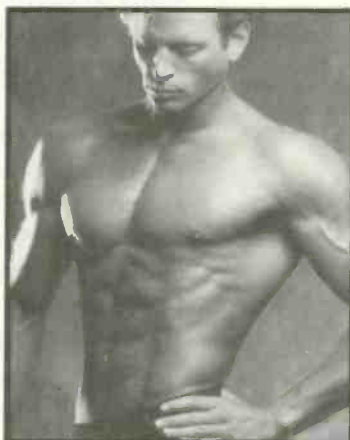
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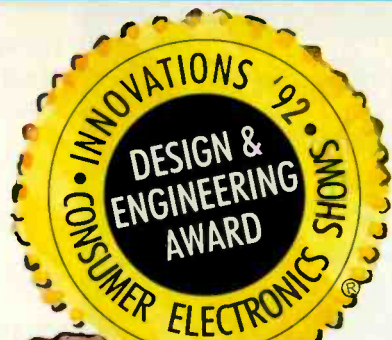
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The Multi-Channel GFA-2535: yet another award-winning amplifier from Adcom.

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amplifiers driving it alone) and the two satellites, and two full-blown six-speaker surround-sound setups. In the first of the surround setups, an audio/video receiver drove all five satellite speakers directly, with the subwoofer operating in passive mode. In the second surround-sound setup, the subwoofer, in its powered mode, drove the center-channel speaker. There is one difficulty with the latter hookup: You won't get any bass from the subwoofer if you don't also use some sort of surround decoder with a center-channel output—or, at best, you'll get only one channel's worth of bass. Consequently, this arrangement is best reserved for systems used exclusively for video soundtracks.

In my listening tests, however, I relied at least as much on music recordings as on movie soundtracks, because music remains the most critical program material for any high-fidelity system, surround-sound or otherwise. Besides, most movies contain music, some of it even well recorded. The System 150 HT performed well with both types of material. In the "music-only" setup, with the center and surround speakers inactive, the sound from the subwoofer and satellites was a little forward, though not excessively so, and exhibited a hint of nasality on voices. I missed a sparkle in the extreme high frequencies, but on the whole the sound was good from the midrange up. The very low bass was also quite solid, even with organ pedal notes. Imaging was very good, as is typical of subwoofer/satellite systems when the satellites are well away from any walls, though it deteriorated somewhat when I listened from off-center.

I found setting the subwoofer balance rather tricky, partly because of the acoustical properties of the listening room. The action of the dynamic bass equalizer probably played a role as well, but I assume that most of the level-setting problem came from the ear's sensitivity to small changes in bass balance. Altering the bass level by 1 dB has a much greater impact on overall sonic balance than a similar change in the midrange. It took a lot of listening with a wide variety of program material before I settled on both a setting of the appropriate subwoofer controls and a placement for the subwoofer box. Consider yourself lucky if you decide on settings and placement in one listening session.

Even after I had achieved the best subwoofer/satellite balance I could, there were slight remnants of a sonic

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gap between the low end of the satellites and the high end of the subwoofer. These were not eliminated by changing the subwoofer's crossover frequency from 80 to 120 Hz—that just made the sound boomy. The principal effect of the gap was a loss of body and richness in low male voices and cellos, which cover the same frequency range. I have encountered this type of gap many times in subwoofer/satellite speaker systems—it's hard to avoid.

Finding a good orientation for the surround speakers—one that produced neither excessive localization nor weird phase effects from their deliberately out-of-phase drivers—also required some experimentation. I settled on placing them to the sides of the room just slightly behind my listening position and aimed toward the front rather than at me. Mounting them high on the walls might provide good results more quickly.

The System 150 HT was at its best in full six-speaker surround-sound playback of movie soundtracks, with especially clear reproduction of dialogue. The tonal balances of the satellites and the center speaker were better matched than in many other surround systems, especially those in which a new and different center speaker is added to an existing pair of main front speakers. Frontal imaging was therefore solid and precise. There seemed to be low-bass oomph to spare from the subwoofer, even in its powered mode, and most of the time that more than made up for the lack of bass response from the surround speakers.

The lack of bass from the surrounds was more evident when playing music through a five-speaker (no center) set-up by way of a multichannel digital ambience enhancer. Although you may not absolutely need wider-range response from the surround speakers when listening to movie soundtracks, good low-end performance from the surround speakers is highly desirable when listening to music.

In sum, Atlantic Technology's System 150 HT is a very good speaker system for playback of surround-sound movies, and it does a pretty good job with music as well. And while you might be able to get similar basic speaker performance for slightly less by shopping around, you won't get the versatility of that powered subwoofer and its wealth of hookup possibilities in the same package. □

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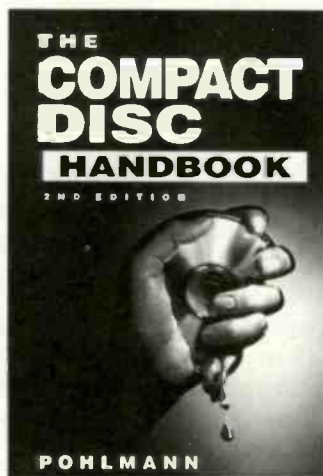
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The Ninth Annual Rodrigues Cartoon Caption Contest

JANUARY! Ah, yes—post-holiday blahs, self-examination, and New Year's resolutions. But cheer up. January also brings our annual Rodrigues Cartoon Caption Contest, which offers you yet another crack at fame and (in a very small way) fortune. Once again the editors of STEREO REVIEW have asked the artist Charles Rodrigues to supply a drawing, and we invite the readers to submit funny captions for it.

The person who sends in the caption judged to be the most amusing will receive the original drawing shown here, a cash prize of \$100, and the distinction of seeing his or her name published along with the winning caption when the contest results are announced. If you win, all your audiophile friends will see your name in the same magazine as Madonna, Luciano Pavarotti, Wynton Marsalis, George Strait, Daniel Barenboim, and—who knows?—maybe even Marky Mark. That ought to put your friends' noses permanently out of joint.

Anyone may enter, and there is no limit to the number of times you may enter, but each caption submitted must be on a separate sheet of paper that also contains the clearly legible name and address of the person who submits it. Entries that have more than one caption will be disqualified. All entries must be received by STEREO REVIEW no later than March 1, 1993.

In addition to members of the editorial staff of STEREO REVIEW and Rodrigues himself, the distinguished panel of judges will include the winners of the eight previous contests: Thomas Briggie (Akron, Ohio), Michael Binyon (Weaverville, California), Bruce Barstow (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Matt Mirapaul (Evanston, Illinois), Marc Welenteychik (Richmond, Virginia), Douglas Daughhete (Birmingham, Alabama), Kelly Mills (Raleigh, North Carolina), and Diane Sullivan (Grand Falls, New Brunswick). Entries will be judged on the basis of originality, appropriateness, and humor, and the decision of the judges will be final.

Now, take a look at the drawing. What is that serviceman doing to those inflatable speakers, and



what do the salesman and customer think about it? And what's so funny about that? Youth wants to know, inquiring minds want to know, Rodrigues wants to know. He's been making you laugh since this magazine's first issue, February 1958. Now it's your turn. Make him guffaw! Make his day! Make his thirty-fifth anniversary year!

The winning caption (and a selection of runners up) will be published in the June or July issue. Every January we resolve to finish the judging by June, but we haven't made that deadline yet. For our thirty-fifth anniversary year we may get this contest act together faster. The usual restrictions are printed below.

**Send entries to:
Rodrigues Contest
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No purchase is necessary. Anyone may enter except the staff of Stereo Review and its parent company (Hachette Magazines, Inc.) and their immediate families. All entries become the property of Stereo Review, and none will be returned. If you wish to be notified of the results of the

contest by mail, send a stamped self-addressed envelope to the above address. In the likely event of duplicate entries, the one first received will be considered the winning entry. The names of the winner and perhaps a dozen runners-up will be published in Stereo Review and may appear in promotional literature for the magazine. Submitting an entry will be deemed consent for such use.

Stereo Review will arrange the delivery of the prize: any tax on it will be the responsibility of the winner.

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ANATOMY OF AN A/V SYSTEM

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I THOUGHT I was being avant-garde. My family thought I was nuts. On a Saturday night years ago, my nearest and dearest gazed in some dismay as I wrestled our Brobdingnagian TV set from its usual location in the bowels of the house up into the living room and maneuvered it into position between the speakers of the stereo system.

Like practically everyone in those days, I had considered high fidelity and television to be separate—and mutually exclusive—activities. Typically, the stereo and the TV set were in different parts of the house, the former serving Bach (or Brubeck or Moby Grape) to the adults in the living room, the latter *Bullwinkle* to the kids in the family room. Of course, the grownups watched a lot of TV as well, but they indulged in a sort of locational slumming to do so. TV was definitely a low-status pastime.

Even so, there were timid predictions from some quarters that the two major branches of consumer electronics would merge into a single unified form of home entertainment at some time in the future. And even while remaining skeptical, some of us wanted to get a taste of what that future might be like.

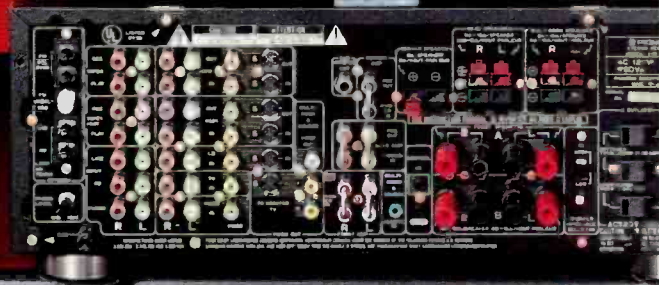
Hence my furniture rearrangement: I was about to enter the world of audio/video, and I was taking my not-too-willing loved ones with me. The occasion was the teaming up of a local FM station with its television counterpart to broadcast the same musical program. Such "simulcasting" was never very common—it presented a major technical challenge to broadcasters, and few listeners were willing to go to the lengths necessary to enjoy it. But for those of us who did, the experience foreshadowed what has since become one of the growth areas in home entertainment: the audio/video or home theater system.

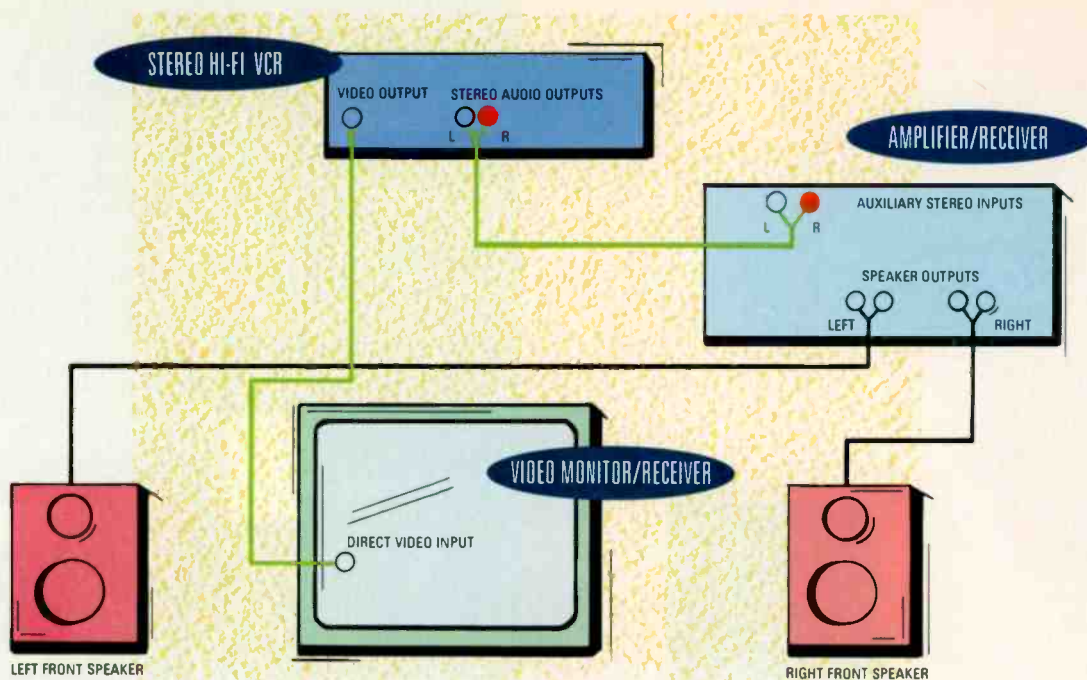
It may be natural to recoil a bit at the phrase "home theater."

PHOTO BY DAN WAGNER



ZENITH





A BASIC AUDIO/VIDEO SYSTEM

The initial wedding of audio and video is a relatively simple task. After placing your television monitor/receiver in between your stereo speakers, connect the stereo audio outputs of a hi-fi VCR to the auxiliary inputs of your audio system's receiver or amplifier. (It's also possible to feed the audio outputs to the inputs of a TV set, then to feed the TV set's audio into the amplifier or receiver.) Hook the VCR's video output to the monitor/receiver's direct video input and you're in business. (If your TV set doesn't have such an input, use an antenna connection.)

After all, to march into your local audio shop and pick up a major Home THX system can set you back several grand even before you buy any video equipment. And we've all drooled over pictures of the art-deco extravaganzas the monied classes tend to erect in their basements so they can watch *Terminator 2* in appropriate style. But though it's easy to equate A/V systems with megabucks, you don't have to blow zillions to assemble something that will give you an immensely satisfying experience. And, fortunately, you can build an A/V system gradually, starting with your present equipment and adding more as your budget permits.

The Right Place

Before you turn your attention to equipment matters, however, it's important to consider carefully where you are going to put everything—it *does* have to be all in one room, as I found out all those years ago. The constraints imposed by your listening/viewing area may profoundly affect

not only what you will buy in the future but also what components you can use that you already have.

In any audio system, the positioning of the loudspeakers is vital, but it gets much more complicated when they have to be integrated with a video display. Chances are that your video watching will rarely be done alone, so the locations of both the audio and video equipment must be chosen so as to give everybody in the room at least a reasonably coherent audio/video experience. If you're using a conventional two-channel stereo system for the audio, that may be harder than it seems. Ideally, the TV screen should coincide with the position of the phantom center image produced by the two speakers, but that is really possible for only one listener. The best solution is a center speaker that actually places the sound source for dialogue and other sounds tied to the video image close to the screen. Until you're ready to go that route, all positioning will be a compromise to some extent.

The age of your speakers may have

an effect as well. Magnetic fields can severely disrupt a television image, and all dynamic speakers abound in stray magnetism. Current models are often shielded so they can be placed right beside or on top of your monitor, but older speakers rarely offer such protection and thus must be kept a safe distance from the TV. If that isn't possible in your present listening/viewing room, you may have to put your A/V system elsewhere—or get new speakers.

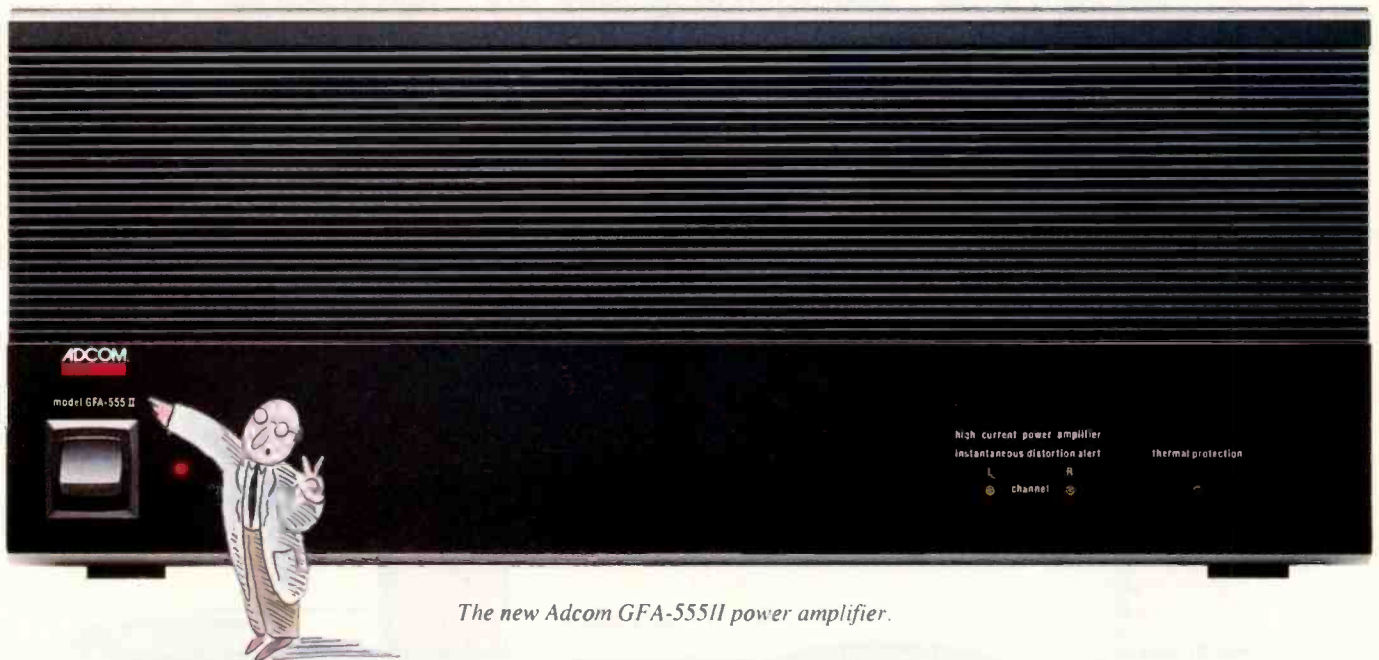
Although even two-channel stereo can enhance your video enjoyment considerably, you may want extra channels for surround sound in the future. The speakers for these channels can be large or small, but their positioning will be important and should be taken into account at the very start. Also, the complexity of the audio/visual experience usually means that you spend a fair amount of time adjusting things, so it only makes sense to place your electronic components where the infrared beams from the remote controls can reach them

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without your having to move from your chair or go into contortions.

You may, on the other hand, choose to forgo an outboard audio system for video use and live with what's built into the TV set. This is a more attractive option than it once was, as the best sets now boast quite decent audio, but it means that the placement of your video monitor should be done with audio considerations as much in mind as video ones. Specifically, the acoustic environment should be as similar as possible on both sides of the TV set, and the set should be close enough to your viewing position for you to be able to hear the stereo effect when there is any.

Sources

The very simplest way to tie your audio and video systems together is to plug the audio line output of your VCR into a high-level input on your audio receiver or amplifier. With old video

recorders the line output will be mono, but the sound may still be a considerable improvement over what you're used to, particularly if your TV set has the sort of tiny speaker that was universal until quite recently (and is still pretty common in inexpensive sets). Broadcast and cable signals will come to life, and even prerecorded tapes will sound fairly respectable.

Probably the most effective early equipment upgrade, however, would be to switch to a hi-fi VCR, which will provide a much improved audio signal, and in stereo whenever the tape was recorded that way. Practically all rental tapes today have hi-fi soundtracks, and being able to take advantage of them is a relatively inexpensive way to improve your system. Most recent hi-fi VCR's also include MTS receivers for stereo TV programs.

If you record things off the air (or cable) and keep them for posterity, it may be sensible to consider a Super

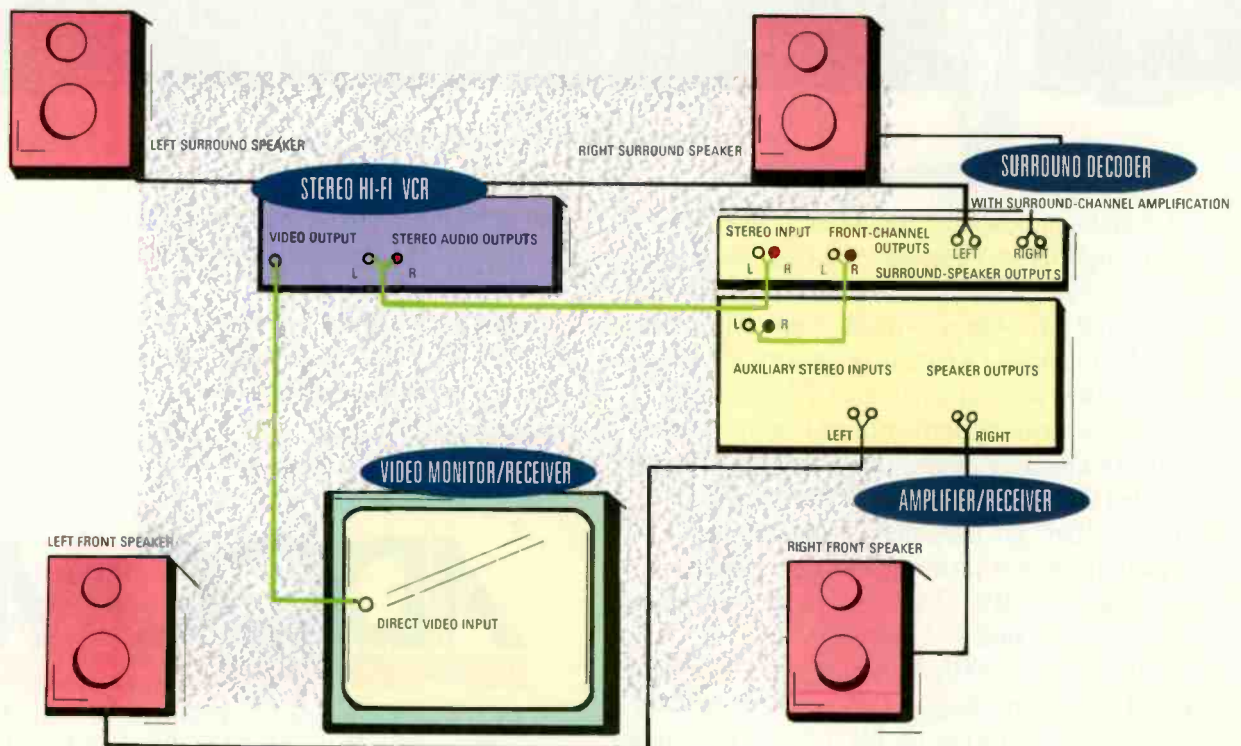
VHS recorder. Prices for these are fairly high, and it takes a good TV set to derive all the benefit of the improved bandwidth, but eventually you may be glad you recorded your treasures in close-to-broadcast quality. If you intend to watch only rental videos, however, forget S-VHS for the time being—there's practically nothing recorded in the system available commercially.

What *are* available in increasing profusion are laserdiscs, which offer not only the best video quality available to consumers but in most cases CD-quality digital audio as well. A laserdisc player is a very worthwhile addition to any A/V system, and almost all new laserdisc players can also play regular CD's, so you need not duplicate equipment.

It is also possible to feed sound from your TV set to your stereo system if the set has audio outputs. Under most circumstances this would be unneces-

A BASIC SURROUND-SOUND SYSTEM

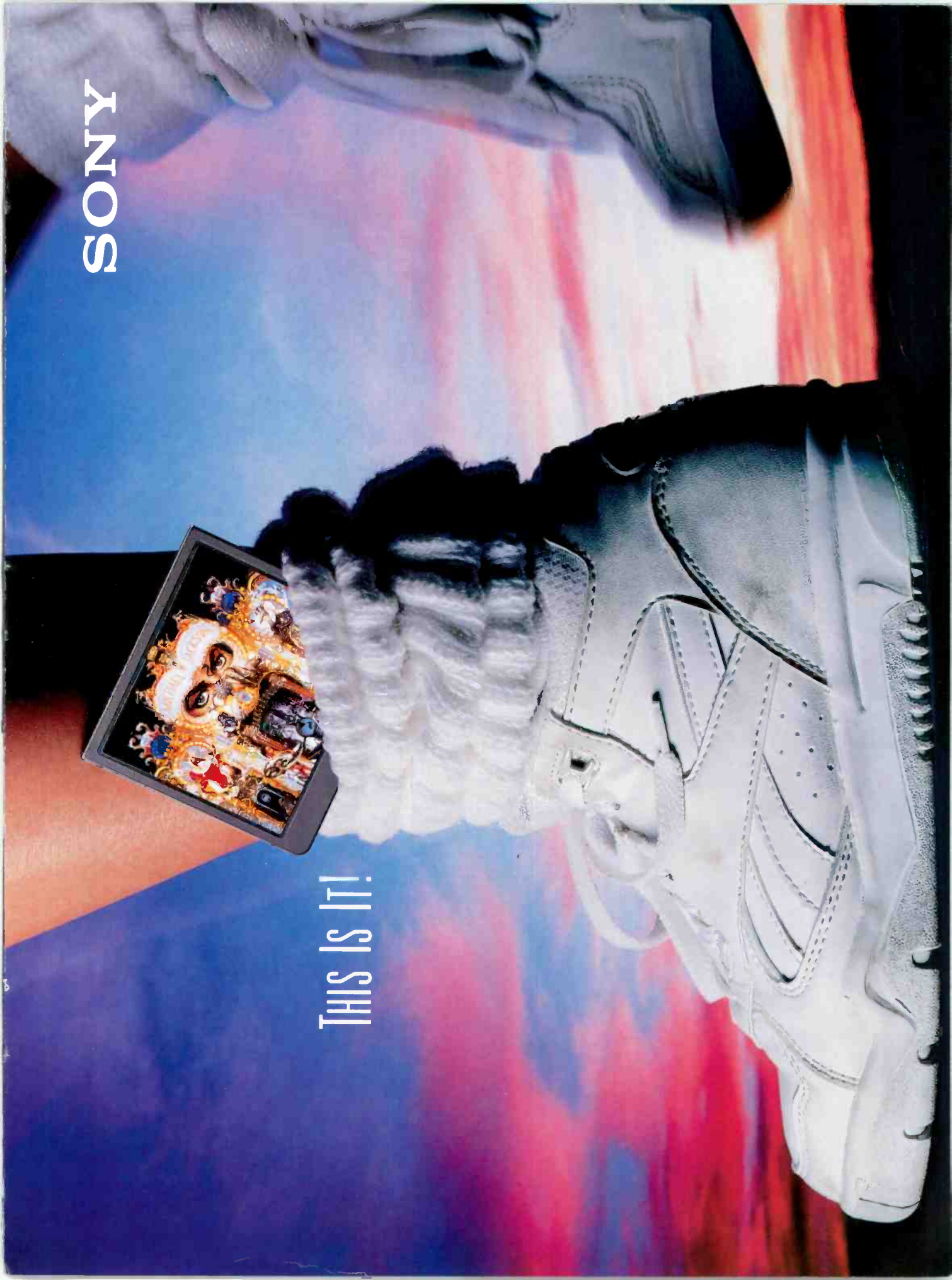
Adding surround sound to a basic A/V system can be accomplished with an outboard surround decoder. Many decoders also contain the additional amplification to power the surround speakers, as in the configuration shown here. Connect the stereo outputs of the VCR to the decoder, connect the decoder's front-channel outputs to your main amplifier or receiver, and connect a pair of surround speakers to the decoder's speaker terminals.



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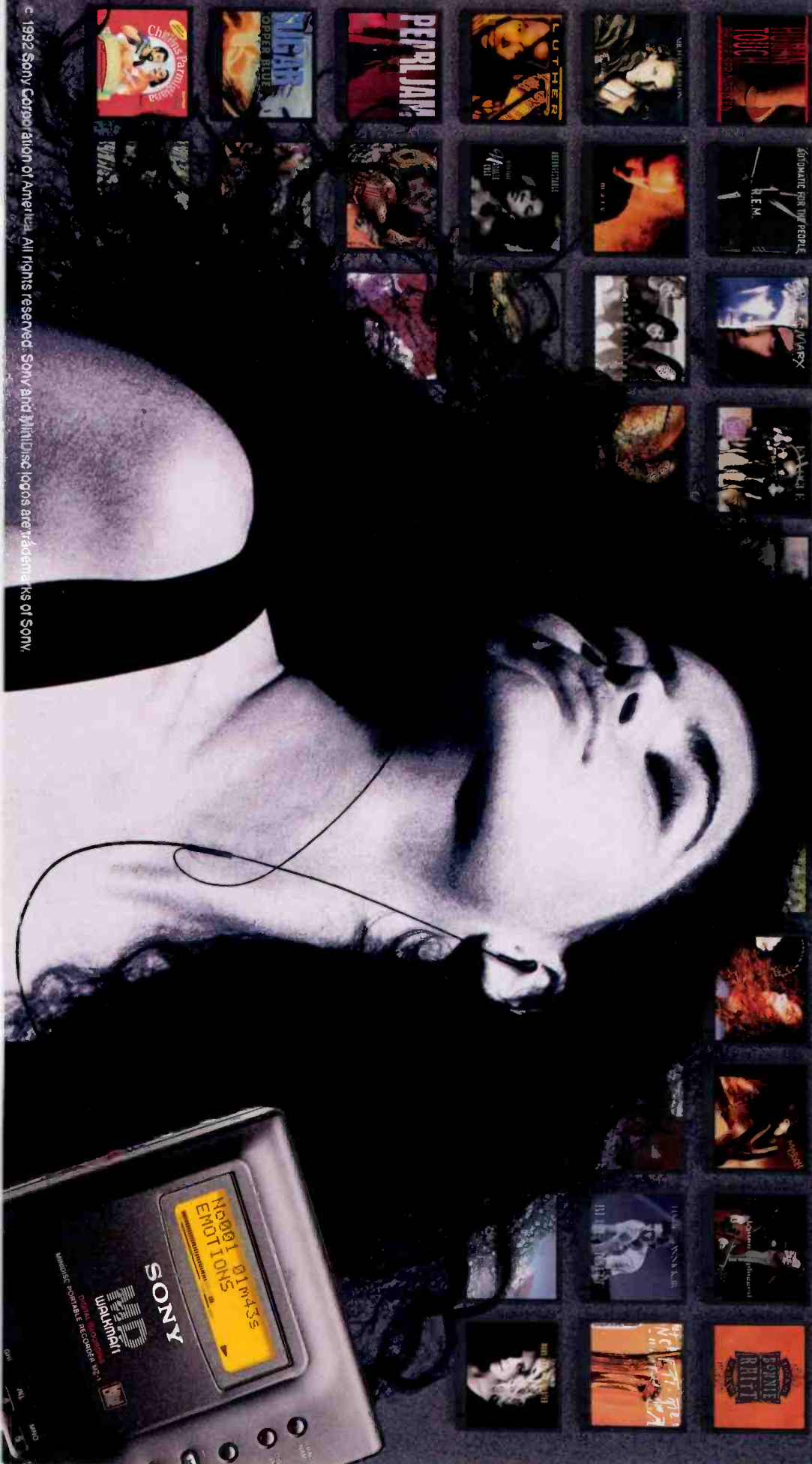
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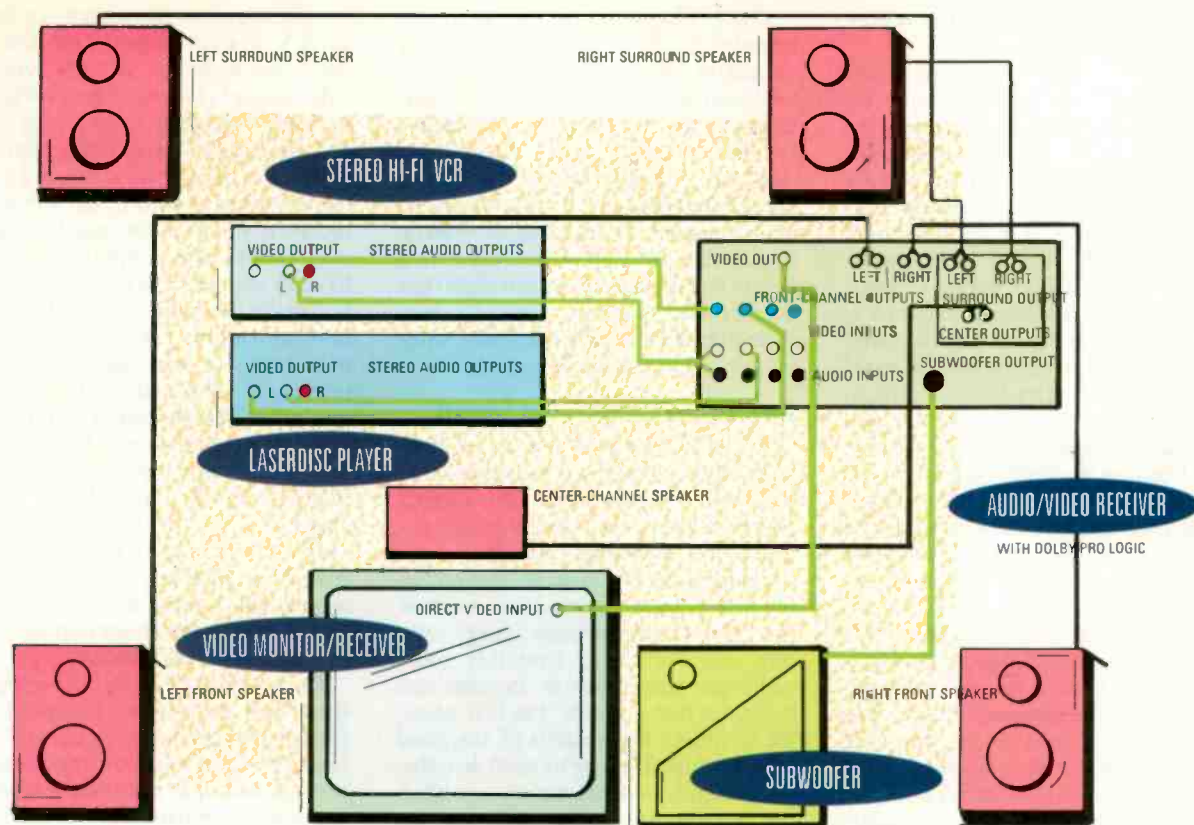
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A DOLBY PRO LOGIC SURROUND SYSTEM

For more elaborate setups using Dolby Pro Logic, the simplest approach is to connect everything to an A/V receiver for all-in-one decoding, amplification, and control of a home theater.

The diagram shows the video and audio outputs from a VCR and laserdisc player hooked into the A/V receiver (these receivers can often accommodate a stunning number of source components). Not only are there outputs for both front and surround speakers, but there is a center-channel output as well as a line output (unamplified) for a subwoofer.

sary, as you would use the tuner in your VCR for viewing and feed its audio outputs to your stereo system. But if you want to tape one program while watching another, feeding the TV sound to your amplifier will let you enjoy hi-fi stereo with the program you're watching as well as the one you're recording.

Command Central

The most basic A/V system—a VCR, a TV set, and a stereo system—presents few control or connection difficulties: Plug the VCR's audio outputs into the amplifier and feed its video outputs directly to the TV, and that's it. But by the time you start adding things like laserdisc players, camcorders, satellite receivers, and the like, along with the usual battery of audio gear, things get complex enough that some sort of signal management is required.

One solution is an outboard video switcher, which accepts a number of video and audio sources and directs them to various destinations, controlling both signals together. For extremely complex systems, switchers probably offer the best solution, but the A/V receiver is becoming an ever more attractive option. The most elaborate receivers can accept half a dozen A/V inputs and let you control dubbing and other functions from the infrared remote unit. Since many A/V receivers also include surround-sound processors of various degrees of sophistication, they are able to serve as all-in-one centers even for quite complex A/V setups.

Here, There, Everywhere

While an audio/video system can certainly be built around a conventional stereo, or even mono, audio system, these days most of us associate audio/

video with multichannel surround sound. The popularity of surround sound grew out of the practice of using Dolby Stereo-encoded movie prints to master the videocassette and laserdisc versions. When people realized that there was all that extra information on their tapes and discs, they naturally wanted to extract it. Consumer Dolby Surround decoders were the result.

The original versions simply added outputs for an extra pair of speakers to be placed behind or, preferably, beside the listening area, to reproduce ambience information added to the soundtrack out of phase (although two channels are usually used, the surround signal is actually mono). If certain conditions were met—a minimum delay and high-frequency rolloff in the ambience channels—a decoder could be labeled Dolby Surround. Some surround decoders complied with Dolby specs, others didn't, but all produced a

dramatic sense of space in the reproduced soundtracks.

The main flaw of four-channel surround systems was that for anyone sitting off-axis, the dialogue seemed to come from the nearest front speaker rather than the TV screen. To correct that, Dolby Pro Logic "steering" circuits were added to many consumer decoders (such circuits had always been part of the Dolby Stereo systems in movie theaters). This technique extracts a center-channel signal—anything recorded in phase and at equal levels in both front channels—and directs it to a dedicated speaker located as close as possible to the TV screen, thus keeping dialogue and other on-screen sounds firmly anchored there for all listeners, wherever they may be sitting. Pro Logic also improves the separation between the front and surround channels.

At first, Pro Logic decoding was available only in the most sophisticated and most expensive add-on decoders, but even advanced digital Pro Logic can now be found in some A/V receivers, and analog decoders have become common even in inexpensive models. Elaborate outboard decoders do still exist, however, and some of these are distinguished by the addition of advanced digital signal processing (DSP) circuitry to enhance the ambience of unencoded material such as music. More modest versions of ambience enhancement are commonly found in receivers as well, but usually with fewer control options than outboard processors offer.

Dolby Pro Logic decoders offer a number of configurations to accommodate different speaker setups. Pro Logic's "normal" mode feeds full-range signals only to the main left and right front speakers; information below 100 Hz in the center channel is split out to the main left and right speakers, facilitating the use of a smaller speaker for the center. A delayed mono ambience signal, rolled off below 100 Hz and above 7,000 Hz, goes to a pair of surround speakers. Most A/V receivers provide amplification for all five speakers, but outboard decoders typically rely on your existing equipment for amplifying at least the main stereo channels. Many do provide amplification for the center and surround channels, however. Some decoders also provide an extra line output for a subwoofer (or two), and a couple of manufacturers add a pair of front "enhance" channels as well. Thus, it's possible to end up with a "nine-channel" system!

While Dolby Pro Logic is really meant to drive five speakers, there is a "phantom" mode that leaves the center-channel information in the main channels for systems without a center speaker. There is also a "wide" setting for systems where the center speaker has the same bandwidth as the main channels, and the Dolby 3 Stereo option can be used where there is a center speaker (plus left and right) but no surround speakers. Thus, it's possible to build a system gradually without having to change decoders.

Speakers Large and Small

An A/V system is similar to other audio systems in that it is the speakers that mainly determine the overall sound; it just needs more of them. For those with capacious budgets and living rooms, the best approach is probably to find speakers you like—such as the ones you're already using—and buy more of them. Certainly some elaborate home theater systems are based on that premise, but it is possible to obtain the benefits of surround sound without going to such lengths. Increasingly, manufacturers are offering satellite/subwoofer systems for A/V use because they offer both economy and unobtrusiveness.

Using three to five small speakers for the treble and midrange, where directionality is important, enables them to be placed where their effect will be optimal without unduly cluttering up the room. All A/V sub/sat systems have at least one shielded satellite speaker, so that the center speaker can sit right on top of the TV set, or just below it, and in some even the left and right front speakers can nestle up against the monitor's sides if necessary. The low-frequency modules can be hidden out of sight, under a table or behind a couch—anywhere that will not cause resonance problems.

At the other end of the scale is the Rolls-Royce of home theater configurations: Home THX. Derived from a set of audio standards developed by Lucasfilm for movie theaters, Home THX equipment must meet certain minimum specifications and have certain patterns of operation enabling it to simulate in the home what you are likely to hear at the local movie palace (assuming it's a *good* movie palace). Home THX systems *can* be fairly compact, but most tend toward the upper end of the home theater range.

Sights and Wonders

Once you know what's available in terms of surround sound and the like,

putting together the audio portion of an A/V system should hold few terrors. For many of us, however, the video aspect is more or less uncharted territory, especially if we haven't gone TV shopping in the past few years.

For one thing, you don't buy just a television set anymore, but a monitor/receiver, which is the same thing but with inputs and outputs. Then you have to choose between a direct-view set (using the familiar old cathode-ray tube) and a projection TV. The former now come in sizes up to 40 inches (measured diagonally); beyond that you're into projection. The most convenient projection units look like normal TV's, only bigger, and cast the image from the rear of the screen. There is a practical limit to how big such units can get, however, so for *really* big pictures, two-piece front-projection systems are often chosen. These can create images up to 10 feet in diagonal measurement.

Direct-view TV's tend to be brighter than their projection equivalents, although the gap has been narrowing of late. The screen size of a good projection set can create a truly impressive experience, particularly with letterboxed movies, which tend to get lost on small screens. One enterprising manufacturer has announced a direct-view monitor specifically designed for a 16:9 aspect ratio (width to height), close to that of wide-screen movies, rather than the 4:3 ratio of conventional TV, and there will no doubt be more wide-screen sets in the future—and all high-definition TV sets, when they arrive, will have a 16:9 aspect ratio.

Whatever sort of display device you choose will come with some sort of built-in audio. It's tempting to ignore it, on the assumption that all your listening will be done through external audio components, but that's not the way it usually happens. For day-to-day viewing—news and soaps and the like—you probably won't bother firing up the sophisticated audio stuff and will listen through the set's own speakers. So do yourself a favor when you shop for a TV set and pay enough attention to its built-in sound system to avoid driving yourself crazy later with one that produces outstanding pictures and worse-than-mediocre sound.

It's been a long time coming, but the home theater experience is here to stay. Putting together an audio/video system to enjoy it takes some patience and understanding, but it need not be intimidating.

Well . . . not *that* intimidating. □



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S-Bit Plus

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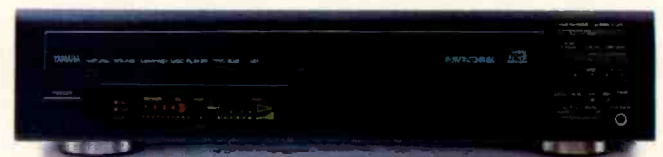
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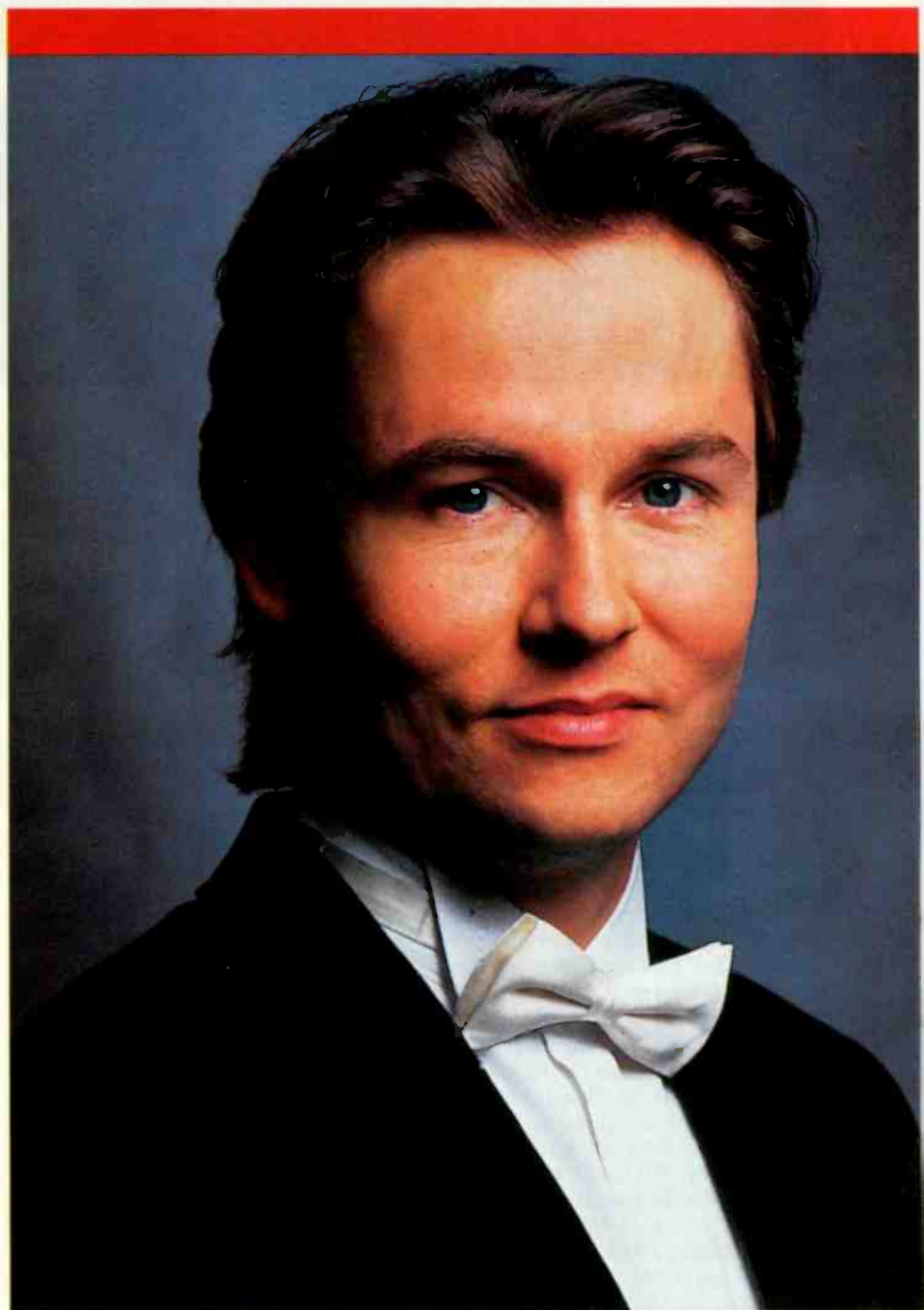
ESA PEKKA SALONEN

**"In Los Angeles
we think
music belongs to
everybody."**

ESA PEKKA SALONEN isn't above some shameless provocation. Having always planned to be a composer before unexpectedly falling into an international conducting career, the thirty-four-year-old Salonen, the new music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, has a healthy skepticism for the flashier aspects of the music world. So it was hard not to think of him as being behind enemy lines when he and the orchestra arrived last summer at the capital of classical-music glitz, the Salzburg Festival, to perform Olivier Messiaen's massive opera *St. Francis of Assisi* and several concerts.

Salonen didn't stay undercover long. Nobody would have mistaken him for a bright young talent eager to respect Salzburg tradition when he began his first concert there with Johann Strauss's "Emperor" Waltz. Some people booed at the notion that a Finnish conductor and his orchestra from America's junk-culture wasteland would dare to play Strauss on such hallowed Austrian soil. And the critics were vicious. Salonen was not surprised at the reaction.

"The bottom line was, they made it clear that to them all music is not public domain. And I think that's completely wrong," the diminutive, reserved conductor told me a few days later at one of the town's outdoor cafés. "If we start developing this idea that music belongs to the nations and races that composed it originally, we're in trouble. That means that Mahler can only be played by Austrian Jewish conductors and orchestras, for instance. But in Los Angeles we think music belongs to everybody. It was





good to make this statement by playing the Strauss."

And Salonen backed it up with a lot of talent. A few days later at the premiere of *St. Francis*, anti-Salonen/L.A. sentiment was scarce amid the resounding applause at the end of the five-hour opera. Clearly, Salonen was the new star of the festival, but strictly on his terms. And that's the way it has always been for him.

Rather than starting with discreet forays into Beethoven and Haydn, Salonen leapt into his recording career with Messiaen's sprawling *Turangalila* and Lutoslawski's Symphony No. 3. Not until this season is he finally getting around to his first Beethoven Ninth. His obvious willingness to try a fresh approach seems appropriate for the job of redefining the symphony orchestra for Los Angeles's increasingly multiethnic population.

"It's the hottest seat in the States because it's in a vanguard situation," said Salonen of the L.A. post. "Maybe the social, racial, and cultural problems are closer to the surface in L.A. than anywhere else at the moment. We can't rely on the Wasp cushion for the arts any longer. We need to see if there's a wider audience there, and I'm sure there is one. We just need to get rid of the prejudiced thinking from both sides. Maybe for a Korean family in L.A., it's complicated to come to the Los

Angeles Music Center and listen to Beethoven, because of not feeling comfortable. So we should go to them and make the first contact. This kind of music is not socially or culturally or racially charged. You don't listen to Beethoven as music by someone living in Vienna writing for the emerging middle class. Now it's something else. It's a universal message in the same way that Shakespeare is. It can be a source of healing."

Realizing such ideals would seem to be nearly impossible. But Salonen has already survived near-impossible odds by rising to the top of the conducting world with little training. When he had his first big success in 1983 in London, where he filled in for an ailing Michael Tilson Thomas in conducting Mahler's Symphony No. 3, he had only a few years' experience as a French-horn player and had conducted a few contemporary-music concerts. Thus, he had little repertoire for the flood of conducting offers that suddenly came his way. "I had one Mahler symphony, and the rest of it was *Rituel* by Boulez, *Contrapunkt* by Stockhausen, and maybe a Sibelius symphony. I wouldn't want to go through those first years again. It was like going through a food processor," he said.

He learned thirty to forty major pieces a year, and though there were moments of brilliance, as evidenced

by his early recordings, there were some failures, too. The Los Angeles Philharmonic was the first American orchestra he conducted, and some of the players remember him with longer hair and speaking broken English, conducting a performance of Schoenberg's *Transfigured Night* that didn't make much sense.

"A few years ago," he admitted, "I always thought, 'Here we go, a serial composer who grew up with Boulez and Stockhausen conducting Beethoven.' I saw myself as a ski jumper in the Sahara—somebody who is undoubtedly a professional but in the wrong place. I did a very bad Schubert Fifth Symphony a couple of years ago on tour, for instance.

"One of the major problems for everybody who starts this young and has a visible career at the age of thirty is that a statement is expected of you, and some things aren't ready to be seen as statements. A few years ago I thought I'd try my hand at a Mozart opera with the Swedish Radio Orchestra in a concert version of *Così fan Tutte*. I was trying it out, essentially, not like doing it at La Scala. But when this project was mentioned at the European Orchestra Union meeting, so much interest was expressed that it turned into a direct broadcast to twelve European countries."

And was it a "statement"?

"Well, I worked very intensely on it

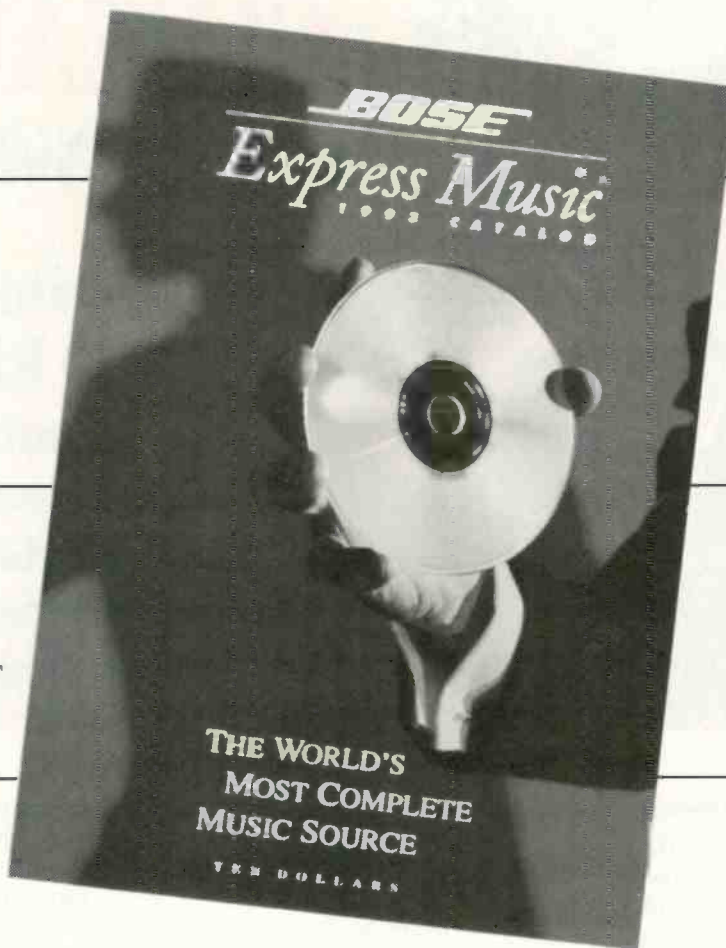
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for a long time," he said. "I was quite satisfied."

Despite such pressures, Salonen's professional life these days has become remarkably simple. His engagements are narrowed down to a handful of favorite orchestras—Los Angeles, London's Philharmonia, and the Swedish Radio Orchestra, where he has been principal conductor since 1985. Repertoire decisions are simple, too: He doesn't play anything he doesn't want to, though he isn't rigid about it. While Rachmaninoff isn't central to his repertoire, for instance, he was happy to record two of the concertos for Sony Classical because he's so fond of the pianist Yefim Bronfman. He jokes that he'd even be willing to conduct Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*—on the condition that Peter Sellars, who has been engaged as the L.A. orchestra's artistic consultant, would stage it.

Obviously, though, Salonen is much more excited about a disc of music by his Finnish contemporary Kaija Saariaho that will come out on the Finlandia label. He also wants to record some of the avant-garde music from the 1950's and 1960's, such as works by György Ligeti and Bernd Alois Zimmermann. And what does Sony Classical think of that idea? "Let's put it this way," he said, "we're still discussing it. The dream is to record *St. Francis*. It won't happen now, but maybe in the future."

THERE will be more recordings of Stravinsky, whose music Salonen conducts with razor-sharp swiftness, and of Sibelius, whose work he performs in the grand manner, with spacious tempos, big gestures, and elemental power. His recent Mahler Fourth recording also seems to recapture the grand manner of early twentieth century conductors. It's full of rubato, each section having its own individual tempo. I was reminded of Willem Mengelberg's famous, freewheeling 1940 recording with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, but that wasn't Salonen's intention at all.

"Mengelberg is a very dangerous point of reference," he said. "His recording is a masterpiece of pulling and stretching the music to the point where it's a miracle that it's still together. My starting point was to find an ideal tempo for each section. The difficult thing is figuring out how to get from one to the next."

Salonen dismissed the notion of recording a complete Mahler symphony

cycle, or even the Third Symphony, saying that it would appear he was trying to cash in on what he calls "the Cinderella story" of his debut. "Maybe a little later, when Mahler is completely out of fashion and there is an intense Meyerbeer wave manipulated by DG, Sony, and Decca with complete cycles conducted by Plácido Domingo—maybe then I'll record a Mahler cycle," he joked.

He's more concerned about taking more time off in future seasons to compose. Now that he's thrown out his serial methodology, uncharted territories are opening up to him, as illustrated by his 1988 piece *Floof*, for soprano and orchestra, which could be an allegory about serialism in its story of a machine that learns to be a poet.

It's as if Salonen's partly reclaiming the life he would have had if Michael Tilson Thomas hadn't hurt his back in 1983. A few years ago he fell in love with Jane Price, a violinist with London's Philharmonia Orchestra, with which he has been principal guest conductor since 1985. Price had to leave her post or they could never have spent any time together. Now they're married and have a baby girl. Salonen is catching up with mundane matters as well, such as getting a driver's license—essential to L.A. living. "The most difficult thing was going to a driving school and sharing this experience with eighteen-year-old boys and girls," he recalled. "They looked at me with pity."

Again reflecting on that 1983 concert, Salonen commented on how strange it was that one incident could have had such an impact on his life. Leonard Bernstein would probably have become a famous conductor even if he hadn't filled in for Bruno Walter. But not Salonen if he hadn't stepped in for Thomas. "I recently had this odd experience," he said. "Radio France had a music festival where they played music by young composers from all over the world, and they played my Saxophone Concerto. I stayed in a hotel booked for the composers, and it was lousy. I was complaining to my wife, Jane, and she said, 'Look, you're being treated like a composer. Aren't you learning something from this experience?' And I was. The guys who are the very focus of all of musical life, the ones who write the stuff, are treated like dirt! And the conductors—who are very suspect people anyway—are treated ten times better.

"There's definitely something fishy about that!" □

"A major problem for everybody who starts young is that a statement is expected of you. Some things aren't ready to be seen as statements."

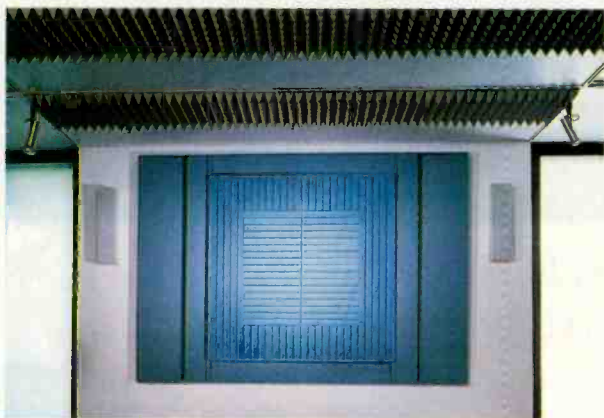




SET FOR LIFE

RONALD CLYNE knows how to retire. Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at two o'clock, the former graphic designer pops open a bottle of Citra Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, calls in his cat, Spot, and strolls around his Brooklyn, New York, living/listening room until 7 p.m. serenaded by Bruckner, Bach, and the blues.

Clyne says he doesn't have to worry about staying in a sweet spot thanks to the 180-degree dispersion of his Soundwave Grand Soliloquy main speakers, which are biwired with cables that disappear into the walls. If he closes his eyes he could be in any number of



places, from a cathedral to a jazz club, depending on the setting of his JVC XP-A1010 digital ambience processor. Helping to create the delay and reverb effects are two pairs of ProAc Mini Tower speakers mounted on the side walls and covered with loose-weave fabric grilles. Filling out the low end are four custom-made Melos subwoofers: two hidden under the desk, one under an end table, and the other in a cabinet next to the electronics.

All of the components were carefully chosen for sound quality, brand reputation, and looks. "I don't buy any piece of equipment if it's not aesthetically well designed," says Clyne, who designed almost all of the Folkways album covers from 1950 to 1986. He built a closet between the living room and kitchen for his equipment so that the black boxes and nest of wires wouldn't show. He mounted the components on a rack in the closet and cut holes in the wall to expose their faceplates.

On the rack are two Tandberg Model 3009 mono amplifiers for the Soundwave speakers; three Tandberg Model 3006 stereo amps, two for the ambience speakers and one for the

subwoofers; a Coda Model 01 preamplifier; a Sumo Delilah electronic crossover that cuts off the Soundwave speakers at 50 Hz; a Tandberg Model 3001 FM tuner; the JVC processor; and a JVC XL-Z1050 CD player. All the amplifiers plug into a Tice Power Block and Tice Titan, an AC power supply Clyne says provides a "more natural, fuller sound."

Clyne has gone to great lengths to get his system to sound as good as it possibly can. He chose MasterLink interconnects and Supra speaker wire, and he clamped TDK Digital Noise Absorbers around all the leads to rid the signals of radio-frequency and other electromagnetic interference. "The biggest improvement is on the speaker leads," he says. "I've got 30- to 40-foot runs of wire that are like an antenna."

His attention to acoustic detail didn't stop with the equipment. Hardwood floors, glass, and drywall make for very bright acoustics, so Clyne paved the ceiling with six rows of perforated acoustic tile to absorb high frequencies, alternating with five rows of Sonex spiked tile to break up standing waves. On two walls he hung his own "acoustic paintings," large wooden canvases with different angles and surfaces to provide "acoustical relief." Interspersed among his own works are pieces of tribal art from two visits to New Guinea.

There's also a dinosaur in the room—Clyne's turntable, a Michell Gyrodec with an Audio-Technica Model 1100 tonearm and AT-ML170 cartridge. Although he would never buy a CD changer ("they're silly"), he's hard-pressed for a reason to play an LP these days. "CD's are cleaner, there's no surface noise, and the bass is better. They're better than LP's in almost every department," he says.

Clyne doesn't envision any more major changes in his system. "I've had fifteen to twenty different systems in my life," he says, "because the quality of equipment is always improving, and I'm always looking for ways to make the music sound better. But this system is so good that improvement is going to be very difficult now."
—Rebecca Day



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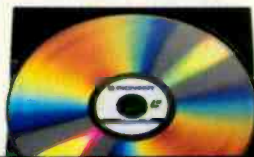
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ELITE
BY PIONEER

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of the
latest decks
shows that
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HI-FI VCR'S

A LASERDISC player may be the source component of choice in a home theater system, but a VCR is its workhorse. It's used to record programs you can't watch at the time of broadcast, to play back rented movies (videodiscs are seldom available for rental), and to edit and watch home movies you've made with a camcorder.

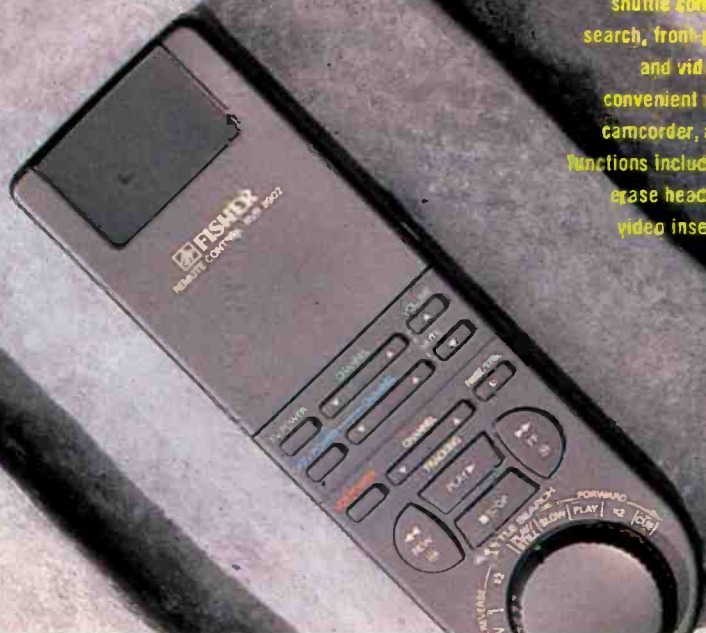
The most important feature of a VCR that is to be used in a home theater system is the ability to record and play back hi-fi stereo soundtracks. In VCR-speak, "hi-fi" means audio-frequency-modulation (AFM) recording, which was developed to overcome the limitations of the "linear," or "edge-track," recording system used in all early home VCR's. Linear recording operates on the same principle as an ordinary audio cassette deck, with a very narrow strip at one edge of the half-inch videotape creeping past a fixed, single-channel audio head. (A handful of VCR's have supported stereo linear recording, but none like this are being made anymore.) Although the results are decidedly low-fi, many inexpensive VCR's still record and play linear soundtracks only.

In AFM recording, however, a two-channel soundtrack is laid down across the entire width of the tape by audio heads spinning at high speed on the same drum as the video heads, yielding a wider bandwidth, greater dynamic range, and lower flutter and distortion. In fact, some enthusiasts use hi-fi VCR's for making audio-only

BY GLENN KENNY



Fisker's FVHC902 (\$600) features VCR Plus+ programming, a remote shuttle controller for fast search, front-panel audio and video jacks for convenient hookup to a camcorder, and editing functions including a flying erase head and audio video insert dubbing.



HI-FI VCR'S



Panasonic's PV-4262 (\$499) comes with a second remote control, called the LCD Program Director (not shown), designed to facilitate timer programming. The conventional VHS deck can play back S-VHS tapes but with standard resolution.

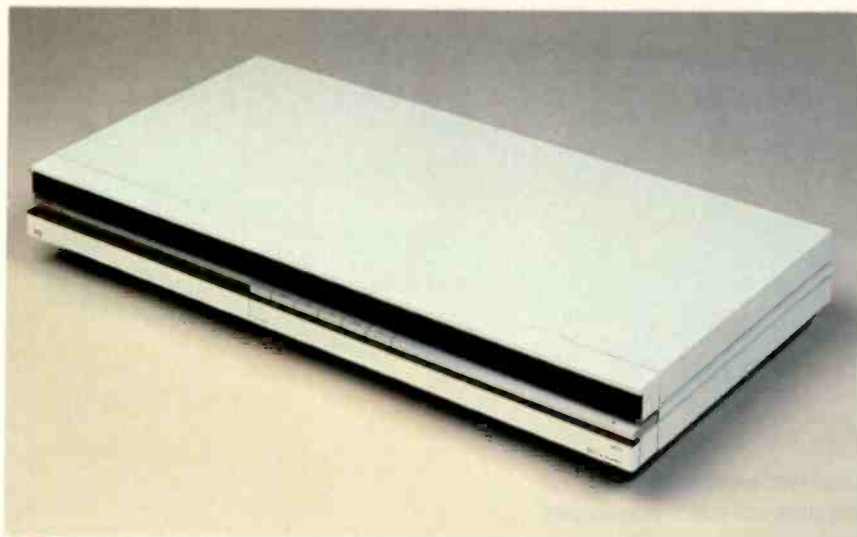
Samsung's XD3500 8mm VCR (\$750), slightly over 4 pounds and measuring 9 x 2½ x 8 inches, is almost in the portable category. It features a flying erase head, on-screen programming, and one-year/eight-event timer capability.




Mitsubishi's Super VHS HS-U67 (\$999) features the company's ViewPoint on-screen operating system and audio enhancements such as Dynamic Range Improvement, said to extend low-level response by as much as 15 dB.

Zenith's VR2420 (\$449) gives on-screen programming instructions in English and Spanish. The otherwise identical VR2424 offers English and French messages. Both models feature automatic head cleaning and a multibrand remote control.





 Bang & Olufsen's S-VHS Beocord VX 5000 (\$2,200) features picture-in-picture (PIP) circuitry and a multiport socket for a special converter so premium cable channels can be selected from the VCR without going through a cable box.

The Hitachi VT-F362 (\$530) features VCR Plus+ programming, a real-time counter, digital tracking control, a shuttle search ring, and illuminated function buttons on its remote control for easy operation when room lights are low.



tapes. Before the advent of DAT, many argued that—aside from a professional-quality open-reel tape deck—a hi-fi VCR was the best audio recorder around. It's still one of the most affordable options for high-quality recording. An added advantage is the generous recording time it affords. Although picture quality goes down noticeably when you switch from the SP speed (standard play, 2 hours on a T-120 tape) to EP (extended play, 6 hours on a T-120), no such falloff occurs in hi-fi audio recording. (EP tapes may not play back as reliably as SP tapes on machines other than the one they were recorded on, however.)

The 8mm format offers even more audio options. All 8mm machines have mono AFM audio, and some support stereo AFM or even a form of digital recording (one 8mm deck introduced several years ago, but no longer available, had a mode in which it could record and play back up to 24 hours of digital audio without video).

The VCR's shown on these pages combine hi-fi sound with various programming options and special features at a variety of prices. For years manufacturers have been trying to make their VCR's easier to operate and to program for unattended recording off the air. Many VCR makers have developed fairly intuitive operating systems using on-screen menus, and several have started incorporating Gemstar's VCR Plus+ technology, which lets the user set a VCR to record a scheduled program simply by keying in a number from published listings.

Picture quality is important, too, of course, especially in a home theater setup. The Super VHS format, introduced in 1987, boasts exceptional resolution, though it's still confined mainly to homemade tapes. But even the conventional VHS and 8mm formats have been refined to the point where they're about as good as they can get, and all but the cheapest VCR's should yield images ranging from acceptable to very good.

The value of other features depends on how you use your VCR. If you have trouble sticking to just one program at a time, for instance, you might want picture-in-picture (PIP). If you have trouble deciding what to watch, you might appreciate another digital nicety: multichannel monitoring, which puts stills of up to twelve programs on screen at the same time. And if you're interested in making home movies, a host of models offer sophisticated editing tools.

Happy hunting.

HI-FI VCR'S



▲ The four-head Memorex Model 53 (\$450) offers VCR Plus+ programming, a one-year/six-event timer, blank search, automatic head cleaning, front A/V inputs, and automatic turn-on/play/rewind/turn-off when you insert a tape.



◀ The Intelligent Control System in JVC's HR-D910 (\$550) offers automatic digital tracking and five different playback modes (Normal, Enhanced, Tape Dub, Soft Pix, and Sharp Pix) to optimize video performance even with rental tapes.



▲ Toshiba's M-658 (\$530), with a universal remote control, VCR Plus+ programming, front-panel A/V jacks, and digital tracking control, automatically changes to a slower speed during programmed recording if the tape is running out.

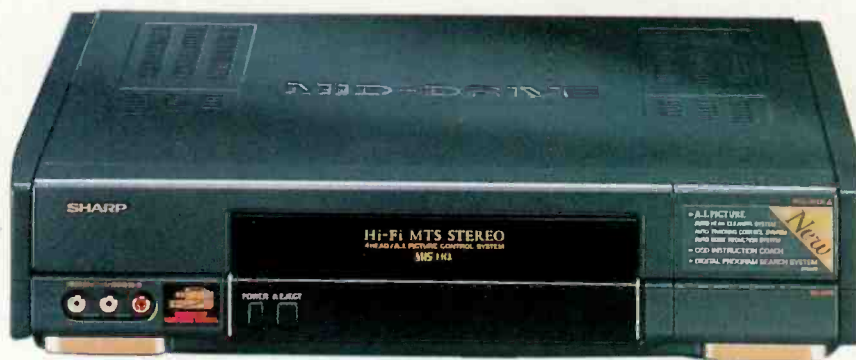
◀ The RCA VR667HF (\$549) features VCR Plus+ programming and RCA's own Pro-Tect Plus system to prevent accidental changes to preset recording instructions. The remote can operate thirty different brands of TV set.



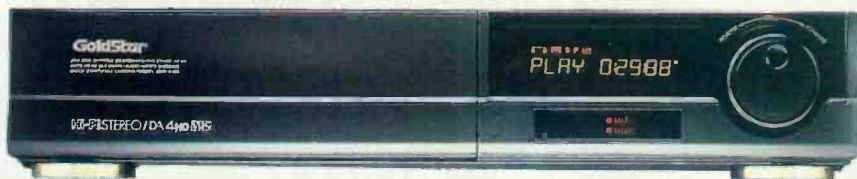
Sony's SLV-696HF (\$650) offers advanced editing features such as a flying erase head and both audio and video insert recording. It also features a shuttle control, VCR Plus+ programming, and a multibrand remote control.



The Philips VR6615 (\$500) features shuttle-controlled picture search at speeds varying from still-frame to seven times normal, plus a real-time counter, automatic head cleaning, front A/V inputs, and automatic tracking control.



The Artificial Intelligence Picture System in Sharp's VC-H95U (\$570) includes automatic head cleaning and tracking control and a noise-reduction system said to improve the picture from old, partially demagnetized tapes.



GoldStar's GVR-A485 (\$500) has special circuitry to improve the pictures from rented tapes, front-panel and remote jog/shuttle search dials, a flying erase head, automatic head cleaning, and a title maker for home movies.

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Guy Clark Shapes Some Classics

ANY song that starts out with Ramblin' Jack Elliot saying "I got these lines in my face tryin' to straighten out the wrinkles in my life" already has a lot to live up to. But Guy Clark knows how to shape a classic, and *Ramblin' Jack & Mahan*, about the rowdy friendship between the Brooklyn cowboy and the rodeo star Larry Mahan, is certainly that, even if nobody knows it yet. "The room smelled like bulls / And the words sounded like songs," he writes. And that's ample reason why Clark, who's put out only seven albums since 1975, is so revered a figure in the Texas school of singer-songwriters.

Using heart and humor to balance the load, Clark, a former carpenter and guitar maker, pulls out his craftsman's tools, constructing durable and affecting music with economy of language, clarity of thought, and efficiency of beat and melody. "Boats to Build," his first album since 1988, contains two songs about the importance of pride in quality handwork, and, like the boat builders of his title song, Clark knows how to make a "fair curve from a noble plan," embellishing it with only the sparest of details—the exquisite filigreed trim of Verlon Thompson's acoustic guitar, for instance, or the fanciful spirit of Sam Bush's mandolin.

If the philosophical whimsy of *Too Much* and the ode to life's little pleasures of *Baton Rouge* fit the typical Guy Clark mold, there are some surprises here, too. In *Picasso's Mandolin* Clark mixes his painterly and musical instincts with funny rhyme ("He was born in Spain / And died in France / He was not scared of baggy pants"). But not even that is preparation for *How'd You Get This Number*, a Mark Knopfler-like ironic blues where Clark uncharacteristically displays a less-than-sympathetic side in his disdain for a perpetual screw-up: "Too bad about your girlfriend / Too bad about your wife / Too bad about the thing you call / The rest of your life."

Nothing here is quite as pithy as Clark's earlier *The Randall Knife* or *Desperadoes Waiting for a Train*, but how many classics can one writer have in him? Some of his new songs need to be heard repeatedly to appreciate their humor, subtlety, and quiet strength, but others, such as *Madonna w/Child ca. 1969*, the pathetic story of a sixteen-year-old survivor ("She's got answers to some questions / I would not dare to ask"), grab you by the head and heart the first time out.

There are small flaws in Clark's carefully hewn product. He and co-producer Miles Wilkinson should have mixed his



voice a tad farther out front, something that becomes doubly apparent in *Baton Rouge*, where he unintelligibly slurs his lyrics and reveals a rustiness in his lower register. And his romantic duet with Emmylou Harris, *I Don't Love You Much Do I*, is marred by her strident vocal and their failure to sing in sync.

Clark shouldn't feel too bad about that, though. He's created an album of dignified, involving songs. No technical

lapse could possibly stem the flow of his emotions. The rest, as he says, is merely details. *Alanna Nash*

GUY CLARK: *Boats to Build*

Baton Rouge; Picasso's Mandolin; How'd You Get This Number; Boats to Build; Too Much; Ramblin' Jack and Mahan; I Don't Love You Much Do I; and three others
ASYLUM/AMERICAN EXPLORER
61442 (34 min)

The Burning Ballads of Jimmy Scott

FIRST heard Jimmy Scott back in 1970, when Atlantic released an album titled "The Source." I had never heard a voice quite like his—it had an oddly plaintive quality as singular as the sound of Miles Davis's horn. Piercingly high and plangent, it was mysteriously androgynous. Scott all but disappeared during the more than twenty years between "The Source" and "All the Way," his exceptional new Sire album, which says as much about the obstacles an artist must overcome in the music world as it does about the vicissitudes of his life. A diminutive, boyish-looking man, he found his first following when he was billed as "Little" Jimmy Scott and

appeared with Lionel Hampton's band back in the Forties. While the list of his recording credits is long, including a number of hits, after the Fifties he largely faded into obscurity. Today, at sixty-seven, Jimmy Scott is being presented for the first time by a major label in settings that do justice to his artistry, with a star back-up including Kenny Barron, Ron Carter, and Grady Tate.

His forte is the heartfelt, burning ballad, and he sings the musical gems in "All the Way" as if he'd reached down to the bottom of his soul and dredged up every iota of feeling. But there's none of the sweaty, overwrought shouting and grunting of modern soul singers. The

Jimmy Scott:
intensity
and
control



feeling goes far deeper than that. It is so intense that it must be restrained, and it is this element of control, fused with an impression of shattering pain, that makes his performances so compelling.

To understand exactly how much of himself this man puts into his music, you have to see him perform in person. He closes his eyes, leans his head back to one side, and sings as though he's placing his very heart in your hands, trusting you not to break it. Preferring slow tempos, he's always far back behind the beat, yet his phrasing is so flawless that each song, no matter how familiar, is fully recreated through his variations on the basic melody. The effect is riveting, and once you see him on a night when he is in good form, you never forget him—he haunts you.

While no recording could capture the full effect of Jimmy Scott live, this one comes close enough. Though some of the control has been eroded by age, his voice retains its plangent quality, and the heart is still there, the soul, the artistry. That should be enough for anyone.

Phyl Garland

JIMMY SCOTT: All the Way

All the Way; Embraceable You; Angel Eyes; At Last; Someone to Watch over Me; Every Time We Say Goodbye; I'll Be Around; My Foolish Heart; I'm Getting Sentimental over You
SIRE 26955 (47 min)

PHOTO: JAY BLANKENBERG/SIRE

Natalia Gutman Plays Schnittke and Schumann

THE growth of Alfred Schnittke's discography in the last half-dozen years has been almost as remarkable as the Russian composer's own productivity. The BIS label alone has accounted for nearly three dozen titles, there have been several on Melodiya, and now celebrated Russian champions of Schnittke's music are recording his works in the West. Following up on the Sony release of the Second Cello Concerto with Mstislav Rostropovich, for whom that work was written barely more than two years ago, EMI has brought out his former pupil Natalia Gutman's second recording of the First Concerto, which was written for her five years earlier. With the music now more thoroughly in her fingers and more deeply engraved in her spirit, Gutman, this time with the London Philharmonic under Kurt Masur, surpasses her own Moscow performance (with Gennady Rozhdestvensky conducting) as well as the two recordings by other cellists.

Masur responds to the Schnittke idiom every bit as wholeheartedly as Gut-

man herself, in terms of both passion and precision. The solo and orchestral elements seem to build on one another throughout the performance, achieving a stunning level of exaltation in the Mahlerian extended finale. The LPO's playing and EMI's demonstration-class recording leave nothing wanting in respect to either power or clarity.

The Schnittke is preceded on the disc by the familiar Schumann Cello Concerto, to which Gutman takes a pervasively warmhearted but somewhat reserved approach that seems a little fussy here and there. While Masur is renowned for a more enlivening way with the Schumann symphonies, he is fully supportive of his soloist here, and there is again much to admire in the fine orchestral playing. In any event, the superb account of the Schnittke makes this an important issue.

Richard Freed

SCHNITTKE: Cello Concerto No. 1

SCHUMANN: Cello Concerto

Gutman; London Philharmonic, Masur
EMI CDC 54443 (65 min)



PHOTO: MECHER/EMI CLASSICS

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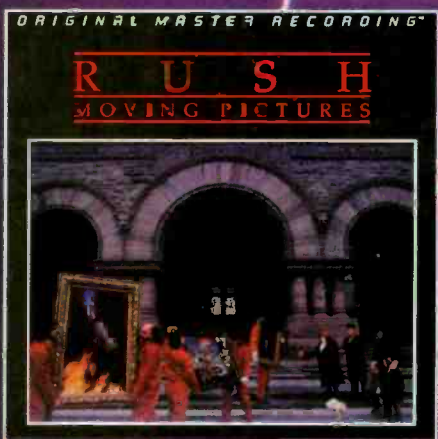
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Rostropovich's Gripping Shostakovich Eighth Symphony

MSTISLAV ROSTROPOVICH, the National Symphony, and Teldec have come through with a realization of Shostakovich's terrifying World War II masterpiece, the Symphony No. 8, that can stand with the previous recordings by Rostropovich's former colleagues Yevgeny Mravinsky and Kiril Kondrashin, who also bore witness to what the painter Goya called "the disaster of war."

The strings perform with white-hot intensity throughout the nearly 23-minute opening movement, and the woodwinds slog through the following movement with all the brutality inherent in the score. The second half of the symphony, a triptych consisting of a toccata-scherzo, passacaglia, and finale, with its compassionate closing benediction, is conveyed with a fervor stemming from the wartime experience itself, memories of which still haunt the survivors.

Not only is this release the finest performance in Rostropovich's cycle of Shostakovich symphonies, it is also the most effectively recorded. The fairly



Conductor Mstislav Rostropovich

close-miked sound from Washington's Kennedy Center carries with it ample body and warmth without seeming cramped or overloaded. Elements of the two Russian recordings of the Eighth may be superior to this one, but as a totality of musicmaking and sonics, the

new Teldec version comes out ahead in my book.

David Hall

SHOSTAKOVICH: *Symphony No. 8*
National Symphony Orchestra,
Rostropovich
TELDEC 74719 (61 min)

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POPULAR

• **FOREIGNER:** *The Very Best . . . and Beyond.* ATLANTIC 89999. A greatest-hits collection fleshed out with three newly recorded tracks.

• **KATE AND ANNA MCGARRIGLE:** *French Record.* HANNIBAL HN 1302. The 1981 album by the Canadian folkie sister act, including their European hit *Complainte pour Ste. Catherine*.

• **DJANGO REINHARDT:** *In Brussels.* VERVE 314 513 947. Among the rarest of the great jazz guitarist's studio sessions, recorded secretly in 1942 under the nose of German occupation forces.

• **CHRIS STAMEY:** *Wonderful Life.* EAST SIDE DIGITAL 80682. Two solo albums, 1982's "It's a Wonderful Life" and 1983's "Instant Excitement," by one of the founding members of the dB's.

• **THE YARDBIRDS:** *Little Games Sessions & More.* EMI 98213. The final studio album (starring Jimmy Page on guitar) by the influential psychedelic blues band, plus alternate takes and the group's commercial for Great Shakes drink mix.



CLASSICAL

• **GRANADOS:** *Goyescas; other piano works.* De Larrocha. EMI CMS 64524 (two discs). Alicia de Larrocha's earliest recordings, now reissued on EMI, were made in the early 1960's for Spain's Hispavox. Other discs offer music of Albéniz, Falla, and Turina.

• **HONEGGER:** *Le Roi David.* Eda-Pierre. Collard, Tappy, Dutoit. ERATO 45800. ". . . a compelling performance of an utterly gorgeous work" (May 1973).

• **JOPLIN:** *Treemonisha.* Balthrop, Allen, Rayam, White; Schuller. DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 435 709. "The choral writing is remarkable, but the ragtime numbers are still the highlights. . . . Schuller's direction, the orchestral playing, the recording . . . are all exemplary" (May 1976).

• **PLACIDO DOMINGO:** *Sings Caruso.* RCA VICTOR 61356. An early collection of arias by Cilèa, Donizetti, Verdi, Puccini, and others, performed with the London Symphony under Nello Santi. "Domingo has gifts that promise the brightest possible future" (August 1972).

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ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT

3 Years, 5 Months and 2 Days

In the Life of . . .

CHRYSLIS 21929 (57 min)

Performance: Arresting

Recording: Good

These fast-tongued Southerners have made the most inventive rap album of 1992. Working in the message-filled, musically savvy style of such neo-flower-power rap acts as De La Soul and PM Dawn, Arrested Development eschews the trivial and tunes into issues. Led by rapper/writer Speech, they hold forth on the tribulations of motherhood (*Mama's Always on Stage*) and divisions in the black community (*People Everyday*), while calling for self-awareness and peaceful revolution among the downtrodden (*Give a Man a Fish, Raining Revolution*). Speech speed-raps through *U*, a common-sense spiel about marriage and the family ("I want, not need, a companion to feed the knowledge I read and the lovin' I've received"), and finds wisdom in the ways of a homeless bum in *Mr. Wendel*.

Musically, the group paints with a large and colorful palette—everything from Buddy Guy and Junior Wells to Sly and the Family Stone, combined with enough turntable tricks and artfully antic samples and asides to keep your ears spinning for weeks. This is an album whose greatest triumph is not just that it owns up to the problems facing America, but that it leaves you feeling those problems can be solved with conviction and a right-minded spirit. *P.P.*

DAN BAIRD

Love Songs for the Hearing Impaired

DEF AMERICAN 26999 (42 min)

Performance: Rock solid

Recording: Good

Aside from deserving an award for album title of the year, "Love Songs for the Hearing Impaired" is nothing more nor less than a foot-stomping, rude, good-time rock-and-roll record. Wisely, Dan Baird avoids the self-conscious attempts at mythologizing the South that clouded the final album by his old band, the Georgia Satellites, and comes back swinging with a set of songs about love, lust, and getting rowdy. There's a great tale about the misadventures of a couple on the lam in *Julie + Lucky*, and *Knocked Up* is a timeless hard-luck story about a reckless lad who gets marched to the altar by an unforgiving dad. Baird and company cook up a Creedence-style voodoo groove in *Lost Highway* and kick *Seriously Gone* so hard and fast you'll have to put a splint on your foot when it's all over. Then there's *I Love You Period*, a hots-for-teacher rave-up that's slyer and funnier than Van Halen's treatment of the same subject. "Love Songs" is a must-own for fans of prime, uncut rock-and-roll, the kind you hardly ever hear anymore. *P.P.*

GARTH BROOKS

The Chase

LIBERTY 98743 (38 min)

Performance: Down to earth

Recording: Very good

No wonder Garth Brooks sells so many records. He pours out the hard-scrabble stories of country music to a Seventies soft-rock soundtrack, and the combination is

REVIEWS

POPULAR MUSIC

Discs and tapes

reviewed by Chris Albertson,
Phyl Garland, Ron Givens,
Roy Hemming, Alanna Nash,
Parke Puterbaugh, and
Steve Simels

mighty potent. In "The Chase," he displays the two sides of his stylistic coin in his choice of cover tunes: Patsy Cline's country-as-country-can-get *Walking After Midnight* and Little Feat's polyglot-rock *Dixie Chicken*. But Brooks goes beyond these obvious homages, blending elements of country and rock into a highly appealing exploration of real-life issues confronting baby boomers.

Somewhere Other than the Night is about an overworked man who, by chance, rediscovers the passion he's been overlooking in his marriage. The song is about a farmer, but the same Type A obsessions apply to big-city yuppies, suburban heads of households, and maybe even an overworked country-pop singer with a fondness for hats. Here, as elsewhere, Brooks is doing what country does best: talking to regular people about regular life. But "The Chase" adds a new wrinkle to country populism by injecting a little rock liberalism. In the album's first track, *We Shall Be Free*, Brooks goes against Nashville's conservative Republican grain by supporting racial equal-

ity, gay rights, and environmental protection. Even if the song seems like a 3-minute, 47-second civics lesson, Brooks has to be admired for taking his music to another level. At a time when the politics of change is in the wind, Garth Brooks is creating a fair breeze of his own. *R.G.*

JOHN CALE

Fragments of a Rainy Season

HANNIBAL 1372 (71 min)

Performance: Live and unplugged

Recording: Front-row quality

This twenty-song retrospective of John Cale's post-Velvet Underground career, performed accompanied only by his own piano and guitar, at least clues you in to which of his musical periods he values most. No surprise that at least half the songs hail from his fertile late-Seventies stint on Island, particularly the incomparable "Fear." He also appears enamored of the Dylan Thomas poems he set to music in the album "Songs for the Dying."

Although I hear all but the Thomas songs with a band in mind, recalling the diabolical frenzy of numberless Cale gigs at CBGB and elsewhere in New York City during his mad reign as a kind of punk-era elder statesman, this unplugged solo program is really a fan's dream. While "Fragments" does, in spots, bear the musty, reverent air of a recital, Cale breaks out of that straitjacket with dark, coruscating versions of *Guts*, *Fear (Is a Man's Best Friend)*, and *Heartbreak Hotel*—a definitively Gothic one. And *Buffalo Ballet*, *Ship of Fools*, and *Paris 1919* remain as lovely and evocative as ever. If Cale's voice has lost some of its fierceness, his performances still manage to project lurking danger or capacious lyricism. *P.P.*

HOLLY DUNN

Getting It Dunn

WARNER BROS. 26949 (35 min)

Performance: Unfortunate detour

Recording: Okay

Nashville songstress Holly Dunn long ago abandoned the retro-Dolly Parton stance she began with *Daddy's Hands*, a tune of country realism that flashed "Bright Future



Arrested Development: tuning into issues

Ahead." Now she settles mostly for sexy country-pop that allows her to hike up her skirt and flex a little calf muscle, if not a little thigh. In the process, she's lost her genuine from-the-heart delivery and replaced it with radio-ready angst that is no angst at all: Compare her version of Verlon Thompson and Beth Nielsen Chapman's *You Say You Will* with Trisha Yearwood's. The difference—in spunk, in conveyance of frustration, and in production values—is the difference between a spitball and a comet. Dunn does better with the romantic ballads *I've Heard It All* and *A Simple I Love You*, but otherwise she sounds as if she's followed her once-promising vision to the end of the road. **A.N.**

TALES FROM THE VAULTS

THE MONTEREY INTERNATIONAL POP FESTIVAL

RHINO R4 70596 (four discs, 297 min).

Given the genuine talent involved—the Who, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, the Byrds, Otis Redding, and Jefferson Airplane, among many others—

it's no wonder legend has it that the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival was the greatest-ever all-star rock event. But on the basis of this new Rhino album documenting the concerts, it seems that . . . well, maybe you had to be there. From the eccentrically recorded evidence on these four CD's, almost all the bands were ragged, out of tune, and kind of lame. The Byrds, for example, are painful to listen to, and they're far from the worst here. In fact, with the exception of the Hendrix and Redding sets, which have long been available and remain brilliant, most of these performances are probably best appreciated as a cautionary argument against the legalization of drugs.

THE TROGGS

Archeology (1966-1976). FONTANA 314 512 936 (three discs, 154 min).



The proto-punk greatest hits of the *Wild Thing* guys are the nominal attraction here, and they remain as endear-

ingly dopey as ever. But the real reason to get this set is the bonus disc, a screamingly funny, often-bootlegged recording of the band trying to perform a moronically simple song—and failing repeatedly, provoking a nonstop barrage of f-word insults. Honest, it's like *This Is Spinal Tap* rewritten by David Mamet. **Steve Simels**

BRIAN ENO

Nerve Net

OPAL/WARNER BROS. 45033 (64 min)

Performance: Zzzzz . . .

Recording: Muffled

Boring aural snooze, despite the industrial sounds, android voices, and comic-relief synth squiggles presumably meant to confer a stamp of rave-culture currency upon it. Eno's probably got a Ph.D. dissertation's worth of theories to explain this neurasthenic cruise to nowhere, but all you need to know is that it sounds like the browned-out, contaminated antithesis of "Another Green World." **P.P.**

EXTREME

III Sides to Every Story

A&M 31454 0006 (76 min)

Performance: Ambitious

Recording: In yer face, dude

Fronted by Nuno Bettencourt, a poll-winning, Berklee-trained guitarist who could play rings around Saturn, Extreme aims a lot higher than the crotch-level fantasies of most lunthead metal bands. Their new concept album, "III Sides to Every Story" is divided into three sections—"Yours," "Mine," and "The Truth"—and runs near the recordable limit for a CD. Much of it is solid and enjoyable, pleasing even this show-me metal skeptic. Okay, the six "Yours" tunes are a bit over the top, aimed at the hair-shaking, air-guitar-playing faithful, although a few of the songs, like *Warheads*, are buffered by a refreshingly cartoonish, Cheap Trick-style sensibility. The "Mine" section's five songs, though, are surprisingly melodic, benefiting from Bettencourt's restrained virtuosity on guitar and keyboards, plus knockout four-part vocals. "The Truth" finds Extreme at the extreme, incorporating orchestration into a suite of longish songs that aim at the pomp-rock grandeur of Queen and early Genesis, with mixed results.

Whatever this album's flaws, be it showoffish excess in the beginning or progressive-rock overreach at the end, Extreme has welded soul-searching lyrics to varied, ambitious music. Even so, I'll probably never listen to it again. Why? Too much of an okay thing. **P.P.**

Sinéad O'Connor: baring an inner self?



CHRYSALIS RECORDS

SALLY MAYES

The Dorothy Fields Songbook

DRG 91410 (51 min)

Performance: A knockout

Recording: Excellent

No question about it: From the opening track, a chipper, deliciously droll *Diga Diga Doo*, this is the most terrific debut album in many moons by a supertalented young singer specializing in classic show tunes. Not only can the versatile Sally Mayes belt without grating and croon without getting slushy, but she also has the kind of natural rhythmic incisiveness that keeps every song (whether ballad pace or uptempo) arrestingly alive. And what first-rate material she's chosen! From the lyricist Dorothy Fields's most memorable Broadway and Hollywood collaborations with Jimmy McHugh, Arthur Schwartz, Jerome Kern, and others come familiar standards (*Don't Blame Me*, *The Way You Look Tonight*) and unjustly neglected gems (*I Dream Too Much*, *Make the Man Love Me*, *April Fooled Me*). The instrumental arrangements by Patrick Brady and Mike Renzi are consistently bright, tangy, and refreshingly untrite. Don't miss this one. **R.H.**

SINÉAD O'CONNOR

Am I Not Your Girl?

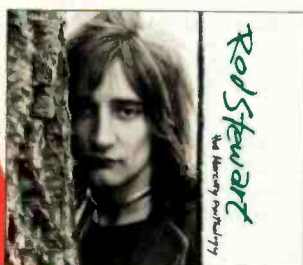
CHRYSALIS 21952 (42 min)

Performance: Vampy

Recording: Very good

Sinéad O'Connor has taken the all-covers plunge after only two albums. If this release is all that an artist supposedly in the prime of a strikingly original career has to show for the past several years—save for some barbed and highly publicized ranting—then maybe her resourcefulness was overestimated in the first place. In any case, "Am I Not Your Girl?" is not the place you'll want to go to hear torch songs and show tunes identified with the likes of Peggy Lee (*Why Don't You Do Right?*), Sarah Vaughan (*Black Coffee*), and Billie Holiday (*Gloomy Sunday*). Maybe singing these numbers has helped put O'Connor in touch with an inner self that's more feminine, vulnerable, and conventional than the one she publicly projects. Even so, it's hard to square two sides of a personality as disparate as the

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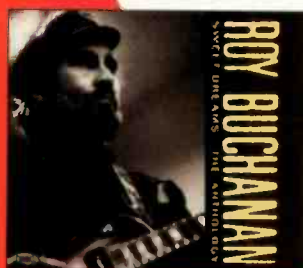
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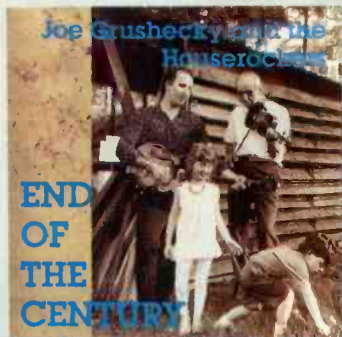


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Return of the Houserockers



JOE GRUSHECKY is the sort of rocker we could use more of. He's an anti-star whose tough-minded songs cast a jaundiced eye at 1990's America: the erosion of values, the economic disequilibrium that makes it hard to hold families together, the thin veneer of lies that keeps politicians afloat. Grushecky himself is a paragon of family values that those in elected office would do well to emulate. A husband and father of two, he teaches disadvantaged kids by day and fronts a no-nonsense rock band by night.

The ever-deepening socio-political morass has inspired "End of the Century," one of his strongest records to date. It's a well-constructed album, deflating our tendency toward hero worship in *Talking to the King*, offering a dim but realistic look at our problematic present in *End of the Century*, and concluding with a glimpse of hope and salvation in *Don't Give Up the Ghost*. Along the way Grushecky essays what may be his best piece of pure music, *She's My Everything*, which has an entrancing, soulful Memphis lilt, and further broadens his range in tunes like *The Bells Still Toll*, a supplicant's prayer sung to the accompaniment of twelve-string guitar and piano. Grushecky is in fine voice, mining the same gritty, heartfelt vein as fellow travelers Southside Johnny Lyon and Willy DeVille, and his band, the Houserockers, provides competent, empathetic support. "End of the Century" is about real lives, not rock fantasies, and its candor is refreshing.

Between 1979 and 1983 Grushecky and the Houserockers (then called the Iron City Houserockers) cut four albums for MCA. While they won critical plaudits and a following in and around their native Pittsburgh, the albums went largely unheard by the

general public. Once again, Rhino has come through with a compilation that rescues a little-known band's best moments from obscurity. The Houserockers were a bar band with a difference. Whereas roots rockers in the pre-MADD era typically urged the crowd to hoist 'em high (and tip the bar help), Grushecky and Co.'s message—in fact, the title of their second album—was "Have a Good Time (But Get Out Alive)." No, they weren't the world's greatest rock-and-roll band, however tempting it might be to romanticize them, but they made some damn fine music, all of it played from the heart. Appropriately, the seventeen-track CD closes with *Goodbye Steeltown*, a 1984 indy-label single about home-town pride in the face of hard times—the central, populist theme of Grushecky's career, when you get right down to it. *P.P.*



JOE GRUSHECKY AND THE HOUSEROCKERS

End of the Century

Talking to the King; She's My Everything; Bad Dream; Love to Blame; No Man's Land; End of the Century; Oh Kathleen; Silence of Your Arms; Lighten Up; The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter; The Bells Still Toll; Don't Give Up the Ghost
 RAZOR & TIE RT 2810 (52 min)

IRON CITY HOUSEROCKERS

Pumping Iron and Sweating Steel—The Best of the Iron City Houserockers

I Can't Take It; Dance with Me; Love So Tough; Heroes Are Hard to Find; Have a Good Time; Don't Let Them Push You Around; Pumping Iron; Old Man Bar; Junior's Bar; Rock-ola; Blood on the Bricks; and six others
 RHINO 70375 (71 min)

one that ripped the Pope to shreds on national TV and the one that purrs "boop boop de doo" like a coquettish kitten in this album.

Still, O'Connor's haunting version of Loretta Lynn's *Success Has Made a Failure of Our Home* works as illuminating autobiography, and her cool, gauzy vocals put across Rodgers and Hart's *Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered* with surprising panache. As for that dreadful *Evita* show stopper, *Don't Cry for Me Argentina*, and her out-of-place closing diatribe against Western religion—well, it just wouldn't be Sinéad O'Connor without a few dithering lapses, now would it? *P.P.*

PRINCE AND THE NEW POWER GENERATION



PAISLEY PARK/WARNER BROS.
 45037 (75 min)

Performance: *Playful Prince*
 Recording: *Good*

This may not be Prince's most revolutionary album, but it ranks with his most enjoyable. Granted, achieving a comfortable familiarity takes patience: The album runs an hour and a quarter, and you may gag on some of its rock-opera and Broadway-musical pretensions. Once again Prince has assumed an alter ego ("Walter," supposedly 320 years old), and the album—whose title is a symbol combining the signs for male and female—is about his love affair with the latest addition to the New Power Generation, a Middle Eastern belly dancer named Layte who he fantasizes is the crown princess of Cairo. Complicating the story line are testy exchanges between Prince and a would-be biographer who's trying to dig up dirt.

On the down side, the album has its mediocre moments, most of them ill-advised forays into rap and hip-hop (such as the tuneless, banal *My Name Is Prince*). As usual, Prince yanks the listener from one attitudinal extreme to another, canonizing sex in a sweet falsetto one moment, getting graphically down and dirty the next. Yet synthesizing such apparent contradictions is part of his charm (if not genius). In terms of musical departures, Prince has worked jazz-soul horn lines into the matrix and mainly uses full-blown arrangements rather than lean, stripped-down funk—except for the sublimely naked funk of *Sexy M.F.*, the hottest number. Other standouts include *Love 2 the 9's*, an intoxicating, headlong tumble into loveland, *The Morning Papers*, featuring guitar work reminiscent of *Purple Rain's* searing majesty, and *Blue Light*, a drolly comic tune about a couple on different sexual wavelengths.

All the seasawing between raw sex ("I'm gonna do ya like ya wanna be done," Prince pants in *The Continental*) and oracular pronouncements ("All seven and we watch them fall," he sings in the enigmatic 7) makes for much confusion, but it's still entertaining if you stick with the groove and take the libretto with a pillar of salt. This is certainly not an opera, because the separate pieces do not cohere (except, perhaps, in the quirky mind of their creator), yet the album succeeds song by song, for the most part, as a forgivably egoistic collection from a chronic overachiever. *P.P.*

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R. E. M.

Automatic for the People

WARNER BROS. 45055 (49 min)

Performance: Emotionally rich
Recording: Excellent

R. E.M.'s "Automatic for the People" is one of the most profoundly sad and emotionally involving albums of this or any other year. It depicts a very different R.E.M. from the group that made its debut ten years ago with "Murmur." In contrast to the involuted impressionism and tantalizing obscurity of that album, the cards are on the table here. Singing with urgent clarity, leader Michael Stipe unburdens his soul regarding various aspects of death.

Stipe revisits and canonizes several real-life figures: Montgomery Clift in *Monty Got a Raw Deal*, Andy Kaufman in the brilliant and touchingly funny *Man on the Moon*. He evokes the physical suffering of someone staring death in the face in *Try Not to Breathe* ("I will hold my breath till all these shivers subside," he sings). *Everybody Hurts* counsels strength in the face of unrelenting adversity with an almost shocking candor, and Stipe's sweet, dulcet delivery recalls Art Garfunkel (no lie!). With calm, prescient wisdom, *Sweetness Follows* offers assurance of what lies beyond the grave, with Stipe's ghostly voice hovering in the churchy glow of Mike Mills's organ and the funeral sawing of a cello. Between the lines, *Star Me Kitten* eerily equates sex with death ("Have we lost our minds? Will this never end?" Stipe queries in somber, measured tones). Dour, portentous images of a dying democracy give *Ignoreland* its rancorous bite, and *Drive* appears to address the death-in-life of an aimless, untended younger generation.

More of a piece than R.E.M.'s last album, "Out of Time," without surrendering that work's expressive, venturesome musicality, "Automatic for the People" is surely their greatest triumph. Stipe's eloquent confessionals are matched perfectly by music that sustains a mood that is dark but not morbid, and

never overplayed. Peter Buck's guitar, in particular, shines without overshadowing the songs, whether he's overlaying a light glaze of feedback, arpeggiating prettily, or wafting a bit of slide guitar against a strummed acoustic. "Automatic for the People" is a remarkably honest, ineffably sad, and thoroughly moving piece of work. *P.P.*

SOUL ASYLUM

Grave Dancers Union
COLUMBIA 48898 (45 min)

Performance: Eccentric
Recording: Good

Just listen to the thick, syrupy bass in this album if you want to hear what a serious producer and a serious engineer can do to a woolly alternative band. Soul Asylum has never sounded this good, which is pretty much a positive thing. Songs like *Somebody to Shove*, *Black Gold*, and *Runaway Train*—which get the album off to a tough-going-on-jaded start—are musically straightforward, so the greater clarity and oomph of the recording make the beefy sound beefier and the weary sound wearier. But when the band tries to play it loose, or wants to meander in and around an epiphany, the arrangements are so tight that they begin to pinch. "Grave Dancers Union" would have been better if Soul Asylum had trusted its loopy-goosey instincts. *R.G.*

10,000 MANIACS

Our Time in Eden
ELEKTRA 61385 (49 min)

Performance: Pensive
Recording: Very good

The aura of 10,000 Maniacs' music recalls Indian summer: You feel the late-season warmth of the sun but sense its inevitable dimming toward autumn. Tinged with frustration, anger, and resignation about the human species' despoilation of the earthly Eden we've inherited, the lyrics by vocalist Natalie Merchant for "Our Time in Eden" tackle

WORDS & MUSIC

Two new combinations of CD and coffee-table book crossed our desk recently—one intriguing, the other this side of useless. *Ferrington Guitars* (HarperCollins, \$50), is a collection of gorgeous color photos of the custom guitars that celebrity luthier Danny Ferrington has made for some of the best-known players in country, pop, and rock—everybody from Phoebe Snow and Rodney Crowell to Richard Thompson and Nirvana's Kurt Cobain. Even if you don't play guitar yourself, it's hard not to appreciate these instruments on the level of really magnificent craftsmanship, and the accompanying twenty-track CD, featuring instrumentals by some of Ferrington's clients (pick hit: the Don Was medley of *Home Sweet Home* and the Supremes' *Baby Love*), is really terrific.

On the other hand, *My Twenty-Five Years with Fleetwood Mac* (Hyperion, \$35) by Mick Fleetwood with Stephen "Hammer of the Gods" Davis is, to put it charitably, a snooze. This band has washed so much of its dirty linen in public over the years that Fleetwood doesn't have any heretofore unpublished sleaze to wallow in (why else would you read a book about this bunch?),



so what's left is the usual and-then-we-did-this-in-the-studio stuff familiar from a million other band bios. As for the accompanying CD, it merely contains two previously unreleased tracks from the group's Jeremy Spencer-imitating-Elvis phase in 1967, and as such will be of no interest whatsoever to the Stevie Nicks fans who are the book's ostensible target audience. Save your money. —Steve Simels

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AC/DC

Live. ATCO 92215 (71 min).
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THE COWBOY ALBUM

KID RHINO 70403 (36 min).
Vaughan Monroe's *Ghost Riders in the Sky*, Frankie Laine's *Rawhide*, Fess Parker's *Ballad of Davy Crockett*, Tex Ritter's *High Noon*, Marty Robbins's *El Paso*, and more. Add them up, and you get this year's finest baby-boomer camp nostalgia artifact. Way cool, Rhino. S.S.



DEVO

Live—The Mongoloid Years.
RYKO 20209 (76 min).
Okay, okay, so ultimately they were just Kiss for kollege kids, but this above-ground bootleg proves that Devo was also a pretty interesting live band before they ran their de-evolution high concept into the ground. Nice bonus: drily amusing liner notes by the group's Gerry Casale. S.S.

DARRYL AND DON ELLIS



KITARO

Dream. GEFEN 24477 (57 min).
With a vocal assist from Jon Anderson of Yes, Kitaro has come up with a mix of New Age, world music, light classics, pop, rock, film soundtracks, natural sounds, and greeting-card lyrics that gives a new dimension to the word "eclectic." Some of it's pretty, some of it's touching, and much of it's trite. Less would have been more.
William Livingstone

MANHATTAN RHYTHM KINGS

We Three. CABARET 5003 (36 min).
Combining the tightly knit playfulness of the 1950's Kingston Trio with the relaxed

congeniality of the 1930's Three Smoothies, the Manhattan Rhythm Kings adroitly alternate here between tongue-in-cheek and straightforward vocal harmonies. It's a snappily varied program, ranging from Gershwin to Leiber and Stoller, and the Kings get a sly assist from the radio humorist Garrison Keillor in the title track and that old Gracie Allen chestnut *Snug as a Bug in a Rug*. R.H.

WILLIE NILE

Hard Times in America.
POLARIS PRI-9200 (20 min).
A knockout EP by one of rock's great natural resources. Pick hits: the title tune, which manages to be topical and still rock like mad, and the hilarious *Sorry*, which mates glorious twelve-string guitar to an addictive tune and lyrics in which Nile apologizes for various outrages with an appealing lack of sincerity. Terrific stuff. S.S.



ROY ORBISON

King of Hearts. VIRGIN 86520 (42 min).
Most of this material was unfinished at Orbison's death, and it's been polished up after the fact by the likes of T-Bone Burnett, Don Was, and Jeff Lynne. As a whole, the album's not as good as "Mystery Girl," but none of it sounds like grave robbery, and the remake of *Crying* with k.d. lang is worth the price by itself. S.S.

PATTY SMYTH

MCA 10633 (45 min).
Smyth's sorry-babe-I-gotta-dump-ya duet with Don Henley, *Sometimes Love Just Ain't Enough*, has been a big hit for a simple reason: Everybody knows the feeling. Nevertheless, the album is mainstream corporate rock at its most routine and faceless—well produced (by Springsteen associate Roy Bittan) but still overflowing with canned emotion and as spontaneous as a Swiss watch. S.S.

MARGARET WHITING

Then and Now. DRG 91402 (58 min).
Never content just to recycle her old hits, Margaret Whiting gives a fresh, contemporary slant here to *Moonlight in Vermont* and *It Might As Well Be Spring*. She's also in top form for some other great standards that suit her perfectly as well as good new songs by Francesca Blumenthal, Brian Gari, and Amanda McBroom. Gerry Mulligan joins in on baritone sax in several tracks. R.H.

everything from a lover's dishonesty (*Noah's Dove*) to the violence and fear that pervade modern society ("There's something seething in the air we're breathing," she sings in *Tolerance*). She urges a dying friend to embrace what's left of his days in *If You Intend* and casts an ironic backward glance at this nation's frontier history in *Gold Rush Brides* ("The land was free, yet it cost their lives").

While the words are uneasy, the music is so orderly and well-tempered as to suggest that perfection is still within our grasp. Merchant's breathy, legato voice and simple, stepwise piano melodies, combined with the subtle, trancelike shimmer provided by the other four musicians, enable "Our Time in Eden" to flow with the grandeur and unity of a symphonic poem. Two songs are punched up by James Brown's horn section, but for the most part the album derives its strength from its even, deliberate pacing and consistent tone. It is, in short, quietly stunning. P.P.



TOM WAITS

Bone Machine

ISLAND 314 512 580 (54 min)

Performance: Not for the faint of heart
Recording: Good

Tom Waits used to be a beat storyteller of the seamy social underground—the winos, the street poets, the homeless crazies. But judging from his soundtrack to the Jim Jarmusch movie *Night on Earth* and this new album, he's become the advance man for the *real* underground—as in Beelzebub, Lucifer, and the Prince of Darkness. Make no mistake about it: "Bone Machine" is minimalist music from hell, played on the bones of sinners and sung through the rusty, ravaged, and perhaps even channeled voice of the devil, who shovels coal through Waits's dreams. Obsessed with death—peaceful suicide and tortured homicide alike—Waits gives these musical mini-movies titles like *Earth Died Screaming*, *Murder in the Red Barn*, and *Dirt in the Ground*, as in the futility of that's-how-we're-all-gonna-end-up-someday. The lyrics often dip into the surreally obscure, but the mood is always right out front—you know we're not talking moon-and-June when Waits rasps, "Bring me some water / Put it in this skull."

Jesus figures in here occasionally, as does Judgment Day (*All Stripped Down*). But while Waits ponders the larger picture of the physical vs. the spiritual, he likes to entertain with thrills and chills. Try on *Goin' Out West*, which sounds like something Charlie Manson might have written while contemplating a career in the movies, or *In the Colosseum*, where "The

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women all control their men / With razors and with wrists / And the princess squeezes grape juice / On a torrid bloody kiss." Happy hallucinations, my sweet. Pop music doesn't get more serious—or creepier—than this. *A.N.*

TRISHA YEARWOOD**Hearts In Armor**

MCA 10641 (38 min)

Performance: Powerful**Recording: Very good**

Trisha Yearwood has made one of the best albums to come out of Nashville in 1992, but it doesn't sound all that country. Oh, sure, you can hear a little pedal steel and fiddle here and a little dobro and mandolin there. And she knows her way around a backwoods moan as well as a honky-tonk throb. But "Hearts in Armor," her second album, seems to use just as many pop-rock accents as pop-country accents while delivering its considerable emotional wallop. In fact, Yearwood sings with far fewer country inflections and mannerisms than, say, the Linda Ronstadt of twenty years ago. She doesn't have to push her naturally tender vibrato to make us feel her desperation in *Nearest Distant Shore* or to make us understand her I'll-get-you determination in *Oh Lonesome You*. So when she really turns on the afterburners in *Down on My Knees*, the searing edge of her hurtful need nearly raises welts. Even if some of the tunes here seem a little generic, Yearwood makes us feel them as if she were telling our own stories. *R.G.*

J A Z Z**STAN GETZ****At the Shrine**

VERVE 513 753 (70 min)

Performance: Suave**Recording: Good remote**

Many jazz musicians have recorded as prolifically as Stan Getz, but only a few others can match the consistently high quality of his output. The first eight tracks of this CD reissue document the Getz quintet's participation in a 1954 Los Angeles concert that also featured the Gerry Mulligan and Dave Brubeck quartets and the Duke Ellington orchestra; in fact, Ellington introduces Getz in the opening track. The two additional tracks here were made in a studio the following day. This was Getz's first concert recording, and it's a flowing and—to use the day's "hip" buzzword—cool set of performances by a group that benefited greatly from the presence of the valve trombonist Bobby Brookmeyer and a solid rhythm section led by the pianist John Williams.

At the time of this recording, Getz had been through a drug ordeal, which included a six-month prison stay, but it certainly hadn't left any marks on his music. The strong rapport between him and Brookmeyer is a joy to hear, and the overall sound is clearly rooted in a style Mulligan perfected several decades ago: the aloof yet seething approach that gave the West Coast its first jazz identity. *C.A.*

DIZZY GILLESPIE**Dizzy's Diamonds:****The Best of the Verve Years**

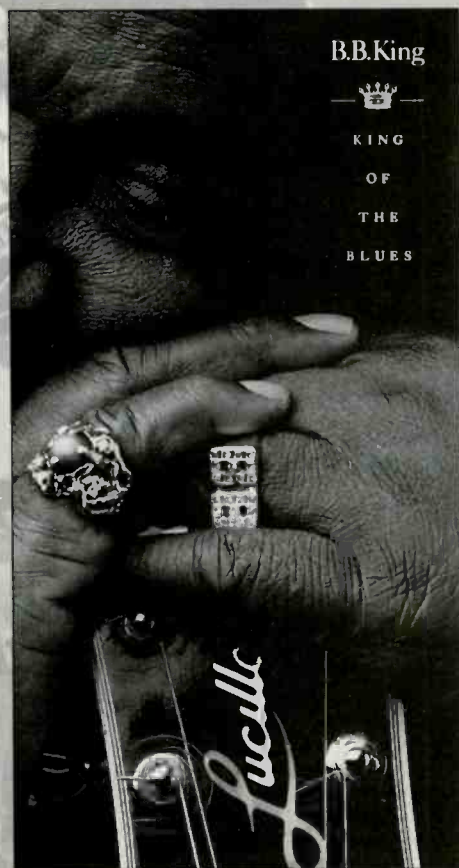
VERVE 513 875 (three discs, 223 min)

Performance: Dizzying diversity**Recording: Very good**

It doesn't seem like so many years ago that Dizzy Gillespie was a young man with a horn that had something very different to say. But 1992 saw him turn seventy-five, and the tributes poured in all year. Record companies know a good hook when they see one, so some of these homages weren't exactly altruistic, but when the music is good, reissues benefit us all, and this new Verve set is about as beneficial as they get.

Gillespie was a pivotal figure in the postwar development of American music. He personified bebop, which he performed with dazzling dexterity and to which he brought a sense of humor that certainly helped it gain wider acceptance. He was called the "Clown Prince of Bop," and some felt that his antics detracted from the music. Behind the humor, though, was a serious musician who not only helped to define modern jazz but also performed a successful marriage between jazz and Latin American music, and that aspect of his artistry is well represented here.

"The Best of the Verve Years" is actually a misnomer, for besides tracks that originally appeared on Norman Granz's Norgran and Verve labels, this collection of forty performances includes nine taken from Philips and




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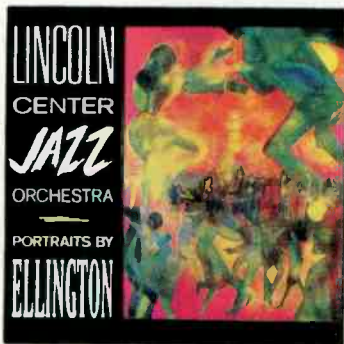
The long-awaited compilation from the creators of the Chess Box Sets and *Billie Holiday: The Complete Decca Recordings* (winner of two Grammy Awards) paints the definitive portrait of a living legend. ✦ 77 tracks for 5 hours of classic blues, including his first-ever recording, 1949's "Miss Martha King" ✦ 30 tracks on compact disc for the first time ever ✦ B.B.'s greatest hits, 19 rarities, including 7 previously unreleased ✦ 72-page color booklet featuring rare photos, liner notes and a first-person commentary by B.B. on his life and music ✦ It's nothing less than the royal treatment. *MCA.*

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its subsidiary label, Limelight. Spanning the years 1950 to 1964, the set is divided into three categories, each taking up a disc: "Big Band," "Small Groups & Guests," and "In an Afro-Cuban, Bossa Nova, Calypso Groove." To borrow that expression, it's all a "groove." Here is Dizzy Gillespie with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, Ella Fitzgerald, Oscar Peterson, Stan Getz, Stuff Smith, Bud Powell, James Moody, Wynton Kelly, Thelonious Monk, Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Parker, and Roy Eldridge (the trumpeter who so influenced Gillespie's style in the early days that one could hardly distinguish between the two). There is even a recording with gospel singer Sister Rosetta Tharpe singing and playing the piano. Need I say more? "Dizzy's Diamonds" sparkles gloriously. C.A.



LINCOLN CENTER JAZZ ORCHESTRA

Portraits by Ellington
COLUMBIA 53145 (58 min)

Performance: Fine
Recording: Good remote

New York City's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts has often given its stages over to jazz, but in the late Eighties it gave the idiom a serious hug, and what started as an embrace seems to have blossomed into a veritable love affair. One result of this mating is the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, a chameleonic band whose mission is to spread the music and leave no style unplayed. "Portraits by Ellington" features the orchestra in Duke's corner, performing a program of his tributes to people and places that have had an impact on what we might call the African-American experience. It includes shorter pieces, such as the portraits of Bill Robinson (*Bojangles*, 1940), Coleman Hawkins (*Self Portrait of the Bean*, 1962), and Bert Williams (*Portrait of Bert Williams*, 1940), as well as vital snippets from the *New Orleans Suite* (1970) and the *Liberian Suite*, commissioned by the government of Liberia to mark its 1947 centennial.

Sure, there are recordings of these compositions by Ellington himself, and if this were a studio session I would question its value, but this concert was not a slavish recreation of Ellington's performances—the solos by Wynton Marsalis, Todd Williams, Bill Easley, Michael White, and others are their own. While this CD is no substitute for the Ellington versions, if it makes you want to explore the originals, it has served its purpose. The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra is doing a splendid job of bringing jazz to ears that might otherwise not hear it, and such efforts must be encouraged. C.A.

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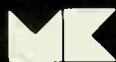
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BACH: Concertos for Two and Four Harpsichords

Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Koopman
ERATO 45649 (54 min)

Performance: Vigorous, decorative
Recording: Full

In 1729 Bach became the director of the Collegium Musicum in Leipzig, an instrumental ensemble that seems to have rehearsed and performed mostly in a local coffee house. Bach is known to have owned at least four harpsichords, and, besides himself and two or three of his sons, there were a number of capable colleagues and students who also played. He seems to have ransacked the closet for material: old instruments from his days as a court composer in Cöthen, Italian standbys (the composers were too far away to object or even notice), and even music by a local aristocratic dilettante (who was undoubtedly delighted), all arranged by the old man himself or at least under his supervision. There are, in all, ten solo concertos, three for two harpsichords apiece, two for three harpsichords, and one for four. This disc, part of a series by Ton Koopman and the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, comprises all the double concertos (remakes of earlier works by Bach himself) and the quadruple concerto (after Vivaldi).

Koopman is the stand-in for Johann Sebastian. He has scrupulously edited these works, he plays the lead harpsichord, and he directs the orchestra. I would describe his approach as tapestry-like: Everything is beautifully and stylishly woven, vigorous in line and color, clean and full in sound. He does not go in for embellished, stretched, or phrased expressivity, but his playing and directing are rhythmic and decorative. *E.S.*

BARBER: Violin Concerto

SHOSTAKOVICH: Violin Concerto No. 1

Salerno-Sonnenberg; London Symphony,
M. Shostakovich
EMI 54314 (65 min)

Performance: Warm, brilliant
Recording: Suitably schizoid

The Barber Violin Concerto, written in 1939 when the composer was still in his twenties, is a replay of late Romanticism, with long and wistful allegro and andante movements only partly contradicted by a short, fast, troubled finale. The Shostakovich Concerto No. 1, written during the dark days of Stalinism and then put aside until after Stalin's death, is less conventional, alternating two big, slow, introspective sections, an opening nocturne and a somber passacaglia, with two short, fast, biting satirical movements, a scherzo and a burlesque—all in all, Shostakovich at his most schizotypic. Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg seems equally at home on either side of this split-personality equation. The Shostakovich at the helm is the composer's son Maxim, and, along with the London Symphony, they make a very strong team for both the warmer Barber and the harder edges of the Shostakovich. *E.S.*

**BEETHOVEN: Violin Concerto;
Violin Sonata No. 10**

Zukerman, Neikrug; Los Angeles
Philharmonic, Mehta
RCA VICTOR 61219 (73 min)

Performance: Not quite a mesh
Recording: Good

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BEETHOVEN: Violin Concerto

BRUCH: Violin Concerto No. 1

Chung; Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra,
London Philharmonic, Tennstedt
EMI 54072 (70 min)

Performance: Very good
Recording: Warm

Some fifteen years ago Deutsche Grammophon issued a recording of the Beethoven Violin Concerto by Pinchas Zukerman with Daniel Barenboim and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Zukerman and Barenboim were frequent collaborators, and their Beethoven glowed with the noblest sort of intensity. Since that recording has been out of print for some time, Zukerman's new one with Zubin Mehta, another long-time collaborator, should be assured an eager welcome, but to my ear it doesn't measure up to its predecessor. It hardly needs saying that there is beautiful solo playing here. The orchestral playing is tidy, too, but there is little in the way of the give and take that made the Chicago version come to life so vibrantly. Zukerman and Mehta just don't seem to interest each other here. Zukerman really soars in the sonata, but the exalted playing on his part is not, alas, matched by the pianist, Marc Neikrug. The sound quality is quite good in both works.

Kyung-Wha Chung's remake of the Beethoven is a happier story. Though still not clearly preferable to her earlier London recording with Kiril Kondrashin and the Vienna Philharmonic, her new version not only has the advantage of an appealing bonus in the form of a characteristically warm and animated presentation of the Bruch concerto, but the Beethoven was recorded live in concert at the Concertgebouw. Her interpretation may have deepened a bit since the earlier recording, and she and Tennstedt do manifest that elusive give and take, building with apparent spontaneity to a cumulatively satisfying realization. The sound has the characteristic warmth of its marvelous locale, though it is a little less well detailed than one might wish—and the applause at the end is left in. The Bruch was beautifully recorded, without an audience, at EMI's Abbey Road studio. *R.F.*

**BRIDGE: Suite for String Orchestra;
There Is a Willow Grows Aslant a Brook;
Cherry Ripe; Sir Roger de Coverly**

DELIUS: Sonata for String Orchestra
New Zealand Chamber Orchestra, Braithwaite
KOCH INTERNATIONAL
3-7139-2HI (69 min)

Performance: Beguiling
Recording: Very good

Frank Bridge's relatively early and very listenable Suite for String Orchestra here makes its fourth CD appearance in an elegant and intimate-scale reading by the New Zealand Chamber Orchestra under Nicholas Braithwaite. Equally enjoyable are his settings of the traditional English song *Cherry Ripe* and the dance *Sir Roger de Coverly*. But by far the finest of the Bridge offerings on this CD is the hauntingly desolate 1927 work for winds, harp, and strings, *There Is a Willow Grows Aslant a Brook* (the title comes from the Queen's words in *Hamlet* upon being told of Ophelia's suicide by drowning).

The Delius work is Eric Fenby's string-orchestra arrangement of the 1916 String Quartet. He did the poignantly nostalgic slow movement, "Late Swallows," in 1963, the other three movements in 1977. If the music is not as consistently inspired as the contemporaneous Violin Concerto, it still makes for a pleasing listening experience either in its original guise or in Fenby's sensitive and altogether knowledgeable arrangement. All told, a very attractive disc, beautifully recorded. *D.H.*

DEBUSSY: Prelude à l'Après-Midi d'un

Faune; La Boîte à Joujoux; Jeux

London Symphony Orchestra, Thomas
SONY SK 48231 (63 min)

Performance: Expansive
Recording: Sumptuous


Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun, written in 1894, was Debussy's first important work for orchestra; *Jeux* was his last. The link here is Diaghilev, who in 1912 brought out



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Nijinsky's choreographic treatment of the *Faun* and commissioned *Jeux*, which had its première the following year. The balletic and chronological links, without Diaghilev, extend to *La Boîte à Joujoux*, which Debussy undertook in 1913; in this case the orchestration was left to André Caplet, who completed the score and had the work produced after Debussy's death.

Michael Tilson Thomas has the London Symphony Orchestra in splendid form here, and his commitment to the music is beyond question. But for all the links in terms of chronology and category, there is more in these three pieces to distinguish each one from the others—in terms of both character and textures—than is evident in these performances. Thomas's expansive approach, which works so beautifully in the *Faun*, tends to homogenize the two more extended pieces. *La Boîte à Joujoux* loses a good deal of its unpretentious childhood essence, veering into the world of *Pelléas*, and *Jeux*, one of the pivotal masterworks of the early twentieth century, sounds more like *La Mer* than it really ought to—one wants a bit more crispness, even at the risk of brittleness. The whole program is gorgeous in its rather unvarying way, though, and sumptuously recorded. **R.F.**

ELGAR: *Symphony No. 1; Pomp and Circumstance Marches Nos. 1 and 2*
Baltimore Symphony, Zinman
TELARC 80310 (62 min)
Performance: With immense conviction
Recording: Top-drawer

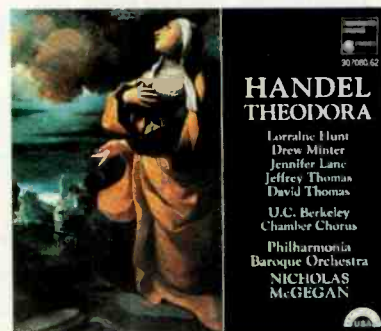
This recording by David Zinman and the Baltimore Symphony appears to be the first by an American orchestra of the Elgar First Symphony, which until recent decades has been considered pretty much exclusive British property. The score bears the same opus number as Beethoven's "Eroica," and its aspirations are by no means dissimilar. It is music cast on a heroic scale, although the visionary opening theme apparently gets lost in an impenetrable orchestral thicket. But what transpires over its 50-minute span can be summed up in lines from T. S. Eliot's *East Coker*: "There is only the fight to recover what has been lost / And found and lost again and again . . ."

At all events, Zinman and his players display total mastery of the ebb and flow of the opening movement's complex textures. The march-style second movement is thrillingly taut and fierce, and the adagio into which it flows without pause is movingly tender, enhanced by subtle touches of portamento in the string body (I suspect Zinman knows Elgar's own recording). And the "fight to recover" finale comes off with blazing and triumphant conviction. The Telarc recording is full in body, with remarkable elucidation of detail in the first and last movements. No less fine are the two "Pomp and Circumstance" marches—the D Major done complete with organ at the close, and the A Minor (my particular favorite) imbued with superb drive and spirit. Good as are most of the recorded performances of these works by English orchestras, whether led by their own conductors or by international stars of the baton, Zinman's can stand up to them all. **D.H.**

HANDEL: *Theodora*
Hunt, Minter, Lane, J. Thomas, D. Thomas;
U.C. Berkeley Chamber Chorus; Philharmonia
Baroque Orchestra, McGegan
HARMONIA MUNDI 907060.62
(three discs, 168 min)
Performance: Thoughtful and accomplished
Recording: Excellent

For many Handel admirers, this recording is an answered prayer. *Theodora*, written in 1749, is one of Handel's last oratorios (actually, the last one written while the composer was in reasonably good health), and it is a sterling example of accumulated wisdom. With its spare though incredibly deft scoring, it may be Handel's most inward-looking work. Johannes Somary's pioneering Vanguard recording, featuring Heather Harper and Maureen Forrester, is well sung, but the performance practices are dated. Nikolaus Harnoncourt's live recording last year on Teldec has sublime moments, but his slack tempos sometimes make the music seem flabby, his soloists are stylistically inconsistent, and the work is shoehorned onto two CD's by roughly 30 minutes of cuts.

In this new recording, Nicholas McGegan doesn't make all that strong a case for performing the piece uncut—despite his best efforts, there are less-than-riveting passages. But his



Mata's "American Panorama"

The all-American program of Eduardo Mata's new Dorian recording with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra—works of Bernstein, Copland, and Harris—harks back not only to the conductor's first recordings with the orchestra he took over in 1977



(several Copland titles for RCA Victor) but also to the beginning of the orchestra's own discography, which included Copland ballet performances conducted by Antal Doráti (also RCA). But the new disc is of far more than symbolic value in Mata's valedictory season in Dallas.

While this particular assortment of works may strike more than a few collectors as being somewhat foolhardy in the face of the imposing competition left by Leonard Bernstein, who was especially authoritative in this repertory, the most compelling performance here is that of Bernstein's own *On the Waterfront* Suite, which to my ears comes through with at least as much impact and cogency as either of the two recordings conducted by the composer. Without a single self-conscious gesture or gratuitous emphasis, Mata lets the music make its points as naturally and inevitably as a tone poem by Tchaikovsky or Strauss.

The familiar suite from Copland's *Billy the*

Kid does not receive quite that strong a performance, but it is a good, solid one, and Mata reaches another high point in Roy Harris's magnificent Third Symphony. Here, as in the Bernstein, he succeeds in combining a clear-eyed focus on the music's substance with a fully sympathetic response to its emotional content—and receives similar commitment from every section of the orchestra. It is a beautiful realization that transcends any real or imagined parochial limitations, just as truly great readings of Nielsen or Shostakovich do.

The album title, "An American Panorama," strikes me as being at once blustery and trivializing, but the musicmaking is something to cheer about, and so is the exceptionally natural sound. **Richard Freed**

BERNSTEIN: *On the Waterfront, Suite*
HARRIS: *Symphony No. 3*
COPLAND: *Billy the Kid, Suite*
Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Eduardo Mata
DORIAN DOR-90170 (60 min)

more sensitive "authentic" approach enables the work, as a whole, to bloom. Any semblance of the old "big bow wow" Handel would be the death of this extremely personal, intimate music. McGegan's clean, transparent sonorities show just how daringly austere, and startlingly direct, the scoring is.

His cast is so well matched, the oratorio seems all of a piece, though the singers are also wonderful individually, especially the honey-voiced countertenor Drew Minter and the soprano Lorraine Hunt, who seems to have a special identification with Theodora, the early Christian martyr who was imprisoned by the Romans. In more dramatic passages, Hunt's voice seems to have greater resources of amplitude and color than her previous recordings suggested. Among McGegan's long string of Handel recordings, this is the best yet (even better than his much-lauded *Susanna*), reflecting the accumulated wisdom of his own years of work with the same singers, orchestra, and composer. *D.P.S.*

HAYDN: Trumpet, Oboe, and Harpsichord Concertos

Goodwin, Bennett, Pinnock; the English Concert, Pinnock
 ARCHIV 431678 (56 min)
 Performance: Good
 Recording: Good

Haydn, who was not a performer himself, was not particularly enamored of the concerto as a form of expression. His Trumpet

Concerto, long beloved by trumpet soloists, is his major claim to fame as a concerto composer, and I sometimes wonder if it would be so well known if trumpeters had anything else to play. This recording speaks to that issue: It uses the keyed trumpet for which the concerto was written but on which it has not been much played in a century or two. As played here by Mark Bennett, it has a kind of broad, open, Classical sound that suits the music perfectly and gives it character.

Oddly, the recording leads off with an Oboe Concerto that may not even be by Haydn. Paul Goodwin's pleasant performance does not show enough qualities of invention or technique to demonstrate the piece's authorship unequivocally. On the other hand, the D Major Harpsichord Concerto, very popular in Haydn's own day and still performed now and again (often as a piano concerto), is indubitably his. In Trevor Pinnock's sparkling, even-handed performance (on harpsichord), it takes on new life—this is "original-instrument" performance at its level best. *E.S.*

KANCHELI: Symphony No. 4 ("In memoria di Michelangelo"); Symphony No. 5
 Georgian National Orchestra, Kakhidze
 ELEKTRA NONESUCH 79290 (51 min)
 Performance: Gripping
 Recording: Vivid

Giya Kancheli, born in Tbilisi, Georgia, in the then Soviet Union in 1935, has composed seven symphonies, among other orches-

tral works. This authoritatively performed, well-engineered 1978 recording by the Georgian National Orchestra under Jansug Kakhidze, now released for the first time in the West, offers his Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, which respectively date from 1975 and 1977 and are both cast in single, 25-minute movements marked largo. Kancheli's "voice" isn't easy to identify at first, partly because he uses bits of ideas from other composers in a collage-like counterpoint. The results lack traditional symphonic logic but have much of the spirituality of Pärt and Gorecki, the orchestral brilliance of Prokofiev, and the narrative thrust of Schnittke.

The Fourth Symphony, which carries the enigmatic subtitle "In memory of Michelangelo," seems to have been written under the influence of the splintered first movement of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 15. The themes are fragmented by snatches of lullabies, martial-sounding brass, and wistful-sounding chimes, all set against each other with a dreamy, polytonal weightlessness. Kancheli masterfully maintains tension throughout the movement, which builds to an impressive cumulative impact as the individual elements interact like characters in a play. Despite a more extreme dynamic range, the Fifth Symphony is a less sprawling and more viscerally compelling work, with a greater economy of musical material and more austere scoring. Both symphonies are well worth investigating. *D.P.S.*

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MARTINU: Fresques de Piero Della Francesca; Sinfonietta La Jolla; Toccata e Due Canzoni
Orchestre National de France, Conlon
ERATO 2292 45794 (62 min)
Performance: Very good
Recording: Fine

In many ways this is the best recording yet of Martinu's richly orchestrated tone poems inspired by the Piero Della Francesca frescoes. Though James Conlon doesn't quite have the authority of Charles Mackerras on Supraphon or the luxurious expansiveness of James DePreist on Bis, the performance is taut, alert, and well played. The music is flattered by the orchestra's French accent, and the infrequently heard accompanying works are welcome, particularly the Toccata, which suggests what George Gershwin's music might have sounded like if he'd lived another fifteen years. *D.P.S.*

SCHUBERT: String Quintet in C Major
Emerson String Quartet; Rostropovich
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON
431 792 (53 min)
Performance: Intense
Recording: Bright

This is the third recording of Schubert's late masterpiece with Mstislav Rostropovich as "visiting" cellist. There is no question in my mind that his presence with the Emerson Quartet is responsible for the blinding intensity of the reading, which is emphasized by a decidedly bright church acoustic. What you hear on this CD will probably either get your adrenaline flowing, or put you off altogether. The ferocious introduction sets the tone, and even in the episodes of lyrical repose there is no escaping the sense of a dare-all performance on the razor's edge. The intensity is, if anything, enhanced in the slow movement by the subtle touches of portamento from the first violin. The scherzo verges on the manic at times, with the somber trio almost oppressive in its relentless quality. Nor is there any letup in the Magyar-tintured finale. I felt out of breath by the end.

If all that seems a bit much, the Cleveland Quartet with Yo-Yo Ma on CBS provides a lovely and altogether more ingratiating alternative. Then, of course, there is the touchstone reading of them all, the 1952 recording by Isaac Stern, Alexander Schneider, Milton Katims, Pablo Casals, and Paul Tortelier (now available only in a four-CD CBS/Sony set celebrating Stern's life in music). *D.H.*

TCHAIKOVSKY: Pique Dame (The Queen of Spades)
Freni, Atlantov, Leiferkus, Forrester, Hvorostovsky, others; Tanglewood Festival Chorus; Boston Symphony, Ozawa
RCA VICTOR 60992 (three discs, 156 min)
Performance: Exciting
Recording: Excellent

The Boston Symphony Orchestra, with its shimmering sound and precise rhythmic execution, sets a new performance standard for this opera under Seiji Ozawa's dynamic and firmly controlled leadership. By and large the singers, too, measure up to their tasks, though superlatives come in short supply. As Herman, the obsessive and self-destructive gambler, the tenor Vladimir Atlantov displays seasoned mastery. His palette may lack some



subtlety, but he finds exciting ways to bring Herman to life. At this stage of her distinguished career, Mirella Freni cannot suggest Lisa's girlishness, but she offers a convincing portrayal of a deeply wounded and desperate woman in tones no longer radiant but possessing great emotional power. The two baritones are effectively contrasted: Sergei Leiferkus, a vigorous Tomsy with his powerful, grainy, and not perfectly focused instrument, and Dimitri Hvorostovsky, with his smooth and elegant delineation of the noble Yeletsky. Maureen Forrester makes a commanding Countess, tender in her nostalgic French aria and utterly realistic in her death scene.

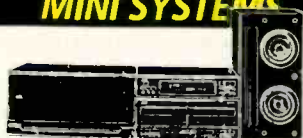
In the minor roles, Katherine Ciesinski's heavy vibrato intrudes on Pauline's exquisite song, and while some of the officers (Chekalinsky and Chaplitsky) are adequately done, Julian Rodescu's Surin is toneless. The soprano Dominique Labelle, however, does a nice turn as Chloé in the pastoral scene of Act II. The live recording has been accomplished on the highest plane, without intrusive applause, and the accompanying booklet is complete with multilingual texts. While this is the best-recorded *Pique Dame*, vocally it's not an all-out improvement over the earlier Philips and Sony sets. *G.J.*

VERDI: Quartet in E Minor
SIBELIUS: Quartet in D Minor
("Voces Intimae")
Juilliard String Quartet
SONY SK 48193 (54 min)
Performance: Splendid Sibelius
Recording: Sibelius better

I have an abiding fondness for Verdi's lone string quartet, composed just before his Requiem, but the Juilliard foursome makes heavy going of the score for my taste. The Vogler Quartet on RCA has the true measure of the music's volatility and Italianate lyricism. On the other hand, the rugged Juilliard approach works just fine with Sibelius's single mature string quartet. The music can take it—especially the two outer movements. The vivace second movement seems to ride on the wings of the wind, and the dance-rhythm finale is done with a ferocity that recalls the late pages of *En Saga*. What the central slow movement, whose introspective quality gives the work its title ("Intimate Voices"), may lack in intimacy here is compensated for by a quietly relentless intensity. I can live with this reading. The recording, from the Library of Congress's Coolidge Auditorium, is decidedly more satisfying to the ear than the rather cramped, close-up sound of the Verdi, done at Princeton University's Alexander Hall. *D.H.*

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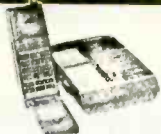
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CLASSICAL MUSIC

WALTON: Violin Concerto; Suite from "Henry V"; "Spitfire" Prelude and Fugue; Capriccio Burlesco

Rosand; Florida Philharmonic, Judd
HARMONIA MUNDI HMU 907070 (60 min)

Performance: Excellent concerto
Recording: Good

Heading the menu in this varied selection of music by William Walton is the brilliant and passionate Violin Concerto from the late 1930's. The soloist, Aaron Rosand, does a first-rate job on both the musical and virtuoso levels, even compared with such illustrious recorded competitors as the work's dedicatee, Jascha Heifetz (with Walton conducting), or Kyung Wha Chung and Nigel Kennedy (both with André Previn). The conductor James Judd, most of whose recordings have been from his native England, has whipped the decade-old Florida Philharmonic into yet another formidable regional orchestra. Besides providing fine support in the Violin Concerto, the players also show their mettle in the sparkling and elegantly crafted 1968 *Capriccio Burlesco*. The *Spitfire* and *Henry V* film music is creditably done, and the lovely movements for strings, "Death of Falstaff" and "Touch her soft lips, and part," are played with great sensitivity. The sound is closely focused but clean and well balanced. *D.H.*



WIENIAWSKI: Violin Concertos Nos. 1 and 2; Légende

SARASATE: Zigeunerweisen
Shaham; London Symphony, Foster
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON

431 815 (68 min)
Performance: Elegant
Recording: Warm

Young Gil Shaham has shown himself to be one of the most reliable of virtuosos in respect to tastefulness as well as opulence. I can imagine more exciting performances of these four works in terms of surface glitter and fireworks, and certainly more indulgent ones, but hardly more elegant ones overall. There's nothing bland about Shaham's elegance, either: He adjusts to the individual heartbeat of each piece and gives sentiment its due, but he never lets it spill over into schmalz. His tone is big, warm, and embracing, and Lawrence Foster, always a superb concerto partner, has the London Symphony on its toes and responding in kind. The Sarasate *Légende*, I suspect, may prove to be the "sleepier" here, the piece that eventually works the strongest magic on the listener, but the entire program is a joy. The recorded sound faithfully conveys the characteristics of the performances. *R.F.*

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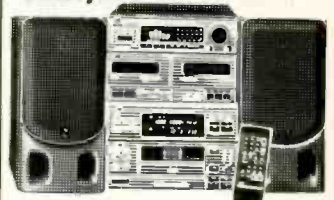


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ALBÉNIZ: Suite Española.

TURINA: Guitar Works.

Manuel Barrueco. EMI 54382 (65 min). The Albéniz is Manuel Barrueco's guitar arrangement of the eight piano pieces in the enlarged edition of the famous suite—neatly played, to be sure, but more conventional sounding on the guitar than in the (admittedly, guitar-inspired) piano original. Turina is represented by his five original guitar pieces—*Fandanguillo*, *Sevillana*, *Ráfaga* ("gust of wind"), *Homenaje a Tárrega*, and a flamencoesque *Sonata*. They're all charmers, especially in these suave performances and recordings. *E.S.*

BRUCKNER:

Symphonies No. 0 and No. 8.

Israel Philharmonic, Mehta. SONY 45864 (two discs, 123 min). This appears to be the first Bruckner recording to emanate from Israel. Zubin Mehta brings plenty of vitality to the early Symphony No. 0, redolent of late Schubert, but the titanic Eighth, heard here in the Nowak edition with its cuts in the slow movement and finale, is no match for the readings by Günter Wand (RCA) or Karajan (DG). The Israeli orchestra doesn't have enough heft, or perhaps lung power, which may account for Mehta's lightweight and sometimes hurried reading. *D.H.*

MENDELSSOHN:

A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Rotterdam Philharmonic, Tate. EMI 54348 (two discs, 117 min). This recording of Mendelssohn's incidental music to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* includes lots of the original dialogue, performed by actors of the Peter Hall Company, in order to present the music in its dramatic context. But for repeated listening, it's perhaps best to program out the somewhat anemic dramatic performances and leave only Jeffrey Tate's fresh, lithe interpretations of the familiar music. Musically, this is one of the best recordings of the work available. *D.P.S.*

SIBELIUS:

Lemminkäinen Legends; En Saga.

Los Angeles Philharmonic, Salonen. SONY SK 48067 (63 min). The last two of the four *Lemminkäinen Legends*, the magically poetic *Swan of Tuonela* and the brilliant *Lemminkäinen's Return*, are justifiably the best known; *Lemminkäinen and the Island Maidens* and

Lemminkäinen in Tuonela are second-drawer in comparison. Esa-Pekka Salonen's readings here have theatricality but little genuine poetry, and his *En Saga* strikes me as hasty and superficial. The sound is excellent, but I'd recommend Järvi on Bis or Gibson on Chandos for the *Legends*. *D.H.*

TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 1 ("Winter Dreams"); Nutcracker Suite.

Chicago Symphony, Abbado. SONY SK 48056 (66 min). Claudio Abbado here concludes his traversal of the Tchaikovsky symphonies with the Chicago orchestra. The First Symphony is warm in sentiment throughout the first half, by turns delicate and brilliant in the second half. A neatly played *Nutcracker Suite* fills out this spaciously recorded CD. Like most conductors, Abbado lets the horns overpower in the reprise of the slow movement's big tune. Andrew Litton's recording on Virgin is the only one I've heard that has it right. *D.H.*

MATT HAIMOVITZ:

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DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 431 813 (54 min). The twentieth-century pieces for solo cello here all refer to the Bach cello suites. The early sonatas by George Crumb (1955) and György Ligeti (1948/1953) are not insubstantial, but Max Reger's Suite in G Major (1915) is little more than a condensation of Bach. The meat of the recital is Benjamin Britten's Suite, Op. 72 (1964). Although Matt Haimovitz softens its rugged profile with his creamy tone and legato, which are emphasized by the resonant recording, his performances throughout are as intelligent as they are delicious. *D.P.S.*

STRING FEVER: Fever Pitch.

KOCH 37150 (61 min). String Fever, founded by Marin Alsop in 1981, is a superb classical string orchestra largely made up of women players. The mostly original pieces here are by David Rimelis, Billy Ver Planck, George Bogatko, and Michael Sahl. One of the extraordinarily engaging features of both the music and the musicians is how easily they all cross over from rock to ragas to reggae to jazz to gypsy to blues to Bach. String Fever manages to sound completely natural, at home, and at the same time unique and, well, groovy. *E.S.*

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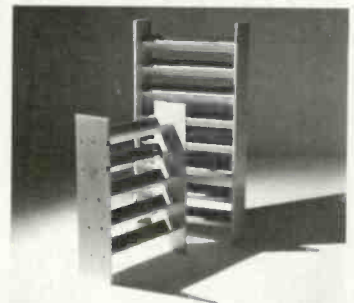
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January

GOING ON RECORD

BY WILLIAM LIVINGSTONE

The Last Great Romantic

SINGERS, pianists, and conductors are the most glamorous and charismatic musical performers, and they inspire intense devotion and loyalty in their fans. I can't say that I have a favorite conductor, but the singer who inspired my deepest devotion and loyalty was Maria Callas (1923-1977). She was such a gifted interpreter that her performances really moved me and made me



Jorge Bolet (1914-1990)

feel that I had surrendered to her the control of my emotions.

Many pianists have touched me, delighted me, and given me pleasure, but the only one who has stirred me so deeply was the Cuban-American Jorge Bolet (1914-1990). Whether with thunderous power or delicate filagree, he could make me feel taken out of myself to some other mental and emotional world. That ability and his large, singing tone have led me to describe him as the Callas of the keyboard.

Born in Havana, Cuba, Jorge Bolet (pronounced George bo-LETT) started piano lessons at the age of seven. When he was twelve, he went to the

Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where he studied with David Saperton and Josef Hofmann. His New York recital debut in 1937 prompted Samuel Chotzinoff to describe him in the *New York Post* as "an artist of prodigious technique and unmistakable musical powers . . . a virtuoso in the noble sense of the word, a pianist who strives for the heroic in tone, sonority, and emotion." And that's the way he played for the rest of his life.

With talent like that and reviews like that Bolet might reasonably have expected an immediate international career, but somehow worldwide fame eluded him in his youth. I first heard him in 1970 at a benefit concert for the International Piano Archive at which he appeared with Alicia de Larrocha, Bruce Hungerford, Guiomar Novaes, Raymond Lewenthal, and I don't know who all. He played Liszt's *Reminiscences of Lucia di Lammermoor* and Concert Paraphrase on *Rigoletto*, and I have not been the same since. I had never heard playing like that.

The next day the *New York Times* proclaimed that Bolet had played the best at the benefit. Soon RCA signed him, released a couple of Liszt records he had made in Spain, and recorded his Carnegie Hall recital in 1974. Belatedly recognition seemed

to be coming his way, but celebrity did not follow. In the United States he remained almost a cult figure, adored by loyal fans waiting for something we called the Romantic Revival, which never came. Despite rave reviews for his recordings, RCA dropped him.

In his sixties, however, he found a devoted following in Europe, where many music lovers realized that the greatest living Romantic pianist was not Claudio Arrau or Vladimir Horowitz, but Bolet. During the 1980's British Decca (London Records) made a series of remarkable recordings with him in concertos and solo piano works by Chopin, Debussy, Rachmaninoff,

and most notably Liszt, his specialty.

These recordings captured Bolet well, but his artistic legacy will not be permanently available to collectors. Only two years after his death some of his recordings have been deleted from the catalog. Fortunately, some have been reissued at midprice (about \$10), and I suggest that piano lovers buy a few before they drop from sight.

The coupling of the Grieg and Schumann concertos with Riccardo Chailly and the Berlin Radio Symphony is now available at midprice (London 430 719). So is a 75-minute compilation with different orchestras and conductors that includes the Rachmaninoff Concerto No. 2, Liszt's *Totentanz*, and his seldom-performed orchestration of Schubert's "Wanderer" Fantasy (London 430 736). If you are new to Bolet's work, start with one of his Liszt performances—*Années de Pèlerinage*, the Sonata in B Minor, *Venezia e Napoli*, or the transcriptions of Schubert songs, all of which show up in different combinations on CD. In his Liszt performances I hear not only passages of great beauty, but also the seductive hedonism that was a Bolet hallmark and his irresistible combination of manly strength and tenderness.

"Jorge Bolet Live at Carnegie Hall" (RCA Victor 7710) contains much of his 1974 recital—the Bach-Busoni Chaconne, the Chopin Preludes, and the Wagner-Liszt *Tannhäuser* Overture. It is a major recorded document.

The two Liszt recordings that RCA released in the early 1970's are now on the Dutch label Ensayo, and Allegro Imports (1-800-288-2007) keeps them in stock. The one of the Transcendental Etudes (Ensayo 3401) is treasurable—listen to *Ricordanza!*—but still more treasurable is "The Virtuoso Piano Paraphrases" (3406). It contains the ones of *Rigoletto* and *Lucia*, the first pieces I heard Bolet play.

The music world has not been the same since Callas died, and I expect to miss Bolet as long as I live. I don't know whether I've accumulated enough merit in this life to deserve a ticket to Heaven. They say it's a musical place, but I'm not so big on harps and church choirs. I'd want to spend eternity in a place where I could always hear Callas and Bolet. □

PHOTO: RCA RECORDS



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