NEW FLATS

JANUARY - MARCH 1985

ISSUE 2

The magazine about LASERVISION

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REVIEWS

LaserVision

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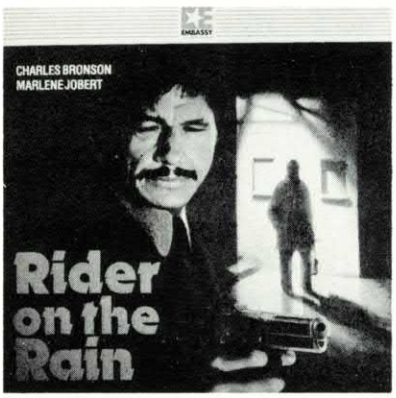

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NEW FLATS

JANUARY - MARCH 1985

ISSUE 2

SIDEWINDER VIDEO
17 CHURCH LANE,
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WEST MIDLANDS B76 0BJ
VIDEO SOFTWARE SPECIALISTS

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NEW FLATS is published quarterly with the aim of providing news, equipment reports, and disc reviews for the benefit of LaserVision users, as well as covering topics of interest in the related fields of Laser-optics, video, and audio. Every effort is made to produce as accurate and informative a publication as possible and all the contents of this magazine are printed in good faith, but resposibility cannot be accepted for other's errors or for facts that may have changed during the production period of this issue.

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Welcome to Issue 2,

First off, thanks for all the response to the first issue and No. 2, apart from being bigger will, I hope, contain more of interest to a greater number of LaserVision users. Although these are relatively early days for LV there seems to be much more to write about than would first appear, and early responses from readers would tend to confirm the need for a magazine such as this. The aim now must be to establish a steady circulation in order to show the world that LaserVision means business! Whatever you want released on LV, this magazine is your chance to float ideas and win others over to your suggestions. There is no point in LV producers issuing product that stays unsold in the racks. More on this in 'What We Want On LV'.

A thought that cropped up in contemplating the feasibility of a magazine was the implication that magazines are topical and newsworthy, and LV did not seem a particularly eventful field of interest. The prospects though are good for 1985 and I think you will find this year's issues eminently newsworthy.

Do write and let me know if there is anything you want paid specific attention to or you have any point you wish to raise. If you require a reply please include an SAE.

LETTERS 4
WHAT'S HAPPENING 7, 11, 18
JAPANESE REPORT 8
USA REPORT 10
GUIDE FOR UNBELIEVERS 13
LV PLAYER SURVEY 18
THE LASERDISC EXPERIENCE 20
NEW RELEASES 21
REVIEWS 22
BOOK REVIEW 34
CATALOGUE UPDATE 35
COLLECTOR'S PAGE 35
WHAT WE WANT ON LV 36

Letters

From : Mr. V. Williams, Cheshire.

Would like to say how pleased I am to see a magazine on LaserVision. I have been collecting discs since PHILIPS introduced LaserVision and I have a VLP600 and a VLP 830, both smashing machines. Film titles I would like to see on LaserVision are: 'It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World', 'Return Of The Jedi', 'Empire Strikes Back', 'Silkwood', 'Class', DISNEY titles, EMI titles, 'Krull', 'Dark Crystal'. Also some of the American titles that you list in the first issue of NEW FLATS -'Insatiable' etc. One last point. PHILIPS do not seem to be particularly reliable when it comes to the release times of discs! Looking forward to the next issue.

Thanks for the suggestions. Most of the features you mention would seem good releases and I guess it is more than likely just a matter of time and money before they appear on LV. As regards the racier titles, I really feel this has been a genuine mistake in the early days of LV not to release this type of material. LV cannot be seen to be unrepresented in different fields of interest otherwise people will always be wary of taking LV seriously. There is hope here for the future I think though it won't happen tomorrow. See below for the disc availabilty bit.

From : R.S. Chamberlin, West Yorkshire.

I read with great interest issue one of NEW FLATS. I have been a film collector for years and have some 400 films on Super 8, Standard 8, 9.5mm., and 16mm., sound and silent. I bought my LV player a few months ago and am satisfied with its performance, although it is a little noisy in operation. I did not choose the remote control version as I can't see that I will ever use the facility.

My interests are classical music and stories, musical films and old movies. I would like to see such films as 'Land Without Music', 'A Song To Remember', 'Phantom Of The Opera' etc. These I would buy without hesitation. I now have over a dozen LV discs which I enjoy immensely and can watch repeatedly.

This thing about picking up noise from the player can be a problem. Although some people prefer to have the player close at hand in order to change discs quickly, if the noise aspect is of greater significance there is a lot to be said for having the player as far away as possible and using the remote, if you have one!

From : John Heffernan, Dublin

Thankyou for the first issue of NEW FLATS. Two years ago I wrote to a video magazine asking them to include a page or two on videodisc reviews. I got a reply stating that the content of the disc would be the same as the tape. I have spent a couple of pounds a month trying to find something to read on LaserVision and now we have it in NEW FLATS. We all make mistakes in collecting and I think that the reviews of the discs in the magazine can help people to choose. The swap and sell section could also help fellow collectors.

A word about myself. I bought a Laser player in London in June 1982. I go there about twice a year and buy about a dozen discs at a time. LaserVision is not on sale in Dublin. I could not join the Silver Disc Club as I was not a resident of the United Kingdom. So the magazine is a double boon for me. Who knows. I may not be a lone voice in the wilderness. If you print a letters section I may even meet a fellow collector here.

Some LV releases I would like to see are : 'The Jolson Story'(Columbia), 'Jolson sings Again'(Columbia), and any Frank Sinatra live concert.

Certainly if any other readers in Eire exist and would like to get in touch with John I'll forward his address. Although this letter appears in the middle of the letters page it was in fact the last letter received before press date and John's suggestions for film releases, like many other responses underlines the need for good old films as well as (from other responses so far received) the best of the current crop. The Frank Sinatra suggestion would seem sound though the 'older' generation of music artistes appear poorly represented on video generally, let alone LV.

From : David Shirley, Warwick.

I purchased a LaserVision player when the price fell and paid £199 for the VLP 700. I thought it was being a bit extravagant at first but the benefits are many. I tend to rent films and purchase music discs, but this is where the problems start. All the LaserVision Centres in my area have their stocks of 200 discs,of which the majority are feature films, and all Centres have the same stock. I exhausted my dealer's stock of the discs I wanted to buy within a month. Therefore I have to order. Of the four I have ordered one came within a week, two within a fortnight, but the last one I am still waiting for after eight weeks. This disc is off the latest list (September) and I am suspicious that PHILIPS are releasing the list in advance in order to guage response. Congratulations on your efforts to make PHILIPS aware of the needs of LaserVision owners.

Several people have mentioned problems with getting discs on the latest lists. The sequence of events appears to be that a batch of titles is contracted and prepared for release,and the tapes sent up to Blackburn for mastering and pressing. Sometimes the tapes do not come through on time, sometimes they are unsatisfactory technically. That leaves the rest to be programmed through the various process stages and with the size of the title lists currently being issued, the only way to ensure everything on the list being available on time would be to store the stuff in the factory awaiting completion of the whole batch. This would mean waiting even longer (can this be pos-

sible?). With the current ambitious release plans I expect this situation is likely to continue in the near future but after a bit of a lull in 1984, at least we are getting a quantity of new product. If US experience is anything to go by, seasoned LV users tend to regard LV disc release dates as more of a 'forthcoming attraction' announcement - and this is in a country where the LV disc market is more advanced.

From : Keith Arnold, Kent.

Congratulations on NEW FLATS - a most interesting and informative magazine. In reading issue 1 one wonders "what will he write about next quarter, surely it's all been said". What do I think of the magazine? It's packed full of useful information and it is obvious from your remarks that you are optimistic about the continuation and development of the system. Hopefully NEW FLATS will continue and prove to be the shop window of LaserVision which the present PHILIPS meagre newsletter is not! I note many typographical errors (or dare I say - spelling mistakes!) which could be eradicated in the future by careful proof reading. The titles of reviews in the first edition appear to reflect your own personal tastes as they are principly semi-cult and popular music. I believe that in future you will need to diversify and have a more catholic approach. You may need to have guest reviewers for the many other subjects. The problem here would be in achieving a level of standardisation but it could be that you would have the final view on the grades awarded.

What do I think of PHILIPS? Their optimistic approach is to be greatly admired as it must be costing them dearly at the moment. I had a long conversation with their information department several months ago, and was told in no uncertain manner that the system was to continue. Your ' Open Letter To Philips' article in the November WHAT VIDEO prompted me to write to PHILIPS suggesting various possible exclusive titles (ie. not available on tape). I also congratulated them on their recent Opera and Ballet releases. At the same time as commending PHILIPS for sticking with LV it may seem rather churlish to over criticise but three contentious points spring to mind which need not have happened with more careful planning.

1) Catalogues - The September list said more titles would appear in October and one therefore anticipated the issue of an October catalogue. This did not materialise and the situation was further agravated by the recent issue of the newsletter telling us things we already knew. They now state that a Winter list will soon be issued - but when?

2) Availability Of New Titles - The two most recent newsletters give a big welcome to the new Opera and Ballet titles (a sentiment which I heartily endorse). I've now had an order 'La Boheme' and 'Tales Of Hoffman' for 4 weeks from my dealer (HMV, Oxford St, London.) HMV tell me that they haven't had stock to fulfill my order. A recent stock inspection at HMV revealed they had many of the less popular Opera titles but not the 'pot boilers'. Assuming that these better known works have been oversubscribed I am very pleased for the publishers but I should have thought that careful monitoring of stocks and orders could rectify the situation earlier than 4 weeks. It's frustrating to know that such titles are in print and then not to be able to obtain them.

3) Technical Quality Of Software - I currently have 22 titles in my collection (in 6 months) and found that 5 of these had to be replaced initially due to pressing faults or damage. Fortunately HMV are very understanding and do not quibble over replacements, but it's a very frustrating and time-consuming business. My advice to punters would be to establish a rapport with one local dealer as they'll probably need his goodwill in instances of faulty pressings. I hope that in future PHILIPS will become more vigilant with their quality control. Your point regarding the quality of original masters is also a problem they should be examining.

Now, as to what titles I would personally like to see. Entertainment features - 'Dr.Zhivago', 'Lawrence Of Arabia', 'Shenandoh', 'Friendly Persuasion', 'Adventures Of Robin Hood' (Errol Flynn), 'How The West Was Won', 'Nicholas Nickleby' (Royal Shakespeare Co.), 'Great Expectations' (David Lean), 'The Damned', 'Gone With The Wind', 'Battle Of The Bulge'. Musical features - 'Gypsy','Meet Me In St. Louis', 'Singin In The Rain', 'Wizard Of Oz', 'MusicMan', 'Kiss Me Kate', 'Kismet', 'Oliver', 'Brigadoon', 'South Pacific', 'West Side Story', 'Fiddler On The Roof', 'Carousel', 'Seven Brides For Seven Brothers', 'Carmen Jones'. Opera - 'Porgy & Bess', 'Carmen', 'Cavalleria Rusticana & I Pagliacci', 'Tosca', 'La Traviata'. Music programmes - 'HMS Pinafore' (D'Oyly Cart), 'Yeomen Of The Guard' (Tommy Steele). Childrens Programmes - DISNEY full-length cartoons (all or any!). Humour - BBC series such as 'Fawlty Towers', 'The Good Life', 'Reginald Perrin', etc, etc.

In the course of composition, this letter has assumed the proportions of a saga but the topics have been running through my mind since acquiring the player last June.

There is plenty more to write about LaserVision. 1985 looks very newsworthy indeed! We will try and cut down on the sperring mistakes. In order to do a 'proper' job would involve an additional process stage which at the present is financially impractical. Please bear with us. The review comment is spot on. Over the next few issues the aim is to gather together a group of reviewers who can cater for the wide interests represented on LV discs. Your comments on disc availability are covered, in the short-term, by the previous letter, I think. We will have to keep the pressure on though! Lastly, your experience with disc rejects seems unrepresentative of other responses. Most people have had duds, but not on your scale. As you say, there is no problem getting replacements but it is a bit inconvenient.

From : Mr. Evans, Gwent.

I havejust read issue 1 of NEW FLATS and found it very interesting. I have not'taken the plunge'yet but have had a few demonstrations of the PHILIPS

machines and have been very impressed. Above all else, the thought of owning videos that will never deteriorate appeals very strongly to me. I think of it as in audio. In collecting music recordings I purchase LPs and build up a library of the music I want to hear. Audio cassettes are a convenient way of transporting that music into the car etc. (maybe to change with CD?) So too with video. Something comes on TV that one wants to see more than once,one uses a video recorder. To build up a library of the films etc. that I want to see over and over, I would choose disc.

I have not taken the plunge yet because there are not enough of the programmes I want out yet on LV disc. May I indulge myself and give you an idea of what I would like to see on LV. Having worked as a cinema projectionist for a good number of years I know the type of film that I enjoy and would watch over and over. Films that are good, clean, entertainment with no foul language and no needless blood and violence. I like, above all else, good escapism. Films like '20,000 Leagues Under The Sea'(Disney),'Fantasia' (Disney, stereo - what a scoop that would be if made exclusively available on LV!), 'Superman', 'Supergirl', any Ray Harryhausen films (genius!), 'Star Wars' trilogy, 'Close Encounters' (not special edition!) etc. Get the picture? (Pun intended!). Any chance of any Thorn/EMI films on LV? As for TV, there is one show that I would give an arm and a leg to have on LV - 'Wonder Woman'. Good clean fun and excellent photography. Good special effects and what surely must be the most glamorous heroine to grace our screens. It bought back all the romance of the early cinema when the good guys and the bad guys were easy to recognise and good always triumphed over evil. Always a happy ending.

Some background on the 'Wonder Woman' series - Offered by WARNER BROS., ABC network took it up and only did a pilot and then shelved it. They later made a dozen or so episodes (based in World War II) and cancelled it. Enter the CBS network who took up the series and brought it up to date (from WW II to 1977). These were the episodes shown by the BBC, the first programmes never being seen in Britain. In all, I believe, 64 episodes were made. This show would lend itself admirably to the LV disc format, each one containing two 50 minute episodes. So, how about it?

Keep up the good work on the magazine - it is something that is definitely needed. Anything that promotes this truly amazing system deserves a chance to succeed. LaserVision needs to succeed. The public needs to wake up to what it has to offer. I do think an awful lot more could be done to promote the system by supplying sufficient tempting software.

In the US DISNEY Cartoons and the film 'Kidnapped' were among the earliest LV releases and a selection of titles is available now - 'Swiss Family Robinson', 'Dumbo', 'Splash', 'Treasure Island', and, yes '20,000 Leagues Under The Sea', among others. DISNEY are very much aware of the mileage they can get out of their product and have been inclined to be very wary of letting go of titles too soon, though recent signs in the US are encouraging. Whether this new outlook will cross the Atlantic is anybody's guess. The other titles you mention are obviously to be hoped for. The 'Wonder Woman' thing would appear of bleaker outlook. Although you might not approve of the comparison, again among the early US LV title releases were the TV movies of 'Six MIllion Dollar Man' & 'Bionic Woman'(now deleted), but the threat of a TV repeat always hangs ominously over the prospect of disc releases like this.(Indeed, a subsequent letter from Mr. Evans informs us that the BBC are going to repeat the series, possibly in 1985.) 'Star Trek', a TV series that has established undoubted cult status, would be more the sort of LV release that would have to prove itself financially viable before more obscure series such as 'Wonder Woman' would be likely to get a look-in. Thanks for the subscription - let's hope you are 'one of us' before it runs out!

From : Kenneth MacLeod, Scotland.

Having ordered, but not received, my LaserVision machine (PHILIPS VLP 700) I am not yet qualified in commenting on the ability of recordings to stand up to more than one play! However, I can comment on what I think should be released on LV. How about some 'old Classics', and by old I do not mean circa 1958. Some of the silents of the 20's and before, especially the comedies have proved their repeatability a long time ago. I know that I for one would love to collect them. Also may be a few old (or not so old) films that are funny or amusing although they weren't meant to be so! A certain film about the Titanic springs to mind.

I was watching recently a programme called 'The Box Of Delights' on BBC 1 and can't help feeling that it would be a good buy if released next year just before Xmas. It may be a so-called 'kids' programme' but it certainly caught my imagination. I can see myself settling down to a few hours of this kind of Christmassy escapism.

How about some rough (you seem to have captured the NEW FLATS syle in one! - Ed.) reviews on machines, after all the bloke who reads the mag. in a shop will want to know a little about which machine is the best value for money. Even if it is only a couple of paragraphs. How about a general comparison with videotape towards the better quality and durability of discs. I wonder how many LV owners bought their machines because they couldn't afford a reasonable tape machine. I know that it's one of the reasons that made me overcome the lack of available independent information on LV and go for broke. Keep up the good work . I can't wait till my machine arrives, it's been two weeks and three days now! What makes it worse is that the two discs I sent for ('Wrath of Khan' & 'Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Bro.') have arrived.

The point about old movie classics is a good one. It does seem surprising that LV has not really catered for the film collector which, in the instance you mention, would probably involve quite easily obtainable masters. Maybe if more film collectors would make their specific tastes known some positive project/s could be suggested. I think the MGM series is a good example of the exploitation of this type of market so it might be interesting to know if these discs sell well.

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ROCHESTER!- Rochester, New York celebrating its 150th anniversary has had the bright idea of using the 100,000 still frame capacity of an LV disc to record photographs and messages of local citizens with a view to placing the finished artifact in a time capsule. Entry price to appear in this feature is $1.50. It will be interesting to speculate whether, if copies of this disc are available for sale as well, if Rochester will, next year, have the highest penetration of LV players anywhere on the face of the globe.

OLD FLATS - Demise of RCA's Selectavision/CED disc system in US disrupted sales of LV also. Not unexpectedly, bad feeling caused by RCA's dramatic withdrawal will no doubt continue for a while yet as software companies cease issuing new releases in CED format. The LaserVision catalogue has, fortunately continued to expand at its usual steady rate - now approximately 800 titles being available. Meanwhile in the UK, offers of CED players + 20 discs for £90.00 have appeared, no doubt causing similar confusion in this market.

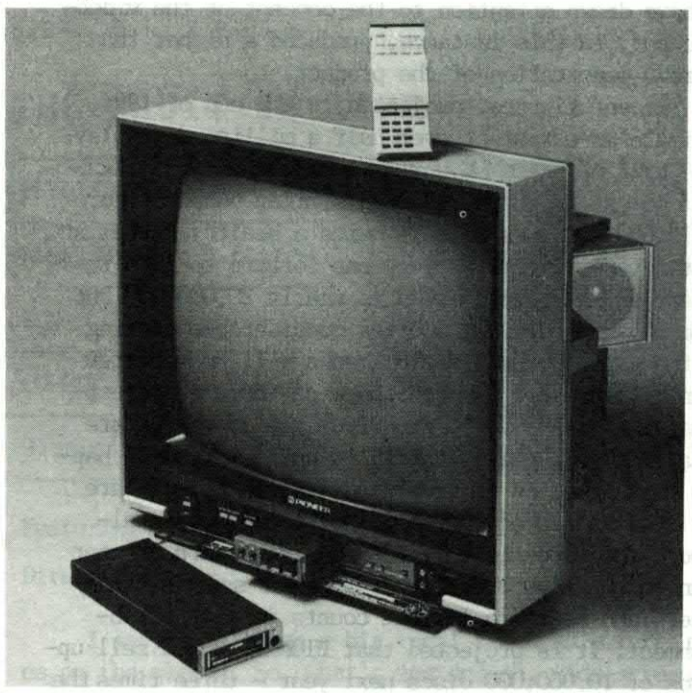
PIONEER USA now offer quick turn-round pressing service for industrial customers which can produce up to 50 one-sided discs in 24 hours - obviously quite a good strike against the previous speed advantage of tape duplication.

CORRECTION - Last issue's mention of industrial player sales to GENERAL MOTORS ('From There To Here') somewhat out-of-date. The eventual total sold closer to 13,000 machines! Currently, TOYOTA latest US car dealership to introduce LV players, in this instance for staff training. They will be utilising the latest industrial machine, the LD-V6000, a version of the domestic LD 700 player.

HELLO JOHN - Visitors to the Motor Show at the NEC may have seen impressively fast reacting touch-screen LaserVision sales display unit on VAUXHALL/GM stand. Player itself not visible though.

150 HOURS - Intended initially for industrial/institutional application, SONY has a SFA 1000 Still Frame Adaptor for its VDP 1000A LaserVision player that allows accompanying audio to a CAV disc in excess of the 30 minute (NTSC only so far) maximum playing time. The analogue audio is digitised and stored and then replayed in real time while the still frame is being displayed. Options suggested allow for 2,348 frames of 20seconds giving 13 hours of audio per 30 minutes of video or 1,384 frames of 40 seconds giving over 15 hours. Still sections so encoded can also be mixed with normal moving picture and sound facility. The use of this extra sound function promises interesting possibilities for book/catalogue type discs ie. wild-life, travel guides, language courses etc. Now, if you leave the picture off the ultimate, at present, extension of this concept demonstrated by the Californian EECO company promises 150 hours of audio! (On the seventh day the machine rests.)

PIONEER BOX CLEVER - As if in answer to the comment in 'What's Happening' last time round, it looks as though PIONEER are going to introduce their range of component TV in to the UK in 1985. The European made SD - 26 monitor superficially resembles the Profeel concept though the add-on tuner, RGB, etc modules are much smaller and tuck into the body of the set itself. Size is 27" which is about the minimum you need for LaserVision really. Further details to follow next issue.



MINI LV DISCS - Though the September **release** sheet listed several music discs with playing times of 30mins. or less, these are all full-size, one-sided discs and not the anticipated 20cm. mini LV discs we have heard mention of. The reason for this is that even though it is seemingly such a waste of the capacity of the full-size disc, mastering costs are what counts and it is therefore cheaper to produce the single-sided bigger disc. Not until the playing time of the content comes down to the 20 min. per side maximum of these mini-discs are we likely to see any appreciable product output, although there are some on the way, if only to establish the concept for the future.

Japanese Report

In the first issue, much attention was paid to the establishment of LaserVision in the USA, the first country to experience a consumer launch of the product. It would only seem relevant to look into a few details of the disc scene in what is, as far as the production of consumer electronics is concerned, the most active and innovative country - Japan. Following PIONEER's launch of LV in Autumn 1981, where they had the disc market to themselves, sales were steady but unspectacular. JVC launched the technically less sophisticated but cheaper VHD system in April 1983. As is often the way, competition seems to have drawn attention to the concept of the videodisc and, in this instance, produced a higher than average penetration of the product.

Recent figures, projected to the end of 1984, indicate an output of over half a million disc players (half of these LV units) - but that is production, not sales. Compared to a similar output figure of 13,000,000 VCRs this is quite a healthy ratio, but, most interestingly, projections forward to 1986 indicate an increase of VCRs to nearly 20,000,000 but disc players to 4,000,000 - a considerable closing of the gap. Old LaserVision hands will know better than to place too much reliance on forward projections like this but, judging from the current state of activity in that country, it could very well happen this time. As it is already, sales of software for disc is already up to 25% of tape numbers although the value is only 15% (ie. discs are cheaper than tape). That means good news for software producers and software is what counts in disc establishment. It is projected that PIONEER could sell upwards of 10,000,000 discs next year - three times the likely number of this year (though these figures include the output of both Japanese and USA plants). Sharing the same NTSC TV standard is obviously an advantage to the consumer as it makes small runs of discs a more viable proposition. It would appear that runs of 2000 per title are quite normal, which is quite a small figure for such a low unit cost product, though again 5000 seems a more likely projection for the future. This is obviously for run of the mill titles of which about 20 a month are released. Double that title output is anticipated for next year. Already the catalogue boasts 1000 titles. The agressive promotion of JVC's VHD system should ensure that PIONEER will be constantly under pressure to innovate and bring products to the market that will demonstrate LaserVision's superiority.

As again mentioned last issue, there is already a PIONEER MSX computer, the PX-7, a two part unit, a keyboard and the computer itself which looks somewhat like a compact disc player with its front mounted aperture to accommodate the software cartridges. Cost is about £300 in Japan. Apart from upgrading PIONEER's disc players to enable programmable sequences to be played as available on the PHILIPS VLP 830, but to a higher degree of complexity, the computer is obviously designed to function as a normal stand-alone MSX machine in its own right. In fact, any LV player with a suitable computer interface can perform control functions far in advance of what is already in the machine itself. In reality that is only easily attainable with the VLP 830 and to a lesser extent the LD 1100 - all future UK machines will probably be more computer compatible. This is the reason. Another facet of this PX-7 computer that will no doubt cause a stir is the ability to upgrade your home LV player to the status of an arcade game machine! Along with the control function information present at the start of even the most ordinary CLV disc (you do not get to see this but it is there to tell the player how to handle the disc), games discs like the already available 'Astron Belt' have all the computer information necessary to play the game encoded in the disc as well which, after putting the LV disc in the machine is down-loaded into the computer and, with a suitable joystick control, the operator is empowered to obliterate an entire galaxy at will! As I write this I can imagine dealers more used to the relative serenity of demonstrating the sonic advantages of LaserVision with a tasteful opera disc being horrified at the prospect of their establishments being laid seige by marauding junior computer buffs, causing existing customers to dive for cover behind the nearest counter as mankind's ballistic achievements of the 21st century echo around their heads. If you think this scene is something of an exaggeration remember that the genuine arcade game does not have a 100 watt stereo amplifier stuffed inside it and a pair of proper hi-fi speaker cabinets either side! In the pipeline is a further game - 'CG Space Action', a production by PIONEER itself specifically for LaserVision, which should raise the state of the art in this field even higher.

You may have heard mention of the likelihood of 20 cm LV discs, indeed some may even be available in the UK by the time you get to read this, and one of the manifestations allowed by this development is the LaserVision video juke-box. Already widely available as a tape based system in many British pubs, or so I'm told, this machine of PIONEER's is an LV disc version that will obviously outclass its predecessors by virtue of audio and video quality and also the time taken to change programmes. I do not know

whether the idea is that the discs intended for these machines will be specially produced items or are also meant to be available as normal retail products - one would expect this to be the case though. The public awareness of LaserVision caused by these mini - LV discs will, I am sure, be great as they have a great deal of 'user friendliness', and, being almost the same size as current 45 rpm black wax discs, their sales impact to the uninitiated, containing 2 x 20 mins video & audio, is bound to be immense. One wonders whether there is any thought in either Japan or Europe of producing a stripped-down basic LaserVision player to cater specifically for the mini - LV disc? Although, as far as this magazine is concerned, it would seem a terrible waste of the apparent potential of LV to exclude the ability to play all laser discs, it is very much the case that the market often responds to these type of sales pitches. It is becoming apparent that LaserVision is possibly too big a concept to be sold in one go, To go forwards, sometimes it is necessary to retreat a little! Maybe a good compromise would be a full-size, non - CAV capable basic machine.

Unless anything else crops up before publication the last piece of news concerns the combined LV/CD player, the CLD 9000 which has appeared and is planned for immediate sale in the USA too. From early information I cannot be sure whether both types of disc go in one drawer or there are separate ones. The machine is based on the LD 700 player and is outwardly similar in appearance but much higher, about half as high again as the LD 700. Price is around £ 900 as previously reported (you read it here first!). Production is set at 2000 units a month to start with. Whether it is a single or dual drawer machine it nevertheless is an important marketing exercise as it establishes the concept of LaserVision to the rather staid hi-fi market. " CD with pictures".

Whether any of these pieces of hardware will make their way to these shores is probably more a matter of time than anything else. PAL bandwidth requirements mean that anything marketed for NTSC countries has to be developed one stage further in order to function here - it is not just a case of an alternative production run - it has to be a higher quality item (with the possible exception of the PX - 7 computer). Let us hope that PHILIPS are being equally forward thinking behind the scenes and will announce some similarly exciting ideas for the future.

At the risk of confusing casual readers, I feel that I must make mention of some of the software available in Japan in order to illustrate the esoteric and exotic material that can appear on LV. Software producers please take note.

For a start there are innumerable jazz titles ranging from the excellent feature film ' Jazz On A Summers Day' to concert programmes by Chick Corea, Art Pepper, M J Q, Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Rollins, Freddie Hubbard, Oscar Peterson, Ella Fitzgerald, Keith Jarrett etc. The Art Pepper is a documentary style programme with Japanese sub-titles. Pop items include 'The Beatles Live At The Budokan (1966)', 'Jimi Hendrix Plays Berkeley','Rolling Stones Hyde Park Concert', 'Ventures Live In LA'(CAV), 'Davy Jones Live(CAV)'!, and further titles by Joe Cocker, Doobie Bros., Blood Sweat & Tears, Chaka Khan (all CAV releases),the Band, and Grace Jones. Two CAV instructional discs are 'The Rock Guitar Guide With Ron Wood & Michael Schenker' and 'The Kenwood Dernard Drum Seminar'. Also a couple of discs by French chanteuse Sylvie Vartan, one of these CAV too. Polish films with sub-titles recently released include 'Man Of Marble', 'Ashes & Diamonds', and 'Kanal' by Andrzej Wajda, Polanski's 'Knife In The Water', and Jerzy Kawaleroicz' 'The Shadow', and 'The Night Train'. Other foreign sub-titled films are some Italian Visconti items - 'Conversation Piece', 'L'Innocente', 'Ludwig', and 'Senso' and from France, 'Plein Soleil'(Purple Noon). In addition, of course, there is the usual Hollywood type film fare available but these examples given I think do provide hope for the possibility of less obvious disc releases over here. Remember though, these Japanese discs will not play on PAL disc players, and are listed for interest only.

LATE NEWS - More on the CLD 9000. The whole point of producing a combined LV/CD player in the past seemed to be, in addition to the convenience aspect, to provide the opportunity to establish LV among the hi-fi fraternity who appear still to regard video with suspicion ie. If you ignore it long enough, maybe it will go away - No chance! Anyway, there is more to this CLD 9000 than just a marketing concept. PIONEER have exploited the integration of this unit to the full by issuing a 'King Crimson - Live In Japan' LV disc that has a digital sountrack. Yes, real CD with pictures. Apparently encoding digital audio on LV discs does involve a slight reduction in playing time (reckoned to be about 5 minutes or so), but that seems of little consequence for music discs that rarely approach maximum playing times anyway. If this CD sound on LV discs really works (It pays not to believe these things until you see/hear them work. We have a copy of this disc on its way from Japan just to show it to you but even then we will not have any means to play it to try it out.) then it really upstages the recent Beta/VHS HI-FI thing which would seem, from first reports anyway, not quite to fulfil its promises in early production samples. And what are the hi-fi people going to do now that 'their' CD sound is available to the video morons too! Fortunately in the UK they will have plenty of time to adjust as although there is room to squeeze this CD sound onto NTSC LV discs, the extra demands of the PAL format means that we are not likely to see the realisation of this concept for some considerable time. As I write this I have a rather fuzzy picture of the CLD 9000 before me which I would dearly love to reproduce in the magazine if it were not for the abysmal quality of the thing. It certainly deserves to be seen for the exciting prospects it implies.

Other PIONEER news is the introduction of a simplified version of the LD 7000 solid-state LV player (in Japan all PIONEER's LV players have an extra '0' on the number - the LD 7000 is the LD 700 in the USA.) This is the LD 5000 and would seem to fill the spot vacated by the LD 660 in relation to the LD 1100.

USA Report

Best positive news is the appearance of the 20cm music discs in recent weeks - first titles being by David Bowie (Let's Dance), J. Geils (Freeze Frame), and Motels. Imminent releases in this format include discs by Stray Cats, Iron Maiden (Video Pieces), Sheena Easton, Phil Collins, Kim Carnes, Thomas Dolby, Ashford & Simpson, Maze, and Duran Duran. These discs list at $10.99, a little less than £9.00, but then the cheapest music discs there are normally $25 (£20) so the price difference is considerable. With our vastly lower music disc prices it would not appear that there is as much scope to offer the same price differential here but hope springs eternal. It would be reasonable to expect a determined effort to establish these small discs as the advent of Beta HI-FI has resulted in a big promotion of 'Video EPs' and there is quite a lot of short programme pop material becoming available. LV disc versions are obviously better and more 'desirable'.

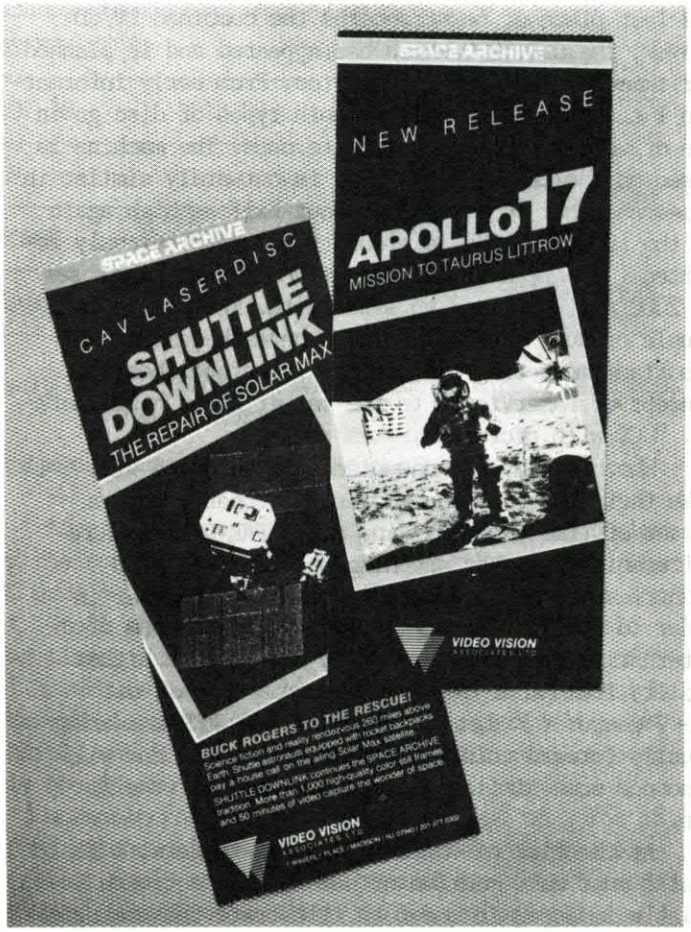
Apparently the combined LV/CD player (CLD 9000) will not after all be available till after Xmas. Introduction will probably follow a launch at the January Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. PIONEER's basic LD 660 player has recently been substantially reduced in price to $300, about $150 less than previously though the top of the line LD 700 remains unchanged in price, but it is now available in a colour option - black as well as silver. We will try and get a photograph of this machine for the next issue.

On the software front there is a continuing appearance of good new film titles of which the imminent arrival 'The Empire Strikes Back' has been gaining most attention. For once the UK is not too far behind with some of titles such as 'Educating Rita', and 'Spinal Tap' being featured on our latest release sheets too. The US LV catalogue is at least a year or so ahead of us in its depth of film material, but as far as music goes I do not think the US position is particularly strong. The best of their stuff is available here yet they do not seem to have a lot of the music titles we get. Indeed, quite a few pop music discs find their way to the LV buyer as Japanese imports - rather a circuitous route.

One of the most bizarre of the recent releases has to be the 'Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman' disc on EMBASSY. For those of you who did not see the short run of this Soap Opera send-up that was briefly transmitted here a year or two back (it got taken off because it was considered too appalling!), 'Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman' was an extension of the 'Soap' idea - but unlike that programme 'MH, MH' seemed remarkably slow and uneventful. Maybe it was. Regardless, there was this one scene that really appealed to me and that was 'the chicken-soup drowning' which fortunately is one of the episodes, along with the first and last that appears on this disc. No way could I ever see this disc appearing here but the apparent obscure potential of this release, even in the US, deserves mention. I mean, the title actually states 'Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman Vol. 1', surely they can't be anticipating issuing more. What chance a UK 'Best Of Crossroads' LV disc? - it should fit on one side of a mini-disc!

It is not only the latest film titles that have been enlarging the US LV catalogue, there is also a steady release of older films of which recent examples include 'Charge Of The Light Brigade', 'Mutiny On The Bounty' (both 1935), 'Dodge City' (1939), 'Arsenic & Old Lace' (1944), 'The Big Sleep' (1946), 'Meet Me In St. Louis' (1944), 'Sunset Boulevard' (1950), and '42nd. Street' (1933).

Although touched upon in 'From There To Here', the Space Discs definitely deserve further attention. There



are three of these discs so far - 'Space Archive Vol. 1' features the Space Shuttle Missions Nos. 5, 6, & 7. 'Space Archive Vol. 2' the Apollo 17 Mission to Taurus Littrow (Moon landing), and 'Collectors Edition' Shuttle Downlink / The Repair of the Solar Max. All these discs carry about 1000 still photographs plus 50 minutes or so of movie footage and would seem to offer one of the most topical special interest exploitations of LV so far. In no way could tape compete with this sort of programme material. As an added novelty, towards the

end of the Solar Max disc there is a brief experimental 3D segment - an idea which is likely to be repeated on a forthcoming Space Archive Mars disc, though apparently the resolution of domestic TV limits the full exploitation of this 3D effect. Further ahead is the possibility of of another Space Shuttle disc and, possibly, one on the Mount Palomar Observatory showing the function of the Observatory itself as well as pictures received through the telescope and historical footage. Does this sort of release capture your imagination and do you think they would be popular here?

No doubt what would be popular here is some of the adult material available on LV in the US. Although the titles do not appear in the main LV Catalogue there would appear to be at least 30 of these discs available. Other than those previously mentioned some relatively notorious titles available include 'Debbie Does Dallas', 'Deep Throat', 'Devil In Miss Jones', 'Inside Desiree Cousteau', 'Misty Beethoven', 'The Other Side Of Julie' as well as two versions of 'Insatiable' - one R rated, one X. These sell for about half as much again as the standard discs - $ 50 as opposed to $ 35. Not too sure how many of these discs are in CAV, though I have seen it mentioned that some are CLV on one side and CAV on the other - presumably depending on where most of the 'action' is!

Another piece of activity among one of the smaller companies are some marvellous re-issues from CRITERION who claim 'the finest films on the ultimate medium'. December 1st. saw the re-release of 'Citizen Kane' and 'King Kong' on LV, but this is no ordinary re-issue job. 'Citizen Kane' is augmented by 100 still photographs on the background to the original production and a three minute trailer for the film (made by Wells) which includes footage not in the film itself. 'King Kong' has a similar still section, but on this release film preservationist and historian Ronald Haver provides a commentary throughout the entire film on one of the audio channels. This would seem a really intelligent idea for film buffs where you could listen to the film as it was made on channel 1, or if you choose, switch to channel 2 and hear the explanatory comments and background. Both these re-issues are in CAV mode which does involve a bit of disc manipulation in the case of 'Citizen Kane' (3 discs), but it is nice to see the film enthusiast catered for in this way. These film releases are quite a bit more expensive than standard price issues but reasonable for the specialist market they cater to. CRITERION make special claim for the quality of the pressings, done at the 3M Plant in Wisconsin, which is fast acquiring a reputation for currently producing the best laser disc pressings.

Next time we will have a look at the National Air and Space Museum Archival discs which offer possibly the most extreme exploitation of LV's potential so far.

WHAT'S HAPPENING....WHAT'S HAPPENING.....WHAT'S HAPPENING....WHAT'S HAPP

SONY LV COMES CLOSER - SONY COMMUNICATIONS have announced the intention of expanding the facilities at their Terre Haute, Indiana, USA Compact Disc pressing plant to accommodate industrial production of LV discs. Date of commencement of production is set for Autumn 1985. With a capacity of at least 1,000,000 discs a year, SONY obviously have optimistic expectation of the industrial market (remember they have to share this with PIONEER and 3M) - possibly any spare capacity might end up satisfying consumer market? Remember SONY's comparitively recent claim that LaserVision is a non-runner on the consumer market as far as they are concerned? Well, they now sell a badge engineered PIONEER LV machine in the healthy Japanese home video disc market - how long before we see an all-original SONY machine for domestic use?

U.S. CUSTOMS - If you do not fancy the prospect of moving house to Rochester,N.Y. to qualify for inclusion on their sesquicentennial LV disc you may be interested in a scheme recently devised by Consell Inc. of Atlanta, Georgia, USA. For a minimum payment of $500 you get 100 pictures of what ever you want on your own personal LaserVision disc that will set you back $20 a time for copies - a little too pricy for Xmas cards yet! The apparent bargain-basement cost of this offer is made possible by the fact that you have to share the disc with any number of people doing likewise. What sort of material might crop up on the finished disc either side of your contribution is anybody's guess, as the aim is to provide a service for for predominantly commercial users, but remember - while you are looking at what they have been up to, someone will most likely watching you! Oh, and you will need an NTSC player to see the disc too.

WHY NEW FLATS - There has been some confusion over the title of this magazine but the reason is this. Much of the resistance to LaserVision is to do with the fact that it's use spans several fields of interest, video, audio, and computers for starters and, quite frankly, almost without exception, most consumer marketing is based on keeping these fields of interest apart. Likewise all the people who write about them.LaserVision changes everything and so it seemed fitting not to lumber the magazine with a title that said 'Laser something or other' as this would soon end up being restrictive in itself. The aim was to describe the optical disc in such a way as to avoid the possibility of future limitation - out of 'round', 'shiny' and 'flat', flat won because our TV screens of the future will also be flat.That connection clinched it!

LV ON TV - Dutch TV recently showed PHILIPS recordable Laserdisc system. Possibly the one currently being tested as a computer storage device which, as yet, does not have erase facility.

DOMESDAY MY DISCS WILL COME - The current big LaserVision project has recently been announced by BBC/ACORN and PHILIPS. In an attempt to duplicate the concept of the original Domesday Book, the BBC envisage a detailed summary of the UK environment and aspects of daily life to be compiled on to two interactive LV discs. There will be a special LaserVision player with a host of new features to enable retrieval of not only still frames but text as well. The player will be able to retrieve 20 pages of text with each video frame which makes...umm..er (grabs calculator).....216,000 photographs and 4,320,000 pages of text. This might cause problems in the disc review depaartment here at NEW FLATS - I do not think there is anyone young enough to embark on an appraisal of even one of these discs without the risk of him coming up to pensionable age midway! Prices quoted for the discs are a ton apiece and the special LV player, to you, £900. Mind you, you'll also need the BBC Micro-computer with some extra memory, and a special ACORN interface and, probably, a very strong table to put it all on. You had best start saving now as the projected completion date is only Autumn 1986.

PENTAX - This Japanese manufacturer has developed solid-state laser of short wavelength suitable for incorporation into videodisc players. Production already under way.

FLAT SCREEN NEWS - The long promised solid-state picture display at last becoming a reality, if only in a small way. After an unsuccessful launch a year or so ago of the first LCD sets from CASIO & SEIKO, the USA has this Xmas seen the arrival of a 50mm flat screen TV from EPSON (ET-10). Not only is this reported to be of reasonable picture quality but it is also colour. CITIZEN shortly to bring out a 70mm set, but this only B&W. Hopefully the size of these sets will creep up, but in the meantime there is news that SIEMENS, W.Germany, reckon they can produce a 30cm FSD (Flat Screen Display) of comparable quality to existing tube sets. Display consists of a sandwich of conductive gas which when electrically charged reacts with the phosphor-coated screen. Production awaiting development of circuits to control the 200,000 or so picture elements. Depth of screen only 65mm. A recent issue of GRAMOPHONE also reported 5'by4' LCD display from MITSUBISHI shown at recent Dusseldorf Radio & TV Exhibition - the colour display reckoned to be watchable if not of outstanding quality.

LASER LIFE - Although great play is made of the seemingly infinite life of LV discs, what of the actual laser employed to scan them. Little publicity is given to this aspect which, considering the substantial cost of the helium-neon lasers in the current generation of LV players is understandable, but surprisingly, 5000 hours does not seem to be an unreasonable expectation. Given 10 hours a week use that should run to a 10 year life - much better than the secrecy surrounding this statistic would indicate. During this time we will be well into solid-state lasers which, apart from being markedly cheaper in the first place, promise life expectancies of up to 10,000 hours. I have seen it reported that experience in the USA has indicated little premature failure of the currently used gas lasers.

CD WITH PICTURES (AGAIN) - There have been several recent demonstrations of CD with added text/graphics displays on the TV screen to accompany the music ie. track listings. sleeve notes, lyrics, colour graphics etc. There is spare capacity on CD discs to encode this information and it will be interesting to see how long it takes one of the companies to market a suitably modified player,or an add-on adaptor for existing machines,in order to exploit this potential of CD.

DOMESDAY CHAPTER 2 - Further to the Domesday piece, later reports suggest that the finished two disc set will only contain 2,000,000 pages of text and 85,000 stills. BUT.... the specially developed LV player is also described as a 'world-standard' model. Does this mean multi-standard? This looks a bit interesting and deserves further investigation.

NOTHING to do with Laservision, but recent US Video Rental Chart contained at numbers 10, 9, & 8 the films 'Ice Pirates', 'Iceman', and 'The Big Chill' - fortunately buffered by Yentl from number 6, 'Sixteen Candles'. However, trouble lurks below at number 16 with a new entry - 'Firestarter'!

NO FUN - That elusive title 'Funhouse' which has threatened to appear for some time now has once again been postponed. The current DPP Nasties Mania is the cause of this. 'Xtro' and 'Visiting Hours' have also sailed pretty close to the wind in recent weeks and anyone who has these titles lower down on their wants list is recommended to elevate them to top position. Until these arbiters of public taste sort themselves out it seems possible that any prosecution (not necessarily a conviction) cropping up in any part of the country is likely to result in these titles being withdrawn from the shelves. Is this the start of a collectors market in the UK?

guide for unbelievers

Although the original motivation behind NEW FLATS was to cater to the needs of existing Laser-Vision owners, it has been something of a revelation in the course of distributing the first issue to find out how little is understood about the concept. By this I do not mean the average 'man in the street' but audio and video dealers, record retailers, and, in one instance, a record company owner - the sort of people one would assume would be reasonably au fait with the topic! At the same time as all this was becoming apparent, I was in the middle of compiling a chart of all the four available LV players in order to enable readers to be able to compare facilities and soon came to the conclusion that, helpful as some of the sales literature is, these leaflets do not lend themselves to making purposeful comparisons - differences in terminology etc tend to confuse the issue. I even had to refer back to the companies themselves to clarify certain details. As a commited user already I thought at least I had all these aspects clear in my own mind. Obviously not.

So, with these considerations in mind it dawned on me that maybe we had been racing ahead a little too fast and there were a lot of potential LV player buyers out there who may be holding off making that purchasing decision for lack of understanding and confusion over this LaserVision thing. The most helpful solution to all would appear to take a 'hands-on' approach look at a LaserVision machine from each of the two LV manufacturers - the basic PHILIPS VLP 600/700 and also the PIONEER LD 1100, a slightly more sophisticated machine. This is not meant to be a 'Battle of the Players' contest, but in doing a 'hands-on' approach to machine reviews it is often easier to emphasise the different features by way of comparison. It is not a case of 'better or worse' but 'different'. Obviously, being a more expensive machine, the LD 1100 has a few extra facilities incorporated.

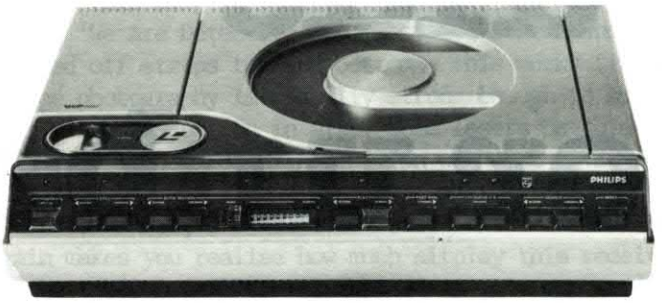
The PHILIPS machinecould best be described as the LaserVision player. It is the original exterior design that introduced the LaserVision concept and will always have special significance for that reason. Though not to everyone's aesthetic taste it does embody the 70s European look that spread over a whole range of PHILIPS products. Personally, I find it the best example of that design era and it suggests a 'spacey' feel that will probably ensure its cache as a collectors item in years to come - as befits any innovative concept. The existing production model is obviously of more recent vintage internally. The experiences and modifications incorporated as a result of the earlier US launch of LaserVision have resulted in a player that fulfills all the basic facilities needed to control both types of disc, CLV & CAV - and does so in reliable and workmanlike fashion.

The PIONEER LD 1100, on the other hand, is really PIONEER's second attempt at the job. The original PIONEER machine with its part wood veneer finish, the VP 1000, was again closer to a previous range of hi-fi components that featured wooden side panels throughout. By the time of the UK launch of LaserVision this machine had been superseeded by the LD 1100 and was never available in PAL version.

In the following run-down on the machines there has been no attempt to measure specifications, essentially because NEW FLATS does not, as yet, have the resources to do justice to this approach. It has to be said though that neither PHILIPS or PIONEER make any play of the relative spec. advantages of their players - all LaserVision machines fulfill a minimum spec. and it seems more likely that any subtle differences in performance that may be perceived will vary as much from machine to machine of the same brand as anything else. As readers of issue 1 will know, most of the five years market development of LaserVision has been more concerned with achieving satisfactory standards of disc production and it is the state of the art of disc quality that is the prime consideration with LV. (That is why the reviews of discs in the magazine are so important). A good disc will reproduce well on any machine but the differences between machines will not be sufficient to enhance a poorly mastered or pressed disc. Readers who may have their own opinions on this are welcome to respond.

The most important point to remember throughout any discussion of LaserVision products is that we are talking about a near broadcast quality replay medium - and LaserVision is the only domestic video system with this capabilty. In order to attempt to cram the PAL colour video signal on to any domestic VCR involves separating the colour and brightness components to fit them within the limited 3+MHz bandwidth of tape. LaserVision can encode the full 5 MHz signal in one go. There is no way that the printed word can do justice to this argument - you need to see it for yourself. The sound is great too! Anyway, after a somewhat lengthy introduction, let's get down to looking at the equipment itself.

PHILIPS
VLP 600/700



The PHILIPS VLP 600 is a stand alone LV player, the most basic of the four models. The remote controlled version, the VLP 700, is the same machine in all other respects. Theoretically, the VLP 600 could be upgraded to remote capability of the 700 as the casing of the cheaper model has the infra-red sensor window incorporated in the base,but this would be a financially impractical workshop modification and, considering the £20 difference in cost price of the two machines,you are best advised to go for the 700 from the outset if this remote facility is likely to be important to you.

Although being a first generation, basic machine it has, nonetheless, stood the test of time quite well. PHILIPS have always been reasonably ahead of the game in substituting electrical switching in place of mechanical function buttons on their range of audio & video tape machines, often ahead of the Japanese manufacturers in this respect, and the ease of control with the function buttons on this player calls for no criticism whatever. There is full logic control and it is impossible to disable the machine by pushing the 'wrong' combination of buttons. Placing the disc firmly on the spindle and closing the lid engages play. Simplicity itself. On normal CLV discs one has the option of :

(1) Forward and reverse fast search facility (in b/w only) which takes about 25 secs. to travel through a sixty minute side.

(2) Control of audio channels, either stereo or individual channels - necessary for for dual soundtrack discs (see review of 'Feeling Fit').

(3) Index display. Pressing this button reveals and also cancels an elapsed time display in minutes superimposed on the top left hand corner of the screen, and, on suitably encoded discs, a second touch on the button reveals a chapter number which enables one to fast scan a disc in either direction and it will automatically stop at these predetermined points. A very useful facility for music discs as the search speed of LV players is so fast it is easy to overshoot the start of a song and this saves unnecessary toing and froing. The third aspect of this index only relates to CAV discs and will display the actual frame number as opposed to the elapsed time.

From this it will be evident that the majority of the buttons control CAV discs only. These are :

(4) Still frame - forward & reverse.

(5) Slow motion - forward & reverse + slide control to vary the rate from one frame per 4 secs. to normal speed.

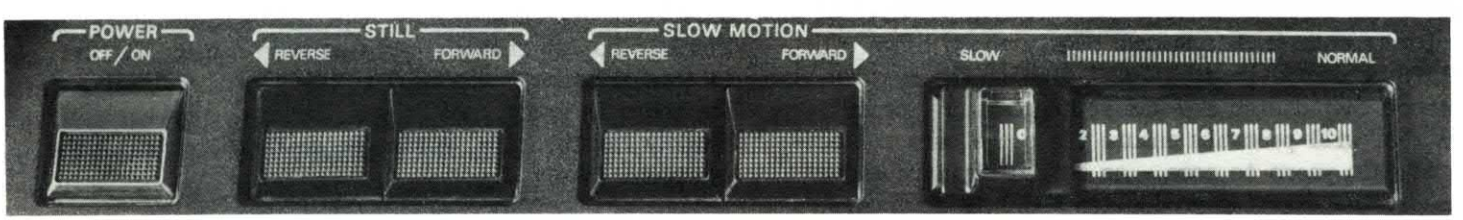
(6) Reverse play, normal speed.

(7) Fast forward. Works in colour with no picture break-up as there is in fast search.

(8) Normal play. Machine reverts directly to normal play from any of the special effects modes.

Red lights above the control buttons indicate in which mode the player is functioning. In practice, the audio lights are the most useful as it can be very easy to forget to reset both channels on some occaisions. Whatever, every time the lid is raised the player reverts to full, normal function play for the next disc and has to be re-set as required. One additional point about the 700's remote. This duplicates some of the functions only - refer to the main chart for complete details. The only function I think you would miss on the remote is the ability to control the audio channels, again , a useful aid on music discs.

Apart from the convenience the remote affords there is also the advantage that it enables one to place the machine as far away from the viewing position as possible. All existing Laservision machines tend to be a little noisy and this model is certainly not the quietest of the bunch. Considering that the disc is rotating at up to 1500 rpm and the necessity to provide ventilation to the helium-neon laser precluding too much damping of sound in the machine's casing the level of noise is understandable. To let the air in the noise obviously finds a way out. The mechanics of the tracking assembly also contribute their whirring. I suppose that must all sound the next best thing to having your own personal helicopter cranking away in the corner of the living-room but, believe me it is not as bad as it seems. I have heard



some VCRs that can manage the same noise level quite easily. On music discs you will experience very little noise however close you sit to the player, but some quiet moments in feature films can be affected by being too close to the machine.

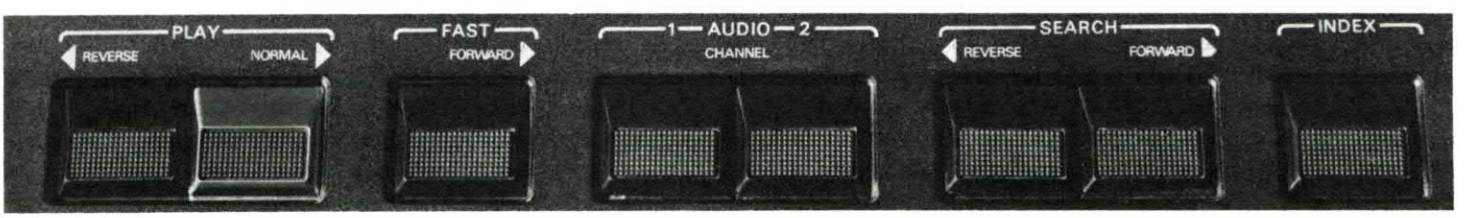
Before you go too far in deciding where to place the machine it might be wise, at this point, to establish a few basic requirements in order to get the best out of the VLP 600, or any other LV player for that matter. Without wishing to sound like the man in that old Stan Freburg sketch - 'Herman Horne on Hi-Fi', possibly you are going to have to re-arrange your living room. (At least you haven't got to move into the garage!) If you have not already taken the step of combining your TV with your hi-fi, then now is the time you are going to have to do it.

On the back of the VLP 600 is a video BNC socket which should be connected to the video input of your TV set, although if your set is a bit old you may not have this facility and you will have to resort to using the aerial to aerial method - you lose a few db of picture quality this way though. Something to consider when upgrading your TV - a topic we hope to cover in more detail in future issues. Also on the back of the player are two (L & R) phono sound output sockets - these you run to the auxiliary inputs on your hi-fi amplifier. Next you place your hi-fi speakers either side of the TV - too close and their magnetic field might cause bending of the picture display, too far and you will find the spread of sound too great relative to the size of the picture. Moving the speakers about to suit the TV is cheaper than buying a 27" TV but the long term will demand this. Roll on Flat Screen TV! All these connections are not difficult to do, it may involve getting some longer leads and, obviously, try to avoid a colossally long video lead so as not to tempt any signal loss. The most difficult thing about all this is that you are going to have to forego the option of placing the TV in a convenient corner of the room 'because it fits nicely there'. Same with the convenient alcoves you have got the speakers situated in. It is at this point you might be tempted to compromise the set-up. DO NOT MAKE COMPROMISES! (Go on Herman, boy.Don't let up on them now.) There are all manner of developments coming along that involve the marriage of your audio and video components and it is going to be far easier and cheaper to make this transition now. This last paragraph is the one bit they do not let on about in the LaserVision brochures. 'Buy LaserVision and destroy your own living-room!'

The worst is over now - it's all easy going from here on. Most people have specialised tastes in programme material that a general overview such as this could not hope to direct potential purchasers to the special use advantages of the 600 over any other but, without doubt,for music and straight through playing of feature films it is ideal, though the lack of a pause control is a bit of an inconvenience. It is quite easy to relocate the part of the film you left as the search time is so fast but, pause is better.

In CAV use which in practice, until there is a greater depth of material available, is likely to be under exploited, the VLP 600 is more than adequate.

The still-frame is excellent, rock steady, and one is not left to worry about any rotating head drums slowly grinding away the oxide from your tapes. From the panel photograph you will notice the adjacent positions of the the Reverse and Normal buttons and with a finger simultaneously on each of these buttons it is wonderfully simple to rock a short segment back and forth without any discontinuity in the motion. This is also true of the still-frame and slow-motion buttons. Incidentally, the sound is muted in all special play functions which I do find a bit of a drawback when trying to learn musical pieces. In times gone by, if you wanted to play the introduction to 'Roll Over Beethoven' on your guitar (I gave up all attempts on the euphonium) you would slow down the 45 to 33rpm or even 16rpm to identify the individual notes - but you still had to find out what the notes were and where to find them on the fingerboard. With a CAV disc you can see the fingering perfectly, and at any speed you want, but there is this one drawback that you cannot hear what is being played while you are watching. In

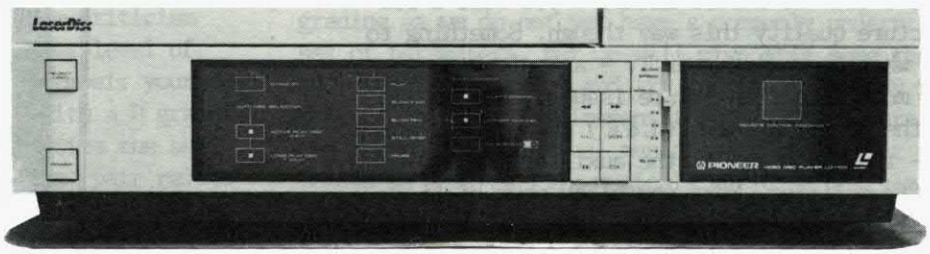


this respect this is a bit of a step backwards that I would hope, in the fulness of time, could be overcome by some means.

We now come to the most important feature of this pair of machines - the price. The VLP 600 lists at £229, and the VLP 700 at £249. In practice, these machines are often substantially discounted - down to £200 or so, and at this price they a gift. There is no doubt in my mind that the realisation of solid-state lasers suitable for the increased demands of video disc use and the continuing economies of scale afforded by larger quantity production will, in the long term, give LaserVision players a price advantage over VCRs, but, as things stand at present the price of these two machines is a consumer's dream. Once you have bought 10 - 15 discs (people always end up buying more discs than they anticipate!) the player becomes effectively free, given the price advantage over tape software. Even with the recent flowering of selected cassette releases at £19.99, LV disc prices are invariably £10 a time cheaper, often £30 cheaper with the majority of feature films! At these rates the cost of these machines is soon absorbed by software purchases. And, don't forget that the quality is better too. The fact that these players work well too seems almost secondary!

To sum up it must be to recommend either of these machines to anyone who is tempted by the LaserVision concept but might be intimidated by seemingly going out on a limb against the flood of VCRs. Floods come and go - LaserVision is forever. Having a LaserVision player now enables you to get a feel for the concept and opens up a whole new aspect of home entertainment that is certain to expand over the next year or two. Keep reading this magazine for further developments.

PIONEER LD 1100



When it comes to the PIONEER LD 1100 we are, apart from seeing the realisation of the Japanese approach to LaserVision, looking at a product that exhibits the refinements accorded any second-generation product. In some respects it might have been fairer to relate this model to the PHILIPS VLP 830, but then a comparison with that machine, which is a stage more expensive again, would also seem equally unfair. Please bear these factors in mind. One similarity in conception with the VLP 600/700 is that the LD 1100 does have a little brother - the non-remote and less sophisticated LD 660, but this machine has never been available in a PAL version and not likely to be so. We only have this 'all the frills' (thrills?) machine that, though able to receive control commands on the machine itself, is essentially conceived as a remote-controlled player. The remote is not an add-on afterthought but designed as the main operating control. What you cannot do with the remote is adjust the slow-motion rate (as is the case with the VLP 700) and switch the CX noise reduction system in and out. Some of the basic functions are duplicated but all else is controlled from the remote - it even duplicates the reject button thereby enabling you to disengage play from the comfort of your armchair.

One of the things you do have to get out of your seat for is to put the record in. The reject/open button is a double function control. If a disc is playing the first press disengages play, and a secondary press opens the lid. The duplicated remote reject control only operates the first function. In this machine the disc fits quite loosely over the spindle, seemingly a more satisfactory approach - all the clamping function is incorporated in the lid assembly. Closing the lid does not initiate play. Here you resort to the play button on the machine, or better still, use the remote. At the end of play the disc does not automatically re-start. If you should wish to repeat the side you must press the play button again.

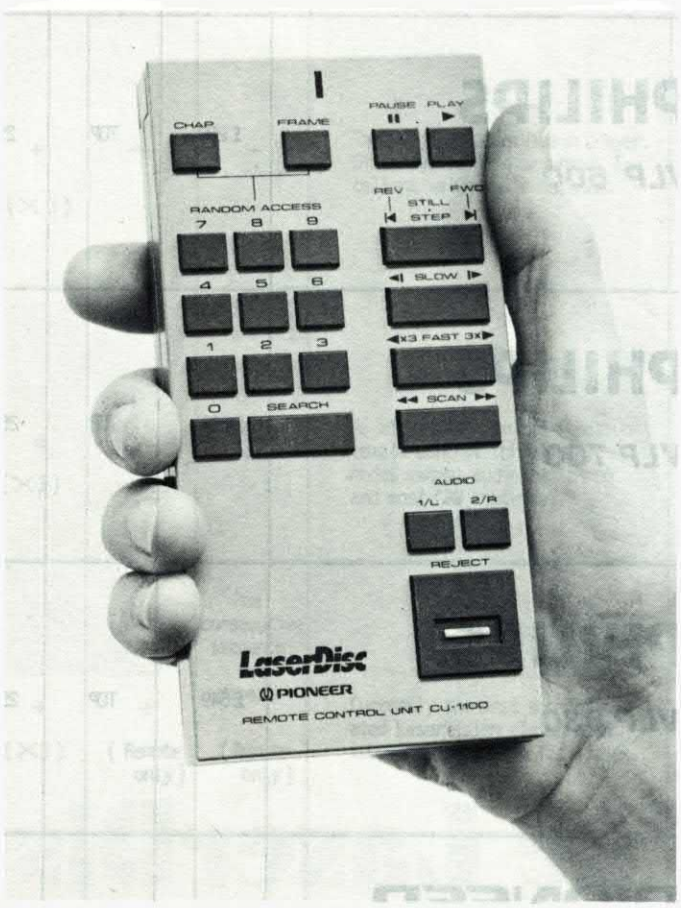
What the buttons do. Instead of the double-function index button seen on the other player, here there are two separate controls - one for Chapter and the Frame button for elapsed-time and, with CAV discs frame number. At this point the PIONEER starts to show some of the features you get for the extra expenditure. On the left-hand side of the remote, beneath the index buttons, is a group of numerical buttons which allow you to access any part of the programme by either time, chapter, or on CAV discs again, frame. You do not therefore need to scan the disc sequentially to find what you want. Punch in the number and, in about half the time it would take when using the scan function, the machine locates the required spot. The screen goes blank during this search mode and the whole operation is quite elegant and smooth. One small point. There is often something of a mix-up with this machine over the information display when you press the search button. When playing CLV discs the superimposed screen display still states 'Search Frame No. ....' when, in fact, there are no frame numbers on CLV discs. This legend should be interpreted as 'Search Elapsed Time ....'. This will not be of any consequence when you are used to operating the machine but might confuse matters when attempting to get to grips with the operating procedure in the early stages.

Three buttons control CAV disc functions on the re-

mote, and it would appear at first glance you had less conrol than the PHILIPS which has six buttons for these operating modes. But, in actual fact, there is one extra dimension to CAV control here - 3X speed reverse play. As can be seen in the remote illustration, the CAV buttons are dual-function controls. The price you have to pay for the 3X reverse speed button is that in order to achieve normal speed reverse play you have to resort to using the slider control and the slow-motion button in reverse mode - set the slider on the machine to run the disc at normal speed. The slow-motion range on the LD 1100 is somewhat less than the PHILIPS - see chart for details. The ergonomics of this remote are good - it is possible to use it one-handed with your thumb doing all the work though I suspect it was conceived with two-handed operation in mind.

Another of the assets of this player is the pause control - something that always seemed a strange omission on the PHILIPS machines.(It is on the later VLP 830 however.) Bear in mind you do not get a picture when going in to pause mode, the screen goes blank, but that is not the importance of this function as anyone used to any audio or video tape machine will appreciate. Details of the other functions and controls on the LD 1100 are otherwise similar to the VLP600/700, and are the basic controls found on all LV players, although here, admittedly, they are executed with somewhat greater facility. All the control functions have a visual representation in the form of a multitude of red lights on the front panel of the machine. Whether you are likely to be able to tell exactly what is happening by looking at the lights is debatable. More than likely, if you are a couple of metres away it would be difficult to discern what particular light is functioning. In a darkened room the distance would be considerably less, but I would expect that after a period of time you might get to know the meaning and position of each light. Whichever way, in practice these lights are not too important - you'll know what is happening by looking at the screen. Again the two lights at the top right-hand delineating the audio channels are fairly easy to isolate visually and these are probably the most important.

The light below this pair is of associated significance. Although only on PIONEER's 20 disc releases so far, the operation of the CX noise reduction system which this light indicates, is the other remaining substantial difference on the LD 1100. The merits of various noise-reduction systems have been topics of debate in the hi-fi magazines for longer than most of us care to remember, and until digital sound has superseeded analogue, the discussion will no doubt continue. Early US LaserVision discs had a reputation for being somewhat below specification in audio S/N ratio terms and noise-reduction was deemed the easiest method of obviating the problem. The improvement in S/N ratio CX allows is 10 db. As far as I know, CX is only used outside the USA on LV discs whereas in the USA CBS have tried to establish it as a general noise-reduction system on audio discs, but they seem to have lost interest in it now and hardly release any new product with it incorporated. Quite where that leaves CX in respect of LaserVision is hard to guess. Certainly with this machine you have the option of using it or not (it needs to be switched out on non-CX discs) and it is there for the possibility of more CX encoded product being released. It is a matter of fact that current UK LaserVision discs do not suffer the poor audio noise performance of the early US product and we will have to wait and see what happens. Having just had a look at the latest US PIONEER Disc Catalogue it would seem that the practice there is to issue every music title with CX and also any films with strong musical content.



Outwardly, then, this is a very nice machine, a good solid feel to it and, if anything, a little quieter than the PHILIPS.

Maybe at this point it would be of interest to comment on the actual laser part of the machine. In PIONEER's workshop I recently saw an LD 1100 on test with the cover removed but still working. The laser is visually far more impressive than I think any of the sales literature from either company would indicate. Essentially the laser is very similar in appearance to a cylindrical valve, about the size of three or four U2 batteries, that discharges along its length a beam of pink light, rather reminiscent of a piece of furry string. The focussed beam is emitted from the end of the laser to be routed through a series of mirrors, lenses, a diffraction grating, and a beam splitter (among others) towards the final objective that you see when you open the lid of the machine. That is not the laser itself. The whole laser and mirror assembly is mounted on a die-cast sledge that moves in accordance with the position of the objective in relation to the disc. It is most unfortunate that safety requirements preclude the feasibility of allowing the laser to be

LV Player Surve

	PRICE	LOADING	SCAN BEGINNING TO END	CONNECT-IONS	REMOTE	NOISE REDUCTION *	AUDIO	PAUSE	INDEX *	ELAPS TIM SEAR
PHILIPS *VLP 600*	£229	TOP	25 sec	AUDIO L+R — VIDEO (BNC) — ANTENNA — TV	—	—	L + R L & R	—	FRAME — CHAPTER — ELAPSED TIME	—
PHILIPS *VLP 700*	£249	TOP	25 sec	AS ABOVE	IR (Limited Function)	—	L + R L & R (Main only)	—	FRAME — CHAPTER — ELAPSED TIME	—
PHILIPS *VLP 830*	£549	TOP	25 sec	EURO-CONNECTOR — AUDIO L+R — ANTENNA — TV	IR	CX (set on machine)	L + R L & R	+	(Remote only) FRAME — CHAPTER — ELAPSED TIME	+ (Rem on
PIONEER *LD 1100*	£399	TOP	25 sec	AUDIO L+R — VIDEO (BNC) — ANTENNA — TV — Direct Control socket	IR (Contols all functions but slowmotion rate)	CX (set on machine)	L + R L & R	+	(Remote only) FRAME — CHAPTER — ELAPSED TIME	+ (Re o

...WHAT'S HAPPENING...WHAT'S HAPPENING...WHAT'S HAPPENING...WHAT'S HAPPENIN

+++++ Next issue we hope to feature the Arts International opera & ballet releases.
+++++ Apparent lull in activity of release of new film titles last year due to lengthy negotiations culminating in reductions in disc prices to their present levels.
+++++ Early MAGNAVOX LV players (the US versions of the PAL VLP600/700 models) were supplied in kit form by PHILIPS, Europe for later assembly in the US.
+++++ Japanese NTSC release of 'Gone With The Wind' (subtitled, 232 mins) necessitates 3 disc issue. However, we have heard of one LV release that runs to 4 discs and this is in PAL format. More on this next issue!

MORE CHART OBSERVATIONS - This time on the UK GALLUP Top 50 Rental Chart from way back in July. Then 11 of the titles were also out on LV - over 20%, quite a good proportion at this stage of the game. By the end of October, a period during which no new films were issued on LV, the number had fallen to 7. So superficially, though there does not appear to be a lot of substance to the film content of the LV catalogue as regard to up to the minute titles, there must be some good stuff there. Considering the absence of some of the major labels still, the hopeful addition of new programme suppliers should give LV a better image yet.

— * Function dependent on disc coding
— On remote control machines, functions set on both remote & main unit unless otherwise stated
— All details manufacturer's quoted specifications

CHAPTER SEARCH BY NO. *	PROGRAM BY TIME *	PROGRAM BY CHAPTER *	STILL FRAME	SLOW MOTION	RATE	REVERSE PLAY	FAST FORWARD	FRAME SEARCH BY NO. *	PROGRAM BY FRAME NO *	COMMENTS
			CAV	CAV	CAV	CAV	CAV	CAV	CAV	
—	—	—	F & R	F & R	NORMAL to 1 Frame every 4 seconds Variable	+	+ (× 3)	—	—	The original LaserVision player. Often available discounted. Excellent value basic machine.
—	—	—	F & R	F & R (Forward only on remote)	AS ABOVE (Rate set on machine only)	+ (Main only)	+ (×3)	—	—	As above plus limited function remote control for all CLV modes except audio switching and most CAV controls.
+ (Remote only)	—	Up to 7 Chapters (Random sequence + endless loop) (Remote only)	F & R	F & R	NORMAL to 1 Frame every 4 seconds Variable	+	+ (×3)	+ (Remote only)	One consecutive sequence + repeat (Remote only)	Currently the most sophisticated LaserVision player with inbuilt programming facilities.
+ (Remote only)	—	—	F & R (Remote only)	F & R (Remote only)	NORMAL to 1 Frame per second. Rate set on machine only.	+ (Remote only) × 3)	+ (Remote only × 3)	+ (Remote only)	—	Recently reduced in price. A smooth operating machine.

..WHAT'S HAPPENING...WHAT'S HAPPENING...WHAT'S HAPPENING....WHAT'S HAPPENI

+++++ Forthcoming 'Fawlty Towers' discs unfortunately only two shows per disc as many of the programmes overran their alloted 30 minute time slot. At least this way no cuts will be made. John Cleese has personally specified a correct sequence of release of the discs.

+++++ Talking of cuts, reader John Dennis, an enthusiastic VLP 830 owner, maintains that 'Who Dares Wins' release is without some rock-concert footage that featured in the theatrical version.

+++++ Two readers report they have returned copies of 'On The Town' due to unsatisfactory nature of the sound - it appears to be clipped at certain points or it has been suggested that some sort of limiter has been wrongly set in preparation of the master tape. Has anyone got a satisfactory copy of this disc?

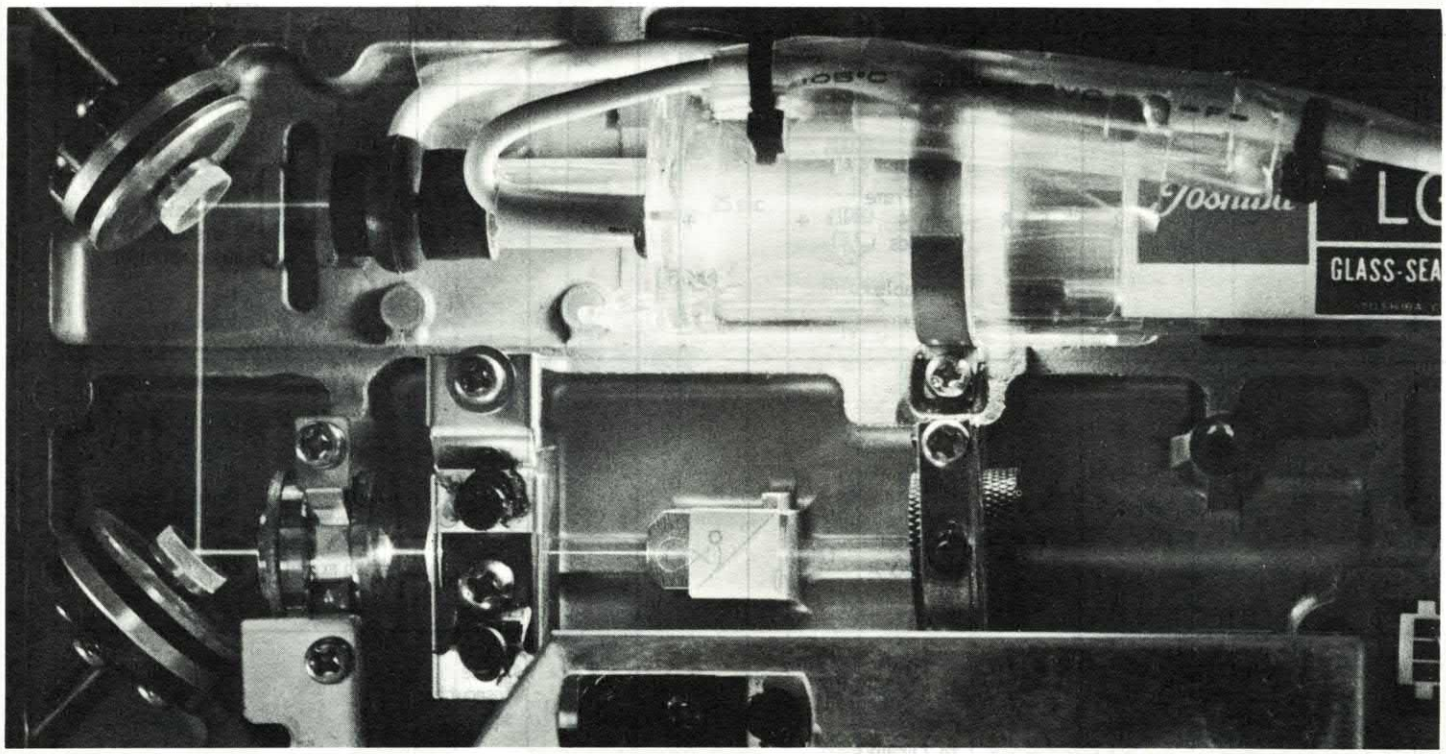
+++++ BBC 'Chris Barber' & 'Sky At Westminster Abbey' discs originally conceived as LV issues.

+++++ Sorry about the mistaken info on the SONY Profeel Monitor last time. Hope you haven't spent all Xmas trying to buy one!

+++++ More on the CLD 9000 LV/CD player. The digital soundtrack on the videodiscs intended for use on it also carry a conventional analogue soundtrack as well

visible in the finished product as it certainly has a lot of eye appeal. The accompanying black and white photograph also hardly does it justice but has been included, nonetheless, for any clarity it may bring to the description. Note, however, that it does not show the whole of the laser path as the objective part is not present in this workshop module. Had it been complete this would have appeared in the bottom right-hand corner. The laser also extends nearly as far again off towards the right of the picture.

At £399 considerably more expensive than the PHILIPS machines and the sophistication you acquire at this price is for you to value. In a fast-changing world this player holds up well with its operating ease, and having seen inside and out I should imagine would prove very reliable in operation.



The LaserDisc Experience

Last Autumn PIONEER were running in-store LaserDisc sales promotions around and about the country - probably near you. Hearing the 'Laserdisc Experience' advert on one of the local radio stations, your intrepid reporter paid a visit to a London event at PHOTOSTEREO in Bayswater to see how the rest of the world reacts to LV. Declining the free glass of wine proffered (journalistic integrity?) I faced the nicely presented display and tried to pretend I was seeing all this for the first time. A then newly released 'Thriller' disc was playing, and also on a side display Paul Simon's solo PIONEER release - neither programme I felt really bringing out the best of the potential picture quality of LV, the Paul Simon especially as it has that 'soft' NTSC feel to it. Sound on 'Thriller' was good though. I cannot vouch for the Simon disc as the sound was turned down. PIONEER's representatives were helpful and informative (just as it should be), and I expect the interested customer who wanted to take an LD 1100 out to Nigeria and, could he get it serviced there?, was probably not that untypical a request in this most cosmopolitan of shopping streets. So, a nice display but not too impressed with the choice of some of the programme material. One little curiosity was in the display rack of empty sleeves - a German version of 'Beneath The Planet Of The Apes' - I wonder how this got there.

A few words on PHOTOSTEREO. I paid a subsequent visit and the proprietor, Mr. Shah, has good things to say about LaserVision and it is proving to be a good seller, both to local residents and foreign tourists. As he rightly claims, once you give people the chance to see and hear the superiority of LaserVision, the system sells itself. Stocks of long connecting cables are kept to enable purchasers achieve the best positioning of their TV and hi-fi (see player reviews!). Both PIONEER and PHILIPS LV products are stocked along with video and audio products from SONY/PANASONIC/AIWA/JVC. Tax free export can be accommodated with ease. Opening hours are 10.30 to 19.30 weekdays, 11.00 to 17.00 on Sundays. It is always possible to have an LV demo as the LV display area is quite large and separate from the main flow of customers.

PHOTOSTEREO, 109 QUEENSWAY, LONDON W.2.

new releases

After a period of relative inactivity on the film front the Winter Release Sheet does much to boost this aspect of the LaserVision Catalogue. From the EMBASSY label comes Champions, the John Hurt starring story of real-life jockey Bob Champion's fight against cancer. With Edward Woodward ++++++ Topical again as far as its appearance on video is concerned is spoof adult fantasy feature Gwendoline based on the strip cartoon by John Willie. Unfortunately it would appear that a few cuts have been made in the video release but the LV version should be as complete as any ++++++ Saturday 14th a humourous cash-in on the'Friday 13th' series starring Richard Benjamin and Paula Prentiss might offer much needed light relief to fans of that group of films as it would seem that Pts 3 & 4 are not likely to make an appearance on video in the short term due to the pressure to make cuts in them ++++++ Considered as a possible exploitation of the 'Carrie' concept, Zapped gives telekinesis a second airing in this issue. High school student invents something in the chemistry lab that endows him with the ability to remove items of clothing from the female students! Stars Scott Bajo & Willie Aames ++++++ Killing Machine has Willie Aames again with Lee Van Cleef, Margaux Hemmingway & George Rivero in a story of organised crime taking over the trucking business on the French/Spanish border ++++++ This Willie Aames gets around! Here with Phoebe Cates in Paradise which bears a striking similarity to 'Blue Lagoon' ++++++ Lianna Highly acclaimed though modest production it stars Linda Griffiths as an outwardly contented housewife with a couple of children whose life takes a sudden change of direction when she meets and falls in love with her night school teacher - Ruth. From writer/director John Sayles of 'Return Of The Secaucus Seven' fame ++++++ Back in France again with a 1970 Charles Bronson thriller, a little different in style to the normal Bronson pieces. Riders On The Rain also stars Marlene Jobert and Jill Ireland ++++++ Humungous - man monster devours holidaying teenagers stranded on deserted island. Yummy! With David Wallace, John Wildman, and Janet Baldwin ++++++ Winter Kills - Jeff Bridges, Eli Wallach, John Houston & Anthony Perkins in political thriller ++++++ Spetters (Hotshots) Outwardly a teen type movie about a trio of motorcycling teenagers but this film from respected director Paul Verhoeven is aimed at adult viewers ++++++ From the same director comes The Fourth Man - a story of an affair between a young man and a thrice married woman whose previous husbands have disappeared im mysterious circumstances. Maybe he will be the fourth man? ++++++ Strangers Kiss 1955 Hollywood setting for a tale of ex-boxer turned actor falling for the leading lady. Stars Peter Coyote & Victoria Tennant. A Michael White production ++++++ Sign Of Four might get muddled up with the last but one film . A Sherlock Holmes story featuring Ian Richardson and David Healy ++++++ French made Street Of The Dammed centers on Chet, a former crime-gang member,coming inadvertently into contact with a former rival through a Chinese girl he has met and fallen in love with. Includes a few punch-ups ++++++ Forbidden World "Part Alien, Part Thing....All Nightmare" it says here! Stars Jessie Vint ++++++ Now Spinal Tap is the sort of film you would hope people would stumble across with out any fore knowledge. A 'rockumentary' concerning the final tour of the US by English mega-group. Patrick MacNee guest stars ++++++ The Seduction Available at last (see Autumn 83 Catalogue).

A hot trio of titles spearhead the RANK batch of releases - Educating Rita, Gorky Park, and Silkwood, and any summary would seem uneccessary. Heart-throb Richard Gere gets on LV with Breathless, a remake of the John Luc Goddard film ++++++ Another National Lampoon production, Class Reunion revolves around a reunion for 'the class of 72' of the Lizzie Borden High School. "No class has less class than this class" it says. Sounds great! ++++++ A different sort of class is Class the 1983 Jacqueline Bisset starring story of a college boy falling in love with an older woman and the story takes some interesting turns ++++++ Yellowbeard features the last film appearance of Marty Feldman in a pirate comedy that also stars Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Peter Cook, Cheech & Chong, David Bowie & Madelin Kahn ++++++ Finally, Lone Wolf McQuade, a Texas Ranger investigates the hi-jacking of military weapons. Stars Chuck Norris, David Carradine & Barbara Carrera.

Music titles and cartoons feature strongly in the MGM releases, good ones too, but something a little unusual is Yes Georgio the film debut of Luciano Pavarotti in a story of a touring concert star and his romance with a lady doctor (Kathryn Harold). Songs include 'Ave Maria', 'O Sole Mio', 'Santa Lucia' and ' I Left My Heart In San Francisco'! ++++++ Lesbianism seems popular this winter for in The Hunger we see Catherine Deneuve and Susan Saron-don get it together. David Bowie also appears in this mixture of eroticism and blood ++++++ Brainstorm is reckoned to feature some good visual effects and concerns the invention of a machine capable of recording the brain's physical and emotional sensations for the experience of others. Someone decides to extend the machines potential! Stars Natalie Wood and Christopher Walken.

GUILD complete the programme contributors this time round. In Young Warriors Kevin, a policeman's son,finds his sister raped and killed and the inability of the police to bring the culprits to book sets him off on his own campaign of revenge. Stars Ernest Borgnine, Richard Roundtree, Linda Day George, James Van Patten ++++++ Private Popsicle is another of those Israeli made teen movies, a follow up to 'Lemon Popsicle' ++++++ Sahara has received some mixed reviews and there seems to be some doubt as to whether it is meant to be taken seriously. One cinema manager recently closed his cinema with this film claiming it to be "the most boring film ever". Could be interesting! Other titles include Revenge Of The Ninja, The Rats, The Wicked Lady but space is running out.

REVIEWS

Pressure of space precludes repeating the review policy as printed in the first issue. New readers who do not have that issue will have to bear with us until it can be updated and condensed for future reprinting. (Look! It's costing us a small fortune in storage charges to keep a mountain of these things that we can't unload - why don't you just send off for a copy, £1.00 post free, or, better still save us spending even more precious beer money on expensive advertising by including this back number as part of a four issue subscription at the giveway price of £3.60. Can't say fairer than that, eh?)

As a very rough recap, B grades suggest things being well up to spec., C grades indicate criticism that, depending on personal taste and your level of video and audio replay equipment, might impair your enjoyment. There should not be any discs with a D grade! In order to isolate specific characteristics the sequence of grades is as follows : the first pair relate to the estimated quality of the original master, video first then audio. The second pair relate to pressing quality, again, video then audio. Remember, none of this grading has any relevance to the artistic merit or otherwise of the release. Anything to do with this is confined to the text of the review.

From early responses to the first issue (it would have been nice to let things run on a little but what with issue 1 coming out a little behind the October cover date [the spirit of LaserVision lives on!], and the difficulties of working this issue around the Xmas holiday period, it has meant that could not be) it has been suggested that I have been overcritical if anything, but, I must take the stance that people are likely to use the reviews to guide them in their purchases and additionally, these discs do not wear out so even the smallest niggle can assume major proportions after the twentieth play. Compare this to the scratched record syndrome - these can be tolerated on a one-off hearing of someone else's record, but how long can you tolerate replaying one of your own favourite records at home when it has a scratch or excessive surface noise?

The long-term aim is for readers to contribute their thoughts on the disc review policy in order to establish the correct priorities. This way the reviews will be of most use in helping others to be guided in their disc purchases. Consider all the current gradings provisional. Mind you, they are not likely to be far out. In issue 4 we will print a cumulative list of all the discs reviewed so far with any adjustments necessitated by the increased body of knowledge gathered in the previous year. These are still relatively early days for LaserVision and a quantity of discs will need to be seen before a norm can be established. One disc that could already benefit from minor adjustment is 'The Chris Barber Band' release - it was felt that the soft-focus filters employed in the production itself impaired the assessment of the master tape grade, so a little upgrading would seem to be called for, and would suggest you ammend your copy to the following - [A / A] [B / A].

The span of interest of LaserVision releases is far greater than one person can embrace, at least if an attempt is to be made to be informative and entertaining. If any readers feel that they have something to say about discs they have, and could present it in a positive, informative manner, then the review pages of this magazine are open to your offers. There is obviously going to be some problem with the technical grading as we do not yet have a commonly understood set of paramaters, but we will give this some thought over the Xmas holiday and try and find some way round this. As a first requirement though, any readers who can assess the classical music/opera and ballet releases as well as film musicals would definitely bring an added dimension to NEW FLATS. Let us hear from you.

THE NIGHTCOMERS

EMBASSY	
ELV 2027	£11.99
CLV	
COLOUR	MONO
97 mins	1972

Featuring : Marlon Brando, Stephanie Beacham, Thora Hird, Harry Andrews, Verna Harvey, Christopher Ellis, Anna Palk.

Produced & Directed by Michael Winner.

Having got so used to Marlon Brando's heavy jowled image from 'The Godfather', his appearance here as Quint, the Irish manservant, in this turn of the century period piece comes as something of a surprise. His sprightly manner seems quite out of place for a film of 1972 vintage. 'The Nightcomers', set in a Victorian country house where, following the death of the two parents in a dawn of the motor age car crash (which you do not get to see), the two orphaned children, Miles and Flora, remain to be brought up by the young governess Miss Jessel, Stephanie Beacham. The formality of the children's upbringing is disrupted by the influence of easy going Quint who simultaneously engages in a secretive nocturnal relationship with Miss Jessel,

to which she denies all knowledge come the hours of daylight. Thora Hird completes the main complement of characters as Mrs Gross the housekeeper who attempts unsuccessfully to keep Quint at bay. Marlon Brando, being another controversial actor, one feels wary of expressing too strong an opinion, but it is much to his credit that he does not seem to be the slightest bit out of place in this English setting. There are a couple of moments in the film where it would appear his dialogue had been re-recorded, but it would seem more likely to have been done for technical reasons than for his inability to maintain the correct accent.

When I first viewed this film I was not particularly stimulated by the picture quality one way or the other. However, I find that with minimal gain on the colour control and a reduction in the contrast (some of the interior scenes are quite dark - correctly so), this disc has a rather nice crisp image with a subtle colouring,very much in keeping with the mood of the piece. The pressing does justice to the original too. The sound, unfortunately, is not of equal merit. The sound is a bit thin in character and there is a tendency for a certain amount of crackling distortion to creep through on the pressing. None of this is too bad but it does make listening a little heavier going than it need be.

[B+ / B-] [A- / C]

STATUS QUO
Live In Concert

POLYGRAM	
790 688 1	£ 9.99
CLV	Chapter Search
COLOUR	STEREO
77mins	1982

Side One : Caroline, Roll Over Lay Down, Backwater/Little Lady, Don't Drive My Car, Whatever You Want, Hold You Back.

Side Two : Rockin' All Over The World, Over The Edge, Big Fat Mama/Roadhouse Blues, Rain, Down Down, Bye Bye Johnny.

As something of an exercise in the hopeful future reality of LaserVision, a recent warm November Saturday saw me setting of to the local high street solely with the intention of buying a disc on impulse, just as you would do when popping in to your local record store. No ordering, no searching high and low for hard to get titles - just see it and buy it! Well, impulse buying can be expensive and I came away with two discs in the end. This is the first.

Not having seen this 20th Anniversary Status Quo concert on the box, one has to take their word for it when it says on the sleeve that the disc contains material extra to the broadcast. Anyway, all the tracks are well annotated on the sleeve - a pleasant change for LV releases. On to the show. Before the concert begins we see HRH Prince Charles chatting to the members of the group. You cannot hear the conversation though one has an inkling that he is prodding Frances and Rick for some tips on string guages or somesuch, though one cannot be absolutely sure. The camera moves to the auditorium and we get a glimpse of the Prince's bemused entourage who look thoroughly at odds with what is going on around them, and one gets the impression that within moments of the house-lights dimming they will, to a man, make a bolt for the exit doors and the relative safety of the hospitality bar.

The music starts - a nice version of 'Caroline' followed by 'Roll Over Lay Down'. This is a loud record and one has to hope your neighbours are equally appreciative Quo fans! The dynamic range is such that the sound suffers a little if it is played soft, the guitars and especially the voices are a little down in the mix unless the volume control is cranked up a bit. The sound has a pleasant natural acoustic to it and one is aware of the audience's contribution and the general ambience of the event. Large halls such as the NEC do not naturally lend themselves to electric music but this is OK. When various stage lighting effects are employed things are visually quite interesting, but when it comes down to the straight shots things are just so so. There is a fair number of shots with missed focus and framing, and there is a generally uninspired attitude towards composition. See the Fleetwood Mac Mirage disc for something better in this respect. The strength of the overhead white light results in a picture quality that is not particularly colourful - many scenes are illuminated with a single colour which, strangely enough, is most effective when the colour is at its weakest.

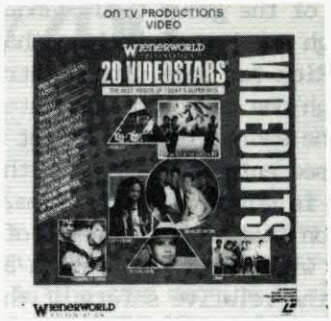
'Don't Drive My Car' offers a different style of song but then it is straight back into it with 'Whatever You Want' and the arm-wavers return in force. Side two has some better visual effects as clouds of white smoke are subjected to brilliant white pulses of light. 'Over The Edge' fairly rocks along and after a blues medley it's down to finale time. Following 'Down Down' everything seems to be over. The stage is dark, a small white flashing light appears to the accompaniment of a strange mechanical whirring sound. What can this be? A guitar chord strikes, the band starts playing, the stage lights come on and, what's this? We see an enthusiastic fan, obviously overcome by the occaision, rushing the stage , only to be relentlessly repelled by the bouncers (For Chrissakes! This may be HRH,overcome by the frenzied excitement of the evening. Let's hope he came out of this fracas unscathed!).'Bye Bye Johnny' ensues and the show relentlessly works to its climactic end.

So, no real quibbles on sound quality here. Video master quality, again, seems excellent and there is a solidity to the image that is impressive, though the pressing itself is marred somewhat by a recurring 'pinstripe' effect on some of the plain backgrounds - as though small groups of scanning lines are clumped together. An unfortunate aspect to what is otherwise an encouraging release. Now, go and ask the neighbours what they thought about the sound!

[A / A] [C / A]

VARIOUS ARTISTES
Videohits

ON TV PRODUCTIONS	
ONTV - 04	£13.99
CLV	Chapter Search
COLOUR	STEREO
78 mins	1980 - 3



Side One : ELTON JOHN - Kiss The Bride, MEN WITHOUT HATS - Safety Dance, GENESIS - Mama, EDDY GRANT - Till I Can't Take Love No More, THOMPSON TWINS - We Are Detective*, YAZOO - Nobody's Diary, KID CREOLE - Annie I'm Not Your Daddy, GALAXY - Wait Until Tonight, FREEZ - I.O.U., IMAGINATION - Looking At Midnight.
Side Two : WILL POWERS - Kissing With Connfidence, RAF RAVENSCROFT - Maxine, LOTUS EATERS - First Picture Of You*, ASSEMBLY - Never Never, DEPECHE MODE - Love In Itself, UB 40 - I Think It's Going To Rain Today*, RONDO VENEZIANO - La Serenissima*, FLASH & THE PAN - Waiting For A Train*, JOHN COUGAR MELLENCAMP - Pink Houses, ROMAN HOLLIDAY - Don't Try To Stop It.

* Denotes Mono recordings.

This is the second. I have been intrigued by these pop compilations and jumped on this stereo one when thumbing through the rack. There were several reservations about trying one of these releases previously - would the multi-sourced material produce a technically cohesive and watchable finished product and, in the fast-moving world of pop music, would the shelf life of such a product survive the passage of time since the release of the original tracks, some of which date back to 1980? Well, on both counts, I think my fears were dispelled on a preliminary scan through the disc. It would be best to state right here and now that, personally, I have a certain hostility towards artistes lip-syncing, but the state of development of the pop video has introduced a level of production and sometimes fantasy in their presentation (ie. we are not faced with people pretending to be genuinly performing their latest hit 'live') that this reservation no longer applies. Indeed, this visual expansion of the presentation of pop music does a lot to enhance the heavily produced type of record as there is no pretence any more and the video can be experienced on a completely different level. On to the contents.

After a brief credit to the suppliers of the clips and following the copyright protection statement that threatens 'PIRATES WILL BE SHOT AT DAWN', we are given a short compilation sequence of the ensuing 20 tracks - nicely put together, just a few seconds of each. Good idea. Elton john kicks things off, being the most established artiste on the album, and then it is straight into Men Without Hats in an outdoor sequence that features some remarkably flourescent reds and greens in a medieval style, open air setting. There is a close up shot in the moody Genesis clip in which Phil Collins screws up his face and momentarily evokes an image of Duane Doberman after a crash-diet! The forties feel of this clip is carried forward to the Eddy Grant piece. 'We Are Detective' is shot wide-screen and has blanked off strips top and bottom - this works fine as the photography is visually strong enough to stand this slight reduction in size. Some lasers on this clip too. Yazoo, featuring the man with the reverse bald head (plenty on top, nothing round the sides!) precedes 'Annie, I'm Not Your Daddy' which on hearing again makes you realise how much airplay this received at the time, possibly over-exposed in this context. The side concludes with three soul-type disco numbers of which the Galaxy track deserves special mention on account of its crisp definition - this is the sort of picture quality that normally merits an A grading. The Imagination clip makes use of the solarisation effect attainable with the SANSUI AV-77 Switcher mentioned last issue.

Side two opens with a Will Powers track that, for some reason,recalls 'Fish Heads', though I'm not quite sure why. 'Maxine' evokes 'Baker Street', but the reason for this is somewhat more obvious. A bit more solarisation here. The Lotus Eaters clip shows great sympathy with the mood of the song - fairly simple too. It might be nice to spend a day by the sea-side here. 'Never Never' follows on nicely - some interesting shots where the camera has been strapped to one of the sails of the windmill and it appears the sail is stationary and it is the windmill that is revolving. Depeche Mode look a bit uncomfortable in in their segment - the video and audio do not quite gel in the human sequences though the foundry shots are OK. A slight hint of tape hiss precedes the UB 40 number which is not such a wide range recording as most of the others, though this is not meant as criticism in particular, just an observation. Oh, I see it is a mono recording, maybe that explains it. John Cougar is on the penultimate track which, on an audio LP is normally reserved for the weakest song, because it is usually reckoned that radio programmers rarely have time to audition these tracks. It is certainly not a weak point on this disc and rounds off quite a good sequence of tracks on this side before Roman Holliday's chirpy closer - another effective video that looks like it did not cost an arm and a leg to produce. It made me think of the similarly styled Jools Holland video shot in the Gents in the centre of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne - someone should put that on a future compilation.

I would not like to anticipate how replayable this sort of disc is likely to prove. Given this has the essential (for music) chapter search facility, it does mean that you can miss out any tracks that you soon tire of quite easily. They have made a very reasonable job of giving a homogeneous feel to the whole disc. Video quality is generally OK. Sound is excellent, both on the master and the pressing. On video, the pressing is just about there for a B grade - there was a little bit of blue speckling on my copy and, overall, it was very slightly grainy, but all in all quite a serviceable job. A good release.

[B+ / A] [B- / A]

OKLAHOMA

CBS - FOX	
7020 - 70	£15.99
CLV	
COLOUR	MONO
139 mins (2Discs)	1955

Featuring : Gordon MacRae, Gloria Grahame, Shirley Jones, Gene Nelson, Charlotte Greenwood, Eddie Albert, James Whitemore, Rod Steiger.

Directed by Fred Zinneman.
Musical Score : Rodgers & Hammerstein.

Musical Numbers include : Oh What A Beautiful Morning, Surrey With A Fringe On Top, I Cain't Say No, People Will Say We're In Love, Out Of My Dreams, Oklahoma.

The opening night of the stage production of this wonderful musical was presented to an unsuspecting public on March 31st. 1943 and the tuneful songs are as fresh today as when they were first written. Gone was the usual opening chorus line-up setting the scene, instead there was one solitary cowboy singing that'it was a beautiful morning and the corn was as high as an elephant's eye! The rest of the show was as equally innovative and thereafter musical comedy was ousted by musical theatre with plot and score being handled in an integrated fashion hitherto unknown. Twelve years later the film version embodied further innovations - it was filmed in a three camera wide-screen process called 'Todd-AO' (this disc is prepared from a CinemaScope print - so you can't see any joins!) and it also introduced the lovely Shirley Jones as Laurey.

Although Richard Rogers didn't think the film casting was totally satisfactory, the viewer will find much to admire in the performances. Shirley Jones and Gordon MacRae are ideally suited. Gloria Grahame and Rod Steiger give fine, well acted performances and put over their songs extremely well. My only disappointment was Charlotte Greenwood as Aunt Eller Murphy - although she looks ideal for the part she gives a rather stagey performance and one can't actually believe she's for real. I leave the editor to make an overall assessment of disc quality but must say I found the print quality to be annoyingly grainy. Also I should have liked a stereo soundtrack as this gives a much greater sense of involvement and enjoyment to the viewer. Other than my comment about print quality I heartily recommend this lovely film.

[Keith Arnold]

Disc Quality - Yes, I can appreciate the bit about the grain. It does seem to crop up on scanned films, it was very noticeable on 'Wrath Of Khan'. I do not think it is a pressing problem and I found this disc to be quite well pressed - it had a certain stability to the picture that is sometimes lacking. I guess you have to make allowances for a thirty year old film and short of going back to the original negative I expect this is about as good as you are going to get. If anything it was the hiss on the soundtrack that caught my attention. To each his own! It is hard to grade old films like this. If it was a modern film it would have certainly been C grades for the master. Anyway, here goes.

[B- / B-] [B / B]

LUCIANO PAVAROTTI
Royal Gala Concert

POLYGRAM - SPECTRUM	
790 588 1	£ 9.99
CAV	Chapter Search
COLOUR	STEREO
60 mins	1982

Side 1 : Introduction/National Anthem, Overture 'Force Of Destiny', 'Recondita Armonia'(Tosca), 'Ah, La Paterna Mano'(Macbeth), 'La Mia Letizia'(I Lombardi), 'Quando Le Sere Al Placido'(Luisa Miller).
Side 2 : 'Fra Poco A Me Ricovero'(Lucia di Lammermoor), 'Lamento di Frederico'(L'Arlesiana), 'E Lucevan Le Stelle'(Tosca), 'Una Furtiva Lagrima'(L'Elisir D'Amore), 'Nessun Dorma'(Turandot),'Torna A Surriento'[Come Back To Sorrento].

Featuring : Luciano Pavarotti with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Kurt Herbert Adler.

Did Caruso make the gramophone or did the gramophone make Caruso? - the riddle remains unsolved. Ever since those early pioneering days the Tenor voice has proven a most viable instrument as this LV disc helps to substantiate. Luciano Pavarotti's recital of operatic arias written by some of the world's greatest composers was recorded by the BBC on 13th.April,1982 and is a fitting souvenir of both the occasion and the artist.

The disc opens with the arrival of the Queen Mother, the playing of the National Anthem, and an Overture. This introduction gives a nice sense of the occaision and settles us down to the main attraction - Pavarotti! The great man then appears and soon has his audience eating out of his hand, standing ovations being the order of the day towards the end. He performs his numbers with great style and panache and I personally find him far more credible in this concert environment than in his more usual romantic operatic roles. The average man-in-the-street wanting a programme of tuneful and fairly recogniseable music will, I suspect, listen mainly to side 2, however the commited Opera Fan will discover a few rarer treasures on side 1.

Chapter Search has been employed and each piece has its own number, making individual band selection simple. Perhaps in this instance we could have forfeited frame numbers in exchange for sub-titles giving an English translation available at the touch of a button.

Let's hope this may be considered for future recitals and operas. Despite minor reservations regarding the lack of translation and the more specialist interest of side 1 this disc should have wide appeal and serve as a valid souvenir of this great artist.

[Keith Arnold]

Disc Quality - This disc does have its shortcomings. It looks like a film recording transferred to video, the definition is a bit soft and any rapid movement looks a little odd, you get a kind of stroboscopic effect. Colour is a bit weak. The sound is OK but lacks presence and has a certain 'glassy' restricted quality to it. I notice that the sleeve says it is a digital recording, maybe this might be the cause. It is clear and undistorted but, to me, does not have the warmth and depth I would expect, especially seeing it is a BBC job. Pressing is a bit flecky - white dashes mostly which I think only show up because of the softness of the original master. It's a relative thing.

Now I am more a Rockabilly man myself and it is not really my privilege to add comments to the guest reviews but I can see that this is one of those discs where any limitations in the production recede in proportion to the emotion and artistry of the moment. Luciano (do his friends call him 'Lucky'?) overcomes the impersonality of the Albert Hall environment admirably. You would not think this was a 7000seat auditorium - it seems much smaller. I play side two mostly. 'Fra Poco A Me Ricovero' and 'Lamento Di Federico' are two very strong openers, and just when you think things are winding down Pav pops in 'Nessun Dorma' and you know the audience would have been happy just to have come for that one number. You realise even he knows it when you see the off-stage shots (Frames 38800-39050). I was looking for paper money to be thrown on the stage during the encore 'Torna A Surriento' ('Surrender' to us Elvis fans) but could see none. The only excuse I can imagine for such restraint is that any money frittered away in a hasty moment would be far better put towards the purchase of this disc and an LV player on which to use it.

[B- / B+] [B- / B+]

ZORRO THE GAY BLADE

CBS - FOX	
1125 - 70	£13.99
CLV	
COLOUR	MONO
93 mins	1981

Featuring : George Hamilton, Lauren Hutton, Brenda Vaccaro, Ron Leibman.

Directed by Peter Medak.

Good musical start to this one over some intentionally dated but authentic opening credits. A worthy follow-up to 'Love At First Bite', this slight reinterpretation of the legend of Zorro spares no opportunity to raise a laugh but the approach is always respectful and sometimes the plot becomes almost credible. A very detailed and professional production throughout. George Hamilton is excellent - he plays two roles, and projects well, even when his face is half hidden by a mask. Incidentally, I do not think that the sleeve photographs do justice to the humorous side of this feature - it would be easy to mistake this for an all-action film were it not for the dubious nature of the title.

While the concept sustains well for the entire film there was, I felt, a detectable loss of momentum around the halfway point that the appearance of Ramon, the long lost brother, certainly reverses. The performance by Ron Leibman as the tyrannical Estabon is excellent and Lauren Hutton portrays the heroine with a charming combination of sensuality and humour. If you have a liking for all those good old adventure films of the thirties and forties, and do not object to the concept being camped up a bit, then this could be just the film for you. Overall, I think I prefered this to 'Love At First Bite'.

No doubt some of the softness of definition is intentional, but I feel it could have been better. May be the less than ideal quality of the pressing makes this look worse than it is. The pressing is a bit grainy and only just there as far as reasonable density of colour goes. Sound is OK. This is very much the sort of film that I can see a lot of people treasuring, and it is a pity that the pressing falls a little short of doing it justice.

[C / B-] [C- / B-]

FEELING FIT

RANK VIDEO	
725 5024 0	£ 9.99
CAV	Chapter Search
COLOUR	DUAL-MONO
Untimed	1981

Featuring : Anthony Van Laast, Susan Hampshire.

There is this one disc in the review rack that keeps getting pushed back down the pile everytime it creeps towards the 'to be done next position'. So, one weekend, feeling guilty having not been out for the Sunday run (Everybody is at it, you know. There is hardly room on the pavement some mornings for pedestrians. If you don't keep your wits about you, you'll find some maniac, all track-suit and ankle warmers, clawing for every last breath, lurching toward you on an imminent collision course), I faced the challenge of the 'Feeling Fit' disc. It seemed to be about time one of the interactive type LaserVision discs was sur-

veyed just to see how good a job could be made of this exploitation of the medium. The most logical approach would obviously be to get down on the floor and try some of this stuff out. Having seen the'Jane Fonda Workout' I did not fancy that style too much - being shouted never inspires me to anything! This is somewhat more subdued.

Anthony Van Laast, a teacher at the London Contemporary School Of Dance, is introduced to us by actress Susan Hampshire and proceeds to outline the principles involved in approaching the exercises demonstrated on the disc. These are divided into eight chapters, each one paying particular attention to a separate aspect of the anatomy - neck, back, stomach, feet etc. After the first chapter, which concentrates on loosening up exercises and body stretches, the disc is so encoded as to put the player into still mode. All the function lights extinguish and, as the chapter card displayed on the screen explains, it is now your option as to whether you should rest, repeat the exercise, or continue on to chapter 2. To continue you must press the normal button on your machine. This procedure applies each time you reach the end of each chapter. It is not possible to play the disc straight through without stopping.

All the exercises are carried out to the accompaniment of a good,rythmic pop music backing track which is on channel 2 (R). Channel 1 (L) contains the same music in sync, but at a lower volume, to allow Anthony to give the instructions for the exercises over the top. The idea is that in familiarising yourself with the exercises you would may be suppress channel 2 but then, as you get to know the correct way to carry out the exercise steps, you can suppress channel 1 and just do them to the accompaniment of the music alone back on channel 2. If that Jane Fonda disc ever gets released on LV that feature is a definite requirement! It states on the sleeve that you should not play both channels simultaneously though I cannot see why - doing this gives a good compromise balance between the voice and the music. There are chapter numbers on the disc to allow one to go straight to a particular batch of exercises without having to scan the disc, or, if you have a machine like the VLP 830 you could even program a specific exercise sequence for repeat play, allowing yet a further control option over the disc. As it is, having a remote control is a definite advantage here as rushing back to a non-remote machine in order to repeat an uncomprehended segment can result in a higher level of physical activity than that induced by the disc's own exercises!

All this programme controllability is without resort to the still/slow-motion/reverse CAV functions on your machine. Slow-motion is obviously the most likely used additional control asset though, of course, you lose the soundtrack as soon as you engage this function. It was the use of the slow-motion that first drew attention to the one weakness in the presentation of this disc. The location for the bulk of the disc is a spartanly furnished, wooden floored room (see cover photo) with Anthony performing the exercises in the foreground and another male and three female participants in the background. Sometimes the other members of the group take over camera front position for spcific exercises. The problem though is this. Anthony is dressed for the entire programme in a rather baggy track suit and so when you hear his instructions as to which muscle groups you should be paying particular attention to, you can only take his word for it as all the detail of the workings of his body is obscured. You tend to listen to him but look past him at the girls, who are outfitted in skin-tight leotards, and therefore convey the point of the exercises with far greater clarity. Even the other male wears track suit bottoms and a dark top so is not particularly illustrative either. It is certainly a lot more informative looking at the women's bodies (well that's my excuse anyway), and it is unfortunate they are normally relegated to secondary positions.("Typical!" says new-woman type person). This point was brought home most graphically when attempting the advanced exercises in chapter 9. This is a non-musical chapter where we see Anthony taking two of the girls through some static floor exercises where the ability to see how your body should be placed is convincingly unambiguous. When he gets Nancy to do her exercise you appreciate the bit about keeping your lower back on the floor because you can see it. This is not the case in a baggy track suit! Such criticism would be about the only one that could be levelled at the production itself though. Anthony Van Laast has a good, supportive style of instruction to offer though he possibly does not have the agreessive, showbizzy manner of presentation that has become the norm in the recent spate of exercise videos. Good! some might say. He seems to know his stuff.

Chapter 10 is an outdoor segment on jogging which re-introduces Susan Hampshire as co-presenter. Again, running in shorts,as opposed to track suits, would have helped viewers observe what muscles should be doing what. Chapter 11 is a still-frame sequence, starting at 47497 and continuing to 47574 - 77 frames of dietary information. Again, the machine stops automatically and it is up to you to still-frame through these at will. Pushing the reverse button speeds you back to the start of this segment and the machine again stops automatically, awaiting your next command. The slow-motion control also functions effectively on this chapter and you can easily revert to still-frame when you find the page you require.

BACK ISSUE

COPIES OF OUR FIRST ISSUE ARE STILL AVAILABLE AT PRICE £1.00 (OR MAY BE INCLUDED IN SUBSCRIPTION OFFER RATE ie. NO. 1 + 3 FUTURE ISSUES FOR £3.60). THIS ISSUE CONTAINS A BRIEF HISTORY OF LASERVISION IN THE UK & USA AND REVIEWS OF THE FOLLOWING DISCS :FILMS - 48 HRS, NINE LIVES OF FRITZ THE CAT, THE BLACK MARBLE, SHOCK TREATMENT, HEAVEN CAN WAIT, STAR WARS, AIRPLANE!, YOUNG DOCTORS IN LOVE, STAR TREK 2, GOIN' ALL THE WAY, RAISE THE TITANIC, ONE SHOE MAKES IT MURDER, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF. MUSIC - JERRY LEE LEWIS / Live, FLEETWOOD MAC / In Concert Mirage Tour, LORETTA LYNN / Loretta, CHRIS BARBER BAND, NO NUKES MUSE CONCERT.

Considering the smaller than usual proportion of this review being given over to the content within it already one of the longest reviews done so far. So long, in fact, that I have unfortunately had to restrain myself from more than cursory participation this time round. Next play, I promise! The scale of this review is in itself an indication of the potential of interactive LaserVision - and these are early days yet. For £9.99 it is a bit of a bargain for the use you are likely to extract from it (assuming, of course, you want to do the exercises!), and the slight criticisms of the presentation would be of continuing lesser significance the more you familiarised yourself with the exercises. The sound quality is excellent and the video is clear, if a little grainy - certainly up to the job intended.

[B / A] [B / A]

BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST
Berlin

POLYGRAM - SPECTRUM	
790 499 1	£ 9.99
CAV	
COLOUR	STEREO
50 mins	1982

Side One : Berlin, Loving Is Easy, Mockingbird, Sip Of Wine.
Side Two : Nova Lepidoptera, In Memory Of The Martyrs, Life Is For Living, Child Of The Universe, Hymn.

Along with what is now getting to be a bit predictable and boring in a lot of music videos - footage of the stage and equipment being set up, the introductory scenes of this disc justify the title'Berlin - A Concert For The People'. The group off-stage seem a little ill-at-ease by the civic niceties and the general media attention and it is something of a relief when the music proper commences. The trio are augmented on this occasion by the addition of two keyboards - Kevin McAlea and Colin Browne. All nine songs featured are group compositions. Visual content alternates between group close-up shots, sometimes superimposed, with a variety of scenic visuals. Sometimes for political effect slightly less arty news type film and stills relating to the Berlin Wall - but all visually pleasing. From this example, I must make a point of checking out some other music videos with an 'unrelated' video track. These seem to be quite popular in Japan.

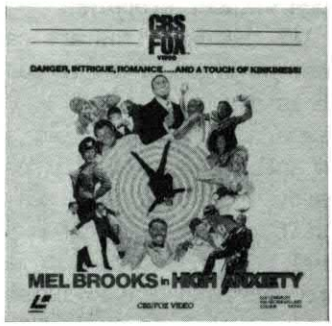
As to the music here, I found the sound recording a bit dry and lacking any natural acoustic - it is a bit too close to a typical multi-miked and separated studio job and hence it looks a bit odd to observe a sea of faces who seem to be completely inaudible and detached ie. there is no prescence to the sound. During the last number where a little audience participation is required they have obviously had to change the balance, and though it may be at the expense of absolute high-fidelity the general sound is much more pleasing and natural. Video/audio sync is a bit off too compounding the effect,and this mainly the reason for the apparently harsh C grading. Personally I do not find the group particularly stimulating visually but then again, may be it is a case of them being overawed by the event itself. To my ears the best tracks are Mockingbird, Nova Lepidoptera, and Hymn (that last one I think because of the better sound). Do you remember the comments about the drummer in the Fleetwood Mac review last issue? Well, this one takes photographs - during the show! Where will all this end?

Generally a good quality release in every respect. There are little things that may be one could comment on but that would be being picky. Generally a good pressing too.

[B/C] [B-/A]

HIGH ANXIETY

CBS-FOX VIDEO	
1107-70	£13.99
CLV	
COLOUR	MONO
94mins	1977



Featuring : Mel Brooks, Madeline Kahn, Cloris Leachman, Harvey Korman.

Produced & Directed by Mel Brooks.

After all the stuff in the last issue about altering the aspect ratio of wide-screen films for TV, the BBC have now gone and shown this film in its true format. Guess who didn't see it! So, here in plain old 'Normalscope' is the disc version. Come to think of it, Mel Brooks is quite well represented on LV - either he likes the medium or CBS think he is a good seller or, possibly, he just needs the money. Whichever, one can only be grateful.

Noteable for its 're-interpretation' of a lot of Alfred Hitchcock's finer moments, Brooks plays a psychiatrist newly appointed as head of the Institute For The Very, Very Nervous where things are not quite as they seem. Sometimes I think that the desire to exploit the Hitchcock thing detracts from the flow a little and I would guess that their novelty value would wear off on repeated viewing before some of his own sketches. One observation - Mel Brooks would seem an ideal candidate to do a 'How To Brush Your Teeth' commercial on this showing.

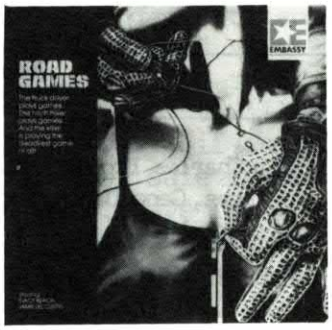
Colour is a little weak on this one. Definition is not too crisp and the picture is slightly grainy. Quite where to apportion blame is hard to pin-point. Sound is acceptable. Pressing is fairly clean, but overall it

could have been just that little bit better in each respect.

[C+ / B-] [C+ / B]

ROAD GAMES

EMBASSY	
ELV 2016	£11.99
CLV	
COLOUR	MONO
87 mins	1981



Featuring : Stacy Keach, Jamie Lee Curtis.

Produced & Directed by Richard Franklin.

Do you remember in the fifties how those British b&w movies were often spiced up with the appearance of a visiting American actor or actress with the intention of bringing a touch of slickness and glamour to our film output in those spartan post-war times? Well, the added glamour did not always work out and often the American star only tended to exaggerate the tackiness of the rest of the production. Times change, and though a first look at this title might suggest an all American production, it is in fact a regurgitation of that old idea, in this case to spice up an Australian thriller movie. Here the idea is executed in slightly better fashion save for the rather dubious accents of the two stars.

Without being another 'High Anxiety', the sleeve makes mention of this being director Richard Franklin's salute to Alfred Hitchcock and there is certainly something of his attention to detail throughout, but I think that, somewhat to the detriment of that intention, there has been added a layer of humour that is typically Australian and is so strong in parts that I would dispute the implication that this film be viewed as a thriller. Stacy Keach plays a truck-driver (or to be more precise he maintains - " Just because I drive a truck does not make me a truck driver") who stumbles across the owner of a green van who seems to be in the process of murdering and butchering any available female hitch-hiker. Keach ends up following him in his artic., having taken on a meaningful trailer-load of pork, and when he crosses paths with hitch-hiker Jamie Lee Curtis it is all set for the plot to thicken. It is not a film that uses any blood and gore to achieve effect and relies on the creation of dramatic moments of suspense, some of which I found a little weak. The soundtrack music also lacked intensity when it seemed to be called for, and at times I thought the music would have been more suitable for some sea-going epic. These criticisms, though, are of minor significance - the main flaw in this film is the injection of humour which produces an end result that fulfils neither approach adequately. The humorous moments are good in themselves especially the boat-chase sequence and the poor chap trying to retrieve his spectacles (typical Australian humour there!), but the mixture of comedy with suspense, for me, does not work. The dingo (pictured on the sleeve) puts in a good performance, by the way.

Being a recent film, the original master seems fairly crisp but again it is a scanned wide-screen (Panavision) print and there are those slight random shifts in definition throughout. A pity this as I do not suppose this would be noticeable on videocassette. Transfer to disc is OK if a little grainy at times. There is some flecking on on the pressing but this is not especially obtrusive and will not affect your enjoyment of the film. Sound is the main weakness on this release. Apart from the original master possessing a slightly 'larger than life' quality, you know, doors being closed and various sound effects being a bit too prominent - presumably this being done to sound 'normal' on lo-fi videocassette replay, there is a rather tedious sibilance to the voices throughout. This quite difficult to filter off, even with an equaliser, without losing the dynamic range of the soundtrack, and this aspect might devalue your enjoyment of the film if you listen with proper audio replay. The soundtrack music itself is unaffected by this and of good quality.

[B- / C] [B- / B-]

THE FRUIT IS RIPE

PRECISION VIDEO	
LVHPV 0523	£13.99
CLV	
COLOUR	MONO
94 mins	1977

Featuring : Betty Verges, Olivia Pascal.

Directed by Siggi Gotz.

I say, this looks a bit racy! A few au naturel poses on the sleeve. So, what's inside? Ah, wide-screen eh....Oh, not so good, dubbed on voices - looks like an 'international' production. The maid is shouting out 'Patricia, Patricia' and no way do the lips match the words and....crikey...we haven't even got to the credits yet and Patricia is already stripped off and flexing her nubile body in the family pool. This looks promising. Now I know I said originally that it would be the review policy of this magazine not to give away too much as regards the details of the plot of feature films but in this case, oh hold on, what about this. The errant husband is clasping Patricia's naked breast. He says "Could it be that you are aroused?" She says "Caress me". And then she says "Kiss me Dimos". What is this 'Dimos'? We are not told. Anyway, it would seem that the plot here is only of secondary importance and serves only as a device to enable Patricia to remove her cloth-

ing at every possible opportunity.

Should you really wish to know what it is all about the plot is apallingly described on the reverse of the sleeve but simply it involves Patricia, the daughter of a wealthy expatriate German industrialist working in Greece, taking off on her holidays. Normally this would entail a trip back to Germany but this year Patricia breaks loose and sets off on a trek around the scenic splendours of Greece in an effort to 'find herself' - or, more precisely someone else.....anybody else? Apart from some excellently photographed close-ups of the naked Patricia we get to see some nice scenic Greek locations, all this being interupted by the odd sexual encounter though these are somewhat forced and un-erotic. Still it's going it a bit for an LV release! Hey, you'll fall about in this bit. Patricia comes across a couple of campers one of whom is this unshaven. dusky male who at one point grabs a guitar and instead of the anticipated sinuous, sensual vocalising, out comes what must be the best Roger Whittaker impression ever heard! If that wouldn't kill the mood stone-dead I don't know what would.

There are some good moments in the film - the henpecked husband getting an unexpected visual treat while sitting at the sea-side picnic table; the incident in the hotel with Martin Muller the business man who can't believe his good luck; and following Patricia's falling out with Tom where she spends an unsatisfactory night with a Greek shopkeeper - the brief but realistically interpreted moment of their reunification. Really though the the plot and the acting come second.

If you can cope with the dubbed on dialogue you will find this a quite well filmed though modest production. After the opening credits the film switches from wide-screen to fill the TV format. The definition is particularly good though the print is a little contrasty and has difficulty retaining shadow detail on the video transfer, notably in the night scenes. There are moments where the print has got a bit dusty and there are a few subtle colour shifts between scenes, but these are minor criticisms in what is really, for the scale of production involved, a good master. Pressing is especially good and some of the outdoor scenes in this film have some of the sharpest definition and best overall picture quality that I have seen on an LV disc. You don't get pictures like this on tape! Sound is just on the verge of going crackly but adequate for the job - the dialogue is a bit edgy but the background music is of excellent quality.

[A- / B] [A- / B-]

10 TO MIDNIGHT

GUILD HOME VIDEO	
955 9414 3	£13.99
CLV	
COLOUR	MONO
98 mins	1983

Featuring : Charles Bronson, Lisa Eilbacher, Andrew Stevens, Gene Davis, Geoffrey Lewis, Wilford Brimley.

Directed by J. Lee Thompson.

Golan/Globus productions increase weekly in number, it would appear that they plan no less than world domination of the film industry. Here is another one. Another seemingly permanent resident of the Top 50 Tape Rental Chart, this thriller is definitely worthy of its long-running success. One of Charles Bronson's better films, he plays a police detective in pursuit of a psychopathic killer bent on eliminating members of the female sex for the humiliation he feels they have bestowed upon him. Warren, the murderer, is a bit of a hunk, at least he seems to think so anyway, and insists on carrying out each killing bereft of any unnecessary garments - ie. starkers. This may give the film added appeal for the ladies and this review is strategically placed after 'The Fruit Is Ripe' to try and offset any sexist criticism toward the magazine.

I found this all quite gripping first time round. The violence is graphic but not overt, the plot thorough without being devious. The charm, if that is the appropriate word to use in this context, of the film is that it forces you to take a stance on who is right and who is wrong - something of a trademark of Charles Bronson's recent films, it would seem.

Unlike the praise heaped upon 'The Fruit Is Ripe', here things are a bit different. It says on the opening credits that this disc is 'a first-generation print'. I do not believe it. Picture quality is poor, soft and lacking detail, indeed the photographs on the reverse of the sleeve are indicative of the type of fuzziness I am talking about. Sound is boxy and restricted too - typical cassette quality! This film would make a good rent for the evening but I would not wish to own it.The fact that I do upsets me.

[D / D] [B / C+]

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CARNAL KNOWLEDGE

20th CENTURY-FOX	
4006-70	£13.99
CLV	
COLOUR	MONO
93 mins	1971

Featuring : Jack Nicholson, Candice Bergen, Arthur Garfunkel, Ann-Margret.

Produced & Directed by Mike Nichols.

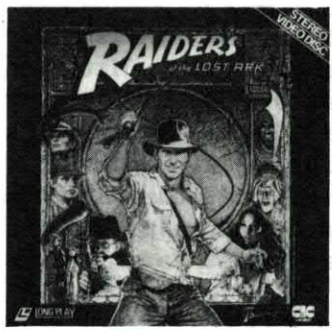
There are some films that however good or bad they may be tend to sacrifice entertainment value in the execution of their concept. This has to be one of those. A film by Mike Nichols (whose former companion in comedy Elaine May featured as screenwriter in the last issue's reviewed 'Heaven Can Wait') there is certainly an element of humour in this feature, but at the expense of facing the unpleasant side of a lot of life's experiences. Following the lives, or more specifically the love-lives, of Jonathan (Jack Nicholson) and Sandy (Art, or should I say Arthur Garfunkel - that is how he is credited) from college days in the forties to the sexually liberated sixties, the film is remarkably short on action and I would be hard put to come up with a better summary of the plot than is printed on the sleeve - it is a nice change to read as concise and perceptive a summary as this. Apparently meandering periods of dialogue are punctuated with some sharp observations on life - it is not a film one can easily relax to, certainly not on a first viewing. I would maybe quibble with the worldliness of Jack Nicholson's characterisation of Jonathan in the early part of the film but, really, for the most part it is very well acted throughout. I would have to make a special mention of the extended camera shot of Candice Bergen at about the thirty minute point on side one. So, not a film for a knees-up on Saturday night but one that could stand repeated viewing, at least with reasonable breathing space between.

Well, having spent a considerable amount of time seemingly saying little of the details of the plot it's on to disc quality. It is a good pressing overall let down somewhat by a less than ideal master tape. The original sound is a little thin for a film of such recent vintage - rather a restricted dynamic range. Picture quality is indicative of a multi-generation copy, not bad certainly but 'could do better'. In addition there is a certain stilted quality to the movement in this release - not obtrusively offensive but noticeable nonetheless. It is as if they shot it at slightly less than 24 fps. At this time of writing I am loathe to settle on a grade but it could be a B or a C depending on the mood. Yes, let's be strict on this one.

[C+ / C+] [B / B]

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

CIC VIDEO	
LVG 2076	£13.99
CLV	
COLOUR	STEREO
112 mins	1981



Featuring : Harrison Ford, Karen Allen, Paul Freeman, Ronald Lacey, John Rhys-Davies, Denholm Elliot.

Music : John Williams. Director : Steven Spielberg.

Somebody is bound to write in soon - "Why is it that all the biggest films end up with the shortest reviews?" Well, to save that person their 17p stamp (why does everyone use 17p stamps? After all, it is only a quarterly magazine. Maybe, in reality, people really are interested in LaserVision and they are enthusiastic. That's the stuff!) So, on to this hugely successful blockbuster which so many readers are likely to have seen already that the details of the plot are bound to be of minimal significance. All this familiarity is in stark contrast to the apparent elusiveness of the star, Harrison Ford. On the sleeve his credit is in small type in contrast to the supporting cast who merit capital letters. Is there any significance to this? The physical appearance of Indiana Jones suggests more than a passing resemblance to a young Howard Hughes (sans moustache, though). Does this bode dodgy for Harrison's future - will he too end up marooned in a Las Vegas penthouse?

The film starts with a nice little joke on the mountain emblem of Paramount Pictures. I seem to recall a previous humorous dig at this in an old Bob Hope / Bing Crosby 'Road...' film. Before you are comfortably settled in the action is under way, no long drawn out title sequences, just ten minutes of 'edge of the seat' suspense. And just when you thought they had forgotten how to make this type of film. Throughout, the film alternates between excellently staged action sequences and the gradual unfolding of the story of the pursuit of the Ark. Of its kind, an excellent production and not really the sort of film that would tolerate too much detailed analysis of the plot (eg. in the poisened monkey scene, why is the boy so concerned about the open door letting the wind in? - it's full of holes anyway. Also, if it's so windy, why do they need the fans on?) The acting is a bit over the top and the plot a little incredible, but the general pace of the production resists too demanding an appraisal.

Best stick to what we know best - disc quality, though I would first just make mention of the slightly 'over-perfect' sound. Where ever the actors are situated, no matter how far away from the camera, the vocal characteristics remain consistent, and though this might not intrude on your enjoyment on a first showing, the addition of a little 'atmospheric' qual-

ity to the voices would undoubtedly help repeated viewing of this feature. Judging by the discs reviewed so far CIC seem to provide good quality master tapes for LV release and this is no exception. At 112 minutes it is getting to be a little lengthy for the medium and it shows a bit. The disc is a little noisy and lacks bite as well. Make sure you keep the brightness control turned down as the disc looks better this way, even if some scenes might appear dark this way. Sound is good, both master and pressing. Hold on, I thought this was going to be a short review!

[A / A-] [C+ / A]

Footnote : Such has been the success of this film in the US that it has been re-issued as a two-disc CAV release thereby allowing fans to slow down the action sequences for more detailed inspection. The intensity of the action certainly lends itself to this exploitation, provided you do not mind the inconvenience of changing discs and paying half as much again into the bargain. Still ,the exercise must have proved worthwhile as it would appear that 'The Empire Strikes Back' (just out on LV in the US) is likely to receive the same treatment. Unfortunately, the size of the UK market as yet precludes the likelihood of similar dual releases here. In the short term anyway!

VARIOUS ARTISTES
Ready Steady Go Vol. 2

PICTURE MUSIC INT.	
PMI 99 10021	£ 9.99
CLV	Chapter Search
B & W	MONO
55 mins	c. 1963 - 6

Side One : BEATLES - Twist & Shout, She Loves You, BEACHBOYS - I Get Around°°, When I Grow Up°°, MARVIN GAYE - Can I Get A Witness, DUSTY SPRINGFIELD - Losing You, MARTHA & VANDELLAS - Dancing In The Street, GENE PITNEY - I'm Going To Be Strong, FREDDIE & DREAMERS - I Love You Baby, FOURMOST - Baby I Need Your Lovin', RUFUS THOMAS - Walkin' The Dog°°, ISLEY BROS. - Stagger Lee, JERRY LEE LEWIS - Whole Lot Of Shakin'°°, WHO - Shout & Shimmy°°, ROLLING STONES - Satisfaction°°, plus interviews and mime segments.

°° Denotes genuine live performance.

Normally it pays to wait till after a second showing of any disc before commiting pen to paper, but unlike most releases I do not just feel like a passive viewer this time round - it is as much a look back into my life as an observation of someone else's. One wonders how much thought was given to these programmes when they were recorded, or how they might be judged twenty years on - one would assume very little. Mind you, there is a lot of nostalgic rubbish spoken about old TV pop shows - in truth most of them were pretty bad. Things started out in good spirit with 'The Six-Five Special'(much the same format as RSG) except for the fact that the BBC were trying to cater for teenage music that originated from the USA without featuring American artistes! ITV managed better with 'Oh Boy' etc.(produced by Jack Good again, as 'Six-Five Special') by featuring bigger stars and some of them were actually American. It is easy to forget now that rock & roll was then under total American domination - that is until Beatlemania. RSG was reallynot much cop. Like Saturday's 'Thank Your Lucky Stars', the show featured only miming to records but in a supposed 'live' situation. On rare occaisions visiting US artistes did actually play live, but mostly it was lip-syncing to the latest hit. Towards the end, the programme became 'Ready Steady Goes Live' and this is the period of the show that probably deserves any nostalgic yearnings - on the basis of the actual music anyway!

One thing that notices now that was not apparent at the time is that,although the artistes who do the lip-syncing are professionally photographed, careful cutting between close-ups/long-shots/audience etc., it is the genuine live segments where there seems to be an adventurousness to the camera work that would appear to contradict the pressures of the moment. Live performances have a tendency to be more unpredictable. Singers, motivated by the moment, are more likely to jump out of camera shot without warning, yet the framing for the most part is strong and well under control. No chance for re-takes here, this went out on the air live.

Rufus Thomas doesn't get much in the way of gimmickry in his presentation, but there are some really nice full head shots that have a lot of impact. The Who, not surprisingly, get the works when it comes to the experimental camera techniques and it works. It does not work so well for the Stones as the zooming is a bit overdone and it gets a little tiring on concentrated viewing. Of the live acts, only the Beachboys seem to escape the creative treatment. I vividly remember the false start to 'When I Grow Up', glad they left it in. I always doubted the ability of the Beachboys to be able to reproduce their records live and it was not until they cocked the start of this song up that I was sure they were not cheating! If my memory serves me right they did one more song on this show - 'Dance Dance Dance', I think. When you get a glimpse of the size of the cameras during Jerry Lee Lewis' number you appreciate the risks they were taking on the tightly cropped close-ups.He is jumping about all over the place and yet they hardly ever miss. Well done chaps!

That is all the live music on this disc. So what is one to make of the rest? Well, you are bound to get some repeated use out of the mimed tracks but there is always that regret that a lot of talent has been wasted here. As to this compilation of tracks, condensing the best of several shows on to one disc is deceptive - it will seem a much better show than you remembered, but I can see anyone who grew up in this era getting something from this.(I lived through this era, but I didn't grow up). It would be nice if,

for a future issue, we could have a whole disc of live performances, and, a bit of self-interest here, if we have to have a mime spot, use the Mick Jagger impersonations one because my schoolfriend Dick Bole was on this, and did by far the best job, but he was robbed of his place in history by a malfunctioning microphone and a less worthy candidate won. Never mind Dick.

Do check the contents list at the head of the review. A quick scan of the disc might lead you to think that there are more tracks on the disc than there actually are. Beware. Also the packaging indicates COLOUR and STEREO. Both obviously wrong. This might result in disappointment for the unsuspecting. All the tracks are on one side of the disc and with chapter search it is easy to select any track without having even to turn the disc over. You do need the chapter search facility as you will soon tire of some of the interview/mime segments.

It would be pretty bad news indeed if this LV disc could not cope with a B&W, MONO programme like this, and fortunately, it is fine. Material like this makes a mockery of the grading system - it is 405 line and lo-fi sound, all recorded on early videotape, but considering these historical realities the grading assumes that no better master tape will turn up. One thing to bear in mind when watching B&W programmes - make sure that the contrast control on your set is not turned up too far. The less contrast the better. The term B&W is somewhat misleading - in real life you hardly ever get a real black or a real white. Try looking around you. Things that you casually refer to as being black invariably are not and contain visible detail and are closer to a very dark grey. Likewise with white. What comes out as a featureless white area on a B&W photograph,in real life, always has some tonal detail in it. You should always think of B&W as more a range of grey tones and there should be detail in the entire spectrum. Adjust your picture likewise. You may find it appears to be less dynamic in the first instance, but after an initial period of aclimatisation,you will find the setting far more satisfactory, and certainly it will be less tiring on the eyes than an extremely contrasty picture. One last thought. It does cross one's mind that both Vols. 1&2 could have been put on one disc but presumably the marketing impact of a £9.99 release works against what would be undoubtably a higher priced package.

[A / A] [A- / A]

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OLIVIA NEWTON - JOHN
Twist Of Fate

PICTURE MUSIC INT.	
PMI 99 0007 1	£ 9.99
CLV	
COLOUR	STEREO
26 mins	1983

Side 1 : Twist Of Fate, Take A Chance, Desperate Times, Shaking You + Interviews & film clips.

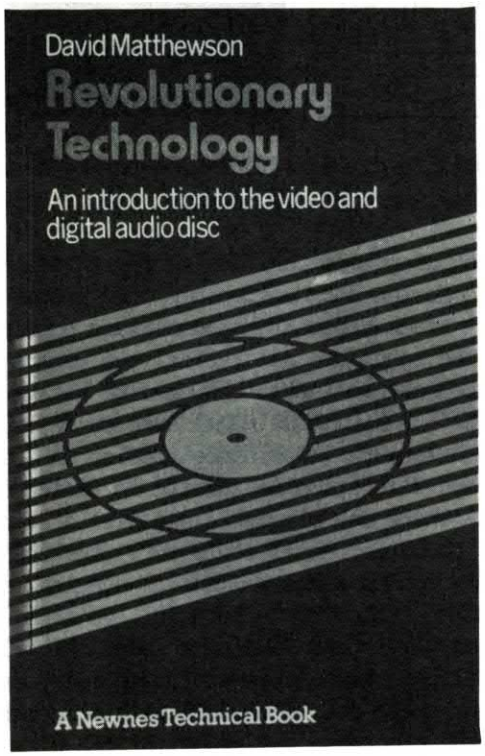
Something of promotional device for the John Travolta, Olivia Newton-John motion picture 'Two Of A Kind', this 4 track Video EP has a certain novelty aspect to it. The songs are all typical pop promos - 'Twist Of Fate' set against a church-like background, 'Take A Chance'(a duet with J.T.) sung on an empty film set, an Arlene Phillips dance routine on 'Desparate Times', and a location featurette in Venice on 'Shaking You' where one minute we see Olivia strolling through what could be Canalletto's very canvases interspersed with someones socks and shirts hanging on a Venetian washing line. Very meaningful. To round out the production Olivia and John talk about the film and we see some clips - disposable stuff generally except for one moment where J.T. demonstrates his mastery of mathematics and proclaims the appeal of the film to the unborn!

As a tape product this would probably have quite an appeal as it gives VCR users a chance to buy a video at very nearly LV prices, but really it is a bit padded and cries out for a bit of judicious editing. It would make an excellent 20 minute mini-disc and for any future programmes such as this such a packaging would be ideal - it would make a very good 'instant repeat' disc, just like a pop audio record. Unbelievably, as it is, there is no Chapter Search so unless you have one of the more sophisticated players it is a bit tedious scanning through the disc to find the songs - none but the most committed O.N.J / J.T fan could sit through the interviews more than once or twice. This omission is a terrible oversight.

Sound quality of the songs is magnificent and it is interesting to compare these with the rather boxy resticted quality of the film clips. Video, although being multi-sourced, is acceptable but the pressing is a bit weak and grainy, not something that should be the case for a disc whose playing time definitely should not be stretching the medium too much. Normally this coarseness to the picture would be of little consequence but for the fact that all the songs are shot with a marked soft-focus effect and this tends to exaggerate the grain. All round then, may be a release only for real fans but nonetheless an interesting foretaste of future LV mini-disc releases.

[B+/A-] [C+ / A]

book review



REVOLUTIONARY TECHNOLOGY by David Matthewson, published by Newnes Technical Books at £5.95.

ISBN 0-408-01334-6 Published 1983.

Guess what it feels like, having done all the tedious research for last issue's historical perspective on LaserVision to come across an actual book about the stuff! 'Revolutionary Technology' is intended primarily as an introduction to video and digital audio discs with a view to helping producers prepare the software - it is not really meant for light reading from a consumer perspective. Having said that, within its 120 pages we are treated to a general history of early video disc systems (would you believe the first patent dates from 1926, and that nearer 40 different systems were established experimentally from that date on), a chapter on each of the three current systems (it was published in 1983 before CED became part of history too), followed by three more on the the preparation of programming material. The book ends with a chapter on CD which, even in the short space of time the book has been out, visually is already starting to look a bit dated. Much the same criticism could be levelled at the earlier chapters, I suppose, but then any book on new technology is prone to this obsolescence. Magazines obviously fulfill certain informational roles better!

Still, it is quite a handy little paperback, printed on good quality paper, with a sprinkling of photographs and diagrams. Readers who are genuinly interested in the technical aspects of LaserVision might do well to investigate this item further. Much of the detail is, I confess, a little beyond my comprehension but I did notice some confusion about the playing times of CAV discs for the PAL format where it was implied that the maximum time was only 30 mins per side. It is, of course, 36 mins. At £5.95 possibly a little expensive for the relevance of the contents to NEW FLATS readers generally, but, may be more technically minded readers might find a trip to the public library worthwhile.

Catalogue Update

CIC Reduced Prices. Recent reduction in disc prices has resulted in two tier structure for CIC titles. Premium titles now at £13.99, two-disc issues £15.99, and remaining film titles at £11.99 are listed below.

Animal House
The Border
Buck Rogers In The 25th Century
Cat People
Conquest Of The Earth
Death Valley
Dracula
Electric Horseman
Escape From Alcatraz
The Fan
Friday 13th Part 2
Gallipoli
Grease
Grease 2
Heaven Can Wait
The Hunter
Jesus Christ Superstar
Love Story
Mission Galactica
Nighthawks
Players
Private Lessons
Rough Cut
Saturday Night Fever
Smokey And The Bandit
Smokey And The Bandit 2
Starting Over
Warriors
Xanadu

And Now For The Bad News. Recent Nasties Campaign has resulted in 'Funhouse' & 'Unhinged' being pulled from release schedules. 'Inferno' & 'Visiting Hours' deleted for same reason. Inexplicably 'Apocaalypse Now' and 'Blues Bros.' also deleted. Other titles never making it include '10 CC Live', 'Kontakte-German Course', 'Dain Curse', and 'Trinity Is Still My Name'. Latter due to unsatisfactory tape.

collector's page

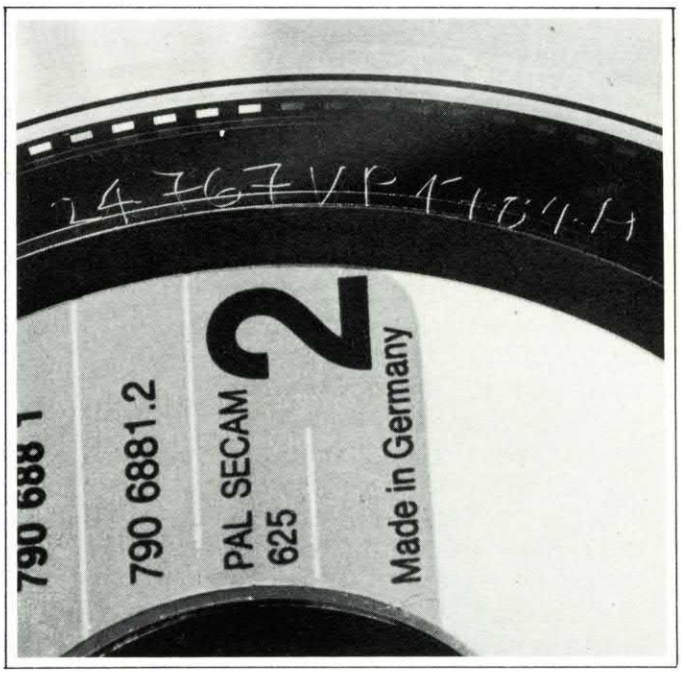
If rarity was the sole prerequisite of collectability a modest chunk of the current UK LaserVision catalogue would no doubt qualify as collectors items. However non-availabilty here is usually only a temporary state of affairs. In the USA, where the factory rejection rate on a lot of the early LV discs was quite colossal, titles that were deleted after the initial burst of activity have in some cases become

sought after rarities. All the early LaserVision discs released in the US were in CAV format, which there means only 30 mins. per side, and so the most modest film often appeared as a boxed multi-disc issue. Some of these titles undoubtedly only involved successful production runs of a few hundred copies. Although it is only a minority pursuit so far, there are collectors in the US prepared to pay quite high prices for some of thes more obscure discs. Prices I have seen quoted range from $ 95 for the 'Muhammed Ali v. Foley & Williams' boxing disc to a staggering $ 300 for the film 'Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein'. It will be interesting to see how this collectors' market develops.

Reader Steven Johns wishes to dispose of 'New York City Ballet' and 'Prom Night' discs, preferably in exchange for film discs. Contact him on MATLOCK 55817.

By comparison, things here look decidedly dull. Notwithstanding, here are a few observations on some unusual discs that have appeared in British racks. In addition to the German language sleeve seen at the PIONEER Laserdisc promotion, I recently came across a similarly unintelligible German language 'M.A.S.H.' disc. Here the whole sleeve seems to have been redesigned because, correct me if I am wrong, the original UK sleeve was olive-green coloured with different artwork. I can understand why shortages of sleeves could result in the discs being packed in foreign language sleeves as a stop gap measure, but quite why the sleeve has been re-designed is something of a mystery.

Also, to continue the German connection (where LaserVision is also sold) you may have noticed some discs in 'plain-English' sleeves are in actual fact manufactured in one of the German LaserVision pressing plants. The sleeves tend to be slightly thicker and the discs are visibly different by virtue of the much smaller centre label.(Like PIONEER's discs that are pressed at SONAPRESS in Germany.) This smaller label exposes the matrix number scratched on the master that



is normally covered on UK pressings. (It's funny when you think about it, but all this high technology, and yet it still ends up with someone scratching a number on the master with a sharp pointed stick.) Quite how the matrix numbering system works is not clear but in the fullness of time it may be possible to compare different pressings of the same title, for what that might achieve!

What We Want On LV

Look...no staples. Is this the type of material you want? Old films, new films? Let us know.

Now that the LaserVision Catalogue is assuming reasonable proportions at last and the number of new LV owners increasing, it must make sense now to establish whether the releases so far match the requirements of owners. Even though it is fair to assume that only the more enthusiastic owners have written in to the magazine so far, the general impression is that a lot of you have 'run out' of discs to buy rather than the money with which to buy them. Also it would appear that the average reader so far tends to buy discs that are obviously popular items coupled with their special minority tastes ie. very little 'in the middle' so to speak. In the case of feature films this would tend to indicate that there might be quite a lot of perfectly good titles in the catalogue that fall into neither category and consequently do not sell very well. Some discs, no doubt, sell over a period of time and it can take quite a time to ascertain their popularity, but all in all, it could be some time before LV sales figures really illustrate the kind of material people really want. If you feel like hurrying things along a little and are anxious to see your kind of programme out on LV soon, then here is your opportunity to say so.

Some readers are no doubt quite happy to send detailed, lengthy lists of what they want (these are welcome) but lots of people, I know, find it hard to get round to doing this sort of thing. To make things easier, consider what programmes you would definitely go out and buy as soon as they were available, even if it meant cutting down the moggy's KattoChunks to do so. List, say 5 films, 5 music programmes or artistes, and 5 TV shows that you would have absolutely no hesitation about. Don't bother about marginal titles, just the dead certs. If you cannot think of 5 in any particular category don't worry. Conversely, if you think of more put them down - also anything you might think of that doesn't fit into any of those categories. Do not deliberate too long over this. You can always send in anything you forgot another time. The idea is to get something going now. No need to write a letter. even. Just stick the list in an envelope, put a stamp on it, and send it off! One final thing - this is your choice. Do not feel you have to choose popular items, this is not the purpose of the exercise . DO IT TODAY!