

LASER **DISC REVIEW**

MARCH 1986

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The magazine about LASERVISION

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News From

Our Correspondent In Japan

LASER DISC REVIEW

MARCH 1986

ISSUE 6

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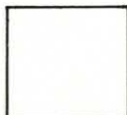
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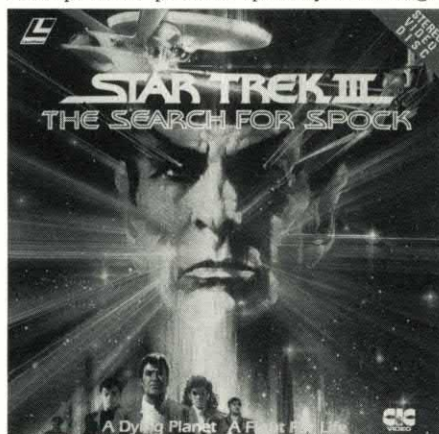
Readers write about Wide-screen, NTSC LV, Disc Quality

From: Mark Dowd, Merseyside

There are many existing titles that I would buy if re-released in wide-screen. Of course, all science-fiction films would be greatly improved, plus the small marks on the print would be less obtrusive. I would like the extended version of 'Star Trek - The Motion Picture'. I recorded this version from ITV last Autumn and recently purchased the disc version. The TV version is a much more polished film when compared to the disc (which incidentally has a similar sound defect to 'Star Trek 2', although only on the left-hand channel).

I am upset to think that CIC were given a lousy tape of 'Raiders' by LUCASFILM. Surely, the customer who forks out good money for their product deserves better. Now that 'Raiders' and 'Star Wars' have been on television, anybody wishing to pirate a copy now has one. Can we therefore have new versions using the best quality masters?

Seeing that 'Star Trek 3' has less than perfect picture quality I am beginning



[After several appearances in LDR of the US sleeve - the UK version makes its debut]

ing to convince myself that getting better titles, and getting them out on disc sooner, is resulting in lousy quality. I'd rather wait six months for decent masters to be found.

It is maybe something of an exaggeration to say that the master for 'Raiders' was lousy. It is an unfortunate reality that any pirate wishing to find a source to run off cassette copies need do no more than find an LV disc to do so. There appear to be two options - either we get simultaneous release with indifferent master quality, or

we wait till tape rentals have reached their peak before we get a suitable quality disc version. It is only reasonable to expect producers to continue making 'big films' for as long as they can continue to make 'big money' as a result. Having their profits siphoned off by piracy inevitably deters them from making suitable disc masters available. LV owners are going to have to decide their priorities - quality, or speed of release.

From: M. Jones, Berkshire

1) I think that the recent increases in LV prices are basically profiteering and disagree with the assumption that the previous prices were not commercially viable. My feeling is that if they were not viably priced they would not have issued as no enterprise will set out to make a loss.

2) The wide-screen debate - I think films should be adapted to suit the medium on which they will be played. I would reject LaserVision totally if a substantial number of films were only available in wide-screen. I feel it flippant for someone to state "if a larger image is required, a bigger TV should be bought". One good reason against this is cost, another is reduced quality. I have found from many shops that the optimum size appears to be 20 - 22" - anything above loses picture quality. I think that your correspondent should save up for a High Definition TV and player - if they ever appear - or build himself a mini-cinema.

3) NTSC video - I recently saw an industrial training disc and found it very clear and stable. The colour was good and not at all grainy. Although unwise as it is to reach a conclusion on an isolated sample, I came close to preferring it to PAL discs.

We will only ever get cheap discs when they sell in large quantities. While the number of discs sold remains low, the price will continue to be high. The main reason discs sell in small quantities is that there are not many owners of LV players.

2) Large TVs are not disproportionately more expensive than intermediate models, and one does need the largest picture possible in order to justify the use of stereo sound. There seems no point in having a wide stereo image with a diminutive picture that bears no relation to what you hear.

One should always adjust the viewing distance to the size of the screen. A larger screen allows you to sit further back - the loss of quality is

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only apparent if you retain the same viewing distance when moving up to a larger set. The quoted excerpt from the reader's letter missed the element of implied humour. This was possibly not intentional on his part but often occurs when one is communicating in an alien tongue - there is a tendency for one's dialogue to become more direct! Many of LDR's readers are eagerly awaiting the advent of HDTV. Many of LDR's readers do have home cinemas (with projection TVs or 10" scope screens for 8&16mm movie showings).

3) Since writing the NTSC LaserVision article, one significant comment has come to the fore when discussing the topic with those professionally involved. The poor reputation of NTSC is derived from its limitations as a broadcast medium. As a video medium it is not significantly inferior - as long as the full bandwidth is utilised. There are less lines in the picture but one gets the impression that the significant increase in LV activity in Japan will result in NTSC LV being pushed to the very limits of its potential (such is the Japanese way). The theoretical advantages of PAL will be of little more than academic interest if the quality of masters remains beneath its potential.

From: B. Smith, Sutherland

Judging by the letters in the magazine, it seems I stand alone when I say I don't want wide-screen films issued in their original format. I don't like watching a letter-box shaped picture with everything about half the size it could be - I want the screen filled completely. Wide-screen is fine in the cinema, but the cinema and TV are differ-

tendency to completely recompose shots by zooming in on small areas of the picture. Full letter-box is probably too small for the current generation of TVs, but something in-between does offer advantages. There are no shifts in definition; the original composition can often be retained (composition is not the same as content - chopping bits off pictures is rarely aesthetically satisfactory as even the lighting balance is a component of the composition. If you do a crop the eye starts to wander because there is no longer a natural frame to the picture); additional process stages are almost certain to degrade picture quality (re-formatting prints always produces unsightly grain which could probably only be avoided by scanning the negative - and there seems little chance of getting film companies to do that!).

LDR would like to see a few titles done in semi wide-screen in order to gauge reaction. Prime contenders would be existing titles that have been done from faulty masters when existing stocks of the disc had run out. Alternatively, a foreign language film with sub-titles would be a good choice. The sub-titles could be put in the black area beneath the picture.

From: D. Bottomley, Manchester

As did many other people I responded to your survey in January 1985 - but you are again asking the very same thing, and in nowhere near as comprehensive a manner. Is the subscription increase in order to cope with this wasteful duplication of effort or is it a Post Office benefit in disguise. When do we get results? LDR seems to be implying that the future for PAL LV seems minimal and we should all purchase an NTSC system in order to have the films now that we won't otherwise get until today's teenagers are pensioned off. Why deliberately annoy the public paying your wages? Also, why are the UK photos not used in the review section in issue 5? Your reliability is slipping. Enclosed is my subscription renewal.

Ah....another satisfied customer! The story is this. The previous arrangements under which titles for LV release were selected no longer pertain. We have new people in charge of choosing and financing LV releases although anyone may join in. Would you risk your savings, Mr Bottomley, on a year old survey? If so, PHILIPS will gladly press up any disc you negotiate a release for - all you have to do is sell enough copies. Easy stuff! Otherwise we have to get in quick with an up-to-date appraisal of laser owners wishes for new software. Only five titles focusses the brain a little more than producing page-long lists. The future of PAL LV is only as secure as we make it. Look what happened in Germany (though, needless to say, they didn't have an LV magazine!). LV may be doing better in NTSC countries because people there have got up off their back-sides and done something about it - a decidedly un-British characteristic we know.

There is an explanation for the substitute new release sleeves on page 27 of issue 5. Is it not to LDR's credit that we could find some sleeves weeks, if not months, before UK release?

From: Jack Haynes, Manchester

I must say I agree with many of the reviews of the new titles published in LDR 5. 'Give My Regards To Broad Street' is good picture-wise but the dialogue sound is very dull at times. 'First Blood' does have a grid-like effect over the picture during dark scenes on side

two. One thing you fail to mention is that the stereo wanders off centre on side two also. 'Star Trek 3' has a very grainy picture that lets it down - in fact, I would say that CIC have let us down with all their new titles. The picture quality of 'Trading Places' is very grainy too and looks colourless. I find the sound on 'The Meaning Of Life' very dull. Very little stereo and



a dominant bass. 'Places In The Heart' is very grainy etc, etc.

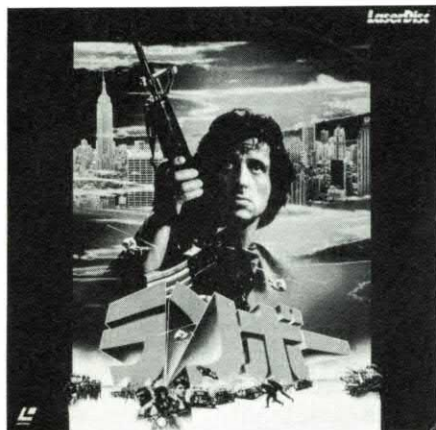
All in all, I think the masters for the recent batch of discs could have been much better. THORN EMI have been alright, but if you ask me, CIC are taking the mickey. I will be wary of buying more of their titles until some improvement becomes evident. Some criticism should fall on PHILIPS. Some of the pressings have had too many flecks on the picture - I thought this problem was something we had seen the last of. ##### This is an edited letter! Jack's previous published epistle was not popular with either dealers or subscribers. In it he suggested that he (and presumably others) would be prepared to pay more for better titles - but this was on the assumption that the quality of masters submitted for LV release would justify the increased cost. Jack feels that paying £20 entitles him to something a bit better.

From: Joseph Ponessa, Oregon USA

With thirty titles unavailable in NTSC, the PAL LaserVision system looks like a must for classical music enthusiasts. There has been a slowdown, almost a halt, in new classical NTSC titles. THORN-EMI stopped releasing through PIONEER of America over a year ago. The Metropolitan Opera entered the field promising eight releases per year, but only produced four in the first year, with no specific titles forthcoming for the second. One wonders if they are waiting to release digitally. In any event, I have all the American & Japanese classical titles - where else is there to go but to PAL?

I was surprised to find that the UK has so many more classical titles, but only one Shakespeare play compared to two in America.

Joseph has compiled an interesting list of all the classical LV titles available in both NTSC & PAL, and indeed, music fans are bound to find desirable discs in each format. To our know-



[This Japanese version of 'First Blood' is in full wide-screen and yet the sub-titles are still superimposed on the picture area!]

ent media, requiring different presentation styles. Errors such as two noses speaking to each other from opposite sides of the screen are produced only by incompetence; the BBC and ITV are very successful in adapting films for TV. The final effort may be slightly different from the original, but it is always enjoyable in its own right.

No, the support for wide-screen is not universal, but if the cropped film fans are already getting what they want there is obviously little reason to write in and complain. There have been some atrocious pan & scan jobs on some older films, and indeed, broadcast versions are often more in keeping with the original - although what can be acceptable on a one-off broadcast can wear thin on repeated viewing. In the past there has been a

ledge, not many US laser fans have yet 'gone PAL', although the Ed did see a PHILIPS player being carted off to Heathrow, bound for the US, when he was in a dealer's shop recently. It will be interesting to find out how US LV'ers react to our discs.

Since this letter from Joseph, the US scene has picked up. Current and forthcoming titles include Met productions of 'La Boheme', 'Idomeneo' (both Digital Sound), 'Les Troyens', and 'Hansel & Gretel'.

From: Brian Stephens, Tyne & Wear

It might be an idea to ask readers to forward details of the best shop in their area for the benefit of other owners and potential LV machine buyers.

My best demonstration of the system was at SELFRIDGES in London shortly after the initial launch. The salesman was very helpful and went to great pains to ensure that I was aware that the machine could not record. I asked "How much do the discs cost?" He then said "Do you mean the pre-recorded or the blank discs?" I swear that was his actual reply!

The editorial pages of LDR are always open to dealers who wish to establish their support for LaserVision. Rather than publish dealer recommendations it would be better for readers to encourage their dealers to contact the magazine directly. LDR doesn't understand why PHILIPS and PIONEER do not publicise their active laser dealerships more openly. Of course, there is always the fear that such overt publicity might alert the hoi polloi to the merits

of LaserVision, but we may be forced to accommodate increased numbers of LV owners in order to support a larger software catalogue. It is but a small price to pay.

From: Lennart Nilsson, Sweden

I would like to get in touch with other LV owners here in Sweden. My address is: Bosgårdsvägen 10, 33012 Forsheda, Sweden.

We are always prepared to publish the addresses of laser fans wishing to meet/communicate with others in their area. We will not reveal subscribers' addresses in any circumstance, or make the LDR subscriber list available to any third party.

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

PHILIPS/DU-PONT

October 29th saw the simultaneous announcement in London and New York of the merging of the optical disc operations of PHILIPS, Holland and the US based DU-PONT company. The new combine, in which each partner holds a 50% stake, will be known as PHILIPS DU-PONT OPTICAL - PDO for short - and will start to manifest its identity in early 1986. LDR went along to the press conference held at Claridges in London's West End. This was a local trip for us, but such was the significance of the merger that it attracted journalists from all over, and at the conference's conclusion, many were being efficiently bussed off to Heathrow to carry their stories back home. What happened between?....

PHILIPS' commitment and innovation in optoelectronics is well known to us - LaserVision, CD, data storage etc, but the advantages of a merger with DU-PONT are not immediately obvious. DU-PONT is a large chemicals and materials based manufacturing company with some optical data storage expertise - mostly in high-density applications. Visibly, PHILIPS are bringing more to the merger with their patents and know-how, plus the manufacturing facilities at Hanover (the PHONOGRAM CD plant), Blackburn (LV & Megadoc), and Eindhoven itself. Although precise details were not given, the obvious impression was that DU-PONT will bring cash to the merger initially, but a dedicated US disc pressing facility will soon follow on. Both parties see the new operation as an attempt to dominate the fledgling world market in optical disc technology - reckoned to be worth around \$4,000,000,000 by 1990 alone. One more graphic statistic quoted was the rise in CD disc production to 200,000,000 units, 50% of the disc market, as compared with only 4% today. CD will be the big push initially with later expansion into CD-ROM. Recordable discs, already available in the shape of Megadoc, are set to be followed by erasable versions in two to three years (but only for data applications, domestic erasables are seen as considerably further off). LaserVision is seen as having immense potential in the interactive & professional fields but no great plans were laid for domestic development beyond the statement of DU-PONT's John Metzger Jr. that "combined home players capable of audio, video, and data functions are envisaged". Neither party saw the new company getting involved in software development (of any of the formats) - they see their role as providing the hardware, the software manufacturing facilities and, in the case of the latter, "providing an efficient, well-run service" to programme producers and publishers.

Displayed at the conference were some of the existing pieces of laser technology. Several of PHILIPS' professional range of LaserVision players were on demonstration with either touch-screen, remote, or direct computer (IBM PC type) control.

In the picture is a PHILIPS VP 835 hooked up to a TS VP120 Touch-Screen monitor. Viewers are presented with a picture overlaid with a series of questions or options. The viewer decides on



a response and touches the corresponding part of the screen. This causes the player to move on to the chosen sequence. No keypad/handset control is necessary.



In the second picture is the CD-ROM player, sitting on top of the computer. Hi-fi fans will recognise its similarity to the CD-63.



This recordable disc system is based on the 30cm LV disc but is not compatible as such. The disc drive (it's a US made OSI one) is in the foreground - on top is the disc caddy and at the front, a bare disc. Normally the disc would always be kept protected inside the caddy.

DUTCH SPACE DISCS

Further details of the Dutch space discs have come forward. As of November - these titles appear to be Dutch only

releases, and there is no plan to make them generally available in the UK (we are not even sure if they will carry English soundtracks). Price is fls -69 per disc.

RUSSIA IN SPACE - COSMO VLP 4004H

In the first quarter-century of space flight, the Russians carried out many more launches than the Americans, but they received relatively little publicity. 'Russians In Space' offers a glance behind the scenes. Material for this disc comes from SOVEXPORT and shows Soyuz and Salyut material as well as preparations for manned space flight. Unmanned exploration of the moon and planets is also covered.

25 YEARS OF AMERICAN SPACEFLIGHT - 4005H

NASA co-ordinates all non-military space travel activities in the US. On the occasion of NASA's 25th anniversary this film was made, looking back over past developments. Produced by Joseph Headlee, the guardian of NASA's gigantic film archives, preparation for the early manned space flights is featured, culminating in the moon landing in July 1969. Additional footage covers the Viking probes of Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn - as well as Skylab and the Space Shuttle.

JOURNEY TO THE PLANETS - VLP 4006H

From the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena comes archive material of the unmanned probes to the planets, including pre-flight simulations. Side one features the still-current Voyager flights, and side two covers the first flights to Venus. Side two also includes some Mars material.

THE SPACE SHUTTLE PROJECT - VLP 4007H

More material culled from the NASA archives plus footage from ROCKWELL INT. Columbia, Challenger, and Discovery are featured. NASA offers an overview of the whole shuttle program, and the disc includes an astronauts' press conference.

EUROPE IN SPACE - VLP 4008H

ELDO, ESRO, and ESA (the European Space Agency) all feature here. Features film of the Ariadne programme plus the European involvement in Spacelab. A probe to Halley's Comet is planned for 1986 - Giotto. Pictures from Meteosat are included.

Release of all these discs is described as imminent. CLV/CAV status is not known. Hopefully, some reviews will follow in a future issue.

All the above information was taken from script outlines and the presentation of the programme material is being done by Chriet Titulaer.

ENDING....WHAT'S HAPPENING....WHAT'S HAPPENING....

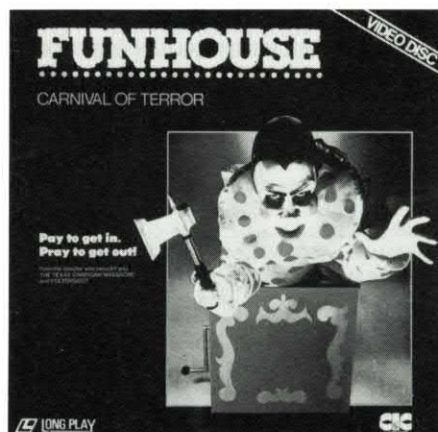
CD-ROM

Some observers believe that the CD-ROM could possibly become more commonplace than the audio CD - and this could be the case if future combined laser players encourage the development of larger and longer digital audio discs. CDs are best suited to portable applications, and it is very much this portable aspect of the CD-ROM that lends credence to this exploitation as an everyday data source. With a capacity of 600 megabytes the CD-ROM offers a thousand-fold capacity increase over conventional computer floppies so making the prospect of encyclopaedias, telephone directories, and all manner of data bases for business, law, medicine, education and the home available on an easy access disc an exciting reality. Without any record ability its limitation is that of providing storage of information likely to be required by many users. The telephone directory is a good example. No-one ever needs to read the entire directory but it has to exist in order for each of us to access our specific requirements. The entire US telephone directory could be stored on five CD-ROMs.

The working unit demonstrated at the PDO launch was very similar in appearance to the first PHILIPS CD-63 players, but within a year or two the CD-ROM drives should start showing up built into the main body of future models of computers, much in the way that floppy drives are presently incorporated. 1986 will be a year of experimentation and evaluation for CD-ROM, so don't expect to go out and buy a player next week - there won't be much software around to use on it! The British Library have been test running a disc since late 1985 that contains various library listings retrievable with the aid of an IBM compatible computer driven by a BRS-EUROPE programme, BRS-SEARCH. LDR is held on deposit at the British

Library (amongst other institutions, believe it or not), so may be we will appear on a laser disc some day too!

FUNHOUSE



That enthusiastic laser dealer, RELIABLE VIDEOS, reckons that there's a lot of people who want to get hold of 'Cat People' & 'Funhouse'. He's even considering ordering up a custom pressing if the demand is sufficient. The discs would be at the new prices of £19.99. Interested? Then get in touch with Peter at RELIABLE VIDEOS, 820 PERSHORE ROAD, SELLY PARK, BIRMINGHAM B29. Tel: 021 471 2428.

MORE PIONEER DISCS

Everytime we print good news about the success of LV in NTSC territories

such as Japan & the USA that means bad news for PAL LV owners. While the hardware developments do trickle through to us, the effect on software is less beneficial. PIONEER Japan, already having to press Digital Sound discs for the US market until the US plant comes onstream for DS product by early '86, are obviously under stress with a bristling home market to attend to as well. PAL discs, and sad as it is to report, relatively small quantities of PAL discs present something of an inconvenience. The adoption of CX encoding by PHILIPS, Blackburn now means that PIONEER can contemplate the sub-contracting of their PAL pressing to the UK plant - provided discs can be produced to their standard. Hopefully, this should mean a little more software activity from PIONEER.

BLACK MAGIC

PIONEER advises that it is indeed necessary to have the black version of the LD700 in order to operate the computer games discs such as 'Astron Belt', 'Strike Mission' etc. An internal modification has been made. Otherwise, both black and silver versions are supposed to be similar internally and will both function with the PX-7 computer (although for those concerned about a clash of colours - the PX-7 is only available in black. Black is tending to be the 'in' colour at PIONEER these days).

However, compatibility with computer games discs may be only a notional specification. Transferring 'Astron Belt' from NTSC means a complete reworking of the disc-encoded programme, and PIONEER find themselves faced with a colossal outlay on the PAL disc that is never likely to be returned in disc sales - the quantity of LD700s is

Not many stockists can boast that great epic "Botham's Ashes" on Laserdisc. But we can. And we can also boast the biggest selection of Laserdiscs in the UK. Call in or phone in your order now. The HMV Shop, Oxford Street. 01-629 1240.



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

not huge, even though the machine has been selling well of late, and the number of LD 700 owners also owning the computer is substantially less. Therefore we may not get the games discs in the near future.

All those laser games you might come across in amusement arcades are in NTSC. Some of these at least do work on the domestic PX-7/LD 700 NTSC set-up it is reported. Future arcade games discs are likely to continue to be made in NTSC - the hardware is already in existence and NTSC is effectively the world standard for such games discs.

CHEAP DISCS

While stocks last, the following discs are on offer at bargain prices. There are a few titles at £3.99. Most music discs and older film titles are £4.99, newer films and doubles £6.99. If you are unable to obtain specific titles locally the best advice is to ring round dealers advertising in the magazine. Some titles are already out of stock and it would seem most unlikely that any future re-pressings, even if they happen, will ever be at such reasonable prices.

FEATURE FILMS - ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, AIRPLANE!, THE AMATEUR, AUTHOR, AUTHOR, BACK ROADS, BANDOLERO, BARBAROSA, BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES, THE BIG RED ONE, BLOW OUT, THE BORDER, BOSTON STRANGLER, BREATHLESS, BRUBAKER, CARBON COPY, CASANOVA, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, CHALLENGE, CHAMPIONS, CHE, CHILDREN OF RAGE, CHOSEN, CITY ON FIRE, CLASS, CLASS REUNION, CODE-NAME THE SOLDIER, COMA, CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES, CULPEPPER CATTLE CO, DR DOLITTLE, DUCHESS & DIRTWATER FOX, 11 HARROWHOUSE, EMPEROR OF THE NORTH, THE FAN, FANTASTIC VOYAGE, FORBIDDEN WORLD, THE FURY, THE GAMES, GETTING WASTED, GOLDEN-GIRL, GREAT WHITE HOPE, GUYS & DOLLS, HIGH ANXIETY, HOODWINK, HOUSE OF LONG SHADOWS, HUMUNGUS, INFERNO, I OUGHT TO BE IN PICTURES, THE JANITOR, JULIA, THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT, KREMLIN LETTER, THE LADY VANISHES (1938), LAST AMERICAN HERO, LIAR'S MOON, LITTLE BIG MAN, THE LORDS OF DISCIPLINE, MAKING LOVE, A MAN A WOMAN & A BANK, MANITOU, MEPHISTO WALTZ, MODERN PROBLEMS, MR BILLION, MURDER BY DECREE, MYSTERY OF MONSTER ISLAND, NEPTUNE DISASTER, THE NIGHTCOMERS, 99 & 44/100 & DEAD, NO NUKES THE MUSE CONCERT, NORMA RAE, 100 RIFLES, THE ONION FIELD, THE OTHER SIDE OF MIDNIGHT, PANIC IN NEEDLE PARK, PARADISE, PEEPER, THE PIRATE MOVIE, QUEST FOR FIRE, ROYAL FLASH, RUCKUS, THE ST VALENTINES DAY MASSACRE, THE SALAMANDER, SATURDAY 14th, THE SEDUCTION, THE SEVEN-UPS, SHOCK TREATMENT, SIGN OF FOUR, SKYRIDERS, SPETTERS, TAPS, 39 STEPS, THIS IS SPINAL TAP, THE UNDEFEATED, AN UNMARRIED WOMAN, VANISHING POINT, VICTOR VICTORIA, VISITING HOURS, A WEDDING, WHOSE LIFE IS IT ANYWAY, WILDCATS OF ST TRINIANS, WINTER KILLS, YES GIORGIO, YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN, ZAPPED, ZARDOZ, ZORRO THE GAY BLADE.

MUSIC/COMEDY - ABC MANTRAP, BIG COUNTRY LIVE, BODY MUSIC, DAVID ESSEX LIVE, DR COPPELIUS, MIKE HARDING, JERRY LEE LEWIS, JAPAN, DON McLEAN, LORETTA LYNN, PUBLIC IMAGE, SIOUXIE & BANSHEES, SPLASHIN AT THE PALACE '84, STYLE COUNCIL, THOMPSON TWINS, COOL CATS, GIRL GROUPS, N.T.W.I.C. MUSIC 1. **CARTOONS etc** - ANIMALYMPICS, CALIMERO, CHARLIE BROWN, FLIGHT OF DRAGONS, LITTLE BROWN BURRO, JOHNNY MORRIS' ANIMAL MAGIC, PIED PIPER/CINDERELLA, PLAYSCHOOL, RACCOONS & THE LOST STAR, SNOOPY COMES HOME, MGM CARTOON MAGIC, TERRYTOONS 2, WIND IN THE WILLOWS. **OTHERS** - DELIA SMITHS HOME BAKING, FOCUS ON SOCCER, GREAT RAILWAYS VOL 1, HARRY CARPENTERS BOOK OF SPORT 1, HARRY CARPENTERS BOOK OF SPORT 2, HENRY COTTON CELEBRITY GOLF,

HORSEBACK, MR SMITHS VEGETABLE GARDEN, PAINT, THE QUEENS BIRTHDAY PARADE, THE STORY OF ENGLISH FURNITURE, TRAINING DOGS WITH WOODHOUSE, WORLDS GREATEST PAINTINGS.

LASERFILM

One press conference we didn't get to was that of McDONNELL DOUGLAS ELECTRONICS and SANSUI on October 28th to announce a large scale production contract for 'Laserfilm' videodisc players. Instead of using existing methods of producing optical discs, McDONNELL DOUGLAS have exploited photographic emulsion techniques. They claim disc mastering and pressing costs to be only one-thirtieth the price of existing technologies.

Conceived as an industrial/educational medium, the 30cm discs can hold 84 Mbytes of digital data and combinations of still-frame with accompanying audio are available. These capacities are significantly less than existing optical storage devices, but then the Laserfilm process does offer lower cost. 1986 should see US delivery of hardware and software duplication equipment.

HDTV

The HDM-2820 monitor is not yet a market-ready product, but something like it may well be in the next five or six years if SONY get their way. As many readers are aware there are moves to introduce a world-wide high definition TV standard as a replacement for the existing PAL & NTSC formats. Most of the push

which are really 'back to basics' approaches. The reason for this reluctant attitude is the inability of the Japanese proposal to allow for an 'easy' changeover period for either broadcasters or consumers - everyone will have to replace all their equipment simultaneously. Broadcasters are understandably horrified at such a massive upheaval, but unlike previous changes in TV standards, the advent of video means that we could have HDTV in "five or six years". That could mean a parting of the ways between broadcast TV and home video - but there seems no reason why the two should continue to be tied to each other if it is going to stand in the way of progress. Broadcast TV in Europe has to function within a licence fee system that is likely to be increasingly unable to compete for major programming material - there just isn't enough money to compete with the new cable, satellite and video distribution methods. Broadcast TV looks destined to become a video equivalent of broadcast radio with a distinct advantage in presenting news and current affairs programmes. Cable, satellite and home video offers programme producers a far more lucrative (and in many ways efficient) means of reaching their audience. HDTV can hopefully provide a level of picture quality that could transform the living room into the home cinema.

Producing software in the new HDTV format would mean that consumers able, or willing to invest in the new equipment could make the changeover immediately (one would expect the disc to be a prime



is coming from Japan where NHK, Japan's equivalent of the BBC, established many of the parameters of new format - 1125 lines tied to a 60Hz frequency. 60Hz gives much less flicker, and the 1125 lines - twice our present capacity - the ability to achieve a far more detailed picture as well as enabling a larger picture to be obtained. Sensibly, this change of standards is being used as an opportunity to alter the aspect ratio from the existing 4:3 proportion to 5:3 (width in relation to height), or if input from the American film companies is anything to go by, the width might be just that little bit wider to accommodate wide-screen films that bit better.

Japan and the USA appear to be quite enthusiastic to adopt the new HDTV format - Europe less so. Here several upgraded PAL systems are being promoted, none of

software medium). That would allow the broadcasters to hold off until such time as the ownership of the new hardware had reached a sufficiently high penetration level before making the switch for everybody. Remember how the changeover to single inventory on vinyl discs was done. When it was considered that most people had stereo-capable record players, they just stopped making mono records.

We'll keep you informed of developments in this interesting move towards improved video standards.

THE NEW DISCS

LIGHTNING & GOLD are more than satisfied with the sales of new disc titles released under their aegis. 'First Blood', 'Star Trek 3', and 'Dune' were all early big sellers and 'First Blood' even sold out and had to be repressed within weeks of

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

release. The anticipated big seller from the first batch, 'The Empire Strikes Back', should definitely have become available by the time you get to read this. It was one of the earliest discs pressed (that's how we got to review it in issue 5), but LUCASFILMS rejected the sleeve design and it had to be re-done. Shipping artwork back and forth across the Atlantic accounted for the delay.

Some 'late' titles won't be appearing - for the time being at least. 'An Officer And A Gentleman' and 'Terms Of Endearment' have been postponed. Being 126 mins, hence £24.99 is the reason. They had been contemplating cutting the films to fit them on to one disc - but that's not likely to prove popular is it! The way the new prices are working means that single-sided discs run to £14.99, two-sided £19.99, three-sided £24.99 etc, etc. This structure is likely to cause a problem with music titles - with the recent price reductions in videocassette versions there is every chance that some music releases on disc could end up costing more than the tape equivalent. That means we might not get certain titles on disc. The good news is that PMI are going to be back issuing more discs in future.

LDR made itself more than a little unpopular with its criticisms of the master quality of some of the recent film discs, but one gets the impression that they were themselves unprepared for the variable quality of material they received. Coming into issuing LV at full tilt as they have has not given them much leeway in dealing with such matters. Certainly they wish to avoid any more films made in stereo appearing as mono versions on disc.

Negotiations are continuing to attract new software companies to the format, but unfortunately DISNEY does not look like being one of them in the short term. Of the existing labels, L&G are looking to get 'Beverly Hills Cop' and 'Rambo First Blood 2' out as close as possible to the tape release.

W.W.W.O.L

Only five weeks after issue 5 went out, 242 people had returned their title request slips. Thankyou for responding so immediately. As the replies came in they were listed and sent off to LIGHTNING & GOLD - in the first week when the replies were coming in thick and fast we were dispatching a daily updated list to them. There didn't seem any point in hanging about.

We actually received nearly 300 returned slips in that period but some came as subscription renewals without the suggestion side filled in. Some came with readers' planned purchases from the existing catalogue. This wasn't what we meant by 'existing titles'. We meant titles already in existence - but not available on LV. Still no matter, even these lists will prove useful as they help show the reaction to the first of the new releases beyond that derived from the initial sales figures. So here is the list:

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND

BLADERUNNER

JAMES BOND films

2010 / BEN HUR

E.T. / MAD MAX films

RETURN OF THE JEDI

SUPERMAN films

INDIANA JONES

THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD

GONE WITH THE WIND / LAST STARFIGHTER

SINGIN' IN THE RAIN / STAR TREK TVs

THE EXORCIST / CONAN films / BEATLES films / GHOSTBUSTERS / WEST SIDE STORY

SEVERN BRIDES FOR SEVERN BROS / BLUE THUNDER / LAWRENCE OF ARABIA / ROCKY films / GREMLINS

FLASH GORDON / CASABLANCA / SOUTH PACIFIC

DISNEY films & cartoons / SUPERGIRL / SPLASH / GREYSTOKE / EXCALIBUR / More POP VIDEO compilations / BEVERLY HILLS COP

PINOCCHIO / THE WALL / BATTLE OF BRITAIN / AMADEUS / ZULU / LIFE OF BRIAN / FANTASIA / THAT'S ENTERTAINMENTS / THE TOWERING INFERNO / PASSAGE TO INDIA / THE KILLING FIELDS / SPARTACUS / WAR GAMES / FLIGHT OF THE CONDOR / ELVIS '68 TV SPECIAL / BLONDIE videos

THE EVIL DEAD / THE DIRTY DOZEN / THE ENTITY / CITIZEN KANE / GLENN MILLER STORY / TEN COMMANDMENTS / CLINT EASTWOOD films / FIREFOX / THE OUTLAW JOSEY WALES / RAMBO / LAUREL & HARDY films / THE DARK CRYSTAL / THE DEERHUNTER / EMMANUELLE / ENTER THE DRAGON / OLIVER / TERMINATOR / BRAZIL / CAROUSEL / KOYAANISQATSI / ELECTRIC BLUE videos / DR WHO / Some SPACE discs

78% considered it crucial for titles made in stereo to appear on disc in stereo. 31% expressed the desire to get some films done in some sort of wide-screen.

Comparing this chart with the previous survey shows a remarkable consistency in readers' tastes. That many of the titles are now nearly a year older doesn't appear to deter anyone from wanting to own them. A good film is a good film. Hitchcock films have fallen back, but Flynn's 'Robin Hood' and Bogart's 'Casablanca' have moved forward. One imagines the new titles such as 'Gremlins' and 'Beverly Hills Cop' would do substantially better than their chart positions indicate. While this survey has been conducted in a more rigid manner than before, it is only a survey of LV owners who are readers of this magazine - and only those who completed the form. However, it can be said without any reservation that anybody considering buying an LV player would expect to find these titles in the disc catalogue. These are the sort of titles people do want to own.

The request for film titles far outnumbered all other categories. The most popular music requests were for pop artists. Queen, Tina Turner, Bowie, Meatloaf, and the CARS/Heartbeat City were in the bubbling under category. 'Video Rewind' appears to have satisfied the Rolling Stones fans as there were no requests for more of their material. The Beatles and Elvis appear to have maintained their support. In the case of Elvis, requests were spread over a variety of films and TV specials - only the

current '68 TV Special' drew common support. James Last and Big Band music persists as a demand needing to be satisfied. There was also a demand for some opera films rather than just stage presentations and also light operetta - G & S D'Oyley Carte productions for example. Opera, ballet, and classical music all drew some support but it was low in proportion.

Looking at the complete list of title suggestions that was used to compile the above list does reveal lots of good titles that only received the one mention. Were some of these to get issued one is bound to think they would sell in far higher quantities than their lowly support would suggest. Maybe in a year or two a larger disc market would indeed allow some of these suggestions to become a reality.

NEW from MARANTZ

MARANTZ announce two new A/V amplifiers with 7 audio and 3 video inputs and both featuring a 5-band graphic equaliser. The PM451 is rated at 70w per channel (8ohms) and sells for £199, the PM551 is a 110w beast and costs £249. Both units have identical facilities and only differ in their power ratings.



An additional feature of both units is their compatibility with MARANTZ's AV BUS system - and an RMC14 infra red remote is available that will control the amplifiers and a whole host of additional MARANTZ units featuring the AV BUS logo - the RV353 Surround Sound Processor being one such.

AVBUS

Talking of the RV353, many readers have been complaining of difficulty in obtaining this unit, and MARANTZ advises that the demand has far exceeded their expectations. A new delivery was scheduled for December but even that is not likely to be sufficient to satisfy demand the way things are going. Further information: MARANTZ, 15/16 Saxon Way Industrial Estate, Moor Lane, HARMONDSWORTH, Middlesex UB7 0LW - Tel: 01-897 6633.

NTSC FOLLOW-UP

Film maker, Ken Barnes - who also writes for this magazine - was in Los Angeles last October to discuss a new co-production deal. While there he paid a visit to Robert Stein of CRITERION PUBLISHERS - the company who produced the unique CAV editions of 'King Kong' and 'Citizen Kane'. CRITERION have some new titles under way - 'The Third Man', 'The 39 Steps', and 'The Lady Vanishes'. This time the discs will be in CLV but the same attention to detail and pursuit of first-rate prints/negatives is being maintained. The new titles will sell for \$39.95.

As to 'Kane' & 'Kong', Ken was so impressed by the high quality of what he saw that he immediately invested in both sets. Having committed himself to NTSC in a fit of enthusiasm, Ken went the whole hog and purchased a further six US discs - which included the restored version of the Garland/Mason 1954 classic 'A Star Is Born' and Hitchcock's 'Vertigo'.



NG...WHAT'S HAPPENING...WHAT'S HAPPENING....WHA



"The reason I jumped in so deep" says Ken "Is that I can't see any possibility of British releases on these titles in the foreseeable future. It has still not occurred to anyone in the British LV market that the videodisc, unlike its tape counterpart, should be aimed at serious collectors and not the casual buyer." Within days of returning to Britain, Ken had purchased an NTSC version of the PIONEER LD700. "I couldn't be happier with the results" he said. "And I shall be keeping a close eye on the US catalogues from now on."

To our knowledge, at least three other readers have gone NTSC since the article. In two instances they have gone for the combined player - the CLD900 and are thus able to enjoy the wonders of LV with Digital Sound. Maybe next time we'll run a page of NTSC disc reviews - there is a fair number of

readers already with NTSC players and we know others are interested. From the magazine's point of view, comparing discs in the different formats helps keep track of improvements in the technology, and maybe one day some enterprising manufacturer will see the wisdom of making a player that will play all the LaserVision discs in existence - not just some of them!

One thing we didn't pickup on in our survey of multi-standard TVs was that PORTATEL can also modify your existing TV in some instances. A sample quote for a SONY KV2704 to accept NTSC 3.58 came to £125.00 + VAT. Conversion time was stated at two weeks.

A little piece of trivia to finish this news item - You may recall US correspondent, Dwight R. Decker, describing how he had 'reclaimed' a reject blank side on his old DISCOVISION copy of '1941' (It is only possible on these



[Goldie Hawn in the 'unreleased' DISCOVISION version of 'The Sugarland Express'.]

early US DISCOVISION titles - don't expect to find anything under a blank sided PAL disc. They are genuinely blank). Well LDR has had a go too and on the blank side of our DISCOVISION 'Jesus Christ Superstar' we found side four of 'The Sugarland Express'. Nothing too special about that you may say - except for the fact that 'The Sugarland Express' never ever appeared as a legitimate disc release. It was listed but no-one has ever seen a copy - all we need now are the other missing sides!

SMALL ADS

FOR SALE / EXCHANGE

STARTING OVER, RAISE THE TITANIC, ALIEN, MODERN PROBLEMS, FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, BALTIMORE BULLET, IPCRESS FILE, CHINATOWN, BREATHLESS - Sale or exchange. Peter Stevenson 01-366 4151.
PHILIPS VLP 600-£90. QUEST FOR FIRE, ALONE IN THE DARK, TOYAH/RAINBOW - £6. Tel (0424) 442802
30 discs available - sale or ex. Write: Cpl D Cord, Q.E.M.H., Woolwich, LONDON SE18 6XN.
SOPHIES CHOICE, BREATHLESS, WHEN A STRANGER CALLS, PROM NIGHT, SISTERS - Sale or ex. D.Radisic, 1 Curzon Walk, Pitsea, Basildon, Essex SS13 3HD.
PHILIPS VLP 700 + 4 discs for sale. Telephone Nottingham 663218
ALIEN, LITTLE BIG MAN for sale, or exchange for PHILADELPHIA EXPT - C.Webb (0924) 279637.
KAGEMUSHA, ALL THAT JAZZ, ABSOLUTION, ALL THAT JAZZ, ATLANTIC CITY, BLACK MARBLE, BLUE MAX, BUTCH CASSIDY, DEATH VALLEY, DRACULA, BLUES BROS, EL CID, EXTERMINATOR, THE FOG, 55 DAYS AT PEKING, HENRY V, LAST AMERICAN VIRGIN, LOVE STORY, FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, THE OMEN, THE ISLAND, RIDDLE OF THE SANDS, APOCALYPSE NOW, THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN, SILVER STREAK, WILD GEESE, plus 100 more films, operas, and ballets - Andy 01-691 8376.

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PHILIPS VLP 700 + 4 discs - £210, or player £175, films £9. - W. Williams. Tel 01-524 1710.

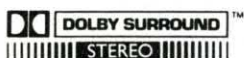
NTSC DISCS / PLAYERS FOR SALE

SUNSET BOULEVARD, THE HUSTLER, MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS, RYANS DAUGHTER, BLADERUNNER, THEY SHOOT HORSES, TRUE CONFESSIONS, PLAY MISTY FOR ME, DEATH WISH 2, NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN, ARTHUR, BARBARELLA, NIGHTHAWKS - Rob Livingstone Smith, 4/19a Poate Road, Centennial Park 2021, Sydney, Australia.
LASER DISC REVIEW has a PIONEER LD 700, NTSC model - 240 volt for sale. Interested readers should phone 01-351 4535 for details.
NTSC LV discs available, especially the latest Digital Sound releases - Roby, 0334 74564.

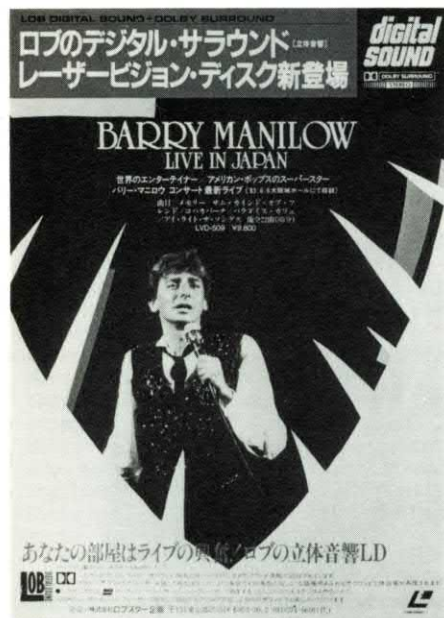
The SMALL ADS column is the ideal way for readers to dispose of unwanted discs etc. This is a free service at present. List titles on separate sheet of paper from any other correspondence and mail in time to reach here by 15th February.

DOLBY SURROUND

DOLBY LABORATORIES appear to be taking more interest in promoting DOLBY Surround Sound in the home. Although the potential has been with us for two or three years, it is only recently that things are beginning to move. Expect to see even more Surround Sound processors appear in 1986. All DOLBY approved ones carry the 'DD Surround' logo and this symbol is also starting to be seen on software.



In Japan this renewed interest in Surround Sound is leading to a number of music programmes being recorded using the process. This promo leaflet for a new Digital Sound Barry Manilow disc shows one such example.



DEALER NEWS

Getting to find LV hardware in a shop, let alone on demonstration, is no easy task these days. Getting to find STEREO REGENT STREET isn't significantly easier. While located just a stone's throw from Oxford Circus, in London's busy West End, you could easily wander past without realising it and so miss seeing the full range of PIONEER A/V goodies on display. Although SRS do keep

[Right - Downstairs at Stereo Regent Street]

a large stock of discs and carry all the latest releases, the corner of the shop these occupy, along with an LD 700 and SD 26 monitor, is only half the story.

Located downstairs is a demonstration room with another LaserVision-based set-up that includes the SP 101 Surround Sound Processor and a couple of Bodysonic chairs.

Anyone who has only read about these things in LDR - or just ogled them in PIONEER's lavishly printed glossy brochures would be well advised to pay a visit when they are in the capital city. A recent addition to the room is a PX-7 MSX computer. (The other piece of equipment you can see in the photo is the PX-TB7 Video Art Tablet that enables all manner of creative compositions on your TV screen or videotapes.)



While they obviously want to sell as many of these components as they can, SRS are only too happy to let LV fans do their own auditioning in the demo room - waving your copy of LDR should be sufficient to persuade them you're the right sort. If you are curious to see how the LD 700 shapes up it may pay to take your best disc along to compare picture quality with what you achieve at home.

STEREO REGENT STREET - 245 REGENT STREET, LONDON W1R 7AF. (Tel: 01-491 7922). Opening hours are 9.00 - 18.00 Mon-Sat, closed lunchtime 12-13.00. Footnote: SRS made a special point to remind me that they have a special offer on the Bodysonic chair at present - purchasers will get the £100 ottoman that is usually an extra thrown in free.

BITS & PIECES

CHINA - VLP720 & 830 players have already been shipped over to China as part of the deal announced in 1985. In October Chinese technical personnel were over in Europe for more detailed briefings on establishing disc and player production facilities in Shenzhen. #### That Maggie Smith/Christopher Plummer film, 'Playing For Keeps', that appeared on disc as 'Double Play' also being promoted as 'Lily In Love' in other countries! #### The Erasmus University of Rotterdam are producing a disc on microscopic anatomy - same programme both sides, one side in PAL, one in NTSC. #### PHILIPS reckoned to be able to produce solid-state lasers with wavelengths as short as existing helium-neon versions. #### A couple of readers have been experiencing picture interference problems on their PIONEER LD 700s - the black models. Anyone else having trouble? #### 'Apocalypse Then'? - Did you manage to get your copy of 'Apocalypse'? It came and went very quickly. #### By press time, 270 replies to W.W.W.O.L. Survey returned. All replies will be passed on until this issue appears on sale. #### France's THOMPSON-BRANDT planning co-production deal with NAKAMICHI on their audio/video recordable disc system.



DOMESDAY

While the the project retains a fairly low profile in the London area, Domesday mania appears to have swept the rest of the country and 13,000 schools have been contributing data, as well as other community organisations. The BBC have had a 30-strong staff working full-time on the project since November '84 and the discs and the related hardware are scheduled to appear November '86.

Disc one, the Community Disc, will comprise mostly the schools input and contain local information related to 25,000 O.S maps and 50,000 photographs. Disc two, the National Disc, will be more institutionally based and will lean more towards statistical information plus photos gathered from library sources.

While the Domesday Project is likely to be a one-off in scale terms in the foreseeable future, the BBC are contemplating continuing their interactive disc operation with ventures in Natural History, Science, and Language Learning. Titles of these projects may well be announced to tie in with the Domesday launch.

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Japanese Report

From Our Correspondent In Japan
MARC COMFORT

The Japan Video Association is quoting statistics for video software sales in 1984 that show videodisc sales to exceed those of videotape. Disc sales are for both VHD and laser, but the significance of the statistic cannot be ignored. Laser appears to be gaining the upper hand in both disc and machine sales. PIONEER are claiming cumulative sales of 340,000 players with monthly production continuing at a 15-20,000 unit rate. Big selling discs do sell in five figure quantities in Japan. The videotape market appears to have lost much of its vigour.

are available from the IR remote. There are two windows in the machine - a small one at the front that reveals the disc edge, and a much larger one top front that allows you to see the surface of the spinning disc.

Like the new PIONEER machine we reported on last issue, the SONYs are 'digital ready' and it is possible to buy an add on DSP 501 unit (¥ 45,000) for the replay of Digital Sound discs.

DENON have a badge engineered version of the PIONEER LD 7100 - the DENOX LA 800. Same price - ¥149,800.



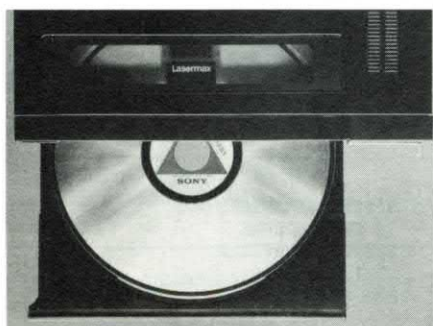
SONY have two new machines on the market (September) of their own manufacture unlike previous models that were made by PIONEER for sale under the SONY brand-name. The LDP-515 (¥ 145,000) is the main model - front-loading, solid-state laser, with remote control. The LDP-505 is essentially similar, but with the addition of a few controls and microphone inputs for karaoke use. This sells for ¥ 159,800.

As far as can be ascertained from the brochures (which are in Japanese) SONY are promising increased horizontal resolution, 370 lines as opposed to 350 on previous models, and 3dB better video S/N. Both players are in black and do not appear to offer anything startlingly different in their external design approach. The OPEN/CLOSE switch is mounted on the actual drawer front, and FORWARD/REVERSE SCAN controls are incorporated into the machine itself - these and other more intricate control functions

YAMAHA have introduced two new models of LV player. Although the external appearance is fairly conventional - black finish, front-loader with just basic controls on the machine - the remote looks quite unlike anybody else's. The regular model lists at ¥98,000, one of the cheapest so far. This is known as the LV-X1. A Digital Sound model, the LV-X1 DIGITAL is available at ¥128,000 - again considerably cheaper than the competition. YAMAHA are quoting 400 line horizontal resolution - substantially more than anybody else has so far laid claim to.

(As an approximate conversion, reckon on ¥300 to the £.) That means the YAMAHA basic player works out to about £250 at discount price - have seen it listed at ¥73,500.

New titles for VHD and laser are equal in number, but not all titles are available on both formats. Karaoke (singalong music) is very popular in Japan and players with these discs are to be seen in many bars and restaurants. This brochure alone lists 68 discs (containing 544 songs in total) - all in the 20cm format. The back cover of this brochure even illustrates a 40 disc storage caddy where discs can be kept for quick access without needing to be kept in their cardboard sleeves. The front edge of each compartment pulls down and brings the disc forward - rather in the way some companies have manufactured plastic library cases for reel to reel audio tapes.



[Above - the new SONY made LDP 515 player. On the left - the LDP 505 karaoke version.]



[This brochure lists 68 karaoke discs - and there are even more available than that!]

DOLBY Surround Stereo is being well advertised for both music (Police 'Synchronicity Concert', Rolling Stones 'Let's Spend The Night Together') and films ('Empire Strikes Back', '48 Hrs', 'Splash' etc).

Japanese TV has a laser disc review section in the programme 'All Night Fuji' - Tokyo Channel 8 - at 01.30 Sunday morning. Believe it or not the viewing fig-

ures are very high (2-3 million) at this time. TV ads for A/V tape, VCR/LV, records, cars etc are all in stereo - Japanese TV has been in stereo for a while now and teletext is getting under way.

On the newer Japanese TV sets the picture quality achievable from NTSC videotape and LV discs is not much different from their PAL counterparts - at times it can be better!

The software situation could best be described as buoyant. Film releases from some of the US majors are only just getting under way but the market looks to be catching up fast. Recent WARNER titles

have included 'The Enforcer', 'Firefox', 'Goldfinger', 'Rocky 1 & 2', and 'Enter The Dragon'. CIC have been active too and 'Stayin Alive', 'Streets Of Fire', 'Flashdance', 'Footloose', and 'Star Trek 3' have all been in Digital Sound. The latest Digital Sound films have been 'Rambo: First Blood 2' and 'Amadeus'. There is a new DS concert performance from Frank Sinatra and as well as a DS 'Barry Manilow - Live In Japan' which is also in DOLBY Surround Sound!

'Terror In The Aisles' has been released in CAV. A couple of bi-lingual WALT DISNEY titles are 'The Living Desert' and 'Make Mine Music'. Also from them comes 'Peter Pan'. 'That Was Rock', a 95minute compilation of the TAMI & TNT concerts from the sixties featuring a host of US & UK talent recorded during the peak of the 'British Invasion' is released on the TOEI VIDEO label along with 'Rock Revolution' and 'Black Vocal Varieties'.

One of the more unusual Digital Sound discs is 'Leathercat', a 45minute porno title. There is quite a lot of Japanese porno available on disc but it is a little wierd as they are not allowed to show pubic hair and mysterious floating patches are often superimposed on the image to solve the problem. In spite of this limitation they are otherwise reasonably unrestrained.

The October release sheet listed about sixty new titles - about twenty of which were mainstream US film product along with a handful of domestic items. 'O Thiasos', a 232 minute 4 sider, represents the only European title. There are twelve Digital Sound discs listed - Tina Turner 'Private Dancer', Casiopea 'Live', Dire Straits 'Alchemy Live', and others from The Jam, Blancmange, Kitchenware, and local artistes. 'La Fanciulla Del West' is the DS opera

on release. Other music titles, both local and foreign, make up the bulk of the rest of the list along with some mood, porno, and documentary items.



[The October release sheet - featured titles on the front page are 'Lifeorce' & Tina Turner's 'Private Dancer Tour'.]



[Digital Sound discs get some extra promotion in this 'Digital Laser Collection' leaflet.]

Disc prices generally work out to ¥7800 for a two sided film, ¥9800 for three. There are exceptions - 'Just A Gigolo' at 104mins goes for ¥12800, but for the most part the basic price structure holds true. Music titles run between ¥5800 and ¥9800, mostly the lower price though. Classical music conforms to this pricing structure, but operas and ballets are more expensive. 'Tales Of Hoffman' and other 4-siders go for ¥15800. The 20 cm discs usually cost ¥3400.

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Forward Scan

Looking At Future LaserVision Developments

An interesting diversion in recent issues has been reporting the increasing playing times witnessed on CLV discs. While the playing time of CLV discs has always been quoted at 60 minutes a side, the original disc mastering specification issued by PHILIPS stipulated a maximum of only 55 minutes, later 58, and only recently actually the full 60. This has been the sequence of events in the UK, but German practice has been somewhat different and near-maximum playing times have been achieved from the very earliest days - no doubt due to the fact they were earlier users of the injection moulding process that PHILIPS UK has only turned to in recent times.

Gold & Silver Discs!

May be, at this point, it would help to try and identify the changes in UK discs, both in the way they were mastered and the actual pressing process. Some guidance to the age of any disc in your collection is the month and year date printed at the bottom right-hand corner of the inner sleeve. These dates are never accurate but do indicate a sequence of sorts! If you put your discs back into the wrong inner sleeves these dates will obviously not be much of a guide, as too will the fact that older titles do of course get re-pressed. (Recent pressings have mostly carried 11/84 and 8/84 dates.)

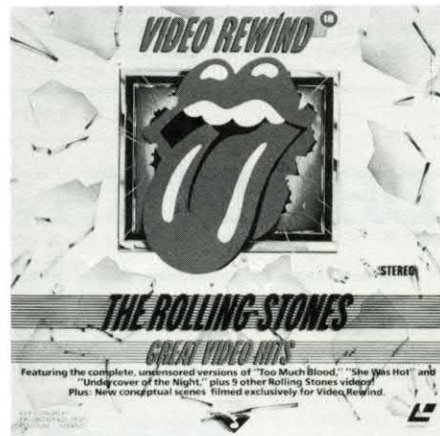
The earliest UK discs are usually dated '81 or '82 and are pressed on very silver coloured plastic. Well, all discs are silver you say, but in fact this is not the case. Later batches of pressings on the 2P process look decidedly gold in colour. It's not always evident when the disc is viewed in isolation, but if you hold discs of each type side by side the difference becomes more obvious. Since PHILIPS has gone on to injection moulding (in 1984), the colour of discs has shifted back to a slightly more silver colour. Telling injection moulded discs from 2P ones is most reliably achieved by looking at the centre labels. The 2P discs have a rectangular bar-code sticker underneath the label. Because it is underneath it should be invisible, but you can always see (and feel) the ridges. Current injection moulded discs do not have this sticker - its absence is often a sign of a re-press on a pre-1985 release.

The characteristics of the pressings apart, the method of cutting the earlier CLV discs is also different. If you take any recent CLV disc you will notice that the beginning of each side looks as though it is in CAV - the first few millimetres retain the vertical blanking period necessary for the special effects modes. This CAV portion is then discontinued and the disc reverts to true CLV format, where several picture frames are stored on each revolution of the disc.

When you play one of these current CLV discs you will find that, on this early part of the programme, you can achieve almost a CAV-type picture when you go in to the SCAN mode. As soon as you have scanned past this CAV portion the picture loses synchronisation and becomes jumbled as usual. (Unfortunately, the coding on the disc does not allow for the CAV controls to function on these introductory portions of the disc.) If you want to try and do a comparison of different CLV disc types, search out 'Star Wars'. You will see that the information on the disc is uniform and there is no early CAV segment.

A Longer Disc?

Seeing CLV playing times creep up prompts the inevitable question of where it will all end. In a comparatively short period we have gone from 58 to 60 minutes, and in the case of 'Video Rewind', nearly



half a minute past that theoretical maximum. How would the prospect of a 65 minute disc side sound? - a 130 minute film on one disc? Here's how we think it might come to be possible. As already mentioned, discs cut in Germany have been nudging the 60 minute barrier for several years, but inspection of these German pressings reveals that the entire disc area is often not used and there are significant gaps on the outer edges of several titles.

There may be good reason for this. The ability of players to track discs further out towards the edge decreases due to fluctuation from the perfect plane - and consequently the greater difficulty in keeping the disc tracked. This is the reason warped discs often play satisfactorily at the beginning, but lose their ability to be kept on track when the warp becomes greater further out. And presumably, LV discs are also prone to the same moulding stress problems encountered in CD pressing where it is possible for deformation of the signal to occur at the extreme edges of the disc.

So, that promising possibility of pushing the recorded information to the extremities of the disc looks dashed -

that is until you inspect a few of the recent UK 'long players'. On these discs you will notice that the signal does almost touch the outer edges of the disc. How is it then that a German disc playing for 60 minutes uses less of the disc area when the track spacing of LV (& CD) is always quoted at a fixed 1.6µm. This track spacing is evidently variable, much in the way that such variation is employed in conventional black wax audio disc cutting. This raises the question - why not have the tighter track spacing of German discs and use the full area of the disc in order to achieve longer playing times? (and don't we need longer playing times!)

On the basis of LDR's latest 'find' we could have a 65 minute CLV disc side. The German pressed 'Splashin At The Palace '84' is a full 60 minute recording but finishes a good 5-6mm short of the maximum usable disc area. It can be a bit tricky calculating CLV playing times due to the fact that they carry only one picture per revolution at the start and three or more at the end. 5mm of disc radius at the start doesn't contain much programme material - 5mm at the outer edge does. Though the ever-reliable LDR calculator has the potential to work out mathematics of such mind-boggling complexity, the Ed doesn't know which buttons to press. But, an extra 5 minutes on 'Splashin At The Palace' looks quite feasible (no really, we worked it out on a bit of paper in the end!). So we asked PHILIPS about the possibility of a 130 minute disc some time soon.

Essentially, their reaction was that longer playing times have been achieved as the improvements in technology have allowed, bearing in mind compatibility with existing players. Running the track spacing too close does start to push the picture quality down because the video S/N ratio drops, and grainier (snowier) pictures result - along with a greater tendency to get crosstalk ('the wriggle'). Experimentally CLV discs have been made that run well past the current maximum but the picture quality was apparently pretty terrible. Without redefining the LV format specifications and ignoring compatibility considerations it looks as though improvements in playing time will continue to be gradual.

Maybe readers who have 'Empire Strikes Back', 'Video Rewind', or 'Splashin At The Palace' could write in to LDR if they have any problems with these discs, just to see how these long discs work out in practice. Beyond that, there does look to be the potential to gradually nudge up the LV playing time as improvements in hardware and pressing technology allow.

CLV/CAV

One of the main reasons for pushing for longer playing times is to avoid those annoying 3-sided discs that become necessary due to the large number of

films that run just over the two hour point. Apart from the extra Fiver they cost, forty minute disc sides are a bit short, unless you are the energetic type that takes to bounding out of your seat with great regularity. (One interesting tid-bit of information that is really nothing much to do with LV but does look promising as far as promoting the format back in Holland - apparently it has become common practice in Dutch cinemas for the projectionist to take a break halfway through showing a film if it takes their fancy! More cynical readers may incline to the view that this may just be a subtle ploy financed by PHILIPS' undercover agents to acclimatise the Dutch public to accepting films in sixty minute segments, and hence showing one of LV's biggest limitations as a cleverly conceived asset!) Back to the plot.....

If we have to have two hour films on three sides there is a compensatory trade-off possible - having two fairly full sides in CLV and running the shorter third side in CAV. Choosing which side to run in CAV would depend on content. Action/adventure films with particularly good effects sequences would be the ideal candidates. In the case of a James Bond film, say, the third side of a two hour film would almost certainly contain a good action sequence on which you could bring all those seldom used buttons into use. (Incidentally, following on from the piece on longer CLV discs, PHILIPS are now able to press CAV sides that run to 37 minutes - 55,500 frames.)

As we have reported before, CAV mastering usually involves special preparation of the tapes but the situation with feature film material looks more promising. For a start, although ideal, perfect still frames are not crucial in films - it is more the ability to slow

suade them otherwise if there is any support for this type of mixed format disc. (It would also be possible on sub-97minute, single discs too remember.)

Now, for those of you who actually read every word of LDR, you may be about to say "But LDR said that CAV discs are not as sharp as CLV ones - won't there be a difference in picture quality as you turn the disc over?". Well, apparently not. Most of the CAV discs produced so far have been originated on videotape. That means they have had to go through additional stages of preparation, essentially field correlation, in order to get them to work properly on CAV disc. Sometimes it's down to the fact that programmes have been originated on 16mm film, hardly the best of formats either. PHILIPS maintain that there is nothing inherent in the CAV process that degrades picture definition. Given the correct quality of master the CAV format does produce equally sharp images.

Seconds Search

Purchasers of the new discs under the LIGHTNING/GOLD deal might have despaired over the lack of Chapters on the music/cartoon discs. Hopefully, Chapters will re-appear on the appropriate discs when things have settled down. LDR has spoken up for them on all compilation type discs as well as musical films. One of the problems with the latter is that when the songs end you often have many minutes of dialogue before the next song starts. It's obvious from reader response that many owners want to be able to play their film musicals as audio only discs on occasions, and so we have also suggested some thought be given to giving the ends of songs a Chapter number as well. This way, if you have an 830 say, you can programme up just the songs sans dialogue. Without the end Chapter the disc will just otherwise carry on into the dialogue until it reaches the next Chapter encoded on the disc.

But, we won't be too disappointed if the programme suppliers find this too tedious to get organised. There have been recent additions to the range of software codes available to be put on to the discs themselves. These relate to such things as CX auto-engage, teletext, and seconds. Yes, that means that future players will be able to access discs by Elapsed Time Search with substantially greater accuracy, thereby reducing the significance of ready-coded Chapters on the discs themselves (which is a very technical process anyway, involving as it does sticking pieces of magnetic foil on the mastertape!). Mind you, unless future players have a fair level of memory incorporated it will probably

need a small computer almost in order to self-index your discs and retain the program for future use. May be this is how PHILIPS plan to get us to invest in a computer! Having this greater accuracy of access to CLV discs will probably have additional advantages in future.

CX AT Last

It has become increasingly obvious that, in absolute terms, LV sound has been falling behind since the advent of Hi-Fi tape. PIONEER discs tend to be the exception to this rule with their added advantage of CX noise reduction - a move PHILIPS have so far resisted, in spite of incorporating the appropriate CX circuitry in the 830 player. In all the time this machine has been available PHILIPS have never produced a disc to exploit the improved dynamic range CX affords. The impression has always been that PHILIPS reluctantly fitted CX on the 830 only in order to retain compatibility with PIONEER players, but never thought much of CX themselves. Openly, PHILIPS have expressed doubts about CX discs being truly compatible with non-CX equipped machines (the VLP 600/700 players). That resistance appears now to have receded, and in mid-October orders were placed for CX encoding equipment to be supplied to the Blackburn pressing plant - with the aim of producing CX discs in the New Year.



Switch the player's CX position to "ON" when using this Videodisc

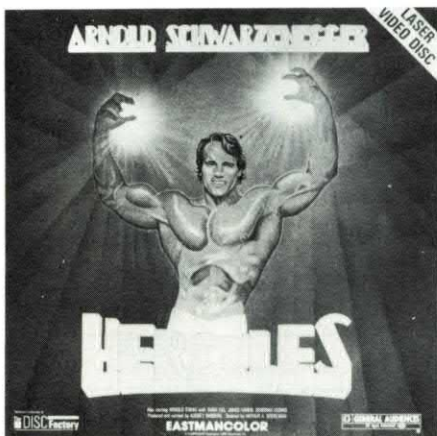
CLV-LONG PLAY

STEREO



What that means for LV owners with the suitable players (the VLP 830 and PIONEER's LD1100 & LD 700) is that you will be able to enjoy future CX encoded disc releases with significantly reduced hiss levels and improved dynamic range. LDR regularly complains about the picture quality of masters submitted by the film companies, but as far as sound goes, the audio on many of the recent releases has exceeded the ability of the LV disc to reproduce it. The 25mm C format master-tapes with DOLBY A noise reduction (the usual audio noise reduction system used in professional circles) that are used for disc mastering should now be transferable to LV without any audio loss. Seeing as there are many readers who regard sound quality as a top priority - any of you with a CX switch on your player will have much to look forward to. Opera, ballet, music, and film titles (in the latter case, only those sourced from a magnetic print, not films with optical tracks so much) will all benefit from a pleasing reduction in hiss level.

We will have to wait and see whether the CX will be of the automatic tripping variety ie. a special code is put on the start of the disc to tell the player to switch the CX encoding on automatically - at present only the LD 700 can exploit this feature, and it can't be switched out! Without the ability to defeat the CX it is impossible to do on/off comparisons in order to convince yourself that the CX has no unsatisfactory side-effects - something that noise-reduction systems are notorious for. As an example, while DOLBY B is almost totally standard on any audio cassette recorder there are people who still resist its use. And thinking further on, many users of Hi-Fi VCRs are troubled by the whistling and buzzing noises caused by the noise red-



[Although a strong contender to be one of the world's worst movies - this NTSC disc is made somewhat more bearable by being able to operate side two in CAV]

things down and accurately review selected portions. Also, most of the problems (and hence extra costs) in preparing material for CAV release are related to the edits in videotape, something that should not arise with feature films unless someone has chopped something out - and we wouldn't want that anyway, would we. CAV for films does begin to look a more practical reality than for music (which is invariably originated on video).

PHILIPS have reservations about doing mixed CLV/CAV discs inasmuch as they fear comebacks from customers and dealers complaining that their discs and/or machines are faulty - "Side 3 works in slow-motion, but sides 1 & 2 don't. I want me money back" sort of thing. The Ed would be quite happy to try and per-



[Even Paul looks unhappy that his disc was released without the addition of Chapter codes!]

uction circuitry employed in those formats.

CX is supposed to be a compatible noise-reduction system inasmuch as it should not degrade the sound on non-CX equipped players. So, VLP 600 & 700 owners need not worry. They won't get the benefits - but hopefully they should encounter no problems either. As far as this magazine can make out, experience with CX in the US & Japan has refined system somewhat since its inception (it was originally devised by CBS in the US for audio records), and with luck, UK discs should start out with all the benefits of this acquired expertise. Evidence of these refinements comes from the fact that although the specified S/N ratio of CX is >74dB, PIONEER never quote this maximum figure in any of their published specifications and resolutely refuse to confer CX with any more than a >70dB rating in their current literature. Seeing as Japanese companies are usually into ultimate specifications, it would appear most unlikely that PIONEER would 'undersell' their products in this way. More than likely, holding back from this theoretical potential of CX allows that greater bit of compatibility.

Looking Ahead

Seeing as most UK owners do not have CX on their machines, does this mean that now is the time to buy a new player? Possibly not. PHILIPS have been making rumblings about getting Digital Sound on PAL LV and this looks to be inevitable. As reasoned in issue 3, the challenge of adding Digital Sound to PAL is somewhat greater than on NTSC, and hard information on how it is to be done is difficult to come by. This magazine's inspired

reasoning suggests that Digital Sound may only be attainable at the expense of the existing analogue audio track. This would mean the new Digital Sound discs would not play on existing players (but conversely, existing discs would play on the new equipment). This does seem the logical approach. Most people's commitment to LV is in their disc collection rather than the hardware.

This reasoning may not be correct. We can only guess. However, such a prediction offers the safest course to take if you are considering buying a new machine. If LDR is wrong and Digital Sound can be crammed on to the existing discs you stand to lose nothing financially. But, you wouldn't thank us for encouraging you to rush out and buy a CX equipped player now if it meant that, within the year, you would also need a new Digital Sound capable player too.

But before you worry about your existing player, CX equipped or not, being obsolete - consider these points. Since the introduction of Digital Sound LV in NTSC countries a year ago, only about 10% of the new releases have appeared in that format - and many of these have been 'demonstration' type discs with limited general appeal. Very few have been feature films. It looks unlikely that Digital Sound on NTSC will become the norm for a year or two yet. So, if Digital Sound is introduced on PAL LV we will likewise probably only see a sprinkling of 'the new discs' that will not perform on existing players during the first year. (Look! We still can't even get stereo, let alone digital). It will be some time before indispensable releases are only available in Digital Sound. From past experience, LV developments are invariably later coming to fruition than manufacturer's announcements would indicate.

It is this gradual introduction of Digital Sound that makes the utilisation of CX worthwhile now. (Can you really imagine PHILIPS shelling out on CX at this late stage if they didn't reckon on getting good use out of the equipment!) Discs are going to appear in analogue for some time to come, albeit in improved condition, and LV owners fortunate enough to have suitably equipped machines are likely to have much to look forward to without any additional outlay.

[Continued from page 15]

reviews themselves ignore, as far as possible, this current wonderful state of affairs so that the reviews may be of as much use to you in future times when their prices may not be so favourable. LDR considers any title priced between £4 & £7 ideal shelf-filler material and an opportunity not to be missed!

Most abbreviations should be obvious to seasoned LV'ers. 'MP' is presently being used to indicate the theoretical presence of DOLBY Surround Sound information on the soundtrack though as yet this feature does not receive any review assessment. In some future issue we hope to publish a glossary of terms relating to our field of interest. Lack of space has prevented this before now. We are still short of space but we are reaching the stage where the subtleties of some of the process stages need more clarification. We are finding that the different trades involved tend to use exactly the same word to describe different aspects of film/video/disc transfer. Even we're confused at times!

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REVIEWS

Masters

Anyone picking up the magazine, wanting to know what LaserVision is all about, must be mystified by some of the criticisms of disc quality they encounter. In fact, most discs are quite watchable, but that's often because it's a good format to look at anything on. Many discs fail to fulfil the potential of the medium because of inferior master quality. Magazines concerned with reviewing video cassette tapes do not mention such matters because they have no way of knowing what is wrong with the product being assessed - the limitations of VCR picture quality mask all but major defects. The capacity of the laser disc to reveal shortcomings in the preparation of masters can easily bring down undue criticism of the format itself. Fortunately, much video-originated material suffers little during the transfer stages prior to disc mastering. But the campaign for improvement in feature-film masters continues.

In the end it comes down to money. While the LV market is small, no-one is prepared to shell out the extra money to commission new, higher quality film prints purely for LV release (after all, there is nothing to be gained from doing them for VCR formats - no-one would know any different!). LDR has suggested that future disc releases should be contracted for LV on the basis of an acceptable master being available - not by negotiating for batches of titles and having to take whatever quality of master turns up. But the UK home video market does not appear to work that way - the title is everything. The US majors work keenly to develop the sell-through market (selling video direct to the consumer rather than renting) and give LaserVision much greater support than possibly it returns to them in profits - for the time-being anyway (see Japan Report this issue!). Little of that forward-thinking permeates through to the UK subsidiaries where rental is teetering on its last legs as the supply of blockbusters dries up, after a boom period of exploitation of the past 50 years of Hollywood's best output. Next year only 'ET' will be left. After that, they gotta make 'em before they can rent 'em!

LaserVision is the only format that actually encourages the ownership of video - both in its concept and its promotion, and deserves a bit more support here in the UK. There are still film companies who refuse to issue product, and even the majority of those that do decline to be directly responsible for it - and it is possibly this remote approach that allows standards to slip. How else could it be possible for a batch of films that represent an investment of possibly \$50,000,000 in their production to be rejected as being of too poor technical standard to be worth pressing on to disc? You don't believe it? It happened very recently.

As it is we will just have to keep chipping away in the hope that the mess-age will ultimately get across. After

all, they do make some great films. How about some great discs?

Grading Discs

It may help your judgment of the reviews to know how they are done. All the uncredited reviews are done by the Editor (who has reasonably poor taste). Otherwise, the LDR panel of reviewers are credited by name at the end of each review. Opinions expressed should be related to whoever did the review - they are not necessarily those of LDR. However, all the discs do undergo inspection on the LDR set-up in order to give a level of consistency to the assessment of disc quality. In this way, even if you do not agree with what LDR says, you will at least be able to relate your judgments to LDR's, and therefore derive a 'constant' from which you can assess your ratings.

The LDR set-up presently consists of a PIONEER LD700, played through a SONY 27" PROFEEL monitor. We consider the LD 700 to give the sharpest picture that it is possible to achieve from an LV disc, and therefore shows faults not apparent on previous players. The SONY monitor may not be a broadcast grade specimen, but represents a reasonably high level of performance. We have to use this monitor because it is the only large-screen, multi-standard monitor available. (So far, no-one has said they have seen a disc look better than we can show it).

This player/monitor combination tends to give prominence to these characteristics - picture sharpness, picture grain (video noise), and spotty pressings. Picture controls are always adjusted to give optimum performance on each disc. There is too much variation in discs for this not to be done.

Discs are cross-checked on the VP600 when the occasion demands. Do bear in mind that the LD700 produces very stable dark backgrounds and many discs look better on this machine than the older 'gas-laser' players where there is the tendency to show streaking in dark plain areas.

The sound assessments are done through a modest level hi-fi set-up at levels commensurate with the picture. Readers who are obsessive about sound might find LDR gradings insufficiently critical. We have seen plenty of demonstrations of video with very loud and dynamic hi-fi sound that strikes one as very impressive - but we incline to the opinion that as soon as the sound gets too dominant it actually detracts from the involvement in the picture. Is there anybody out there who does listen at colossal volume and finds they are still able to relate to the picture? (We do accept that many owners play their musicals, ballets, and other discs as 'audio-only' programmes....And doesn't that alter one's opinion of sound quality!

Pressings

The changes in pressing quality also continue. Discs are no longer as clean as they were around the time of the last lot of EMBASSY & RANK pressings.

Some current discs have even had a bit of drop-out. We prefer the older discs, without spots! Some people have observed a greater incidence of crosstalk on the latest releases ('the wriggle') - even when playing times have been relatively short.

This Issue

This issue contains reviews of as many CAV discs as we could locate. Many readers have expressed the desire to get as much CAV as possible and some of the discs reviewed are not listed as CAV in the catalogue. Some of them are imports, one of which, at least, is available here in the UK, along with other titles in CLV. Sources for import discs are detailed in issues 4 & 5. Providing stocks are still available, the titles marked with an * next to the price are currently on special offer at prices between £3.99 - £6.99. However, the

[Continued on page 14, column 3]

Disc Grades

Readers should find titles attributed 'A' & 'B' grades satisfactory. 'C' & 'D' grades will still be found 'acceptable' by many, but we do believe they exhibit less than ideal master/disc quality. In absolute terms, we rarely find genuine 'A' grade discs. Those so classified may not be consistently up to that standard but do exhibit characteristics worthy of such recommendation.

ORIGINAL MASTER - FILM/VIDEO

'A' is the ideal grade, and though not perfect, masters so graded should show negligible generation loss etc. All 'B' grades should be acceptable. Anything with a 'C' will probably exhibit poor definition, colour, excessive grain etc. A 'D' indicates dubious preparation of master material.

ORIGINAL MASTER - AUDIO

Bear in mind that LDR is not a purist hi-fi magazine. Any master considered 'A' grade will have a good dynamic range. With films it would indicate the use of a magnetic track. 'B' is still quite a good grade but might not stand up without the accompanying picture. Any film with a 'C' will have a thin sounding optical track, or one that has a high level of hiss or modest distortion. A 'D' indicates a major sound defect.

DISC QUALITY - MASTERING & PRESSING

'A' indicates a blemish-free, 'strong' image. 'B' discs might contain blemishes that are not especially disruptive to viewing. It is unlikely that older pressed discs will ever manage better than this grade. 'C' grade discs are invariably those with too many spots and speckles. Any disc graded 'D' indicates a title we were unable to get a clean copy of or we would wish to imply you avoided.

Remember: There are variations in LV disc pressings, and if you receive an especially spotty or speckly disc, it is well worth seeking a replacement. This is particularly important with older pressings where the sample variation is much greater.

THE SEQUENCE OF GRADES IS - PICTURE MASTER QUALITY/SOUND MASTER QUALITY/PRESSING QUALITY.

BARBAROSA



PRECISION LVITC 0025 * £13.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1982 86 mins Rated PG

Starring: Willie Nelson, Gary Busey, Gilbert Roland, Isela Vega, Danny De La Paz
Director: Fred Schepisi

Buddy Holly was quite thin. Gary Busey, who portrayed the star in 'The Buddy Holly Story', looked physically right for the part, but in 'Barbarosa' is as fat as a pig. Willie Nelson is a Country & Western singer/composer of some stature. He often makes records with Waylon Jennings, a member of Holly's band at the time of his death.

None of this has much to do with the plot of 'Barbarosa' - but these are about the only reasons anyone would normally consider investigating this disc. And that would be a shame. 'Barbarosa' is a modern Western and there is very little shooting - even though Barbarosa himself is an aging villain who many would like to see in an expired state. (The Spanish dialogue specifically refers to his "cahoonas". "Bring me His cahoonas" is heard on more than one occasion.

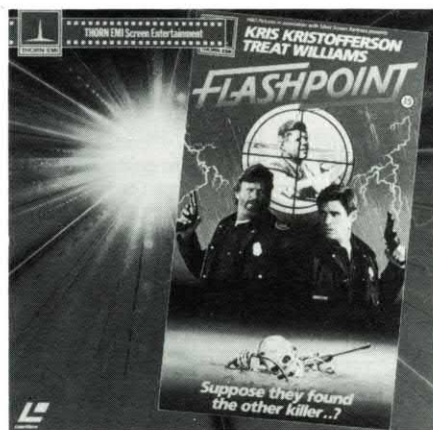
Obviously Willie Nelson is the aging desperado. Gary Busey is Farmboy, the

dumb kid with whom he crosses paths and develops an uneasy kinship. Before you know it the film is over. Not a lot happens even though the tale is told. Someone lying on a cutting room floor has probably seen more of this film than the rest of us, and that missing footage could very easily have made 'Barbarosa' in to something really special.

The scanning of the wide-screen print is not ideal - a bit of squeezing has been employed to aid matters. In rare moments when the centre of the frame fills the TV screen the picture quality is detailed and pleasing, but overall this is not the case. In contrast, the sound is about as good as it could be without going stereo, although there is a faint whistle that detracts.

In many ways this is not a totally satisfactory release but its appeal is outside that off the Western buff and deserves some acknowledgement as such.
[C + / B] [B -]

FLASHPOINT



THORN EMI TLY 90 3104 1 £19.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1984 89 mins Rated 15

Starring: Kris Kristofferson, Treat Williams, Rip Torn, Tess Harper
Director: William Tannen

They give most of the plot of 'Flashpoint' away on the sleeve. What's left..? Treat Williams and Kris Kristofferson are two U.S. Border Patrol guards content with their lot until it comes time for electronic surveillance to oust them from their preferred way of life. Condemned to 'digging their own graves', so to speak, by burying the electronic bugs in the desert, they happen across the buried remains of one of the Kennedy assassins - and his \$800,000 contract fee. While they are deciding whether or not to take the money and run it becomes apparent that there are other parties interested in the discovery - and they are the kind of people who are not averse to eliminating a few more incidental characters in this twenty year saga.

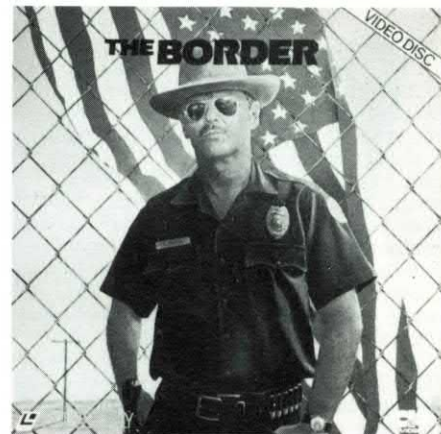
Don't let the HOME BOX OFFICE origination of this film put you off. It's not a watered down (with convenient breaks for the adverts) TV movie. But then again, it may not be the stuff of compulsive repeat viewing either. There are flaws in the production. Rip Torn's make-up is hardly realistic enough to make credible his friendship with Kristofferson's father - he just doesn't look old enough. And if anybody can explain how it is possible to jump into a pond without

causing a ripple the magazine may be motivated to offer a prize of some sort!

The picture quality is passable. Some scenes are quite pleasant but others exhibit a lack of detail in the shadow areas. Parts of the film look darker than they probably should. The sound is adequate but a little hissy even though the dynamic range seems good for a 'talking' type film.

[B - / C +] [B]

THE BORDER



CIC VIDEO LVG 1055 * £11.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1982 103 mins Rated 18

Starring: Jack Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Valerie Perrine, Warren Oates, Elpidia Caprillo
Director: Tony Richardson
Music by: Ry Cooder

Before the march of electronics depicted in 'Flashpoint' came 'The Border'. Jack Nicholson is the patrolman involved in the hopeless operation to secure the Mexican/American border who is confronted by corruption amongst his own confederates. Supplying wetbacks to local businessmen nets them extra cash and at first he resists - but a hefty mortgage and a persistent wife (Valerie Perrine), anxious to get her share of the American Dream, persuade him otherwise. We see the ensuing sequence of events from both sides of the fence. Nicholson stumbles across a young Mexican girl striving to care for her baby and support a little brother and finds himself facing divided loyalties.

'The Border' was no great shakes at the U.S. box office and one can but hazard a guess why. There is no easy solution offered to the issues raised and it is all rather too close to home for comfort. UK viewers, with somewhat greater detachment (geographically speaking), might find more to appreciate in this sensitively observed movie. Sometimes the pace does seem a little rushed and the cutting looks a mite too sharp in places where the camera could well have lingered that bit longer. Another five or ten minutes would have let us see more of some of the characters and made better use of the music which again appears cut to the bone. (The end credits suggest there should have been more too.)

Originally a wide-screen production the reduction to TV format is adequate though there is a little video lag in some of the darker scenes. Definition is good. The sound is a bit hissy and crackly but the music sounds unaffected. You may have difficulty getting a copy of this disc free of spots - we did.

[B - / C] [C]

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THE STYLE COUNCIL Far East & Far Out



POLYGRAM 040 369 1 * £9.99

CLV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

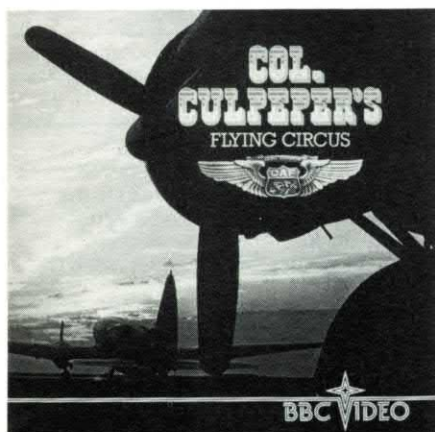
1984 58 mins

Side 1: The Big Boss Groove/Here's The One That Got Away/You're The Best Thing/It Just Came To Pieces In My Hands/Mick's Up/Dropping Bombs On The WhiteHouse/Long Hot Summer/My Ever Changing Moods/Le Depart/The Whole Point Of No Return/Money Go Round/Headstart For Happiness/Speak Like A Child

You can be sure that, until PHILIPS start using CX, or better still, we get Digital Sound on PAL LV, discs won't come much clearer than this one. A live concert, recorded in Japan, 'Far East & Far Out' suffers from incredibly dark stage lighting that gives the initial impression of a poor standards conversation. But, moments of greater illumination reveal a competently produced master - you've just got to settle for a dark picture! Still, this is a disc worth buying for the sound alone, and although you may need to be amenable to the slightly jazzy and remote nature of The Style Council's music it will make a worthy purchase. The pressing could have been a little better. The review copy suffered from a few white spots and some occasional line dropout but was generally bearable.

[B / A] [B -]

COLONEL CULPEPER'S FLYING CIRCUS



BBC VIDEO BBCV 6014L £11.99

CAV COLOUR MONO

1982 50 mins

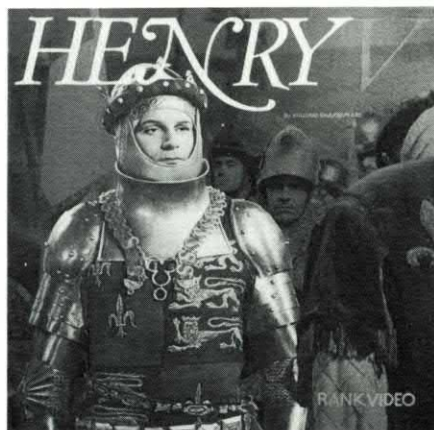
As of 1982, the 89 World War Two aircraft that make up the Confederate Air Force constitute the 15th largest air arm of the day. Under the leadership of the mythical Colonel Culpeper the CAF aims to act as a constant reminder to the present generation of the dangers of dropping one's defensive guard in a world whose liberty is perpetually under threat.

In the UK, where the desire to preserve has almost reached epidemic proportions, such accompanying patriotic fervour is rarely observed and this is what gives reporter Ian Wooldridge his angle in this fifty minute documentary that rarely rises above the level of passing curiosity. There are, of course, the aeroplane enthusiasts who would cherish any disc on the subject, but even they would no doubt prefer less chat and more hardware. That this disc is in CAV also underlines this weakness - there are not many occasions when you feel the desire to interrupt the play mode. It is the commentary and the interviews that make the programme interesting and this is really no more than a TV programme preserved. Were it conceived as an LV disc we might have expected a freer and more creative approach to the visual presentation. Something more could have been made of the intriguing but brief glimpse of the B29 graveyard and maybe we could have had a still-frame record of the individual aircraft. 89 frames would hardly stress the capacity of the disc. As it stands the disc is of limited appeal.

Originated on (at a guess) 16mm film the master quality is only really just adequate - it does not lend itself to detailed still-frame inspection as the image is a bit grainy and the definition only average but it will more than suffice for linear viewing.

[B / B] [B]

HENRY V



RANK VIDEO 735 0010 0 £13.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1944 137 mins (3 sides) Rated U

Starring: Laurence Olivier, Robert Newton, Leslie Banks

Director: Laurence Olivier

This stirring re-enactment of the Battle of Agincourt should not be dismissed as an incoherent Shakespearean melodrama. It's a brisk movie which received two Oscar nominations (for best picture and actor - Olivier) and bristles with rich characterisations from a strong cast. It's just the sort of movie you would expect them to be making in 1944 as a sort of patriotic

pick-me-up for a war-torn Britain.

It opens in the Globe Theatre in 1603 with a company of actors performing the play to a packed house of boisterous locals. Gradually, as the play progresses, the scenery becomes more and more realistic - until finally the play becomes the film. We see Henry encounter the French at Agincourt, and in one now famous scene a roving camera follows the French mounted assault as it builds from a trot to a full-scale charge. The resulting battle is the climax to an Anglo-French argument which is only finally concluded when the victorious Henry, magnanimous in victory, agrees to a marriage to unite the two nations. It is during these final scenes that the scenery regresses to its original condition and the players finally take their bows to a well-satisfied audience.

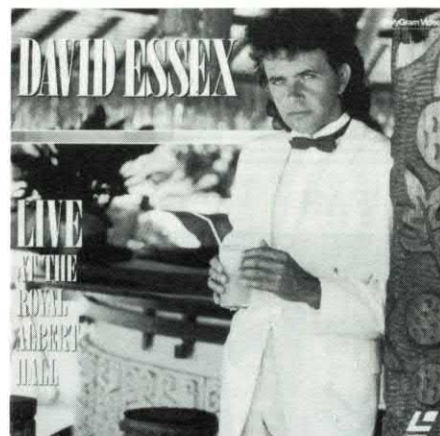
Presented in this way, 'Henry V' manages to escape the wooden theatricality which normally hampers its production and thereby enhances its appeal.

[TERRY JOHNS]

Disc quality: An aged but quite serviceable master with some variation in picture quality and an understandably crackly and somewhat distorted soundtrack. Difficult to relate to modern material as far as setting a grading.

[C + / C +] [B -]

DAVID ESSEX Albert Hall Live



POLYGRAM 040 348 1 * £9.99

CLV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

1984 90 mins

Side 1: Here It Comes Again/The Whisper/Down Again/Me & My Girl/Oh What A Circus/Verity/You're So Fierce/Rock On/Tahiti

Side 2: Lamplight/Fishing For The Moon/Second Hand Love/Moonlight Dancing/You Don't Know Like I Know/Twist & Shout/A Winters Tale/Silver Dream Machine/On My Bike - Not Fade Away - Pretty Thing

You may need to be a bit of a fan to fully appreciate this well-produced live concert disc, but if you are there is really very little here to criticise. A good and authentic live sound complements a well-lit video originated picture with plenty of close-ups of the star himself. Others may find the material a bit samey and David never quite lets go enough to break out into even the mildest sweat - but no matter.

Apart from the tiniest hint of grain in the master there is nothing to fault here. Only the pressing would cause comment for some spots and some occasional line dropout but is otherwise vivid and strong. Overall a good memento.

[A - / A] [B -]

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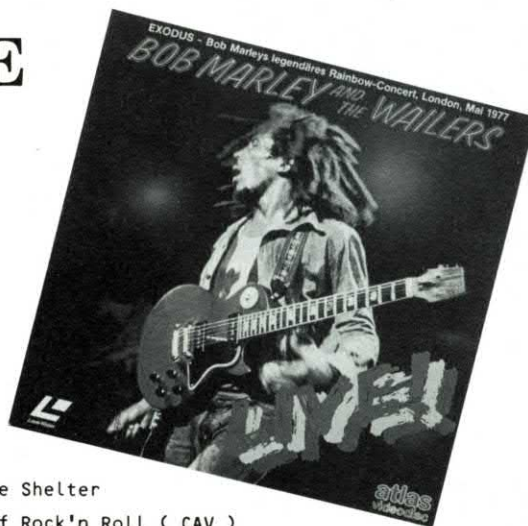


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THE FAN



CIC VIDEO LVG 2054 * £11.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1981 91 mins Rated 18

Starring: Lauren Bacall, Maureen Stapleton,
James Garner, Hector Elizondo, Michael Biehn
Director: Edward Bianchi

In a role that might strike some as too close for comfort, Lauren Bacall plays the celebrity pursued by one particularly persistent fan who, failing to achieve any response to his letters, resorts to making his mark in the star's life by wielding a cut-throat razor in the immediate proximity of her secretary - and any other person unlucky enough to come between them. After a good menacing build-up on side one with the appropriate, yet not overdone, viol-

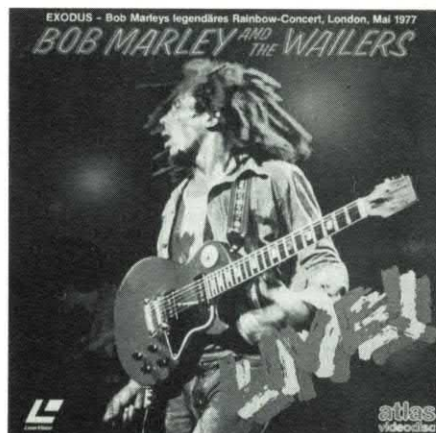
ence, 'The Fan' does lose momentum and possibly fails to sustain through to the climax, but it is not for the want of trying by the cast. It is Lauren Bacall's film but she does not appear to be trading on any past reputation. You do not get to see that much of James Garner. Hector Elizondo, with hair and without the selection of frocks in 'Young Doctors In Love', is the police detective, but his part appears written down as the film progresses, after what looks to be an integral introduction. Michael Biehn, as the fan conveys the similarly unpleasant aura accorded the leader of 'the Ten' in 'The Lords Of Discipline'.

Print quality is variable. The darker scenes are a little too dark if anything, but the picture is tonally extremely pleasant in the brighter scenes. Many PARAMOUNT titles seem to capture the real feel of film in the video transfer, but it is a pity that the quality is not consistent throughout in this case. Also inconsistent is the sound. For the most part it is a scratchy optical track, but for no apparent reason, around the 45.00 point, it becomes clear and eminently listenable. Unfortunately, later on side two, it reverts to its old self.

The pressing looks decidedly unpredictable and spots of significant quantity marred the review copy. Without the opportunity to assess a second one the best advice might be to approach this one with caution unless you are prepared to persist with a few returns.

[B - / C] [D]

BOB MARLEY Live At The Rainbow



ATLAS 405.2002 (Germany)

DM. 59

CLV COLOUR STEREO

1977 70 mins

Side 1: Trenchtown Rock/Them Belly Full/I Shot The Sheriff/Rebel Music/Lively Up Yourself/Crazy Baldhead/War/No More Trouble/The Heathen
Side 2: No Woman No Cry/Jamming/Get Up Stand Up/Exodus

Well presented in a double sleeve, with (German language) sleeve notes, this is a straightforward record of a May 1977 performance in London's Rainbow theatre - four years before Marley's premature death. The concert, based upon the 'Exodus' album, has been remarkably well recorded in spacious stereo sound, with none of the instrumental balance problems that can arise in location recording. There is a certain amount of audience noise - but this has been kept well

in the background, where it adds to the atmosphere without distracting attention from the performance. There are no spoken links which can be tiresome with repetition, but the disc also lacks Chapters which does make it that little bit more difficult to locate individual tracks.

The director, Keef, ensures that the cameras are kept on the move, and that they are always pointing in the right direction. Predictably, Marley himself is the centre of attraction but Junior Marvin, on lead guitar, gets his fair share of close-ups, as do the very disinterested looking vocal backing group, the I-Threes, led by Rita Marley.

Definition is really very good - individual beads of perspiration are readily discernible. The colour balance appears to be faithful to the original multi-coloured concert lighting. The pressing looked generally adequate but did get a bit spotty on side two.

The content and running order are identical with LWT's broadcast in 1984, but the disc has the advantage of stereo sound. Warmly recommended to Marley fans. [PAUL RONCHETTI]

[A - / A] [C]

** This disc is currently available from LASER SOUND & VISION, Eastbourne.

VICTOR VICTORIA



MGM / UA UMLV 10151 * £15.99

CLV COLOUR STEREO MP

1982 129 mins (3 sides)

Starring: Julie Andrews, James Garner, Robert Preston, Lesley Ann Warren, Alex Karras
Music by: Henry Mancini
Director: Blake Edwards

I must say from the start that I am not a fan of either Blake Edwards or of his wife, Julie Andrews. Edwards has become of late a very indulgent director who has tended to subscribe to the 'Airplane!' school of film-making i.e. throw in a load of gags and we'll think of a plot later (I often find it hard to believe that he is the same Blake Edwards that made 'The Days Of Wine & Roses' and 'Breakfast At Tiffany's'). Julie Andrews has always seemed to be a most capable singer who, whilst perfectly cast in the role of Mary Poppins, in reality could not act her way out of a paper bag.

It is particularly pleasing, therefore, to report that 'Victor Victoria' is a delightful, slightly farcical piece of whimsy with an extremely original plot line and a generous sprinkling of (mainly British) character actors who give the whole production a classy and, unusually for a Blake Edwards film, distinctly un-American air.

The film is based on a 1933 German movie which was remade in 1936 as 'First A Girl' (starring Jessie Matthews) and concerns Victoria Grant (Julie Andrews) who, penniless in the Paris of the 1930s joins forces with Toddy (Robert Preston), an aging homosexual cabaret performer. In an effort to obtain employment for them both, Toddy suggests that Victoria becomes Count Victor Grazinski, a female impersonator, and such is her success at impersonating a man impersonating a woman that she rapidly becomes the toast of Paris. At this point I will mention that Victoria's impression of Victor (the man) is not entirely convincing. However, there can be little doubt that Victoria's impression of Victor (the woman) is spot on and for that Julie Andrews can rest assured of a career as a female impersonator if ever the need arises.

It is at this point that James Garner enters the proceedings playing King Marchant, a Chicago gangster who is in Paris poaching acts for his nightclub back home. He sees Victoria impersonating Victor (the woman) and is immediately captivated until he learns that he is a she.

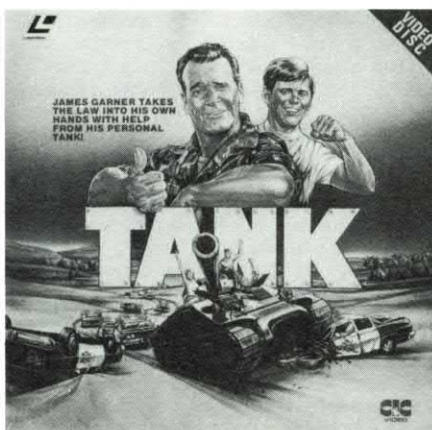
The subsequent chaos and confusion that reigns is a sheer delight and the film is highlighted by some punchy dialogue, terrific performances and top-rate direction by Edwards. Robert Preston has never been better as Toddy (don't miss his impersonation of Victor (the woman) at the end of the film); Graham Stark plays a seedy French waiter with an acerbic line of patter, and Alex Karras scores as Garner's butch bodyguard. But for me, it is Lesley-Anne Warren as King Marchant's dumb blonde girlfriend who steals the show with the kind of voice that would stop a Sherman tank dead in its tracks at ten paces.

I find it difficult to find anything bad to say about this film. Role reversal films are usually good box-office ('Some Like It Hot' & 'Tootsie' spring to mind) - the reason being, I think, that the concept intrigues people. I don't think that 'Victor Victoria' will acquire the status of 'Some Like It Hot' (you can't improve on perfection), but it actually has quite a lot to say about male, female and homosexual role-playing and if only for that it deserves a lot more recognition than it has received to date.

Picture quality is adequate, if a little under-defined and this may be due to the reduction from the wide-screen image that additionally causes a few problems where important action occurs at the edge of the frame. The sound quality is good, the musical numbers are well recorded and in sync. A slight amount of speckling was in evidence towards the end of side one on an otherwise acceptable pressing. [PETER MOVERLY]

[C + / B +] [B -]

TANK



CIC VIDEO	LVG 1140	£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	MONO
1984	108 mins	Rated 15

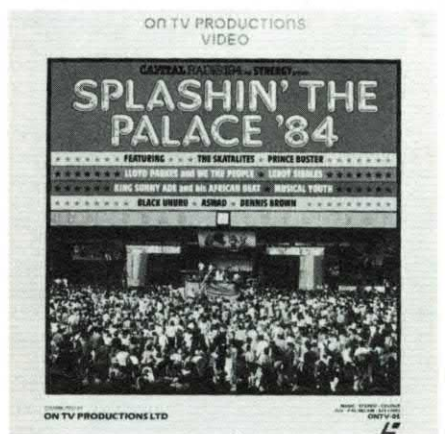
Starring: James Garner, G.D. Spradlin, Shirley Jones, C. Thomas Howell
Director: Marvin J. Chomsky

To accuse 'Tank' of being a formula film may be a little unfair. Set in a small southern US town, it revolves around a conflict between a near retirement Sergeant-Major (James Garner) and the local Sheriff, whose corrupt practices have gone unchallenged until Sergeant Carey stepped in to protect the local prostitute from being beaten up by a bullying Deputy. A display of brinkmanship ensues that only leaves Zack Carey one last card to play - the use of his his preserved, and much cherished, Sherman tank. That the ensuing mayhem could come about without the intervention of either's superiors does require a level of repression of one's critical faculties, but providing you can accomplish this, the chain of events leading up to the resolution of the dispute makes for an enjoyable couple of hours viewing.

In spite of a good cast and a high standard of production, 'Tank' may not be the stuff of too many repeat viewings, and although it might not be the finest of CIC's transfers (it's a touch contrasty) the quality of the picture does go some way to giving the disc ownership appeal. The sound is quite compatible - clear, and with a reasonable dynamic range, if slightly hissy. The review copy had some low-level spitting on one side but this looked to be a sample pressing fault and should not crop up on your copy. (Note: The listed run time on the sleeve of 113 minutes is the NTSC duration, so the revised 108 minutes for the PAL version looks about right.)

[B / B -] [Test pressing]

SPLASHIN' AT THE PALACE '84



ON TV	ONTV - 05	* £13.99
CLV - Ch	COLOUR	STEREO
1984	60 mins	

Side 1: PRINCE BUSTER - Al Capone/SKATALITES - Latin Goes Ska/LEROY SIBBLES - Rock & Come On/Rock Steady Party/KING SUNNY ADE - Synchro System/MUSICAL YOUTH - Pass The Dutchie/BLACK UHURU - General Penitentiary/Guess Who's Coming To Dinner/ASWAD - Roots Rockin'/DENNIS BROWN - Revolution/I Can't Stand It/Promised Land/LLOYD PARKES & WE THE PEOPLE - Redemption Song

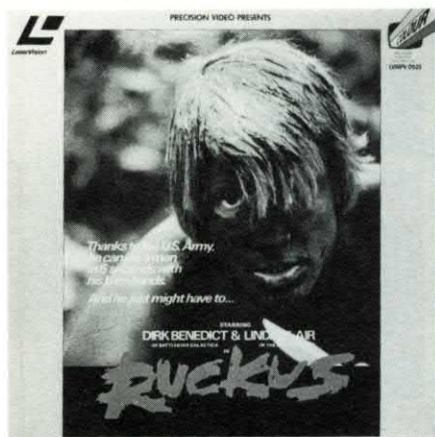
It is a well-known fact that, these days, supporters making regular attendances at Selhurst Park are unlikely to witness much in the way of quality football - except on the rare occasions that Millwall come to visit. The opportunity to present this open-air reggae festival at the Crystal Palace ground offers an alternative means of getting some star talent within the stadium's perimeters.

It seems too good to be true that with the Sunsplash logo emblazoned across the rear of the stage the sunny weather should hold out for the duration of the show, but indeed it does. Rather like the previously reviewed 'Reggae Sunsplash' volume, the rapid turnover of acts here does tend to work against too great an involvement on the part of the viewer - no sooner have you adjusted to one act than they're gone. Prince Buster and the Skatalites each only have one song and these appear troubled by setting up problems - something that intrudes fractionally on Leroy Sibbles' segment. He is the first artiste on the disc to really establish a presence but the music does not otherwise flow till the latter part of the programme. Overall, this compilation serves more as a memento of an eventful day.

There are several names listed on the sleeve of those connected with the production, but whoever was responsible for the camera mixing must possess a deep-rooted fear of men with black faces. There is hardly a shot that lasts for more than four seconds and the camera angle changes with stroboscopic regularity. This may be necessary to stimulate viewer response on a low-fi tape format but becomes fatiguing given the clarity of laser presentation. That said, the production values are high and sound and picture are good - as is the transfer to disc where it is only the modest graininess to the picture that would cause comment. The pressing (a German one) exhibited a few spots, but as there are few dark scenes their presence was of little significance.

[A - / A -] [B -]

RUCKUS



PRECISION LVWPV 0521 * £13.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1977 89 mins

Starring: Dirk Benedict, Linda Blair, Richard Farnsworth, Matt Clark, Jon Van Ness, Ben Johnson, Taylor Lacher
Director: Max Klevan

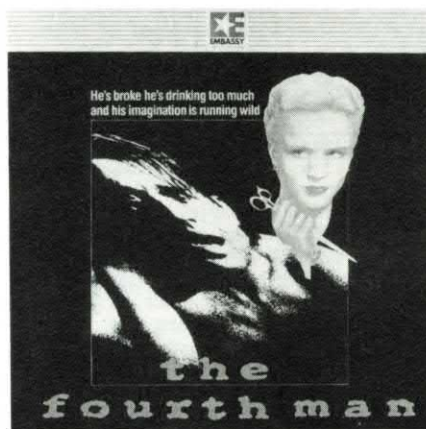
In a sort of 'First Blood' meets 'Smokey & The Bandit' conglomeration, Dirk Benedict ('of 'Battlestar Galact-

ica'', as it says on the sleeve) plays the Vietnam veteran pursued by the small town good ol' boys for no better reason than he doesn't fit in. Fortunately for our Dirk, his experiences in the far more hostile jungles of South East Asia have more than equipped him to handle them. Sounds familiar eh? After an initial attempt to establish a plot with a bit of menace, the film rapidly declines into light-hearted hokum but is all competently done. We don't have a rating for this one but it makes for fairly inoffensive family viewing.

Possibly a greater reason for acquiring this disc than its insights into the human condition is that, if you can't get hold of a bargain-price copy of 'Hoodwink', this will do as a reasonable alternative to showing how good film stock can look on LV. It is not consistent throughout as the transfer does not cope very well with the contrasty scenes, but on occasions, when the light is either diffused or the action is inside, the picture veritably sparkles - it is perfectly sharp, with good colour, and devoid of any grain. The sound, though, is reasonably poor and crackles fairly regularly, as well as suffering from a bit of a high-pitched whistle in the background. Unusually for a disc of this vintage, the pressing of the review copy was remarkably clean and almost a match for some of the pressings we got around the middle part of 1985.

[A - / C -] [B +]

THE FOURTH MAN



EMBASSY ELV 1378 £13.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1983 97 mins Rated 18

Starring: Jeroen Krabbe, Renee Soutendijk, Thom Hoffman, Dolf DeVries, Gert DeJong, Hans Veerman
Director: Paul Verhoeven

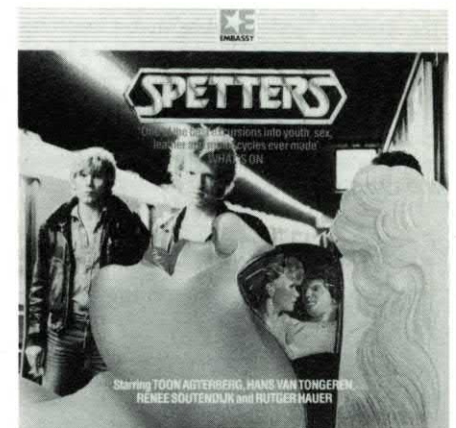
Another EMBASSY title with no preceeding logo. 'The Fourth Man' appears initially to share certain similarities with the plot of 'Reuben Reuben', but this Dutch thriller rapidly develops into something considerably more ominous. Gerard Reve (the writer here) is significantly further down the slippery slide into alcoholism and his blurred observations of the real world are becoming uncomfortably juxtaposed with premonitions of his own violent demise. The pursuit of a rich young widow (already the veteran of three marriages where the husbands have mysteriously expired) conflicts with Gerard's uncontrollable lust for the woman's muscular young lover, and the shot of the author excitedly fumbling about in his underpants while peering through the keyhole at their lovemaking might strike

some as less than family entertainment.

The dubbing of the film leaves much to be desired. The sound is a bit too perfect and lacks reality, thereby throwing up a barrier to what is essentially a film of mood and dialogue. Sub-titling would have been better. The transfer could have been better too, and in spite of a possible soft-focus mistiness in the original (which may not be the case) the disc looks dull and diffused until well into side two where improvement occurs. More than likely the disc should have looked this way throughout. The giveaway to a poor telecine job is the fact that the left-hand side of the frame is invariably out of focus.

[C / B] [B]

SPETTERS



EMBASSY ELV 3016 * £13.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1980 103 mins

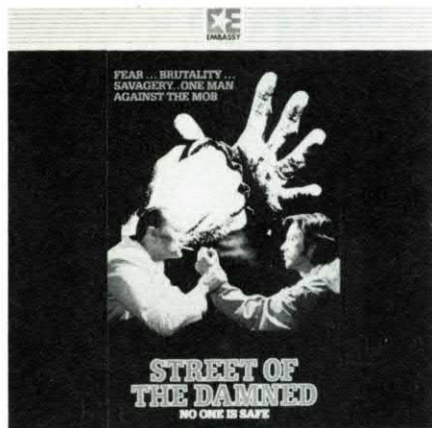
Starring: Toon Agterberg, Hans Van Tongeren, Renee Soutendijk, Rutger Hauer
Directed by: Paul Verhoeven

Again Dutch and dubbed, but in this instance, more successfully so. Outwardly a teen movie, 'Spetters' has much else going for it. The teenage trio of motor-cycle fans (well, they're twenty in fact) are quite a likeable bunch but the initial focus on Ron Hartman's aspirations of becoming a motorcross champion develops into an interesting insight into the Dutch way of life. There is no denying the dubbed dialogue is ungainly, but if you can get past the first twenty minutes it is possible to get caught up in the drama. (One of the dubbing actors has to be the chap with the blonde Beatle haircut from 'Space 1999' - he does several voices.) This film suffers less from dubbing than 'The Fourth Man' because close-ups are less in evidence and the action is more intense but some of the substituted dialogue is particularly inane. Again, like the previous film, 'Spetters' is refreshingly frank about sexual matters, but the words chosen in the translation are possibly too literal and bear no relation to the sort of phrases used in real life.

The timing of the disc does not agree with what is stated on the sleeve and it is possible some cuts have been made, but it is not especially apparent from just viewing the film. The picture quality is OK even though one might have had expectations of something a trifle better.

[B - / B] [B -]

STREET OF THE DAMNED



All the action here occurs in a seedy part of town, real low-life stuff. The night club where mob leader Hagen hangs out looks no fun at all. This is where the style creeps in. Chet is the perfectly conceived hero. He is trapped - he works as a railway welder these days though in his time (he's only in his thirties now) you know he was a bit of a Flash Harry. The plot hangs on Chet facing former adversary Hagen before he can face himself. It's a story that has been told many times ("A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do") and repetition is no detriment to the concept.

Picture quality is a trifle bleak but the disc is reasonably crisp. The sound does have a slight amount of hiss but is otherwise clear although some of the music does suffer from a little soft edged distortion - again it's slight. [B - / B -] [B]

EMBASSY ELV 6101 £13.99

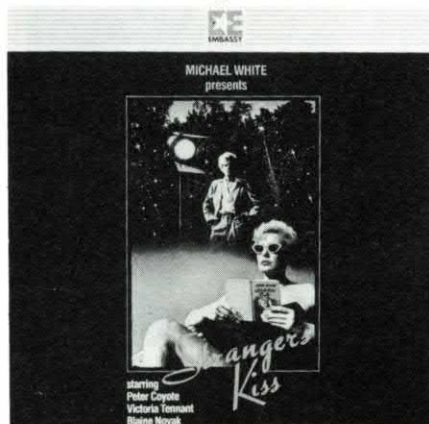
CLV COLOUR MONO

1983 102 mins

Starring: Bernard Giraudeau, Christine Boisson, Jean-Pierre Kalfon, Michel Auclair
Director: Gilles Behat

If you can bear it, a third dubbed film. This time a French effort, and loathe as I am to admit it, 'Street Of The Damned' projects style even through the handicap of dubbing. Admittedly, the dubbing is of a higher standard than either of the two previous efforts - the balance between the dubbed voices and the backing track is more compatible, and the drawly Americanised voice conferred upon the hero, Chet, seems ideally chosen.

STRANGERS KISS



EMBASSY ELV 1367

£13.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1984 90 mins

Starring: Peter Coyote, Victoria Tennant, Blaine Novak, Dan Shor, Richard Romanus, Linda Kerridge, Carlos Palomino
Directed by: Matthew Chapman

If you want to see how a low-budget B-movie was made in Hollywood in 1955 you can watch this low-budget Hollywood job made in the eighties. An opportunistic director/producer team are trying to sweet talk a small-time racketeer into funding their new movie and he goes along with it in order to give his fidgety girlfriend something to do. Without realising it he is trading one problem for another. Her starring role involves a love affair with the leading man - a relationship that looks set to continue after the director's final "Cut!" at the end of the day's shooting.

'Strangers Kiss' is a rather low-key affair. Most of the action takes place on the film set and the cast are more than able to command the viewer's attention - most of the time. With only one main theme to sustain the film through its entire 90 minutes there might have been good reason to develop a few subplots in order to vary the pace. It is what many people might consider an 'arty' film. When footage of the film being made is shown we see it in black & white, and though the production is authentic in spirit, these b&w clips are wrongly composed and lit (although this latter aspect may be affected by the film being duped on colour stock). Stevie Blake, the leading man in the fifties film,

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doesn't really look enough of a pretty boy to be right for those times though rackets man Frank Silva more than makes up for this shortcoming. (Richard Romanus who plays the part really does look like he showed up for work thirty years late!) With an evocative score composed and played by Gato Barbieri, 'Strangers Kiss' comes very close to achieving its aims and some will certainly find it an intriguing film.

One unfortunate aspect of the disc is the rather murky transfer utilised. It is sharp but the colour is poor and the overall contrast too high, leading to a disc that always reminds one you are watching video rather than film - in this instance a crucial factor. There is a lot of spitting on the soundtrack - it comes and goes as the reels are changed and spoils an otherwise clear track. On a first viewing this inadequacy of the audio did not prove too troublesome but did become annoying the second time round, and with the degraded picture quality does prevent an unreserved recommendation of this disc.

[C + / C +] [B]

LAST OF THE SUMMER WINE



BBC VIDEO BBCL 7028 £11.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

(1984) 87 mins

Featuring: Michael Bates, Bill Owen, Peter Sallis, with John Comer & Jane Freeman
Written by: Roy Clarke

The sort of disc to get lost in the rush, 'Last Of The Summer Wine' serves as an excellent memento of the programme's earlier days. It does in fact consist of three episodes from the beginning of the very first series and therefore features Michael Bates as Blamire. And the cafe scenes also serve as a memorial to John Comer as cafe proprietor Sid.

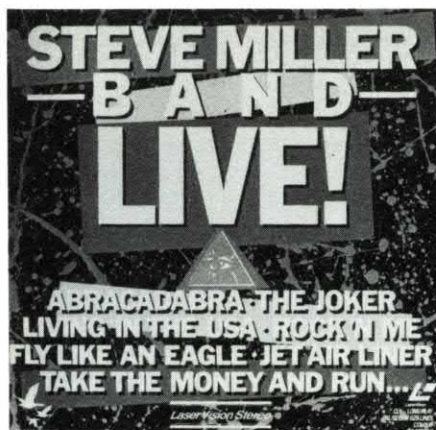
The prospect of Compo losing his door key, Compo going to church, and the trio making a trip to a stately home does not immediately presuppose gripping entertainment, but 'Last Of The Summer Wine' makes ideal repeat viewing. The initial impact is slight, but Clegg's abstruse observations do add that extra layer to an already well-crafted script, and the conversational scenes can be viewed many times without losing their appeal. Had video release been the prime motivation for making these programmes there would have been no need to take the delinquent trio out of the studio environment for the (rather poorly) filmed exterior sequences that were evidently necessary to increase the impact for the one-time broadcast viewer.

Obviously a repackaging of a cassette release, the three programme 90 minute running time wastefully exploits the potential of the laser disc. Someone should point out to the BBC that 60 or 120 minutes are the preferred time slots for the medium. Should we ever get a further compilation of the later episodes a full disc would make more sense.

The disc is mostly video originated and the quality is more dependable than some of the recent BBC releases but has still suffered from a degree of generation loss. Quite watchable though.

[B / B +] [B]

STEVE MILLER Live



PICTURE MUSIC PMI 90 2050 1 £9.99

CLV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

1983 55 mins

Side 1: Macho City/Gangster Of Love/Rock'n Me/Living In The USA/Fly Like An Eagle/Jungle Love/The Joker/Heart Like A Wheel/Mercury Blues/Take The Money & Run/Abracadabra/Jet Airliner/Buffalo's Serenade

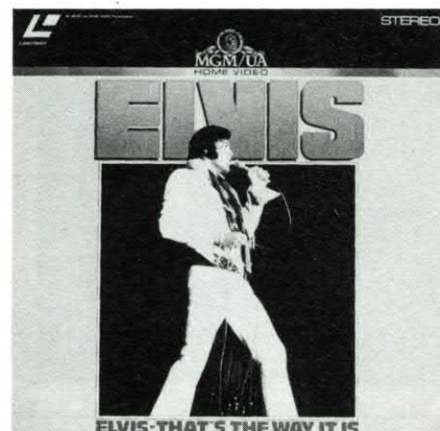
If you're going to make a concert video it might as well be in Pine Knob as anywhere else. As a recording that has also seen laser release as a CD, this is the sort of LV that might be relied upon to have had special attention paid to the sound - and indeed this is the case. Sometimes the audience sound a little remote (which is one of the pitfalls of striving for sonic perfection), but this would be a minor quibble.

Most of the featured songs are those which Miller has had hits with in the singles chart - but rarely outside the USA. If you are looking for something more sixties you'll be out of luck, although instrumentally there are compensations. 'Gangster Of Love' has been endowed with a refreshing and valid new arrangement; 'Living In The USA' sounds just like it used to be and is accompanied visually by a selection of photos from the Miller scrapbook. Another break with the concert environment occurs with the inclusion of the studio recording (and accompanying video) of 'Heart Like A Wheel'.

Picture quality is reasonable for an NTSC conversion and it is the lack of stage lighting that keeps it from looking more impressive. When the lighting is good, the picture is good. The disc itself suffered from a modest level of spots but was otherwise acceptable. A well thought out release.

[B - / A] [B -]

THAT'S THE WAY IT IS



MGM / UA UMLV 10373 £9.99

CLV COLOUR STEREO

1970 93 mins Rated U

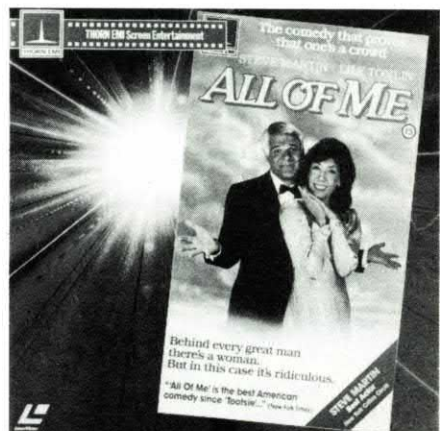
Songs featured: The Next Step Is Love/Polk Salad Annie/Stranger In The Crowd/You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'/All Shook Up/Bridge Over Troubled Water/Heartbreak Hotel/Blue Suede Shoes/I Just Can't Help Believing/Patch It Up/Suspicious Minds/Can't Help Falling In Love/Love Me Tender/You Don't Have To Say You Love Me

Before 'Elvis On Tour' came 'That's The Way It Is', Hollywood's idea of what an Elvis documentary should be like. Side one is the part of the disc worth having, containing some excellent rehearsal footage. Unfortunately, when it comes to showtime, Elvis fails to hit a groove and often appears to be struggling. There are moments, but they are only moments. Fans will obviously want this film as it marks Elvis' return to live performing, but it doesn't have the wider appeal of the later disc.

Print quality is variable - some scenes are very sharp and clear but the majority of the film looks a trifle too grainy for comfort. The sound, though listenable, is not up to the standard one would expect of a musical feature - the stereo image has a tendency to wander and the sound sometimes becomes muffled for no apparent reason. The pressing too looked a bit spotty on darker scenes.

[C + / C +] [B -]

ALL OF ME



Starring: Steve Martin, Lily Tomlin, Richard Libertini, Victoria Tennant
Directed by: Carl Reiner

THORN EMI	TLY 903086 1	£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	MONO
1984	88 mins	Rated 15

When it was released in the USA last year, many critics hailed this film as a true classic and Steve Martin won the Best Actor award from the New York Critics Circle. As a comedy, it is clearly related to such Hollywood classics of the '30s and '40s as 'Topper', 'Here Comes Mr Jordan' and 'Heaven Can Wait'. In other words, it mixes everyday life with the supernatural and spiritualism. And, like its predecessors, it is loaded with funny situations.

The plot, an extremely convoluted affair, goes like this: A dying, rich, eccentric (Lily Tomlin) hires a Hindu mystic to transport her soul to the body of a healthy and beautiful young woman. "I'm going to come back from the dead" says the dying Edwina to her lawyer Roger Cobb (Martin). "I can do it because I'm rich".

"This is not a parking ticket" Martin points out "This is the grim reaper".

For the first 25 minutes or so the tone of the comedy is beautifully handled - cynical, subtle, and satisfying. Then Edwina Outwater dies and the experiment goes wrong when, instead of entering the body of the young woman her soul occupies the right side of Roger Cobb's body - and he has control only of what's left. Martin's performance is terrific as he splits himself into two physically different personalities. But, in one or two scenes, the joke is overplayed and the subtlety of the first three reels is supplanted by an unnecessary crudeness - a sort of sniggering fifth-form humour. The toilet scene, for instance, would have been very funny if Martin had stuck to a one-line joke but what should have been a great 10 second scene lingers on for over two minutes of lewd physical gyrations and obscenities that detract from the carefully orchestrated tone of the piece - and so robs the film of the wider audiences that would have loved it.

However, once these heavy, ham-fisted scenes are out of the way, 'All Of Me' gets back to being funny again as it builds and builds its way to an unexpected and totally satisfying finale.

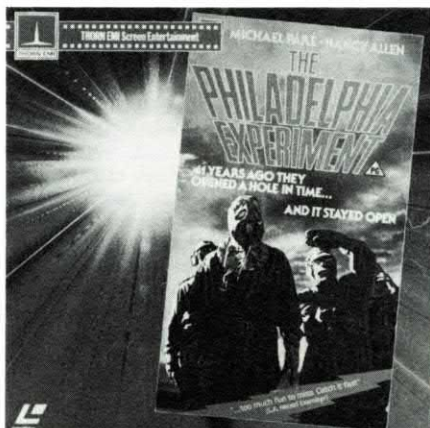
Steve Martin and Lily Tomlin are two of America's most capable and popular experts in the difficult art of comedy. They have yet to prove themselves to British audiences and this film should have done it for them were it not for its clumsier moments. Carl Reiner's direction is well-paced, and apart from Martin's extraordinary performance, there are fine contributions from the supporting cast - Selma Diamond as Martin's raspy-voiced dead-pan secretary, Dana Elcar as his randy, philandering boss and, most delightful of all, Richard Libertini as the unworldly Hindu guru.

My only complaint on a soundtrack that is adequate for the type of film involved (it is clear and undistorted if a little hissy) is that over the final titles/credits there is an excellent jazz vocal by former Basie singer, Joe Williams (with a fine big-band arrangement from the great Billy May), that has been chopped about three seconds before its natural conclusion. An annoyance to anyone who likes, and knows, their music.

As a film, 'All Of Me' rates 2½ stars out of four - though I would have wished to have given more. [KEN BARNES]

Disc quality: Print quality is none too special here. Neither the colour or definition are that good and the image has a hint of graininess. Watchable. [C+/B-] [B]

THE PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT



THORN EMI	TLY 902782 1	£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	MONO
1984	96 mins	Rated PG

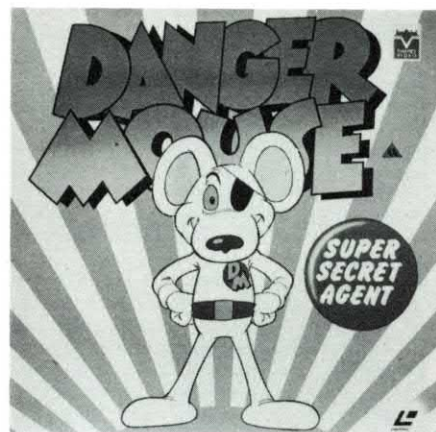
Starring: Michael Pare, Nancy Allen, Eric Christmas, Bobby Di Cicco
Directed by: Stewart Raffill

Travelling through time has to be good fun, and any half-decent movie that cares to exploit this aspect of wish fulfilment is bound to succeed to a certain degree. The two periods in time, 1943 and the present day, are linked in the story by a research scientist common to two experiments to make objects radar invisible. The first WW2 attempt caused two sailors on the target ship, the USS Eldridge, to be hurled into the ether from where they return - confused, and in a totally different location. It is now 1984 and 'The Philadelphia Experiment' mostly hangs upon the problem of trying to put everybody (and everything) back into their rightful place.

The main characters - Michael Pare ('Streets Of Fire'), Bobby Di Cicco (looking exactly like he did in '1941'; the film starts off with a dance-hall sequence and it has to be more than coincidence that he should be chosen to play the role), and Nancy Allen are all quite credible, but the screenplay does show a few weaknesses as far as the speed at which the two sailors become assimilated in their new environment. Throwing away that aspect of plot development does detract from an otherwise interesting film that remains an enjoyable view nonetheless.

With careful adjustment this disc exhibits pleasant image quality - the definition sometimes falters as a result of the wide-screen reduction, but tonally comes very close to capturing the right look of film as opposed to being just good video. The soundtrack was reasonably full-ranged for a non hi-fi track but did find itself struggling against a level of hiss now and then and this maybe should push it down to a C+ even though it should prove quite listenable. The disc was clean but did have a pressing fault affecting the sound on the latter part of side one. This should only be a sample defect, and on that basis... [B/C+] [B]

BEST OF DANGERMUSE



THAMES VIDEO	TLY 903358 1	£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	MONO
1980	101 mins	Rated Uc

Written by: Brian Trueman
Music by: Mike Harding
With the voices of: David Jason, Terry Scott, Edward Kelsey, Brian Trueman

A Cosgrove/Hall production

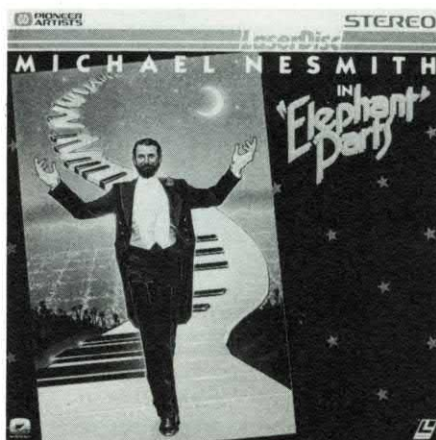
Side 1: Custard/Close Encounters Of The Absurd Kind/Trouble With Ghosts
Side 2: Who Stole The Bagpipes?/The Odd Ball Run-around/Public Enemy No. 1

It is often the most unlikely discs that prove hardest to review....Who is reading this? Do you realise the debt we owe Danger Mouse? Well, some of us didn't, but 'The Best Of Danger Mouse' goes some way to putting that discrepancy right. Here, run together with specially recorded intermission fills are six episodes of the gripping saga.

This is no collectors' edition though. While reasonably crisp, the picture quality is often very grainy and the appeal is mainly to those who are likely to be sufficiently absorbed by the contents so as not to notice such things. We wouldn't like to put an age group on that but seeing as the running time on the sleeve is listed at 120 minutes it might be prudent to keep this disc out of the hands of any kid who can count good.

[C+/B-] [Test Pressing]

ELEPHANT PARTS



Featuring: Michael Nesmith, Bill Martin, Lark Alcott, Chicago Steve Barkley
Songs: Magic/Infinite Rider On The Big Dogma/Rio/Light/Tonight (The Television Song)

PIONEER ARTISTS MP 109 - E £ 19.95

CAV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

1981 58 mins

After all this time it may be a bit insulting to be still identifying Michael Nesmith as an ex-Monkee (the tall one with the bobble-hat). Since those days he has produced some passable country-tinged records (several of which are featured here) and also moved into video - specifically with the PACIFIC ARTS people, the producers of this music/comedy compilation.

If seeing a gay marine doing a recruiting commercial, a teenaged daughter considerably endorsing Elvis drugs for jaded parents ("Blue Suede Ludes" & "All Shook Uppers" would you believe!), a car company selling last year's model as this year's by turning the seats around, and nuking troublesome neighbours appeals to your sense of humour, then there may be something here for you. Certain finer points of American culture prevent us appreciating some of the jokes (or maybe some of the humour just doesn't work), but if you are the right age (don't ask!) much of this still makes sense. The 1981 topicality of some of the sketches inevitably devalues their appreciation now but the passage of time may bring these back as enjoyable period pieces. Who knows? As of 1985 it is the music that bears the most repetition.

It would come as no great surprise to find out that the video original of 'Elephant Parts' possessed only modest image quality but, even still, there is not much here worth looking at. You can be sure that the picture declined that bit further during standards conversion. The sound is acceptable on the spoken parts and outstanding on the music. The volume balance between the two is not particularly good - either the music is too loud, or the speech too quiet. A remote volume control would be an advantage here. Overall, a disc with limited appeal.

* Note: Although in CAV this disc will not produce a perfect still frame. Parts of the picture tend to jitter.

[D / B +] [B]

PINK FLOYD Live At Pompeii



SPECTRUM 790 182 1 £ 9.99

CAV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

1972 60 mins

Side 1: Echoes Pt. 1/Careful With That Axe Eugene/A Saucerful Of Secrets/One Of These Days I'm Going To Cut You Into Little Pieces

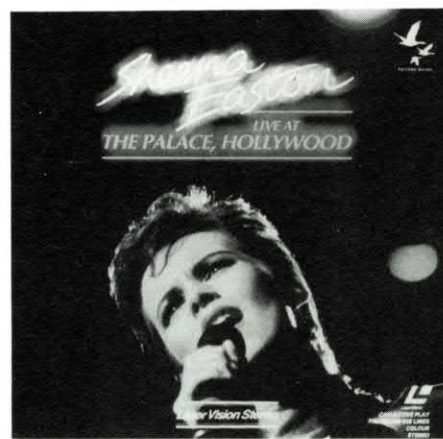
Side 2: Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun/Mademoiselle Nobs/Echoes Pt. 2

The passage of time has inclined to give 'Live At Pompeii' the appearance of a rather ungainly concept video. Using the historic backdrop of the amphitheatre, eerily devoid of any audience, very little of the natural acoustic of the location is allowed to impinge on this dry and near studio-perfect recording. Should you close your eyes for a moment the whole trip might appear a lot of unnecessary effort, but the high standard of origination (35mm film) has at least left something worthwhile for fans to mull over.

Apart from a light leak on the left hand side of the frame that does become distracting in the darker scenes, the quality of the print looks good. This is one of the few CAV discs reviewed that manages to maintain the sharpness of the original - although it is still not up to the best CLV examples.

[B - / A] [B]

SHEENA EASTON Live At Hollywood Palace



PICTURE MUSIC PMI 90 1273 1 £ 9.99

CAV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

1982 60 mins

Side 1: Prisoner/Help Is On Its Way/I Wouldn't Beg For Water/Are You Man Enough/Fooled Around And Fell In Love/When He Shines/ Modern Girl

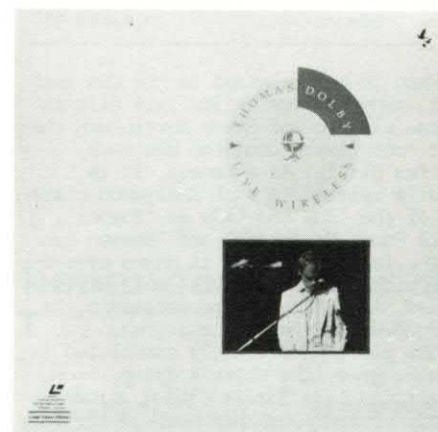
Side 2: Madness Money & Music/In The Winter/Weekend In Paris/Morning Train/You Could Have Been With Me/Raised On Robbery/Wind Beneath My Wings/For Your Eyes Only

The earlier songs in this Hollywood recorded show strike one as extremely pedestrian and laboured. Visually Sheena is obviously doing everything just right, but singer and backing group (very professional, very uncommitted) fail to establish a presence, and it is not until 'Fooled Around And Fell In Love' that things start to gel. If you can cope with some of Sheena's rather awkward between song repartee you might be able to manage straight through playing, but being both Active and Chaptered, the ability to select is greatly facilitated. Sheena thrives under still-frame inspection and is rarely revealed at a disadvantage.

With a good sound and passable (for an NTSC conversion) picture, the pressing, a German one, is the main weakness due its tendency to show flecks in the predominantly dark disc and, like many German-pressed discs, there is a modicum of low-level spitting on the sound.

[B - / A -] [C]

THOMAS DOLBY Live Wireless



PICTURE MUSIC PMI 90 1957 1 £ 9.99

CAV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

1983 58 mins

Side 1: Europa & The Pirate Twins/Windpower/One Of Our Submarines/Radio Silence/New Toy/Urban Tribal/Flying North

Side 2: Jungeline/Puppet Theatre/Samson & Delilah/She Blinded Me With Science/Airwaves

Touted as being somewhat innovative, 'Live Wireless' attempts to combine some moody footage shot in a cinema projection booth with a live concert recording. So far so good, but Thomas Dolby has the annoying habit of cutting into the actual songs (on the sound - it wouldn't matter if it was the picture) and this can be off-putting, to say the least. Dolby's electro-pop makes for quite listenable enjoyment, but any attempt to create an atmosphere is hindered by this clumsy presentation. Combined with an extremely grainy master (that may be due to budget level origination) that rarely makes for a pleasing picture there may be limited appeal here for the casual purchaser. Although uncredited on the sleeve, Lene Loviche is the featured singer on 'New Toy'.

[C - / A] [B -]

TINA TURNER Queen Of Rock 'n Roll



VCL
In Germany - 405.3113 Price DM. 59
In Holland - VLP 1031M Price ffs - 69

CAV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

1982 60 mins

Side 1: The Bitch Is Back/Crazy Cajun Cakewalk Band/Hot Legs/Nutbush City Limits/River Deep Mountain High/The Woman I'm Supposed To Be/I've Been Loving You Too Long/I Can't Turn You Loose/Don't Leave Me This Way/Giving Up, Giving In
Side 2: Fever/Disco Fever(Inferno)/Music Keeps Me Dancing/Help Me Make It Thru! The Night/Everyone's A Winner/Root Toot Undisputable Rock'n Roller/You Don't Bring Me Flowers/Sometimes When We Touch/MEDLEY-I Think It's Gonna Work Out Fine/Honky Tonk Woman/Acid Queen/I Want To Take You Higher/Le Freak/Proud Mary/Music Keeps Me Dancing

Recorded before her present resurgence in popularity, the choice of tunes is an interesting mixture of material - obvious uptempo numbers, a few cover versions of then current hits, and a couple of slower songs hinting at an emerging change of style. Tina works very hard - perhaps too hard - and at times you feel pressured to enjoy the show rather than be allowed to be won over by it's natural energy. The backing band are professional if uninspired, and Tina is helped out in the choreography department by two dancing couples.

Picture quality is difficult to assess due to the use of some star filters that considerably diffuse the image but the impression is that this was how it was meant to look. There are some intermittent red stripes that no doubt also originate from problems with the videorecording itself. We have seen these before on music videos. The pressing looks adequate but may not satisfy hi-fi fans as there is some audible spitting on the quieter moments of an otherwise good quality audio track.

[B / B+] [C]

** This disc is currently available from LASER SOUND & VISION, Eastbourne

RUSH Exit - Stage Left



SPECTRUM 791 558 1 £9.99

CAV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

1981 60 mins

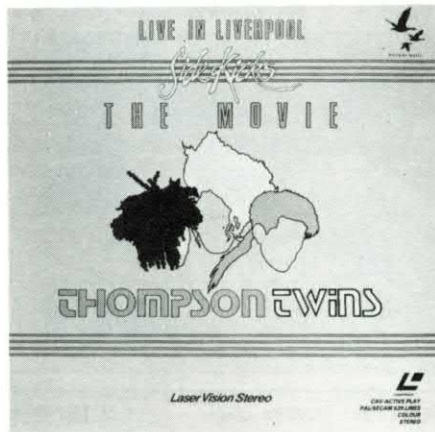
Side 1: Limelight/Tom Sawyer/The Trees/Xanadu
Side 2: Red Barchetta/Freewill/Closer To The Heart/Y.Y.Z./Medley - By Tor & The Snow Dog/In The End/In The Mood/2122

Whether by virtue of it being in CAV or the fact the original was of poor quality, the picture on 'Exit...Stage Left' leaves much to be desired and the disc is to be avoided by all except the staunchest supporters of the band. Mixed in with the live concert footage are quotes from the group that do detract from the flow - but then even they maybe figured some spoken encouragement was

necessary to keep the viewer's concentration somewhere other than on the picture. The sound is studio perfect and incompatible with what you do see. The fact that it is about half a second out of sync doesn't help. It is hard to be encouraging about this disc. It has obviously had attention lavished upon it but the outcome could not be considered a success.

[D+ / A] [B-]

THE THOMPSON TWINS Sidekicks-The Movie



PICTURE MUSIC PMI 90 1955 1 * £9.99

CAV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

1983 60 mins

Side 1: Kamikaze/Love Lies Bleeding/Judy Do/Tears/Watching/If You Were Here/All Fall Out
Side 2: Lucky Day/Lies/Detectives/In The Name Of Love/Beach Culture/Love On Your Side

From the very beginning of 'Sidekicks' you are aware of a bustling and enthusiastic audience crowding the stage - but you can rarely hear them. You do hear a 'studio clean' recording of the show, with appropriate sound effects emanating from the left and right hand speakers, but the home viewer never really gets

the feeling of 'being there'. Although you can never be sure about these things, the video production looks pretty low-budget too - thereby compounding the detachment. The picture is rarely impressive - but it does have its moments.

It is also hard to tell how much the disc process has affected the final result. The picture looks a bit grainy and is often not very sharp. The reviewed copy of this disc did illustrate one of the biggest bug-bears of the laser fan - spots. Side one was exceptionally clean for a disc from this period, but side two had just a few too many of the 'little white' variety to go unnoticed. In most respects, this must be considered a disc mainly for fans.

[C+ / A-] [C+]

ELTON JOHN In Central Park



VCL 405 3110 £17.99

CAV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

1980 60 mins

Side 1: Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting/Little Jeannie/Berry & The Jets/Imagine

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Side 2: Someone Saved My Life Tonight/Goodbye Yellow Brick Road/Sorry Seems To Be The Hardest Word/Your Song/Bite Your Lip-Get Up And Dance

Even confronted with the sea of faces expectantly looking towards the raised Central Park stage, Elton John does not appear in the least fazed by the prospect of performing before them. In 'Benny & The Jets' he even rambles off on some rather chancy piano improvisations, always on the verge of running himself into a dead-end, but seemingly safe in the knowledge he will make it through. In 'Imagine' he takes time off to enjoy an apparently unintended joke conceived on the spur of the moment. None of this is at the expense of putting in a committed performance, and while the audience do not share the front-of-house advantage of the home viewer, it is evident that they too are sharing in the whole experience. When, at the end, Elton is waddling around the stage in a Donald Duck outfit you too might want to join in and dance.

It is fortunate that the camera is mostly in close-up as this is one of those fuzzy NTSC conversions and any time the picture is in long shot there is a tendency to produce a double image. Being in daylight probably makes it more bearable than usual. The sound is clear but the mix is questionable and not always tonally pleasing but is more than adequate to support the picture. In spite of these shortcomings this is a disc with nostalgic appeal.

[C - / B] [B -]

ELTON JOHN Nighttime Concert



VESTRON VL 11011 £14.99

CLV COLOUR STEREO

1984 53 mins Rated U

Side 1: Sorry Seems To Be The Hardest Word/Blue Eyes-I Guess That's Why They Call It The Blues/Your Song/Saturday Night's All Right For Fighting/Goodbye Yellow Brick Road/Too Low For Zero/Kiss The Bride/I'm Still Standing/Crocodile Rock/Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On-I Saw Her Standing There-Twist & Shout

Again in the open air (Wembley Stadium) is 'Nighttime Concert' - down to just 70,000 fans. Almost a club audience in comparison. Although the audience is just as enthusiastic the music lacks the sparkle of the earlier disc. Elton's voice sounds strained at times and is a little down in the mix. Many of the numbers come across a trifle rushed. So, for different reasons, this may not be a disc for the unconverted.

The standard of origination and post-

production looks high but the master used for the disc release has suffered from a degree of generation loss and exhibits a noticeable level of grain and has weak colour (and this latter comment accepts that the original recording may well not have been too colourful in itself). Only the definition has held up. The sound is good quality.

[B - / A] [Test Pressing]

HOODWINK



PRECISION LVSPV 0524 * £13.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1983 93 mins Rated 15

Starring: John Hargreaves, Judy Davis, Dennis Miller, Wendy Hughes
Director: Claude Whatham

In any Australian film you are almost certain to encounter a few familiar faces and 'Hoodwink' is no exception. Martin Stang (John Hargreaves) is a likeable villain who exasperates girlfriends and family alike with his inability to break his wayward habits. A failed one-man bank raid threatens to put him back in jail, but in a last ditch attempt to avoid incarceration, he feigns blindness and once again looks set to avoid his due punishment. An unlikely romantic involvement adds a further twist to the plot and, even till the very end, the viewer is left unsure of whether Martin has finally changed his ways.

It's worth buying the disc to find out. Even though the sound is only a scratchy optical track and you might find a few spots on the pressing, a few of the scenes in 'Hoodwink' represent some of the best picture quality we've come across. If your player and TV are up to it, the prison yard sequences and some of the related interior scenes are really cracking. It looks as though the disc was taken from a cinema grade print and hence the contrast gets a bit out of hand at times, but when the contrast is under control the picture is excellent.

[A - / C] [C +]

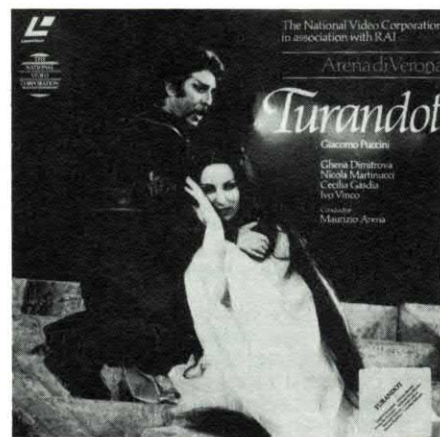
TURANDOT

ARTS INTERNATIONAL 05 AI 034 £23.99

CLV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

1983 120 mins [2 discs / 3]

Featuring: Ghena Dimitrova, Nicola Martinucci, Ivo Vinco, Cecilia Gasdia
Conductor: Maurizio Arena



A live recording from the Arena di Verona, Italy, August 1983.

The recent release of 'Tosca' and 'Turandot' gives us LV availability of all the popular Puccini operas - well done ARTS INTERNATIONAL! There now only remain for release three lesser-known works to complete the full series of the Master's operas - perhaps one day.

The Arena di Verona productions are designed to fully exploit the vast open air Roman auditorium and 'Turandot' is an ideal choice with its oriental costumes, spectacle, and large chorus scenes.

Left incomplete on Puccini's death in 1924, the third act duet and finale were later completed by Franco Alfano. The work was first performed as Puccini left it on 25th April, 1926 - and Alfano's completion was heard for the first time at the second performance.

The plot concerns Turandot, an icy Chinese princess who has sworn never to marry unless her suitor is a prince of the blood royal and can successfully answer three enigmas. Should any prince fail in his quest he must forfeit his life; when the opera opens at least 26 suitors have already perished, and another awaits execution by the sword. The Chorus is in a bloodthirsty mood demanding the head of the recently failed suitor. Then enters Tartar Prince Calaf incognito who instantly falls in love with Turandot in true operatic fashion. He accepts the challenge, answers all three enigmas correctly, and finally wins the hand of the Princess - but not before a slight twist in the plot.

The style of singing at Verona must surely sometimes be more 'can belto' than bel canto due to the vocal demands of filling the vast auditorium. Fortunately, the principle soloists in 'Turandot' give excellent performances which do stand repetition. Ghena Dimitrova (Turandot) is outstanding amongst the cast, possessing a gloriously dramatic soprano voice more than equal to the demands of this taxing role. Nicola Martinucci (Calaf) has a fine forward Italianate tenor voice, although at times he's defeated by the vocal climaxes.

When viewing these Verona productions in the intimate surroundings of your lounge certain failings in the production, unseen from a seat in the vast arena presumably, come to light - the badly made-up bald wigs that resemble converted bathing hats, the executioner's sword being sharpened six inches away from the grindstone, the soprano with a gap in her top dentures, and the generally broad histrionic gestures and lack of facial expression from several members of the cast.

The picture quality is excellent and

only a slight hint of grain would draw any comment. I found the quality of the sound recording to be good and individual voices were well defined - better than in some opera house productions. However, that same sound imbalance witnessed on 'Cosi Fan Tutte' was in evidence and there is obviously something not quite right here. The balance control on the amplifier needs to be switched hard right in order to level the sound output from the two channels. [Editor's note: All four operas in this batch exhibit this same sound fault ('Tosca' & 'Arabella' being the others). Where the blame lies is not known at this time, but if readers do find any of these titles unsatisfactory it might save them unnecessary inconvenience to avoid the others.] The disc pressing was quite clean.

This may not be the definitive video production of 'Turandot' but is nevertheless one which I'm happy to add to my collection. [KEITH ARNOLD]

SLEEPING BEAUTY



ARTS INT 04 AI 006 £23.99
CLV - Ch COLOUR STEREO
1983 165 mins (2 discs - 4)

Featuring: Irina Kolpakova, Sergei Bereznoi
Conductor: Victor Fedotov

The tale of the Sleeping Beauty ballet is based on the fairy tale 'La Belle Au Bois Dormant' by the French writer Charles Perrault (1628-1703). Perrault also wrote 'Red Riding Hood', 'Cinderella', 'Bluebeard', 'Tom Thumb' and 'Puss In Boots', as well as other stories - and these characters appear in the final act.

The ballet comprises a prologue and three acts, ending with the wedding of Aurora and Desire. This is in fact only about half of Perrault's original story which became pretty grisly beyond that point.

When I.A. Vsevolozhsky, the director of the Imperial Theatres, wanted to produce a ballet in homage to the idea of an absolute monarchy he brought Tchaikovsky and Petipa together and encouraged them to work on his production, which he had derived from Perrault's fairy tale. Tchaikovsky was reluctant as his first ballet 'Swan Lake', produced thirteen years earlier in 1877, had not been a success. However, to Petipa's exact choreography he composed the music (Opus 66) dance by dance and scene by scene. Although the ballet was not an initial success, it soon gathered a devoted following, and the Kirov Ballet's presentation is still the ideal production. There is also a version by the Moscow Bolshoi

Ballet, produced in 1973 by Yuri Grigorovich.

The original 1890 casting of the ballet was influenced by the presence of a number of Italian star dancers who were guests of the Imperial Ballet at the time. Carlotta Brienza danced the part of Aurora, and Enrico Cecchetti danced both Carabosse and the Bluebird. However, in this Kirov production, each dancer plays only one part. This is a luxury that only large state subsidised companies can afford, for in this ballet there are opportunities for dancers to play more than one minor part.

The costumes for this production are quite lavish and are based on French 17th century court dress. The sets are large and static and, whilst effective when viewed from the stalls, the plain wooden floor boards of the stage look rather incongruous when the set is seen from the circle or grand tier level; the use of the trapdoors in some of the scenes means that a floor cover cannot be used. The lighting is rather flat and static so that dancers who come forward and move far stage left or right are liable to be left in the gloom. This lighting problem seems to be a Kirov trademark - see it also in their 'Giselle' production. Travelling spotlights do not appear to be used, unlike the ballet 'Spartacus' by the Moscow Bolshoi where the leading characters are always well lit, even in very dark scenes, by tracking spotlights.

Irina Kolpakova, playing the part of Princess Aurora, is an extremely good experienced dancer who performs with great precision but with little change of facial expression and thereby does not project much warmth into the part. Irina's popularity with the audience is tremendous - so much so that at certain stages her bows and encores completely stop the action of the plot; not always a benefit! Sergei Bereznoi (as Prince Desire) is adequate but appears less experienced than Irina. His solo leaps and landings lack a certain poise and sureness, and he sometimes appears a trifle hesitant. He looks more at home in the pas de deux.

Vladimir Lopukhov, as Carabosse the wicked fairy, performs in an admirable manner. He manages to create just the right atmosphere of scrawny menace surrounded by the black-faced ghouls and bat-things. The Lilac Fairy is a major part in the ballet and is well danced by Lubov Kunakova. She dances with strength and elegance but could express more warmth. The dancing of the supporting characters is of a high standard throughout. The Bluebird, Andrei Garbuz, is especially worthy of mention for his sheer exuberance and technical skill in the brises voles, which gives the illusion of flight. He is well-matched in the pas de deux with Princess Florina, Yelena Yewtyeyeva.

Each segment of the ballet is on a separate side of the disc though there may be some cuts in the 56 minute Act 3 as the dance of Cinderella and the Prince is missing, and the Diamond Fairy first enters to rapturous applause - as if she had just danced a brilliant piece and was returning to continue - or perhaps she is just very popular with the audience!

The orchestra plays well under Fedotov. Tchaikovsky's gift of writing memorable and opulent melody is given full reign in 'Sleeping Beauty'. The lush orchestrations are well suited to the plot, but it is a pity the musicians are not given greater acknowledgment. The programme notes on the music are meagre and even the name of the leader of the orchestra is not mentioned. This is a shame, for the leader plays the interlude

in Act 2 virtually solo.

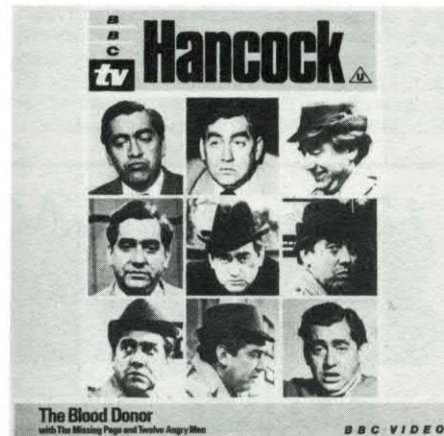
From a production point of view there are a few oddities. In an interior shot of the theatre one can see two TV cameras set up in the royal box. One of these cameras gives an out-of-focus picture down the left of the frame on occasions. There are a few clumsy changes of camera shot from close-up to long shot, but generally things are satisfactory. Differences in colour balance and saturation between cameras can sometimes be noticed - the low lighting level may be a contributory factor here.

Considering the size of the cast involved and the sheer length of the ballet this is an admirable version of the ballet by the Kirov.

The sound recording is quite satisfactory and does not have the artificial reverberation of the 'Giselle' production. Apart from a little video lag the picture quality is generally pleasing except on side 3 (Act 2) where the image becomes very grainy.

Although recommended as a production it should be pointed out that two copies of the disc were auditioned and both had an excessive amount of flecking - to the extent that potential purchasers would be advised to be most thorough in checking the copy they get. Discs from this period should not be as spotty as this! [B - / B +] [D] [TONY WELLS]

TONY HANCOCK The Blood Donor



BBC VIDEO BBCL 7004 £19.99
CLV B & W MONO
1959/61 86 mins

Side 1: The Blood Donor (23/6/61)
The Missing Page (11/3/60)
Side 2: Twelve Angry Men (16/10/59)

"Three programmes - that's very nearly a disc full!" Yes, once again, a straight transfer of a tape release ignoring the different presentation demands of the disc. Still never mind, fans will appreciate being able to get hold of these at last. The sleeve notes make no attempt to alert the casual buyer who may not be old enough to remember Tony Hancock and wonders what all the fuss was about.

'The Blood Donor' is the obvious starter title, but being one of the occasions where Hancock hadn't learnt the script and needed to resort to using cue cards, might disappoint non-believers. Much of the reputation 'The Blood Donor' has accumulated is due to the audio record - a specially commissioned re-recording of the episode and not just the soundtrack of what you see here.

This TV episode hasn't been since a special broadcast tied in with the BBC's 40th Anniversary celebrations in 1976. Most of the TV Hancocks have been rarely seen since their initial transmission - 1969 was the last time they ran a repeat series.

Again, 'The Missing Page' was a show re-done for LP, and hence fairly well known. Sid James makes an appearance here and comes across as a perfect foil for Hancock's pretentious aspirations. In 'Twelve Angry Men', a spoof of the Henry Fonda film 'The Twelve Angry Men', Sid James is again present and this is possibly the best programme of the trio. The immediacy of the 'live' performance, while making apparent the limitations of such endeavours, shows Hancock and James in full flow, aided by an excellent supporting cast. You will recognise a few familiar faces - the magnificently mustachioed Mario Fabrizi being a personal favourite.

The BBC has thrown away many pieces of TV history (rumour has it that quite a few Hancocks were among them), but it is significant that these products of the Light Entertainment Department will give historians far greater insight into the '50s & '60s than all manner of carefully preserved 'serious' output. That these shows are still funny too is about as high a recommendation as one could offer.

Without wishing to go into the intricacies of the 405 line TV system that was used to make these programmes, it has to be said that they constitute just about the worst picture quality you'll likely have come across on a disc so far. That is not meant as any form of criticism - it's just something you have to put up with on TV material of this vintage. 'The Blood Donor' appears to have

suffered more than the other two - half the scanning lines have 'gone missing' and the picture sometimes resembles a freshly ploughed field. The sound is surprisingly satisfactory and, overall, one would have no hesitation in approving the preparation of the master material.

Seeing there is a whole bunch of these programmes available for issue, readers with this one on their wants lists had best shove it to the top if they want to see more.

THE MESSIAH



ARTS INTERNATIONAL 04 AI 012 £23.99

CLV - Ch	COLOUR	STEREO
1982	125 mins	(2 discs - 3)

Featuring: The Academy of Ancient Music & The Choir of Westminster Abbey
Conductor: Christopher Hogwood

Soloists: Judith Nelson, Emma Kirby, Carolyn Watkinson, Paul Elliot, David Thomas

Following in the footsteps of Hogwood's audio recording of a couple of years ago, this is an authentic-style performance of Handel's popular oratorio, using relatively small forces. The Choir of Westminster Abbey is an all-male one and the Academy of Ancient Music play either original instruments or modern copies. To these ears at least, the smaller scale of this performance transfers rather better to the domestic environment than one of those blockbuster massed choir events that come complete with brass bands and anvils. The individual strands are easier to follow when given a more intimate performance, and because there is no danger of leaving large sections of either the choir or the orchestra behind in the rush, many of the individual numbers can be taken at rather brisker speeds than one may be accustomed to.

The soloists, all specialists, deliver their arias and recitatives clearly and expressively, but without any of the overcooked operatic histrionics that we have been subjected to in the past.

Both sound and picture quality are very good - even the pressing is clean and free from any noticeable spots and blemishes. I find myself turning to these discs rather than to the cassettes of Hogwood's earlier recording - even when I simply want to listen to, rather than watch, 'The Messiah'. (That said, the audio cassette version has the advantage of an informative illustrated essay in its accompanying booklet.) Chapter Search is incorporated, but with only 16 access points spread over the 50-odd numbers. [PAUL RONCHETTI]

[A - / A] [B +]

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IMPORTS

None of the following titles are presently available in the UK, although LASER SOUND & VISION (see advert) may be bringing in some of the music titles in addition to the ones they already have in stock. Sources for German & Dutch discs otherwise are printed in issues 4 & 5. One word of advice - we have found several older German pressed titles to be rather unreliably pressed and readers are advised to tread with caution.

CHARLES AZNAVOUR An Evening With



VCL
In Germany - 405.3111 Price DM.59
In Holland - VLP 1030M Price fls-69

CAV - Ch COLOUR STEREO

1982 60 mins

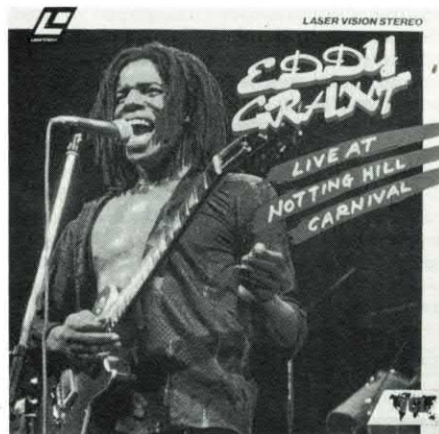
Side 1: And I Have Lived/We Had It All/Etre/Hungry For Your Loving/Between Us/Mon Ami Mon Judas/No I Could Never Forget/Take Me Along
Side 2: Mon Emouvant Amour/Ave Maria/What Makes A Man A Man/She/The Old Fashioned Way/Yesterday When I Was Young

Charles Aznavour has an intensity to his performances that can leave viewers squirming uncomfortably in their seats. There is a moment in this live concert recording from the Duke Of York's Theatre where he points determinedly straight at the camera, and you doubt whether the physical integrity of the cathode ray tube is sufficient to keep him out of your living-room.

In moments of lesser tension you are permitted to wallow in the excellent sound and picture of this well produced disc. Supported by the Wren Orchestra, Charles takes a little time to get going and tends to force the pace initially, but side two flows with a natural energy. A glance at the track listing reveals the inclusion of 'She' and 'Old Fashioned Way', but for as many readers who take exception to the lyrics of 'What Makes A Man A Man' there will be those who cherish its inclusion. (At the end of this song Aznavour turns and walks towards the body of the orchestra. The bearded trumpet player being directly approached looks decidedly nervous at this moment.)

Although conferred a slight soft-focus treatment the picture quality is good. The review copy of the disc was a bit spotty on one side but side two was fine.
[A - / A] [C +]

EDDY GRANT Live At The NottingHill Carnival



VCL
In Germany - 405.3112 Price DM.59
In Holland - VLP 1032M Price fls-69

CAV - Ch COLOUR STEREO MP

1980 30 mins

Side 1: Hello Africa/Neighbour Neighbour/My Turn To Love/Cockney Black/Walking On Sunshine/Living On The Front Line

Something of a novelty inasmuch as this is one of the few 'straight music' discs recorded in DOLBY Surround Stereo. Eddy Grant manages to combine casual professionalism with a convincing level of commitment during this performance at the 1980 Notting Hill Carnival (on an open stage in the Portobello Road, just under the flyover). The disc has been rather tightly edited and songs are sometimes faded out prematurely. This makes it that bit harder for the viewer to become involved, but it is possible, even in thirty minutes. Sometimes the camera wanders from the stage to record some of the Carnival street activity but most of the time it stays on Eddy. As the light fades towards the end of the day the camera crew are obviously having trouble continuing filming without lights but presumably a bit of push-processing saved the day. This is 35mm filming and the picture quality on the disc is quite good but the sound, again good, lacks any ambience whatsoever and does nothing to enhance the illusion of the open-air environment. With this one reservation this looks to be a thorough production and even the CAV format does not emit any of its usual tell-tale signs where definition and movement tend to become degraded.

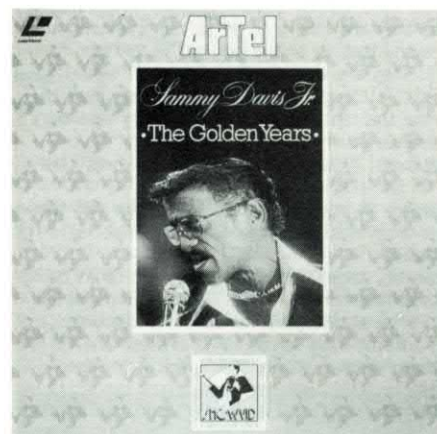
[B + / A -] [B]

SAMMY DAVIS JR. The Golden Years

ARTEL (0016.07113)
In Germany - 405.3135 Price DM.39.50
In Holland - VLP 1024M Price fls - 69

CLV COLOUR STEREO

1980 59 mins



Side 1: Sweet Beginnings/Ain't Misbehavin'/The Candyman/The Gambler/Just In Time/As Time Goes By/Stop The World medley - Just Once In A Lifetime, I Want To Be Rich, Gonna Build A Mountain, Life Is A Woman, Evie, What Kind Of Fool Am I

In 59 minutes Sammy Davis Jr. takes a nostalgic look at his 50 year career in showbusiness. At a little more than a minute a year this is obviously not going to be a studied autobiographical feature - most of the disc comprises a Las Vegas solo stage performance (supported by a full orchestra) at Caesar's Palace, sandwiched inbetween a specially recorded monologue in the empty auditorium.

Presumably edited with TV broadcast in mind, the selection of contents may not be ideally suited to disc release. Several of the songs have rather wordy intros and the inclusion of 14 minutes of impersonations in 'As Time Goes By', though enjoyable, does not really leave enough time left for straight-ahead singing and dancing. The 'Stop The World' medley, while maybe not the easiest-on-the-ear collection of tunes, does give singer and musicians a welcome opportunity to get involved. 59 minutes is probably just not long enough to do the job of such a retrospective properly, but videos of artistes of this era are too few and far between for one to be that choosy.

Production standards look quite adequate but some of the separation in the darker areas of the picture looks to have been lost in the conversion from NTSC. The picture is reasonably clear in close-ups but suffers a mite in long-shots as a result. The sound is OK, if a little hissy for a music title, and the pressing (a UK one) only suffered from a modest level of spots which did intrude at times.

[B - / B -] [C +]

some Adult Discs...

This collective review of what might be loosely called 'adult discs' represents yet another exploration of some of the lesser-known regions of the LV repertoire. Thanks go to Steve Keaton for undertaking this demanding work.

Needless to say, all these titles are (or Dutch or (were!?) German releases. These countries' attitudes to sexual matters appear con-

siderably less confused than in the UK.

'Geschichte Der O' and 'Tiroler Slippertjes' are not likely to present any problem to someone wishing to import them (as of November '85 anyway). The four MIKE HUNTER discs will, and HM Customs advise they are likely to be seized if found, and destroyed (that is unless you put up a fight for them). They are what they describe as "sexually explicit" although the actual words they used to describe the contents sounded decidedly unsavoury and sent us scurrying to our dictionary for enlightenment. If we'd known there were words like that in our dictionary well!

Readers in other countries must judge for themselves what local conditions are and what is/is not acceptable.

However, these reviews may only end up as being of academic interest. While VIDEOSCREEN is still functioning actively as far as LV is concerned, the situation with German LV is unclear and it is not known whether stocks still remain, or more peculiarly still, whether these discs can still be dispatched by mail. Since 1st October, new German regulations have come into operation which restrict distribution of certain categories video software - the review discs may fall into one of these.

Other discs that are definitely restricted are German language versions of titles such as 'Butch Cassidy & The Sundance Kid', 'Call Harry Crown', 'M.A.S.H.', 'The Nightporter', 'French Connection 2' as well as some local product.

Anyone still interested would be best advised to write to Germany first in order to confirm availability (details in issue 4).

TIROLER SLIPPERTJES

VIDEOSCREEN VLP 2036E (Holland) fls-79

Unfathomable German farce that promises Brian Rix, but delivers down-market Benny Hill. (The disc has also been released in Germany under its original title - 'Geh, zieh Dein Dirndl aus' on the UFA label. The Dutch language sleeve notes on the VIDEOSCREEN disc indicate that 'Tiroler Slippertjes' is one of the best and most typical of an entire genre of German films made in the early seventies. They state that the Tirolean situation inspired about another twenty such epics - this is the only one to make it on to disc!) Bums and boobs abound, but it's all fairly innocuous and genuine wit is rather thin on the ground. The picture is very sharp but the excessive contrast leaves the colours looking a little washed out. Ho hum. I suppose the Dutch subtitles are good for a laugh.



GESCHICHTE DER O

VPS VIDEO 5202 (Germany) DM.59

An infinitely curious affair adapted from Pauline Reage's infamous tale of sexual subjugation and humiliation. (The film's title in English is 'The Story Of O'). Although originally refused a certificate by the BBFC, who presumably considered its blatant S&M theme too strong for the average Brit, the movie

has made a fleeting appearance on tape and is more likely to have been seen than any other in this collection. To be honest, its appearance here is only token as it's by no stretch of the imagination a hard-core sex film. However, the tone is highly erotic and admirers of Just Jaeckin, director of acclaimed soft-core travelogue 'Emmanuelle' and comic-strip romp 'Gwendoline' (available on LV from EMBASSY) may well be interested in obtaining a copy.

Although only in dubbed German there's plenty to interest the eye. The medieval centre section in particular is quite spectacular, with some marvellous sets and costumes. Corinne Clery, later to be seen as a Bond girl in 'Moonraker', makes an attractive heroine, and film buffs will doubtless smirk at a cameo by Anthony Steel, onetime British movie idol, as a decrepit old businessman. Although largely soft-focus, disc quality is surprisingly acceptable. Like other VPS titles, this disc comes in a chunky box.

SENSATIONS

MIKE HUNTER VIDEO LB-1B (Germany) DM.59



Hard-core sex movie notable more for its age than its content. Hazy recollections of outrageous bell-bottomed trousers, frilly shirts and stack heels would seem to date this about '71, although I could be wrong. Haircuts are uniformly hilarious throughout and there's much chunky lingerie on show. Dated isn't the word. That said, the sexual content is quite strong, with nearly all acts depicted in extreme close-up. As a movie it's actually quite competent, with some bizarre set pieces and an attractive female cast. Curiously the men are universally gruesome. Although only running for approximately 70mins, a wealth of porno trailers on the second side ensure value for money. This is a feature of all the MIKE HUNTER discs. Quality is reasonable. The images are sharp and there's a dual soundtrack giving a choice of either English or German dialogue.

SWEET PARADISE

MIKE HUNTER VIDEO MH51-B (Germany) DM.59

Another golden oldie, this time dressed up in a quite misleading sleeve (it's a still taken from 'Las Vegas Maniacs'). The paradise of the title would appear to be a log cabin containing three mountain (mounting?) ladies and a horny wood-carver. There's much ribald bonking to be seen, although the overall effect is rather charmless [Seems like if you're in the market for something shot in the Alps 'The Sound Of Music' is still the one to go for - Ed].

The pop-art opening credits indicate that the disc is of vintage release and disc quality is average. Once again,

running time is short, but trailers make up the difference. These are a hoot and are worth the price of admission alone.

GIRLS USA

MIKE HUNTER VIDEO MH-59B (Germany) DM.59



Great sleeve - shame about the movie. Despite the title and a couple of familiar names (Samantha Fox & Venessa Del Rio) this is not an American production. Instead we have a very low-budget German offering that appears to have been thrown together one overcast Sunday afternoon. The girls are rough, the fellas repellent and the plot inconsequential [Needless to say, this was the Ed's favourite]. I think it revolved around a kidnap, although it's kinda hard to say. There's no English dialogue option. Sexual content is explicit although rather thin on the ground. Del Rio spends a rather inordinate amount of time wrestling with nipple clamps while Sam Fox (not that Sam Fox!) chokes on a variety of organs. All a bit naff. Disc quality is mediocre - sharp, but a little grainy, with thin sound.

LAS VEGAS MANIACS

MIKE HUNTER VIDEO MH41-B (Germany) DM.59



Marvellous! Although some of the HUNTER titles remain unseen due to an out-of-stock situation, this appears to be the highlight of the catalogue. At least partially shot on US location, and with a reasonable budget to boot, it certainly looks a good deal more lavish than the earlier HUNTER discs. What's more, the girls are gorgeous throughout, the men of passable appearance, and the action staged with a commendable vigour. Special note must be made of the disc quality which is exceptional - certainly better than the average mainstream disc. I'd say it was mastered from a good negative rather than a print, and there's the bonus of a dual German/English soundtrack. In terms of quality and content I really do not think you could ask for a lot more.

In Brief...

FRIEDRICH GULDA

MOZART FOR THE PEOPLE Volume 1

LOFT 2001 (405.1011)

Sonata Es-Dur KV 282 13'43"

Sonata D-Dur KV 311 18'22"

DM.59

MOZART FOR THE PEOPLE Volume 2

LOFT 2002 (405.1012)

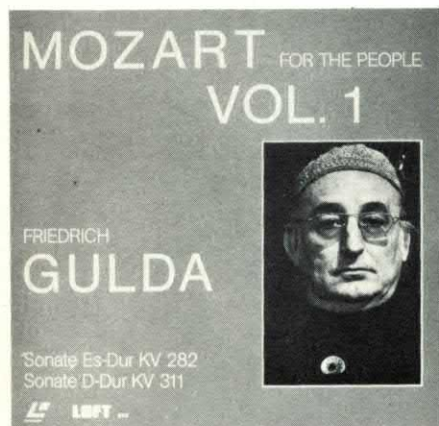
Sonata F-Dur KV 332 20'00"

Phantasie C-moll KV 475 10'01"

Sonata C-moll KV 457 8'18"

+uncredited encore c.18"

DM.59



Friedrich Gulda is a pianist who blends improvisations with the classical repertoire. 'Mozart For The People Vols 1 & 2' are two single-sided discs from a solo piano recital recorded at the Amerikahaus, Munich on 13th February, 1981. In presentation both discs are identical - a bare stage, a piano, Gulda, and a rarely seen audience. Only about three camera angles are employed and one imagines little post-production was therefore necessary. Whenever Gulda's face is in close-up the picture quality is stunning - every detail is perfectly reproduced and there is not the slightest hint of grain. If anyone wanted an example of the achievable quality of video-originated material on LV, these shots would have to be it. However, we wouldn't recommend these discs on the basis of the copies we have seen. Both pressings are quite spotty (and spots on a solid dark background just aren't on), and additionally, there's some constant low-level spitting on the audio which could not be considered acceptable on this sort of programme material. But, pressing problems aside, these LOFT people obviously had the right idea of how to handle an LV release. (The sleeve notes are printed in German, French, and English). The only criticism would be that the programme should be spread over two discs.

FRIEDRICH GULDA / URSULA ANDERS

OPUS ANDERS

LOFT 2004 (4015.1015)

DM.59

As might be imagined from the previous review, Gulda is not averse to breaking out of the usual rigidly conceived barriers within which we confine our musical tastes. What must be the most bizarre disc encountered since the magazine's inception is 'Opus Anders' - 'ein Psychodrama mit Musik' it says....

Gulda teams up with Ursula Anders, a singer come percussionist, for what starts out to be a fairly restrained vocal/piano recital. After some interviews Anders takes to beating on some bass drums and assorted percussion instruments, followed swiftly by a spoken interlude. Initially a softly spoken



piece, Anders builds to a dramatic climax and, without any forewarning, throws off all her clothing and rushes back to the drums - in this instance a modern rock'n roll kit, and proceeds to lay into the assorted hardware with considerable abandon. Gulda, who has been absent during all this, reappears. He too is naked - bar an obscure woodwind instrument with which he initiates a drum/vocal duet with Anders. The improvisation exhausted, he moves toward the piano and continues with further interchanges. Gulda continues to blow away at his instrument as well as trying to keep both hands working on the keyboard - clearly an impossible task. Logically, one anticipates he will bring other appendages into use in order to cope with the surfeit of demands - but he resists this option! The disc concludes with a clothed segment of more placid nature.

Other than being slightly diffused, disc quality compares with the solo discs.

KRIEG DER STERNE
CBS / FOX - 405.1602

DM.59

Comparing different versions of the same title can have you making all sorts of misguided assumptions, and the novelty of a new sensation can easily override one's critical faculties. But, playing the musical intro on this dubbed German language version of 'Star Wars' did leave the impression of a better musical sound on the German disc. There is someone banging away on a triangle who is far more clearly defined on the German disc, and the overall string sound is far less restricted and hence more pleasing. In order to swing the balance back in favour of the UK disc, 'Krieg Der Sterne' has that intermittent focus fault (witnessed only on the latter part of the UK version) all through! Otherwise picture quality is remarkably similar.



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THE MEANING OF LIFE, SMOKEY & THE BANDIT 3, STAR TREK 3, STAYIN ALIVE,
STREETS OF FIRE, TANK, TOP SECRET, TRADING PLACES, UNCOMMON VALOUR
BACHELOR PARTY, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, PLACES IN THE HEART,
ROMANCING THE STONE

THREE OF A KIND, TAKE HART, ERIC CLAPTON/WHISTLE TEST,
HANCOCK/BLOOD DONOR, MONTY PYTHON 1, MONTY PYTHON 2

BEACHBOYS/AN AMERICAN BAND, COMPANY OF WOLVES, VIDEO REWIND,
NEIL DIAMOND/LIVE AT THE GREEK, ELTON JOHN/NIGHTIME CONCERT

THE KILLING FIELDS

DER ROSENKVALIER, ROMEO & JULIET, AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE AT THE MET

New releases, now available

MORONS FROM OUTER SPACE, LET'S SPEND THE NIGHT TOGETHER, RAZORBACK,
WILD GEESE 2, ZIGGY STARDUST & THE SPIDERS FROM MARS (ALL THORN EMI)

New releases, due before Xmas

BEVERLY HILLS COP, FALLING IN LOVE (CIC titles)

Previously announced, due after Xmas

PARTNERS, THE EVIL THAT MEN DO, U2/BLOOD RED SKY

New releases, due after Xmas

CARMEN, NUTCRACKER (ARTS INT), RAMBO FIRST BLOOD 2 (THORN EMI)

Forthcoming, no scheduled delivery date

DOLLY PARTON IN LONDON, POLICE SYNCHRONICITY, HALL & OATES/LIVE

Previously announced, now cancelled

AN OFFICER & A GENTLEMAN, TERMS OF ENDEARMENT, PAUL YOUNG/VIDEO SINGLES,
WHAM/THE VIDEO, THE WORLD AT WAR, THE KEY

LASER
DISC REVIEW

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COMING A SUBSCRIBER, SEE
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TILL NEXT TIME

As usual, there are several features
being prepared for future editions - but
we can never be sure which will be ready
in time for Issue 7. One definite feature
is that of American correspondent, Dwight
R. Decker's look at some of the US Space
discs. We did have this planned for inclu-
sion this time, but it was squeezed out
due to lack of sp...oh! Anyway, the regul-
ar features will be there as usual - News,
Reviews etc, etc.