

LASER **DISC REVIEW**

DECEMBER 1986

ISSUE 9 £1.25

The magazine about LASERVISION

Towards A
Combination
LV/CD Player

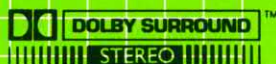
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REPORT**

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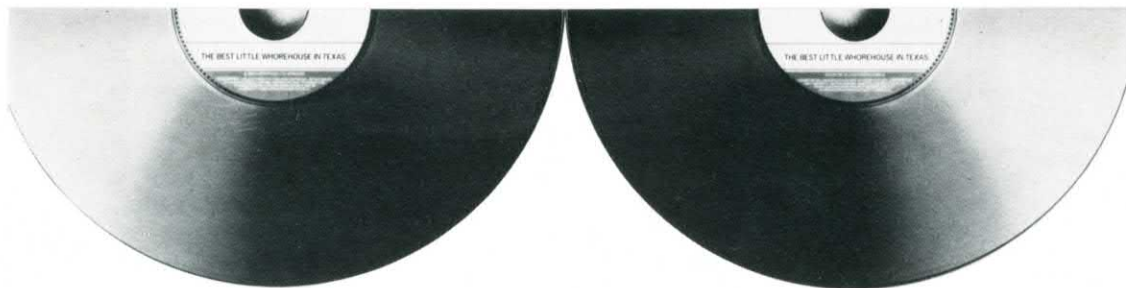
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Sitting in limbo....

Much of the information in LDR doesn't appear in other magazines because most of it is originally researched. We don't rely too heavily on press releases and the like - mainly because there aren't that many on the subject - but also because there isn't a lot actually happening in the world of PAL LV. It's two years since the first combination LV/CD player was launched on to the Japanese market and, even though elements of change are falling neatly into place here, the realisation of the concept seems as tantalisingly distant as ever.

While LIGHTNING & GOLD have managed to inject some life into the LV catalogue, as far as current chart film material is concerned at least, much of their effort looks like going unrewarded now that investment in an existing model of player is not a particularly good idea, considering imminent modification of the LV format is in the air. (See page 14.) Since that article was put together PIONEER have run out of players and (understandably) show no signs of bringing any more LD700s into the country. Unfortunately too they show no enthusiasm for jumping in with a PAL version of their latest combination player (or at least if they are, they're not telling). They gave us the impression of being happy to wait it out till they see what PHILIPS do with their new hardware. But nobody seems to know when that will be.

Meanwhile the WARNER titles are selling well. Within weeks of release *A View To A Kill* had sold out (it's being re-pressed) and *Blade Runner* (inspite of a bumped-up press-run originally) was not far behind. There are others likely to be temporarily out of stock by the time you read this. There's obviously a

market for the right title and yet runs for LV discs are still perilously low. We need a larger player base to improve the situation, especially in terms of seeing more specialist titles on disc. Unless more players are sold, those readers feeling presently neglected are going to remain so till.... when?

Things appear to be proceeding at an interesting pace at Blackburn. The first CD produced on the Combi-SPU (Special Production Unit) line has gone into the shops. (The version illustrated on page 15 is the genuine article but just done up in a commemorative package.) The new production line is designed to handle all types of discs - CDs and both sizes of LV disc (you'll just have to take our word for it there are two sizes of LV disc - they've been out for years in Japan & the USA). Maybe now some thought will be given to improving the audio side of analogue LV discs, especially if they are to continue being made for some time. Some trials with CX are long overdue. It would be nice to see some longer-playing CLV discs too, but that's not likely to happen till we have the next generation of players. (It keeps coming back to that doesn't it?)

This, and what appears in the rest of the magazine, is about as much as we know is going on in the world of laser. In the meantime we're just sitting here waiting for something to happen.....

WE MAKE COCK-UPS TOO DEPT.

The correct catalogue number for the Dutch disc of *Brief Encounter* is VLP 2182E, and not the one printed in LDR-8, p.16. Apologies.

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Letters

From: M. Buckfield, London

Would it be possible to print a Top Ten Disc Sales Chart in every issue? Also, could you produce a binder for the magazine as the copies are well worth keeping?

Because of the erratic supply situation with LV discs, a truly representative Top Ten sales chart would be near impossible to compile. The only chart that could be accurately made would possibly be one of the whole-salers' ship-outs to dealers, but this would not differentiate between discs that dealers bought and immediately sold on, or bought and still have lingering unsold in their racks. And it is this last aspect of sales that is surely the statistic we would want to know.

On the binder front the news is more positive. Binders for Laser Disc Review are obtainable for £4.25 (including UK postage) from:

Binders,
78 Whalley Road,
Wilpshire,
BLACKBURN, Lancs
BB1 9LF

These binders will accommodate up to 24 copies of LDR (depending on the thickness of future issues!). This company produces a range of magazine binders to suit various sizes/thicknesses of publication and these can be recommended to fellow accumulators for their practicality.

From: J. Colin R. Hunter, Scotland

With reference to Brian Stephens' letter in LDR-7 regarding possible cuts in *The Empire Strikes Back*, I have been unable to detect any difference between the PAL and NTSC versions. My NTSC CAV copy is on 5 sides (with a potential 2½ hour maximum playing time therefore) so there is no need to make any cuts to fit the whole film on. I think it is safe to assume the PAL version is indeed complete.

In contrast, the PAL version of *Star Trek II* has definitely been cut. The missing scenes are close-ups of the Cetl Alpha eel burrowing into and out of Chekov's ear and are quite strong. It really isn't surprising that they were cut to allow the film its PG certificate (although there is no excuse for not having them on the disc version). The recent showing on ITV included a few extra seconds of the worm leaving Chekov's ear not on the PAL disc, but the NTSC version is the only one that I've come across to include both scenes in their entirety. The only other differences between PAL & NTSC versions show the extra care taken in framing the 70mm print to fill the TV screen in the NTSC version. There are

many cases of this but two examples come to mind:

1) During the Kobayashi Maru simulation at the beginning, the bridge viewscreen shows a number of computer-generated tactical displays. The PAL version only shows about half the area whereas the NTSC version squeezes the print so that the whole viewscreen is visible.
2) Towards the end of the film, as the Enterprise is about to enter the Mutura Nebula, the Reliant fires a photon torpedo across its path. We see a short clip of people being rocked about aboard the Enterprise in the PAL version. It is not clear where these people are. In the NTSC version the same clip (this time with TV format frame showing the right hand side of the print) shows Dr. McCoy in his office with Dr. Marcus as the ship rocks.

Finally, what is the source of that terrible flaw in *Return Of The Jedi*? On side three, every shot of the Emperor shows a large, moving black mess on the right of his hood. It is most distracting and looks like the Emperor is being menaced by a huge slug. This major defect is present on all pressings that I've seen and I'm astounded that it was allowed through quality control. For the record, I have a SONY 72" multi-standard video projector which makes such flaws terribly obvious.

From: Brian Stephens, Tyne & Wear

I recently had a short holiday in Amsterdam and managed to pick some discs up but I was unable to arrange a postal deal for further discs. An assistant in a small video shop gave me the address of RAF VIDEO at Rijnstraat 166-168. The shop is quite easy to find as the No 25 tram that can be caught from the central railway station puts you off at the door. They stocked quite a large number of discs and also the VLP720 and LD1100. Of the 200 to 300 titles there must have been at least 100 children's cartoon discs. The manager was totally unwilling to take orders by post from Britain because of the trouble involved. He was astonished that we should even be bothered about the Dutch catalogue because ours is so good.

A tip for anyone going to Holland is to try and find some Dutch literature on LV because of the confusion with CD. When I bought a CD in a department store and asked the girl if they sold LV she looked very puzzled and said "Yes, you've just bought one". I explained the difference and she then told me LV was not sold in Holland. I was lucky enough to find two video mags with LV articles so I ended up taking one round with me. Ironically

the article it contained was about ordering British LV discs by post! LDR was given a mention but no details of how to obtain it were given.

When I went to the duty-free shop at the airport I was surprised to find they had a small number of LV discs - all British, and all at inflated prices. The assistant couldn't believe I wanted Dutch discs because of the subtitles. He claimed they sold discs to people all over the world and none of them would want subtitles.

From: Rolf Kindermann, West Germany

LDR is exactly the type of magazine we need for detailed information and for a step-by-step LaserVision success in the domestic market. Unfortunately, there is no LDR counterpart in Germany - look at the result!

Some comments on 'Lasers Across Europe' in LDR-3:

Die Eremitage (The Hermitage) is in CLV and the running time is 50' + 35'. It is bi-lingual Dutch/German.

Tintins Abenture (The Adventures Of Tintin) Vols I & II also Dutch/German. *Galaxina* is more interesting for your UK readers in that it is again bi-lingual, but English/German.

Clowns Magic Sensations is also English/German bi-lingual. The version available in Holland has Dutch sub-titles.

These language details are not stated in our German PHILIPS catalogue. Regrettably, *Koyaanisqatsi* was cancelled, and also *Grace Jones/One Man Show*, among other music titles, has not been released.

An explanation for those dubbed film versions in Germany may be that "ante LaserVisionem" foreign films were always prepared that way for cinema and television. Original versions with/without sub-titles were the exception. Thus we had little opportunity and little practice of enjoying original sound. Very recently there have been some dual-language transmissions in our stereo TV broadcasts.

From: John J. Fisher, Sussex

What a long wait it has been for the those WARNER titles. If you thought *Return Of The Jedi* was poor (which I found OK - or at least it didn't worry or annoy me) I found *A View To A Kill* very disappointing visually. Definitely soft in focus. Your description of *Jedi* being sourced from a pirate video would be apt for this WARNER title. Doesn't anybody vet the tapes? I have checked about the first twenty minutes of each side of *Purple Rain* and that seems OK.

CIC's *Witness* was everything I enjoy about LaserVision - on side one - but something has gone wrong with side

[Continued on page 6]

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two. It's a noisy and grainy picture with intermittent patterning. It is not my habit to reject discs, but this one has gone back on the slender chance it's a wrong 'un.

Depression sinks in about *West Side Story* & *Casablanca*. Interesting to note the high pre-orders for these titles. But it doesn't do any good in changing the policy as regards issuing more classic films! Maddeningly the video companies are selling many classic tapes. How will LV overcome this under-a-tenner sales pitch? What about the possibility of LaserVision owners coming together through the magazine and arranging their own pressings of classic titles. A sort of limited-edition idea, picking one or two titles at a time. I think it would demonstrate the potential of a different type of film from much of the present output. I think it's worth a try.

Well, the review didn't quite say 'Jedi' was sourced from a pirate video but it is a remarkable coincidence that all the major Hollywood blockbusters look several generations down from the original video transfer. But then such 'limited' masters do restrict the scope of subsequent counterfeiters who could otherwise conveniently use the LV disc as a more than adequate sub-master to run off endless low-bandwidth VHS copies.

Many of the delays in LV disc release would appear to come from unexpected faults cropping up on tapes sent for disc pressing. The suspicion is that they are not checked as well as they should be.

L & G are keen to issue 'West Side Story' and 'Casablanca' - it is just that to commission a fresh tape master would cost more than would be returned by subsequent disc sales. However, these titles are almost bound to be routinely re-mastered at some stage or other and we could still be in with a chance for a PAL disc release eventually.

From: Carleton Sarver, New York

I note that some of your readers are acquiring NTSC-capable monitors or monitor/receivers to take advantage of the larger available NTSC videodisc library. They may be interested in knowing more about something called the comb filter.

In the United States and Japan, current monitors and monitor-receivers are commonly equipped with a comb filter to separate chroma (colour) and luminance (b & w brightness) information. The happy result is horizontal resolution extending to the NTSC signal limit of 4.2MHz. And since the comb filter removes luminance information from the chrominance channel, false colour (in plaid clothing for example), is eliminated.

Because of the greater video bandwidth of PAL signals (5.5MHz in the UK) a notch filter is suitable for removing the 4.43MHz colour signal from the luminance signal. In actual practice, this limits horizontal resolution of PAL sets to about 4 MHz, comparable to that of the full NTSC signal. Don't lose any sleep over this though, because common picture tubes couldn't reproduce detail remotely close to 5.5MHz anyway! False colour still exists in PAL sets, but is finer and hence not as annoying as on NTSC sets with a notch filter (all older NTSC sets and many cheap ones

use 3.58MHz notch filters).

To the point. Multi-standard monitors and monitor/receivers of European manufacture are optimised for PAL and SECAM. Their NTSC 3.58 circuitry is rudimentary, intended mainly for the pickup of Armed Forces Network TV programmes. Some have a 3.58MHz notch filter, which effectively limits horizontal resolution to a blurry 3MHz. Others have no filter at all, offering the viewer full bandwidth - and a picture filled with colour dots!

So beware. A comb filter is an absolute must if NTSC laserdiscs are to be fully enjoyed. And I expect that in the UK only models of Japanese origin are likely to have a comb filter.

Theoretically, there should only be minor differences between the quality of a comb-filtered NTSC picture and that of a non-filtered PAL or SECAM one (there are significant technical barriers to the use of comb filters with PAL or SECAM systems).

But you have better TV sets in your hotels than we do.

TV manufacturers are remarkably reticent about the performance specifications of their products, and we have only seen one manufacturer in the UK (PIONEER) openly make claims for picture quality. Trying to ascertain the bandwidth figures for the LDR SONY Profeel monitor proved fairly unsatisfactory. SONY's UK technical department could only "seem to recall" a bandwidth of "around 4 MHz" in PAL mode and were even less forthcoming in its NTSC potential. This whole topic of TV performance and the specifications needing to be understood in order to make an informed purchase will be dealt with in a future issue.

From: Mark Dowd, Merseyside

Why is it that with a collectors' format like LV so many of the sleeves seem thrown together? The worst designs so far are those of the new batch from CBS/FOX, followed closely by those of THORN-EMI. When will these people realise that an LV sleeve requires more than just a photograph of the original cassette sleeve. Does it really cost so much to put a little effort into producing a decent piece of work?

The front cover should look as much as possible like the original cinema artwork. The front covers of the new WARNER titles should have the other companies crying with shame! The use of a film still for a front cover is not good enough either.

The back covers should contain as much information as space permits. They should include a couple of stills, a basic run-down of the plot and a cast list. MGM/UA have done this from the start. PRECISION's *Raise The Titanic* has an especially impressive cast listing.

Too many double album sleeves are simply wasted at present. *Star Trek - The Movie* has the most boring centre-piece I have ever seen - a black background with other titles from the CIC catalogue printed in white. Other companies fill their doubles with adverts. Sometimes a title will have a nice big picture (*Silkwood*, *Return Of The Jedi*). Again, nice to look at but still boring. *Alien* is the best double centre-piece I've seen yet.

It is only logical that a glossy, well-made cover will catch the eye and may tempt you to buy the disc - even

if the title is unfamiliar.

For the record, the general consensus of readers' opinion would tend to agree with the writer's comments on the THORN-EMI and new CBS/FOX sleeves. The covers of CIC, WARNER, and RANK-ORION titles are usually more satisfactory due to the fact that the disc artwork has already been prepared in the USA. Original artwork for PAL disc does have to be paid for afresh, and the cost spread over a relatively small quantity of sales. However, that is not necessarily a valid reason for their uninspired appearance.

As to sleeve notes - one aspect of the US artwork that does not manage an Atlantic crossing is the use of more detailed sleeve notes that tend to be more respectful of the purchaser's intelligence, and more informative too. Both the WARNER and older CBS/FOX sleeves appear in PAL with diminished sleeve information. (CIC discs - these being UNIVERSAL & PARAMOUNT films in the US - do not usually carry very detailed notes.)

Double sleeves are an indulgence only perpetrated in the PAL LV market - though this seems to be something of a pointless exercise if the additional space is not utilised satisfactorily. You don't expect to pay over the odds for more exotic packaging only to be confronted by adverts. Japanese and US double (or triple even) disc sets are routinely presented in a single sleeve. Logically it would make sense for PAL double discs to be similarly presented in a single sleeve (and be cheaper as a result) unless companies are going to be bothered to fully artwork the inside faces - such as with the ARTS INTERNATIONAL doubles.

From: Peter Moverley, Middlesex

With regard to CX noise reduction. I think that if PHILIPS had paid to have the equipment installed at Blackburn then they should use it. No one is forcing them to include CX on their new players just because the discs are being pressed in CX. The sound advantage that LaserVision had over VCRs has disappeared with the advent of Hi-Fi recorders. I find it difficult to detect hiss on Hi-Fi videotapes whereas it is usually prevalent to some degree on discs - the sooner we have CX the better. (I must admit, though, I find the 'breathing' of the DBX circuitry on Hi-Fi tapes annoying - you just can't win!)

From: David Styles, Sussex

Five years ago I was walking past the ODEON in Worthing - not wanting to go in due to a dislike of various people making a lot of noise, cigarette smoke etc - and I thought to myself of the idea of something like laser discs to watch films and concerts via a TV instead. You can imagine my delight at the technology that has produced this superb system. My laser machine is an LD1100 which I may part-exchange for a better model - hopefully one that will play digital discs as well. I have also been thinking of hooking up to a large TV screen - say between 26" and 40" - for the 'big-screen' effect. This to me would give a more dynamic feel.

Thank you for your time, and may technology keep spinning along.

SHURE Thing

Latest participants (July) in the surround sound sweepstakes are SHURE

BROTHERS of Evanston, Illinois, USA - well-known in audio circles for their vinyl disc (remember them?) cartridges. SHURE also have expertise in PA applications and now, following a demonstration overseen by Chief Development Engineer, Robert B. Schulein, SHURE have the HTS 5000 Surround Audio Processor to add to their product range. Compared to the run-of-the-mill product launch, the HTS 5000 (Home Theatre Sound) demo presented a remarkably informative overview of the DOLBY Surround format, highlighting the added tweaks the company has wrought on their unit, which is already a bit of a novelty in that it is the first in the UK market to incorporate D/A delay chips. Others that have them are on the way but the SHURE unit is the first to arrive.

In the DOLBY MP (Motion Picture) surround process the left & right channels are carried intact to reproduce the conventional left and right outputs. Information for the centre channel is added to the L & R signals in equal amounts, in phase, and for the surround/rear channel, in opposite phase. In this way four channels of information can be encoded on to two, and similarly decoded to reconstitute the left, centre, right and surround signals. A variable delay is necessary to ensure the rear channel information does not arrive at the listening position in advance of the main front output.

The new SHURE unit takes things a stage further by emulating the decoding characteristics of professional DOLBY MP units that incorporate additional steering logic circuitry - "Direction Enhancement" as SHURE describe it. With any matrix technique there is an inevitable signal leakage between channels that reduces the accuracy of image placement and the professional units employ special circuitry to detect strong directional information and cancel any spill into the opposing channel, adding a compensatory volume boost at the same time to keep the power output constant. In order to qualify for the DOLBY MP logo on the front of their processors manufacturers do not need this directional logic circuitry, but the SHURE unit exceeds that minimum specification.

What with the more expensive (at least for the present) digital chip delay that introduces less noise into the surround signal than the present-day analogue devices, the HTS 5000 is not cheap. It lists at £599 and the cost of additional amplification has to be taken into account - there is none built in. The unit connects to the tape in/output on your existing amp or acts as complete front end if you go the whole hog with a five/six speaker system - left, centre, right, sub-woofer

and surround speakers. The SHURE unit has a wired (no I/R unfortunately) remote that has separate front and surround volume sliders. The front panel of the processor incorporates a graphic LED display to facilitate balancing and checking the unit's output. SHURE obviously appreciate the price is likely to limit sales mainly to the professional /disco market but the HTS 5000 is there for domestic users who appreciate the additional features. It's a new departure for SHURE BROS and other additions to their product range can be expected - entry into the CD player market being one such anticipated break from the previous commitment to the world of vinyl.

As is par for the course these days the source material for the demo was heavily disc dependent. On the equipment table lay a PAL PIONEER LD700, an NTSC CLD900 and, from the company that brought you LaserVision, a PHILIPS Matchline VHS Hi-Fi VCR! We were only 'treated' to one excerpt sourced off tape which did look a little fuzzy when thrown up on to the 3 metre fuzzy screen by the SONY video projector. Disc highlights were the newly-released *Back To The Future* and an impressively crisp Japanese Barry Manilow concert disc recorded in DOLBY Surround that was reported on in LDR-6. Not so crisp - and not so DOLBY (it was being used to demonstrate the simulated surround available on the HTS 5000) were a few moments from the Madonna *Live Virgin Tour* Digital Sound disc.

Robert Schulein is himself a bit of a disc fan and in the throes of upgrading his LD660 to something a bit more modern and digital. By the time you read this he'll be back in the US, but information on the SHURE HTS 5000 would be forthcoming if you were to get into contact with the UK agents - HW INTERNATIONAL, 3-5 Eden Grove, London N7 8EQ. Tel: 01-607 2717.

SONY Soft

SONY has announced the formation of its own software division in the UK, SONY VIDEO SOFTWARE EUROPE, to exploit the video sell-through market throughout Europe. The announcement included a mention of acquisition of titles for the videodisc market but division manager, Bruce Wilkinson, informed us that exploitation in this area is very much dependent on a sufficiently large player base being established in order to make releases

The SHURE HTS 5000 Surround Audio Processor

on the format viable. Presently the division is still being set up, but is expected to begin operating towards the end of the year, concentrating initially on 8mm and the older VCR formats.

LV vs VHD

A recent report in the US music trade paper, Billboard, laid out the current state of play in the videodisc format war in Japan. LV players outsell VHD in a ratio of 7:3, which should mean 500,000 LV players being sold this year. The LV/CD combination player is something that the more primitive VHD format has nothing to counter with and the increased consumer awareness of CD, and as a result LV, seems likely to continue the trend. Blockbuster titles can manage 40-60,000 sales on disc compared with 10,000 for the same title on videotape. VHD manufacturers JVC are forecasting lower player and disc prices, though whether the LV camp will follow suit is not stated. At present VHD and LV prices, both software and hardware, are comparable.

SONY Professional LV

More on SONY's new PAL interactive LV disc system recently introduced through its Video Communications Division for training and point-of-sale applications. The three basic components are the LDP-1500P LV disc player, the HB-G900P MSX-2 computer, and the HBI-G900P 'Videotizer'.

Externally the LDP-1500P is similar to the present Japanese domestic (NTSC) player, the LDP-525, but this PAL version offers a 2.5 second maximum access time among other embellishments. Connections are Video(BNC), Audio L/R (phono), Euroconnector, and an RS232C port with switchable baud rates. The front of the machine carries cabled remote and headphone sockets and controls for Scan, Play(F & R), Pause, Audio, Auto-Repeat, and Eject functions. Horizontal picture resolution is quoted at 440 lines



(colour) and audio S/N at 67dB (with CX on). In search mode a black burst signal is generated in order to maintain stability of the on-screen computer graphics. A DB-1500P External Sync Lock Board is available as an extra. The player is 220/240V switchable and consumes 33W. Weight is 10.7Kg and dimensions are 424mm(W) x 116mm(H) x 405mm(D). Price £1195.

The HB-G900P Genloc Personal Computer is the first MSX-2 unit to make these shores, but is essentially a dedicated videodisc model. (While the MSX standard is one of compatibility, individual manufacturers still have the option to develop dedicated applications without compromising the system's uniformity.) The HB-G900P has 128K of video RAM offering up to 250 colours and 16K of built-in ROM dedicated to videodisc commands. The unit comes with a 3.5" floppy drive (720K formatted) and there is an extra compartment to add a second. The keyboard is separate from the main unit (cable connected) and has full 75 key function including a numerical keypad. Rear panel connections are many - Video(BNC), RGB(Euro), Audio In/Out (Phono), Tape(DIN), Cartridge Port (a second front-mounted one is available too), Printer(14-pin), RS232C, and a Video Interface(36-pin). Again the component is 220/240V switchable and consumes 33W. Dimensions of the main unit are 355mm(W) x 80mm(H) x 325mm(D) and weight is 6.5Kg. Price £999.

The computer's Video Interface socket connects to a similar one on the HBI-G900P Videotizer, a processing unit designed to digitise video images from any source for storage in the computer's memory to enable the construction of more complex computer graphics. Power requirements are 220/240V, consumption 25W and dimensions 354mm(W) x 45mm(H) x 330mm(D). Weight is 4.3Kg.

Laser Rot II

It has been some time since we mentioned the existence of 'Laser Rot' - the collapse of certain disc pressings into a shower of multi-coloured speckles some time after their manufacture - but seeing as we routinely receive phone-calls from readers mystified by the dramatic change in condition of their 'archival' recordings some update appears in

order.

Though precise information is not as forthcoming as would be liked, this deterioration in optical disc pressings has seemingly affected most of the major manufacturers - so far, the magazine has encountered the problem in discs from the UK, USA, Germany & Japan - the essence of the problem would seem to be in failure in the reflective-coating and bonding stages of disc production. A somewhat implausible story emanating from the USA that the PIONEER plant there attributed the cause to "contaminated water" (implausible insofar as every disc manufacturing facility cannot be supplied from the same cold-water tap) took on more credibility when a major plastics supplier to the industry informed us that the presence of water/water vapour itself acted as a contaminant if present at certain stages. This sounds more sensible although there are still doubts the problem is completely licked.

In the UK, the change from the 2P LV process to injection-moulding resulted in a whole slew of rot discs (*Poltergeist*, *The Thing*, *Ready Steady Go* etc) that caused a temporary cessation of pressing till matters were sorted out. Eighteen months on from our first report the problems with UK discs would appear to be confined to this period, though there is evidence that some of the very earliest 'silver coloured' 2P pressings are not proving as reliable as they should be. Indeed, the colour change from silver to silver-gold on the 2P pressings (see LDR-6) would seem to coincide with substitution of a silver reflective coating in place of the aluminium originally used. Early German pressings appear to be similarly flawed by this oxidation of the aluminium layer - readers are advised to tread cautiously in pursuing older titles from the German LV catalogue.

Although not intended as a practical solution to the rot problem, we have been advised that, theoretically, an unplayable example of laser rot could be reclaimed by stripping the reflective coatings and re-silvering the disc - in spite of the apparent loss of picture the recorded information on the actual plastic does remain intact and permanent. However, this was only meant as a simplistic explanation of the

phenomenon. The problem is only likely to be completely resolved when manufacturers cease making modifications to the pressing process before the full implications as to their longevity have been assessed. Talk of "300-year life-spans" is not very re-assuring when odd samples of disc expire without warning. (It should be noted, though, that the forthcoming recordable optical disc media are unlikely to be permanent beyond a 10-year life-span initially, but these discs are not to be confused with factory-pressed LV & CD discs which employ slightly different technologies.)

Talking of CD discs, we'd be interested to know of any experience of these failing after manufacture - there is certainly no logical reason why the problem should be confined to the video disc. It is just that the digital coding of CDs is likely to mask failure till a considerably advanced stage, and even then, the disc will probably just mute without any apparent reason.

In the meantime, readers are advised to check their copies of the aforementioned LV titles, as well as *Peeper*, *Xanadu*, *VideoHits*, *Flight Of The Dragon* & *Stevie Nicks* for signs of deterioration, in which case the defective pressings should be returned to your dealer for replacement. If that proves impractical then PHILIPS manufactured discs should be returned to them (via the Silver Disc Club, say) and PIONEER's titles to the company in Greenford. We do know of instances of other titles that have failed but only have individual reports that could indicate sample rather than batch defects, but we will print other suspect titles as and when corroborated evidence comes to light.

Reassurance in the matter does come from the fact that some of the oldest discs at LDR (from 1978/9) maintain their blemish-free appearance, whereas the problem discs appear to stem from manufacturers' attempts to 'improve' the process. Understandably, in this competitive field, the disc manufacturers do not willingly trade information that would also help competitors in other aspects of manufacturing efficiency, and if consumers are not to be left to suffer on the sidelines as a result, it would seem prudent to maintain a vigilant and vocal stance in expectation of being provided with a serviceable and reliable product.

Dealer News

The concentration of LV fans in the Manchester area can more than likely be attributed to the presence of dealer EDWIN P. LEES in the Piccadilly Plaza, Parker Street. Reader Jack Haynes always seems to be hold of the latest titles before we have them. Now we know where he gets them from.

In the Swindon area of Wiltshire - the small town of Cricklade to be exact - is dealer M.E. TYE (107 High Street, Cricklade, Wilts SN6 6AA. Tel: (0793) 751006) who keeps mostly PHILIPS, GEC, & JVC products in stock - as well 700 LaserVision discs for sale and rental locally - "We try and collect at least one copy of every disc."

T'S HAPPENING...WHAT'S HAPPENING...WHAT'S HAPP

Two of our advertisers previously handling only mail-orders have this Summer opened up shops handling both LV and CD discs. In Chelmsford Tom Butterworth's LASER DISCOUNT is at 86a Main Road, Broomfield and Tuesday to Saturday opening is provided. Down south in Eastbourne is LASER SOUND & VISION's new establishment, situated at 72 Terminus Road, where we know they keep a good supply of LV discs ... and "1000s" of CDs too according to their advert. Refer to respective ads for further particulars.

Briefly we must mention new outlets in the Oxford Street, W1 area of London where, apart from the VIRGIN MEGASTORE again stocking LV discs, the new TOWER RECORDS emporium at Piccadilly Circus (Open till midnight) have a goodly supply of these video gems too.

U.S.A. News

PIONEER's CLD-7 LV/CD player has been launched in the USA as a replacement for the CLD900. As is usual for PIONEER LV products, the machine takes on a new number in its export version and is known as the CLD909. The price is \$900. Unlike previously reported, the reduced bulk of the player is managed by keeping the main LV disc motor fixed, and only swinging the smaller CD drive motor up on a pivot to play CDs. PIONEER is claiming a finer focus on the laser objective, circuitry improvements to upgrade picture resolution and a refinement of the tilt-servo mechanism to compensate better on warped discs. The player has a CD subcode output on the rear (that will still need an adaptor when eventually usable) and some extra Control in/out phono sockets to tie the unit in with PIONEER's system remote. There is the same 10 Track(CD)/Chapter(LV) programmable repeat facility as on the LD7100(707). The scan function shows modification; for the first couple of seconds it runs at an 11x rate, switching automatically to a faster 45x thereafter. Audio specs for CD & DS LV are a frequency response of 4-20,000Hz (-1.00dB, +0.5dB), 98dB S/N, 95dB dynamic range, 92dB channel separation, .005% THD, and "unmeasurable" Wow & Flutter.

YAMAHA have started limited distribution of their two LV-only players. The LV-X1 Digital player, at \$799, is a fairly straightforward unit with the PCM circuitry for DS LV discs built in. The cheaper (\$599) LV-X1 (no 'Digital' in the name) predictably lacks the DS circuitry.

For unexplainable reasons we do not have the new disc releases this time. Should you wish to take advantage of it, STARSHIP INDUSTRIES in Virginia operate a 24-hour recorded message "Laser Disc Hotline" that gives all the present and forthcoming disc releases in the U.S. Phone: 010 1 703 430 0330 and just listen. (And no, we don't have a bunch of Telecom shares either.)

As the NTSC LV market continues to spew out titles that are never likely to appear here we do plan to update the NTSC LV article from issue 5 with the aim of providing revised details of dealers etc.

Countdown to Domesday

As the last weeks of 1986 ebb away before us the BBC Domesday launch (and its allied introduction of LV hardware) moves closer. PHILIPS new VP-415 LV player with LV-ROM, Genlock, Instant Jump, and Multiple Vision Mixing will be the top of the range of a new series of PHILIPS front-loading, solid-state players for the professional market that will follow on in 1987.

The Domesday discs will function under the AIV System (Advanced Interactive Video) developed by the BBC/ACORN/PHILIPS partnership. Apart

from the VP-415, users of the Domesday discs will require a BBC Master Series AIV computer incorporating Turbo Co-processor, Videodisc Filing System (VFS), LV-ROM interface and trackerball (mouse) control (RM NIMBUS and IBM-PC compatible models are expected too), an RGB-capable monitor with audio, and a trackerball.

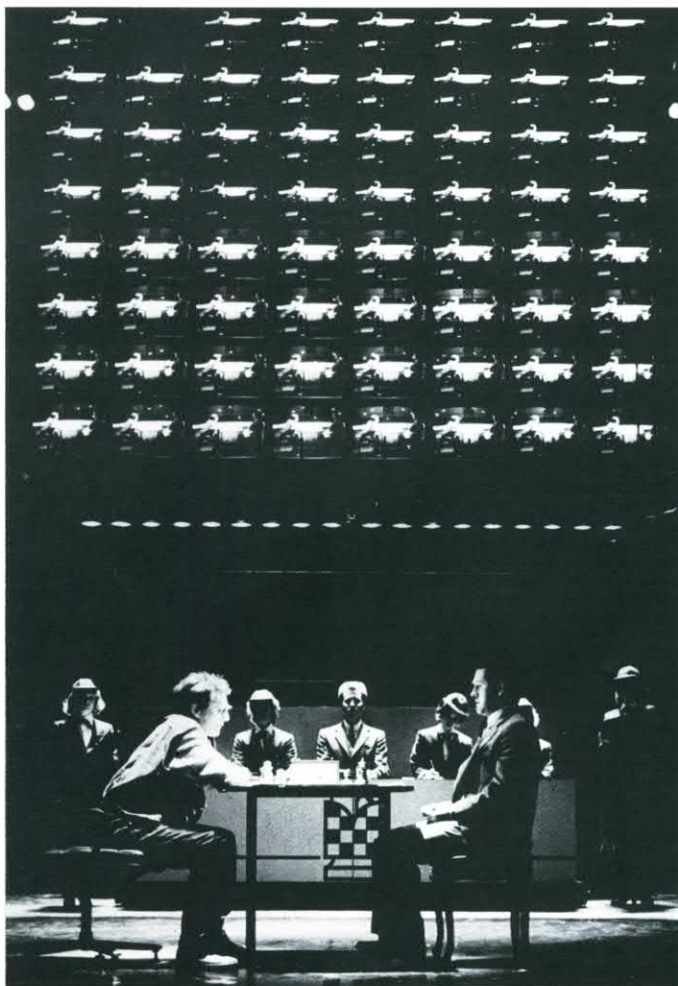
For 1987 the BBC are planning a further disc on Ecology in the AIV format plus conventional discs on other topics. Look out for a BBC-TV series on Domesday starting at the end of November, about the time of the planned system launch.

[More on page 34]

Chess Piece

Strung up on steel cables above the stage of the currently running London musical *Chess* is a 3.8 ton grid of 64 TV screens - a PHILIPS Vidiwall system sourced from 6 LaserVision players, 2 video tape machines and 6 TV cameras positioned around the stage. The mobile screen effectively becomes a video chessboard.

Additional TV monitors placed at either side of the stage bring the total in use up to 128, and the displays are controlled by a computer system designed by MEDATECH. Operation is semi-automatic, allowance being made for the display to be synched to the live stage action by the music director.



NG...WHAT'S HAPPENING...WHAT'S HAPPENING...WH

日本の報告

From Our Correspondent In Japan
MARC COMFORT



PIONEER's new LD9200D Digital Sound LV player

PIONEER have yet another LV player on the market. Designated the LD9200D, it is in the style of the LD7100(707) but incorporates the necessary audio circuitry to decode Digital Sound discs. There are small cosmetic differences (it has the large LED track number display) and the player is endowed with the current state-of-the-art video specs - 400 line horizontal resolution and 45dB S/N. Price is ¥129,800. This now brings PIONEER's current total of LV players to four, plus the LV/CD machine.

NEC are also now selling the CLD-7 under its own brand name - the VP-L700.

Expect to see more new players before the year's end.

On the TV front, for ¥220,000 (nearly £1,000), SONY sell the DSC-10 Digital Scan Converter that can be connected to either the 21" KX-21HD1 (again ¥220,000) or the 14" KX-14HD1 monitors to double up the vertical line resolution. The Converter, which will not work with just any monitor, raises the scan frequency to 31.5KHz, twice the conventional 15.75 KHz (NTSC) figure. On the KX-14HD1 (similar to the KX-14CP1 computer monitor available in the UK) SONY quote a 4050 character display - 90 x 45 columns. While the Converter cannot actually create extra information that is not in the original signal, the reduction in the prominence of the scanning lines - more noticeable with a 525-line system - creates the illusion of greater detail. Although the KX-14HD1 is essentially a computer monitor, the larger 21" monitor is designed as a conventional video/TV display unit and SONY illustrate it in their brochure connected to all manner of A/V appliances. However, the fact that the top-of-the-range 27" monitor does not function with the DSC-10 suggests the Converter is presently only likely to give of its best with still, rather than moving, images.

OTHER NEWS

The recent CCIR decision to postpone making a decision on adopting the Japanese 1125-line HDTV system as a world broadcast standard is being reported somewhat differently here. The CCIR's intention to recommend the NHK/SONY TV system in a draft proposal at the next session in four years time is being reported as tacit acceptance of

the format itself, and little is being made of the objections of European broadcasters.

LV SOFTWARE

More CAV versions of previously released films continue to be put out. Like the already mentioned 2001 and 2010, the new titles - *Poltergeist*, *Forbidden Planet*, *Brainstorm*, *Clash Of The Titans* and *Westworld* are all wide-screen, with sub-titles under the picture and with Digital Sound. The discs list at ¥12,800 (about £50). Incidentally, in Japan a form of resale price maintenance dictates that all home entertainment items such as audio and video discs/tapes and books and magazines cannot be discounted - it doesn't just apply to books as in the UK.

The total of Japanese LV titles now exceeds 3,000.



NEW LV RELEASES

The new releases listed exclude films already available/forthcoming in PAL or NTSC (USA) unless in an alternate format or presentation. Film titles are usually sub-titled in Japanese and the original language track left intact. For this reason a French film, say, listed under its original title will probably be in French dialogue with Japanese subs. Documentary and Special Interest titles can appear in any language combination.

Most domestic Japanese product has been excluded from the listings, as have titles that have not yet succumbed to a sensible translation. The September listing is a late addition and less complete still!

JULY

Films - *Jaws II*, *Mission Airwolf*, *The Gorgon*, *Battalion*, *Star Wars* (re-issue in DS), *Brainstorm*(CAV,DS), *Forbidden Planet*(CAV,DS), *That's Dancing*(CAV,DS), *Pale Rider*(DS), *Outlaw Josey Wales*(DS), *Special Effects*, *Tales From The Dark-side Vol 3*, *Nostalgia*(1983), and three DISNEY cartoons - *Mickey Mouse*(CAV, 59'), *Minnie Mouse*(CAV,57'), *Going Quakers*(88').

Music - *Bon Jovi/Breakout*(DS,Junior, 23'), *Heart Attack*(58'), *Depeche Mode/Hits*(46'), *Miles Davis/Live '85*(DS,59'), *James Brown/In Japan*(DS,80') - 15 track 1986 recording), *Now That's What I Call Music Vols 2 & 3*, *10CC/Live In London*(DS,55'), *Paul Mauriat/Last Paradise*(CAV,30'), *Benny Goodman/King Of Swing*(DS,48'), *Power Station*(CAV,DS,26'), *Rainbow/Final Cut*(57'), *Scorpions/World Wide Live*(58'), *Various/Kerrang! Video Compilation*(89').

Other - *National Geographic* - *Wild Chimps*(CAV,59'), *The Small Slow-Motion World*(CAV,59'), *Rain Forest*(CAV,59'), *Oscar Fischenger*(CAV,50').

AUGUST

Films - *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, *I Married A Monster From Outer Space*, *Death Wish III*, *Absolute Beginners*(DS), *Vision Quest*(DS), *The Right Stuff*(DS), *Wolfen*, *Galaxy Of Terror*, *The Crazies*, *Blacula*, *Terror On Tape*, *Real Life*, *Perfect Strangers*, *Swordkill*, *The Chase*, *Codename Falcon*, *Dr. Phibes*, *Enter The Ninja*, *Zombie Island Massacre*, *Monkey Fist*, *Westworld*(CAV,DS), *Clash Of The Titans*(CAV,DS), *Poltergeist*(CAV,DS), *Leri Oggi Domani*, *L'Annee derriere a Marienbad*, *Le Qui des Brumes*, *Rue Case-Negres*, *Tokyo War Trials*(DS,277'), & DISNEY cartoons - *Donald Duck*(CAV,59', bi-lingual), *Daisy Duck*(CAV,55', bi-lingual), & *Disney Scary Tales*(91', bi-lingual).

Music - *Sheila E*(CAV,DS,57'), *Magnum/Live In London*(DS,72'), *Uriah Heep/History*(75'), *British Rock 1st Wave*(59') *Ready Steady Go Vol 3*(57'), *Otis Redding/Sweet Soul Music*(49'), *Bon Jovi/Live In Japan '85*(75'), *Manhattan Transfer/Vocalese Live 1986*(DS,90'), *I Love Mozart*(DS,46'- Jazz).

Others - *National Geographic* - *Trains*(CAV,59'), *Tigers*(CAV,59'), *NHK Travelogue/Silk Road-Athens to Istanbul*(CAV,50'), *Marine Flowers*(CAV, DS,52').

SEPTEMBER

Films - *Mean Machine*, *Slaughterhouse Five*, *Great Waldo Pepper*, *Creature From The Black Lagoon*, *Baby Love*, *King Solomon's Mine*, *Demons*(DS), and a 2-disc compilation of *Flying Down To Rio & Top Hat*.

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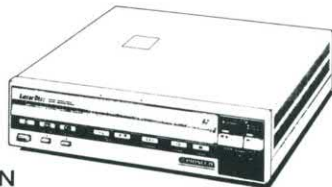
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LEGAL NASTIES

What the Video Recordings Act means to the disc market

Since 1st September, 1985 all video recordings issued, whether tape or disc, have been subject to new restrictions brought into being as a result of the Video Recordings Act, 1984. Each new release has to be classified by the BBFC (British Board Of Film Classification) in order to define audience suitability for home viewing; this being indicated on the disc/tape package by a rating symbol that approximates in style to those we are already used to seeing on cinema features. While the style is similar there is no guarantee that the home video version will remain unaltered from the cinema release of a film, even if the rating appears to be comparable. All existing cinema features are required to be re-classified to conform to the Video Recordings Act legislation - at a cost to the software distributor of £2.30 per minute of running time. For a 100 minute feature, for example, the software company will have to find £230 just to re-issue a previously released cinema film on video. For material that has never had a cinema showing, and therefore has never been through the cinema certification

1940 will have to be classified. In order to cope with such a huge backlog the certification is being done in six-monthly stages spread over the next two years - each September and March date being the cut-off point for a specified category of material. This first September deadline requires any existing post-1940 production that does not have provisional theatrical certification be withdrawn from sale. This category would include TV movies, TV related product, and special interest and music programmes that would have never had cinema distribution (and hence no previous certification).

All existing software will need to be labelled to conform to the packaging requirements of the Act in order to remain legally saleable (or rentable). That'll probably mean the entire present stock of LV discs will need to be stickered at some stage. The Act requires disc labels to be labelled with certification marks too - this may be problematical to say the least.

As there is a range of fines running to £20,000 for committing an offence one can expect retailers, distributors and manufacturers to err on the side

expired or non-certified product from the UK because export supplies are exempt from the provisions of the Act. While the Act is intended to safeguard the tender sensibilities of UK nationals (or more accurately, UK residents), its formulation hints at a curious double-standard mentality by our administrators that tends to reinforce the belief that they still look upon "those foreign johnnies" as beyond moral redemption and therefore unlikely to be further corrupted by our dumping unwanted tat on them. After all, if they didn't have the basic good sense to be born in a civilised country like Britain....

However, the Act's emphasis on controlling the activities of the supplier means that UK residents can still be legally supplied from overseas with any amount of unclassified material as long as it doesn't offend against the provisions of the Customs Consolidated Act, 1876. In practice, that means UK disc buyers engaged in personal imports will probably be unhindered in their activities, provided they do not stray too far from material that has received a cinema showing here. It puts the kibosh on any dealer wishing to carry imported discs, although as it is not the intention of the Act to exercise too much control over music/special interest product it may be possible for dealers to carry these sorts of discs - with certain provisos.

Many of the exclusions itemised in the Act set out to exempt special interest, documentary, educational, religious, musical programming etc from the need to obtain classification, except where it touches on certain sensitive areas such as nudity, sexual activity, bodily functions, and violence to humans and animals. These exceptions have far greater relevance than might be first thought when it comes to what could, superficially, be considered quite innocuous material. "Gross violence towards humans or animals" obviously affects sports and hobby programmes dealing with the likes of fishing, football, boxing, hunting etc. (WALT DISNEY's *Old Yeller* has apparently fallen foul of the Act in this respect.) News and documentary material depicting human suffering is also vulnerable and even religious product could find itself on a sticky wicket when it comes to showing, say, someone being nailed to a cross. There is no way that the more adventurous music videos are going to be safely sold

Video Recordings Act 1984

1984 CHAPTER 39

An Act to make provision for regulating the distribution of video recordings and for connected purposes.

[12th July 1984]

process, the charge rises to £4.60 per minute of running time. "Ethnic" product, which covers foreign language material, but may be not if it is subtitled in English, is also charged at the lower £2.30 rate. (There appears no obvious reason why the Act should effectively subsidise programmes more than likely originated overseas.)

So far the Act has had little noticeable effect because there is an element of everyone feeling their way in determining the benchmarks of the new classification system. Many of the more controversial titles appear to be being submitted somewhat later than might be expected. But, as from 1st September, 1986, the Act will begin to bite on all previously released video material, and every title made after

of caution. The onus is on them as "suppliers" to fulfill the Act's requirements. The consumer does not appear to be the target of the Act's implementation, but in fact there is no stated exemption for private sales between individuals. The Act makes reference to "supply" of video works "whether or not for reward". Literally, taking into account the exclusions listed in the various subsections, this would appear to indicate that it will no longer be possible to sell on unwanted discs in your collection if they are not classified in accordance with the new regulations. Barter may be the only means of trading that complies with the precise wording of the Act. Fortunately, overseas readers will still be able to acquire

unclassified. (And if you want to see a drug-induced suicide pact in a graveyard that culminates in a full-frontal stabbing then look no further than the ARTS INTERNATIONAL *Romeo & Juliet* disc.) In the interests of self-protection software companies will undoubtedly take the cautious step of submitting most everything for classification, and the cost is one that the consumer will have to bear.

DISC IMPLICATIONS

Because the legislation relates to content there is no additional burden on disc producers, providing that the programme on disc remains unaltered from the certified version. However, those unique and presently woefully underexploited exclusive features of the disc are likely to remain that way as the addition of trailers and still-frame sections to programmes will require a re-classification, and hence involve an additional financial burden. In themselves still-frames are exempt from the provisions of the act - unless again they touch on the sensitive exclusion categories - but there appears to be no way of putting the BBFC certificate on the finished product if these still frame additions have not been viewed. In fact, the LV disc (and CD-I and CD-V later) do not appear to be catered for more than cursorily in the Act's modus operandi (So much for the politicians' grip on new technology!)

The obvious question to the BBFC was how a still-frame or mixed moving/still-frame disc would be charged when undergoing classification as there is no pre-determined linear running time. (How long does it take to watch 100,000 individual frames - one a second would likely reduce the most stable of censors to a mesmeric state after four or five hours and that would still leave 20 hours to go. *Show '84* would probably fit comfortably into the exempt category, but what of a disc full of art gallery exhibits that might include a few erotic drawings? What about if we put LDR on disc some time? Does this mean that publishing in the future will be subject to this new form of censorship, plus the additional financial burdens it brings?) We didn't get a very satisfactory answer to this question because rather a large amount of time was spent in explaining just what a videodisc was. I don't think we'll be putting LDR on disc awhile.

A NOT VERY BRIGHT FUTURE

Even without knowing the details of the Act, most readers will have probably already found themselves contemplating some possible anomalies that could come to pass. Cine fans will no doubt be mystified (but reassured) that they can continue to deal in 8mm films unhindered. Cine films do not need to be classified under the new regulations. It's only when material is on video ie. the new technology. It is also going to seem strange seeing uncut versions of films on TV (or at least less cut) - because the Act does not exercise control over broadcast transmissions. And what is one supposed to make of the spicier programme material that might wait down from an unregulated European satellite transmission in the coming years. (Sorry, correct that. A phonecall to a present dish person reveals that within the last twenty four hours they have viewed an uncut *Scarface* and *Don't Go Near The Park*.)

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The Act would appear, even from this brief examination, to be a complete shambles and is likely to seem more embarrassingly ill-conceived with each passing month as all the 'wrong' people fall foul of it. As far as feature film material is concerned it is bound to effect the care with which Hollywood movies are prepared for these shores. (Reports in US trade papers indicate some level of amazement that the UK deems it necessary to have a double certification process, especially when cuts are routinely inflicted the first time round.)

As is befitting the citizenship of a democratic country, the remedy to the Video Recordings Act is in your hands. It behoves anyone likely to be in a

position to "supply" video material to make themselves as aware as possible of the details and implications of the Act - this article should not be seen as a legally correct and full interpretation of it.

Seeing as it is the boys in blue who will be conferred the responsibility of executing its provisions of search, seizure and arrest it might pay you to get in touch with them to clarify the situation. We wouldn't know which department to ask for but a request to be put through to the Thought Police should endear you to them for a long, long time.

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Towards a Combination Player

The method by which digital (PCM) audio - the type of encoding presently used on CD - is to be added to PAL LaserVision has now been agreed and "as and when" PHILIPS choose to introduce a combination LV/CD player it will retain the ability to play the existing analogue-audio LV discs - present LV owners' collections of discs will remain compatible. Unlike the addition of PCM audio to NTSC LaserVision (Digital Sound as it has been tagged there) - where discs carry both analogue and digital audio - with the new PAL format it will be necessary to have a new type of LaserVision player to take advantage of the new digital LV discs - they will not play on existing players. To retain compatibility, as has been the case with NTSC, would have involved compromises in playing time etc. As it is, Digital Sound NTSC LV discs can only manage 55 minutes playing time per side as a result of having to accommodate both audio tracks and there does seem little point in emulating this approach in PAL when the underlying demand is for longer playing times (ie, fewer just over two-hour movies that require 3 sides, plus the problem of having to spread 60 minute music programmes - a common duration - over two sides of a disc). In

practice, it is expected that the majority of film titles will continue to be pressed in the current analogue sound format as this is well able to accommodate the bandwidth requirements of optically striped film prints. Only the more hi-fi, magnetic prints really justify pressing in the new digital audio format. Music titles will almost certainly always be pressed as digital-audio LV discs. There is no indication as to whether, in the transitional period over the next few years, whether the more popular titles will be pressed in both analogue and digital formats.

No firm date has been suggested by PHILIPS for the introduction of a new player from them. It doesn't look likely that we'll see anything sooner than our last mid-87 prediction and there is every likelihood that it will be still later than that. We have been promised a combination LV/CD player for around £400 - but quite what the final specification is to be has not been stated. Knowing PHILIPS' preference to produce mass-market products, rather than work up from a specialist market first, one imagines that they would prefer to tool up for a player, or range of players, that would take advantage of all the consumer applications of optical disc (some of

which have yet to be agreed). A feature-laden product is not that expensive to produce if you can sell enough of them to return the economies of large-scale production. PHILIPS are not likely to see much point in producing a new combination player that is only going to sell a few tens of thousands of units - there is no money for them in this size of market and the impression is given that they still have a certain faith in the LV side of the consumer optical disc market. In conversation, a PHILIPS spokesman made reference to "the re-launch of LaserVision" - a comment that indicates an expectation of a more successful market penetration than previously.

However, because the basic spec for PCM-audio LV is now established there is nothing to prevent other manufacturers stepping in earlier, for as we all know, dual LV/CD players already exist in the NTSC markets and it wouldn't take much modification to introduce a PAL version quite quickly. This suggests an opportunity here for PIONEER, but as of this time of writing (August), there was no suggestion that they had anything planned - at least this side of 1987. How both PHILIPS and PIONEER aim to sustain the hardware side of the present LV market is a matter of some speculation. It is going to be unbelievably difficult to sell players now it is evident that you will definitely need to buy another one within the year to cope with the new disc format - and indeed, there are already doubts about even the availability of some existing models of player.

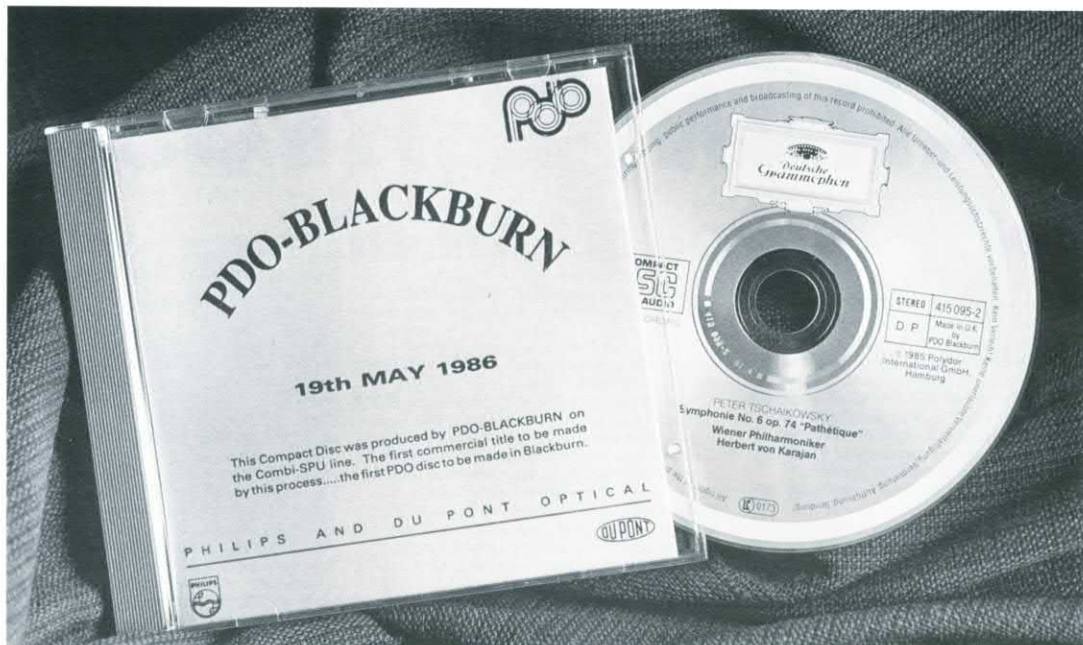
Because of developments up at Blackburn, production of PCM-audio LV discs will be possible next year, and manufacture of discs proper will likely start well before the introduction of hardware, in order to build up a reserve of stock. Initially, mastering for the new LV discs will have to be done in Eindhoven, Holland and shipped to Blackburn for pressing until the appropriate equipment is installed at Blackburn itself. (It's on order.)

FUTURE LV/CD FORMATS

The other aspect of the new player is the relevance of the variously named CD-V (CD-Video) or CD-Clip format we first mentioned a year or so back. In these days of video promos for pop singles and the general growth in the visual aspect of music presentation PHILIPS have come up with this 'CD-with-video' format that could offer, for example, a total audio playing time of 20 minutes - the last five minutes of



[PIONEER's innovative CLD900, able to play all video and audio discs - but so far only in the NTSC format]



[All types of disc can be made on the one production line now installed at Blackburn - 20 & 30cm LV and 12cm CD]

which would be accompanied by the appropriate video clip or short movie.

The video is likely to have to go on the end of the disc due to the limitation imposed by the minimum rotational track length necessary to carry video - that's why there is a big label on an LV disc - presently it is not possible to carry the signal on an LV disc at less than a 110mm diameter. While the actual track pitch of CD audio is virtually the same, there is no necessity to encode the same quantity of information per revolution as it is not tied to the need to build up a complete TV frame each time. (Even CLV discs now commence with this CAV portion.) Presumably a CD-V disc would not be tied to this CAV/1 frame-per-revolution format and would carry the video in CLV linear mode (CDs are configured this way) closer to the disc centre. The possibility of reducing the video bandwidth on CD-V is an alternative means of containing the video signal.

Depending on just how CD-V is done will probably affect whether CD-V discs will still play on existing CD hardware, ie, playing a CD-V disc on an old model CD player will mean that the sound is extractable but you just will not be able to retrieve the picture unless you have a new player.

Compatibility with NTSC & PAL TV formats will be another problem unless PHILIPS have something clever up their sleeve. One of the main development parameters for the original audio-only CD was that the PCM coding should not be TV standard dependent (as are most of the PCM recording adaptors made for VCRs) - the sampling rate would not be tied to some convenient multiple of the PAL or NTSC frequency for the very reason that worldwide compatibility was a prime requirement for the proposed disc. People had come to expect a vinyl disc bought in one country would replay in another, and it was considered important to continue this tradition

with Compact Disc. When you start putting video onto CD the concept of a world standard suffers - at least until such time as we move into the realms of digital video too. As no manufacturer has so far seen the wisdom of making a multi-standard LV player, one doubts they will cope with this CD-V problem properly - but one lives in hope.

Of course, it won't necessarily be

that will be a second-generation addition is not clear. At the press conference to announce PHILIPS' tie-up with DU-PONT for the purpose of exploiting optical disc technology, the American company's John Metzger Jr did tell us that "Combined home players capable of audio, video and data functions are envisaged". He just didn't say when.

"Combined home players capable of audio, video and data functions are envisaged. . ."



crucial to have a new LV/CD combination player to exploit CD-V discs - there is no reason why the facility should not be just built into future CD-only players, but there are marketing possibilities in tying it in with the LV/CD player. There is still the 20cm disc format to utilise, and indeed, no-one has yet seemed to have woken up to the merits of audio-only 20 & 30cm discs that would be able to carry huge amounts of music. (No more struggling across the room with your vinyl Ring Cycle box-sets or forking out extra for those silly double-CD sets that are only necessary for an extra few minutes of music.)

The CD-ROM aspect of the optical disc deserves some mention - in its CD-I (CD-Interactive) manifestation, where text, digitised graphics and speech can be stored. This expansion could also be incorporated into some future combination player - though whether

BUYING TIME AGAIN

While there may be doubt about the precise makeup of the next PHILIPS LV/CD player, the most important aspect - that a machine with the ability to cope with the physically different sizes of optical disc now has an agreed technical specification in PAL - means a significant element of doubt about the future has been eliminated. Whether the market will be led by PHILIPS or by other manufacturers is a matter for speculation - seeing as PHILIPS projected delivery date seems to be slipping back somewhat. As it can make no sense for anyone to invest in either a new LV or CD player when there is a more promising product looming on the horizon, too much deliberation and delay introducing something could very easily result in the present market stagnating and losing the momentum that has been so expensively cultivated.

MARANTZ RV353

Dolby Surround for all

MARANTZ' RV353 decoder was the first consumer DOLBY Surround Sound unit to be introduced to the UK market though supplies have been significantly short till quite recently - such has been the demand for what was considered to be a fairly obscure and specialist product. Now that it should be reasonably easy to acquire one it seemed appropriate to report on it in some greater detail.

CINEMA HISTORY

First off though, a recap on the DOLBY MP Surround format itself - a by-product of DOLBY's attempts at improving the sound quality of the optical sound-stripping carried on the majority of cinema prints. This optical stripping can be most simply described as the celluloid equivalent of a vinyl record track, but instead of a stylus tracing a groove of varying physical dimensions that translates into a fluctuating electrical sound signal, the cinema print carries a photographically printed equivalent, whose transparent centre area is read by a light source shining through it onto a receiving photo-cell, that again converts the modified incoming signal into sound.

These optical film tracks offered limited frequency response and attempts at improving sound quality, as well as introducing stereo, were limited by the inability to increase film speed (the industry standard being 24 f.p.s.) or to impinge on even more of the picture area to add additional sound tracks. (Encroaching onto the main picture area of the film inevitably reduces picture quality.) With the advent of magnetic tape recording, the '50s saw a move to incorporating a magnetic stereo sound stripe on the cine film in place of the optical, and while this brought improvement the magnetic prints were more expensive to produce and far less able to stand up to repeated running through movie theatre projectors. As a result, these magnetic prints tended to be restricted to prestige, city-centre locations and optical mono prints continued to be the norm in order to

endure the more rigorous handling of the local cinema circuit.

Dolby's application of their type 'A' noise-reduction, in conjunction with adjustments to the existing Academy Curve - the limiting frequency response curve employed to mask the inadequacies of cinema sound-system reproduction - showed the optical track to be a far more robust carrier than conventionally thought and serviceable optical stereo prints were feasible. However, large auditorium stereo demands some additional centre imaging to compensate for the problem of the majority of the audience being seated some way off the ideal axis to receive 'perfect' stereo.

The SANSUI QS Matrix, an encoding method previously used for 4-channel discs in the quadraphonic era of the early '70s, was employed to piggyback this centre channel, plus an additional channel for rear/surround information, onto the basic stereo signal. The centre output is derived from the information carried in-phase on the left and right channels and the rear from the out-of-phase difference - a 4-2-4 matrix. DOLBY's refinement of the QS matrix along with the previously described optical track clean-up touches, known as DOLBY MP (Motion Picture), has come to be the industry standard for stereo film recording - to the exclusion of virtually every other approach.



Because of the manner in which the 4-2-4 matrix functions the additional centre and surround information goes along for a free ride on any subsequent stereo copy of a DOLBY stereo film - whether cinema print or home video format. Realisation of this fact means that any manufacturer willing to fulfill DOLBY's licensing requirements can produce a consumer-level decoder able to extract the additional information. Simplification of the MP circuitry in

home units is allowed, but all those that bear the DOLBY logo must satisfy a certain minimum specification - they need to have at least 20 milliseconds of time delay (commercial units working in large auditoria need more) and DOLBY B noise-reduction circuit in the surround channel. [It should be pointed out that although there is an element of noise-reduction in the format, DOLBY MP does not involve any end-user noise-reduction control.] In addition, the frequency response of the rear channel has to cut off frequencies above 7KHz. These requirements, along with the phase parameters previously mentioned, result in a product such as the RV353.

RV 353 DESCRIPTION

The unit is designed to function as part of the company's range of A/V components that also sport the AV BUS logo - whereby all the parts function under a single remote control unit - though it is in no way restricted in its use as a stand-alone product. However, you will need an extra pair of speakers that, by virtue of the 7KHz roll-off, do not need to be particularly full-range units. The RV353 incorporates its own amplification (2 x 17W, 8 ohms) for the additional speakers.

Two basic speaker system layouts are recommended - the T-speaker cinema arrangement (Left, Centre, Right, Rear), or a more conventional corner placement (Left, Right, Left Rear, Right Rear). They suggest the former for DOLBY MP decoding and the latter for the other surround modes the unit offers - **Matrix** (for simulated surround on non-MP stereo sources) and **Spatial** (for stereo enhancement of mono sources). A **System** switch dictates which layout is determined (though you'll still have to move the speakers by hand!). In the T-speaker mode the Left Rear becomes the Centre, and the Rear Right remains the delayed Rear channel. That sounds a little confusing (not helped by the rather muddled instruction booklet either) but it's fairly straightforward in practice.

There is a **Mute** switch which kills





the rear output for comparison purposes. Two Calibration sliders (L & R) work in conjunction with indicator lights that are supposed to trip intermittently with the sliders set at the correct level. The variable Delay slider ranges between 15-30 msec (and obviously, when in the T-speaker mode, this only effects the rear output). Adjustment is necessary to ensure that the likelihood of your sitting nearer to the rear than the front speaker(s) does not mean that the surround information arrives at your ears before that from the front. If you can move the rear speaker(s) a long way behind the viewing position you will require less delay. Whichever, you should not have it cranked up so much as to create an unrealistic echo - though some tonal modification is to be anticipated (and desired).

The Volume control adjusts the level of the rear output only - and in the T-speaker arrangement the centre and rear volume levels are ganged and care must be taken that your left and right speakers (fed from the main amp) are kept in harmony with the centre volume. The remaining slider - the Surround Effect Control - is to be used when the unit is in Matrix and Spatial modes.

POSITIONING

After some preliminary trials with the speakers in each corner (System 2), a change was made to the T-speaker, System 1, layout - described as preferable for DOLBY MP in the MARANTZ instructions - and the speakers remained this way for most of the rest of the review. However, System 1 did seem most appropriate for DOLBY films, but seeing as speaker placement is very much dependent on domestic practicalities this should not be taken as a disincentive to explore both layouts. (To this end, it pays not to carefully conceal and trim the speaker cables prematurely.) At LDR the use of the centre channel has assumed greater relevance in recent times with the increase of (self) invited guests, come to watch the latest discs, resulting in yon Ed being shoved to the end of the settee and finding himself hearing poorly balanced stereo, something that has not previously been a problem when prime centre position has been available. The centre channel does fill out the sound stage and improve eye/ear co-ordination for off-axis viewing without diminishing the stereo effect. While the placement of the rear speaker appeared dramatically close to the listening position (the seat being against the wall), the rear channel effect did not appear to be a point source as a result and sound seemed suitably dispersed - though a reasonably central location would seem prudent.

SAMPLE CUTS

A good demonstration for the separation afforded by the DOLBY Surround format is the space-port bar scene on side one of *Star Wars* where conversation is completely isolated in the front

speakers, to the extent that if you turn those outputs off and just listen to the surround channel you can see speakers' lips moving that emit no sound at all. There is considerable depth to the sound image on this scene. *Gremlins*, similarly, shows a substantial amount of front/rear separation - for example in the opening scene where Hoyt Axton's dialogue stays firmly at the front, and the rear outputs mostly the ambient street sounds - again almost to the exclusion of the voice. *Star Trek III* (the NTSC disc in this instance - see later information) showed less obvious front/rear separation with the dialogue but showed good background acoustic as regards the environmental sounds on the Genesis planet. More obvious effects, such as the use of the transporter beams, showed up well.

To be honest, it proved impossible to achieve any substantial front-to-rear movement with the decoder. This may be expecting too much of the format. Of course, it is always possible to fake the rear channel a bit by pushing up the rear volume higher than it should be, but this is really a pointless exercise if the dialogue etc starts creeping round to the rear channel as well.

Excerpts with other film discs in the rack produced variable results. With *Octopussy*, for example, the rear channel produced ambient sounds suitably punctuated with effects, and the more recent *Bond A View To A Kill* added some good acoustics to the mine scene on side three that considerably enhanced the impression of 'being there'. With the concert film *No Nukes-The MUSE Concert* the rear channel was a nice embellishment

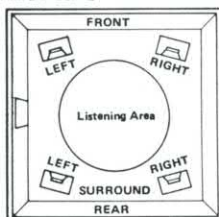
but one might have expected a bit more of the audience sound from the rear. *Purple Rain* was more effective, if not always obvious. The trouble with some of the titles is that the surround effect is not immediately apparent, but you need only hit the Mute button and the sound suddenly collapses into the front speakers and becomes very flat in comparison. A quick scan through the *Glen Miller Story* (NTSC disc) did not produce much in the way of rear channel separation other than the concert scene in the hangar towards the end, where it was noticeable that the audience applause was stronger from the rear speakers than the front, but then given its pre-DOLBY vintage, it may have been unfair to expect too much of this disc (there isn't that much stereo even!).

AZIMUTH

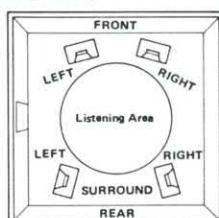
The success or failure of discs to reproduce the surround information correctly is greatly dependent on transfer quality throughout the entire chain - something disc fans can appreciate more than most. The reliance of the DOLBY MP Matrix on good phase match means that azimuth errors on the sound heads that occur in the transfer stages can easily result in the matrixed channels being 'lost', even though the general audio quality ostensibly remains satisfactory.

This problem of information loss was something that was highlighted in a trip taken to DOLBY's London HQ (complete with LD700 and a selection of discs) where the auditioning of several popular disc titles (*The Empire Strikes Back*, *48 Hrs* among them) revealed these

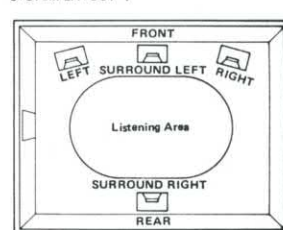
SYSTEM LAYOUT 2



SYSTEM LAYOUT 2



SYSTEM LAYOUT 1



MARANTZ suggest these basic speaker positions. System 1 is deemed most suitable for DOLBY MP encoded discs and the "Surround Left" output becomes the centre channel in this instance.

Experimentation with the height of the rear speaker(s) is also recommended.

transfer shortcomings. While DOLBY often have their own engineers on hand to advise at a film's sound-mixing stage (though this happens less than it did now the process is better understood), there is little they can do to oversee the subsequent duplication stages that masters can endure before ending up on one of the home video formats. (When you think about it - how many discs and tapes do you see that bear the DOLBY Surround logo? The companies themselves do not appear to know what they have on their own masters.)

One aspect of transfers that does not effect the integrity of the surround information is the 4% speeding up that occurs with PAL telecine transfers, though it can be the case that PAL discs sourced from NTSC conversions can suffer if carelessly transferred. You can only judge the success of the transfer by the finished product - even a common master delivered to two different pressing plants could end up with differing levels of surround information.

Incidentally, this magazine's use of the initials 'MP' to denote DOLBY Surround encoding harks back to the company's earlier, and now lapsed, use of the initials (it stands for 'Motion Picture'). Nowadays the DOLBY Surround logo has tended to replace it, but this does not lend itself to text usage and so the magazine continues to use MP till something more suitable turns up.

LAYOUT 2 MODE

Back in Layout 2 mode a few concert discs were tried in the Matrix position. The *Grateful Dead-Dead Ahead* disc, recorded in a cavernous auditorium, seemed an ideal choice for some simulated surround but surprisingly gave of its best left in the DOLBY position, where presumably the treble cut in the rear channel prevented sudden transients breaking through and reminding one of the rear output's similarity to the the front. This disc definitely improved with

this most realistic-sounding enhancement, and the effect of having the audience all around and the music at the front was effectively created. On the ARTS INTERNATIONAL ballet of *The Nutcracker*, where there is less existing ambient information, the extra brightness of the Matrix position proved a better option - although the effect was essentially one of just filling out the sound rather than adding anything. In general, with concert recordings, a more substantial amount of delay seems to be called for.

CONCLUSIONS

A major problem with a review of a piece of equipment such as the RV 353 is the sheer amount of time it can occupy. The effects achievable with the MP Matrix are not employed throughout movies (otherwise they wouldn't really be effects) and the rear output can often bumble along, giving out only modest enhancement information, for several minutes at a time before a more obvious manifestation makes itself apparent. Undoubtedly the decoder and the DOLBY Surround format does work although it is dependent on the quality of the transfer.

The unit is simple to calibrate each time and you are unlikely to spend more than a few moments adjusting it - if it's there, it's there. It is not a piece of equipment likely to fall into disuse after the novelty has worn off, and once wired into your system you are unlikely not to continue using it each time a stereo disc is played - whether an encoded disc or not. The list of DOLBY MP titles in the Laser-Vision catalogue continues to grow in healthy proportion (if not in quantity) and the trend looks likely to endure. (See list below. These titles have not all been auditioned and will produce varying levels of surround information.)

Used with a 30 Watt amplifier for the front the RV 353 seemed to have

enough power for average listening conditions, though reverting to the Layout 2 mode and putting the rear speakers up high it came to being worked much closer to maximum output and readers used to volume listening might find the unit running out of steam. At its price, though, it seems realistic value.

While this review was being prepared MARANTZ were expecting supplies of a new decoder - the RV 351 - similarly priced but a full-width unit (420mm) of slightly less flashy appearance. However, the RV 351 does offer a loop-through facility on your amplifier's tape-monitor socket (you lose the use of your tape-monitor socket with the RV 353) and some variation in its operational facilities. Further investigation of the RV 351 is recommended before a final purchase decision is made.

MARANTZ RV 353 SPECIFICATIONS

(Din)

Rated Power - 17 Watts per channel
(8 ohms, 1 KHz)
THD - 0.3% (Direct)
Input - 200mV/85k ohms
Output - 350mV/1.0k ohms
Frequency Response -
Direct (20Hz - 35KHz) +0, -3dB
Dolby (100Hz - 6 KHz) +0, -3dB
Signal to Noise Ratio -
Direct (IHF-A) 90dB
Dolby (CCIR/ARM, WTD) 70dB
Delay - 15-30 msec (Adjustable)
Power - 220/240V AC, 50/60Hz
Size - 320mm(W) x 55mm(H) x 260mm(D)
Weight - 3.6Kg
Price - £129.90 including VAT
Manufacturer: MARANTZ UK,
Unit 15/16 Saxon Way Industrial Estate,
Moor Lane, HARMONDSWORTH, Middx,
UB7 0LW. Tel: 01-897 6633

PAL LaserVision discs containing Dolby Surround information (Transfer dependent)

ABC - MANTRAP
ALIEN
ALL THAT JAZZ
ALONE IN THE DARK
ANIMALYMPICS
APOCALYPSE NOW
BEACHBOYS - AN AMERICAN BAND
BEVERLY HILLS COP
BLADE RUNNER
BRAINSTORM
BREWSTER'S MILLIONS
CAT PEOPLE
CAT'S EYE
CHAMPIONS
CHARIOTS OF FIRE
CITY HEAT
CLASH OF THE TITANS
COCOON
COMPANY OF WOLVES, THE
DRACULA
DUNE
EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, THE
ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK
FAME
FINAL CONFLICT, THE
FIRST BLOOD
FLASHDANCE(?)
FLETCH
FOOTLOOSE
48 HRS.
GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROAD STREET
GOONIES, THE
GRANT, EDDIE - NOTTING HILL LIVE
GREASE

GREAT MUPPET CAPER, THE
GREEN ICE
GREMLINS
GREYSTOKE
GWENDOLINE
HAWK THE SLAYER
HIGH ANXIETY
HIGHEST HONOUR, THE
JAWS 3
JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR
KIDS ARE ALRIGHT, THE
KILLING FIELDS, THE
KRIEG DER STERNE
LAST AMERICAN VIRGIN, THE
LET'S SPEND THE NIGHT TOGETHER
MAD MAX - BEYOND THUNDERDOME
McVICAR
MEGAFORCE
MEANING OF LIFE, THE
MORONS FROM OUTER SPACE
MUPPET MOVIE, THE
NEVER ENDING STORY, THE
NO NUKES - THE MUSE CONCERT
OCTOPUSSY
OH! HEAVENLY DOG
PALE RIDER
PASSAGE TO INDIA, A
PIRATE MOVIE, THE
POLTERGEIST
PURPLE RAIN
QUADROPHENIA
QUEEN - WE WILL ROCK YOU
QUEST FOR FIRE
RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

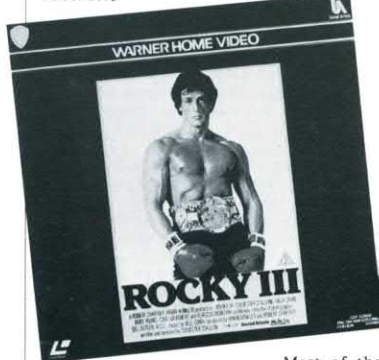
RAISE THE TITANIC
RAMBO - FIRST BLOOD II
RAZORBACK
RETURN OF THE JEDI
ROCKY II
ROCKY III
ROMANCING THE STONE
ROSE, THE
SAHARA
SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER
SATURN 3
SHOCK TREATMENT
SILVER DREAM RACER
STAR TREK - THE MOTION PICTURE
STAR TREK - THE WRATH OF KHAN
STAR TREK III
STAR WARS
STARLIGHT ONE
STREETS OF FIRE
SWORD & THE SORCERER, THE
TAPS
THIS IS SPINAL TAP
TO RUSSIA WITH ELTON
TOP SECRET
UNCOMMON VALOUR
UNDER FIRE
VICTOR/VICTORIA
VIEW TO A KILL, A
WAR GAMES
WATERSHIP DOWN
WEDDING, A
WITNESS
XANADU
YES GIORGIO

DISC REVIEWS

An Introduction

Reaction to the WARNER titles has been variable to say the least. Some readers are happy just to see the damn things out at last, others feel let down by the quality of some of the masters. To this end, it has proved difficult to handle the reviews this time. Too many of the WARNER masters just do not look good enough to have made it on to disc - while often well scanned and of above average sound, the picture quality has turned out to be uniformly dull and diffused. One is appreciative of the fact they mostly appear to be negative transfers and show a certain amount of control over the grey scale, but only *Greystoke* could be said to achieve anywhere near the preferred standard. Many of the titles are 'watchable' but one would not be inclined to pull one of them out of the rack to demonstrate to friends how good films can look on disc. We have heard rumblings of making a better effort of the next WARNER releases so we'll keep fingers crossed.

That said, we have to 'cope' with them somehow. A random selection is included in the main body of reviews as normal, though it should be pointed out that some of these do manifest the (so far unique to) 'WARNER spots' - a pattern of fine white spots often appearing in darker scenes and fond of clinging to vertical parts of the picture - that we consider bad enough to have automatically required fresh masters for disc release. If *A Nightmare On Elm Street* hadn't shown up this time we could have well called it a day and gone out and bought a VHS recorder.

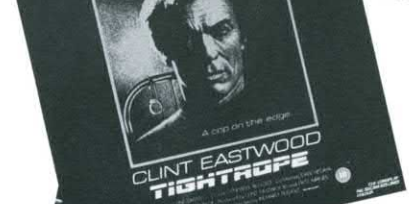


Most of the WARNER transfers have that pastelly-coloured look of an NTSC conversion about them, though it seems to suit the period feel of *City Heat*, but the disc is plagued by 'the spots' in the many dark scenes. The sound is generally good, though the voices of Clint Eastwood and Burt Reynolds sound strange; weak and asthmatic - yet this is more than likely a characteristic of the original film-sound recording.

The *Rockys* are possibly the worst of the bunch (though we haven't seen *Rocky II*). The one thing worse than a disc of a Hollywood blockbuster is a

disc from a Hollywood blockbuster that has two main distributors (WARNER here, UNITED ARTISTES/CBS-FOX in the US). They must split the master tape between them the picture quality is that grainy and unsharp.

Rocky is, in fact, a complete cock-up. It looks as though the artwork went up with the wrong running time on it (121 minutes), and the disc was mastered up on three sides as a result. The movie only runs 115 minutes at the outside in PAL and should have fitted on to one disc. Unwitting consumers are expected to cough up the

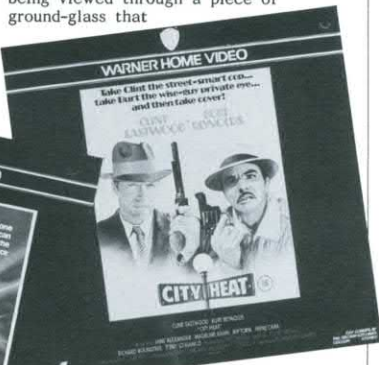


extra fiver for a mistake that could have been so easily avoided. The disc itself looks more saturated with the TV brightness down but as this loses rather too much detail this proves impractical and the wishy-washy image has to be tolerated. The mono sound (it is a mono film) is remarkably hissy and has some fairly constant distortion break-outs in moments of greater volume.

We can speak better of *Rocky III* but not get too excited because it still lacks crispness and sparkle. The audio is a fairly dynamic optical track, even if it's still a little muddy

and unsteady in the treble regions. It sounds OK at modest volume.

The sound on *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* is excellent but the picture suffers from the impression of being viewed through a piece of ground-glass that



adds a uniform graininess throughout likely to prove distracting on a larger TV screen. Watchable though.

As too is *Mad Max II*, even if it suffers from being an obvious PAL transfer from a regular contrast cinema print. That makes it one of the sharpest WARNER discs though the transfer has difficulty coping with some of the contrasty scenes (which are predictably common in the sun-drenched Australian outback) and the night scenes are a bit featureless. The gritty style adds a certain vigour to the bleak mood of the movie. The catch is that it should have been a stereo disc and not the crackly mono one it turns out to be.

We started getting enthusiastic about *The Never Ending Story* - a kids' fantasy story with some adult appeal - till we turned the disc over and found it to be much too hissy. The sound starts out pretty impressively and has some really interesting stereo, but as of this writing we haven't been able to work up the enthusiasm to try it again on the MARANTZ Surround Processor to which it would seem ideally suited. The picture is one of the best WARNER discs - it's still a bit softly defined but less so than most of the others.

Tightrope has a lot of dark scenes and is not very exciting picturewise as a result. Some well-lit close-ups of the star look quite impressive but there are too few of these to make our day. The sound was alright for the type of film. There appears to be a cut in the movie fairly early on where Clint is interviewing a prostitute. Just when the lady seems to be taking more than a passing interest in the workings of our hero's trousers there is a horrendously sharp scene change that coincides with an abrupt jump in the soundtrack music, indicating something more than just pacy editing.

[Continued on page 34]

these last three months. Usually it's a case of keeping fingers crossed for a film title to turn up that will show the medium to some advantage - something that you can stick on and impress people with. Too often you end up falling back on some of the more reliable music titles for positive input to the review pages. *A Nightmare On Elm Street* is a disc worthy of recommendation and it's quite a fun film too.



The movie is about dreams, about dreams getting muddled with reality. It's also a horror film although it's not gross. It's meant to get you going not to have you enduring laboured, explicit detail. Hardcore horror fans may find it a little restrained. Heather Langenkamp (Nancy) is really the star and comes over as a resourceful and attractive teenage heroine whose character develops a dream-world communication with a supposedly incinerated child-murderer, and an ability (in the face of the apparent impotence of all around her) to 'deal' with him. We say 'deal' because there's a Part II and a Part III on the way. Say no more.

CBS/FOX deserve some praise for the transfer. The picture looks very crisp; it's got good colour and the correct level of contrast, and in the better-lit scenes you are aware of an overall sparkle that is rarely evidenced. The soundtrack is optical, clear and fault-free, and well up to the job in hand.

Attentive credit readers may be puzzled by the listing of four characters who do not appear. The film is touted as being uncut for video release and we even cross-checked with the US version (which is on the IMAGE label - the company responsible for many of the porno discs and thereby unlikely to be timid about issuing complete versions) and the same 'omissions' occur. No-one we spoke to here could detect differences with the cinema release, including someone who saw a preview in the US (have we got contacts or haven't we?!). It seems a safe bet that the whole film is here. (Incidentally, US readers might like to know that the UK disc knocks spots off the domestic version - even though the NTSC disc is in itself not too bad, it almost looks as though the US disc was sourced from the same transfer but is a generation or so down - a PAL conversion?? Maybe you guys had better be getting into PAL LV sometime soon.)

Enough of this. If you're tempted by the movie go ahead and give it a try. But whatever you do - DON'T FALL ASLEEP.

CARMEN

ARTS INT 05 AI 040 £23.99
CLV-Ch COLOUR STEREO
1985 160mins (4 sides)

Featuring: Maria Ewing, Barry McCauley,
Marie McLaughlin, David Holloway
Conductor: Bernard Haitink

Carmen was first performed at the Opera-Comique, Paris in March 1875 and its initial hostile reception instilled acute mental depression in Bizet, from which he never recovered up to the time of his death only three months later. Since then *Carmen* has been recognised as a masterpiece and it has become one of the world's best loved operas.

This beautiful work is based upon Prosper Merimee's Spanish story of soldier-boy Don Jose's love for Carmen, the fatalistic gypsy girl. For her, Don Jose leaves his girlfriend Micaela and deserts the army. Carmen subsequently leaves him for Escamillo the swaggering toreador. Don Jose confronts Carmen outside of the bullring, and in an exciting and tragic finale, pleads with her to return to him. When she refuses he stabs her, and the curtain falls with the grief-stricken man cradling the dead body of Carmen in his arms.

Do not be deceived into thinking that *Carmen* is all gloom and doom. On the contrary, it's a work that teems with tuneful familiar numbers - such as *The Toreador's Song*, *The Habanera* and Don Jose's *Flower Song*. Film musical buffs who remember *Carmen Jones* will recognise all of the tunes from the film.



The intimate Glyndebourne setting must surely be a very close approach to the original Paris presentation. Over the years the work has had musical recitatives added to replace the spoken dialogue and it's usually performed as a large-cast grand opera. Happily, the scaling back down to Glyndebourne dimensions does not rob the piece of its impact. This super performance is given in the original form with spoken dialogue linking the musical numbers. For those like myself, who find spoken foreign dialogue tedious, an English libretto has been included (not a French one as indicated on the sleeve). The disc contains Chapter Search which cues the musical numbers - so it is possible to skip the dialogue should the viewer so desire.

Maria Ewing's finely sung and acted Carmen is a joy to behold, whilst I've never heard Micaela sung better than here by Marie McLaughlin. Barry McCauley sings Don Jose, and while he may lack the style and panache of an international superstar, nevertheless brings the necessary commitment to

this taxing role. I found David Holloway's Escamillo a somewhat tame character, lacking the vocal and dramatic flair required for this extrovert part. The smaller roles are well played by the rest of the strong cast, and top marks must go to director Peter Hall's moulding of his songbirds into shape to achieve a high quality of acting rarely seen in operatic performances. Congratulations must also go to musical director Bernard Haitink for his excellent interpretation of the score.

The recording has been made without presence of an audience. What is lost is a sense of theatre and immediacy, but conversely, what we gain is a higher quality of presentation. The camera work, lighting and general production have far more flexibility in these semi-studio conditions and the singers have been able to sustain their 160 minute performance over (presumably) a period of days.

We have the same high standard of production as on many other ARTS INTERNATIONAL discs. Picture quality is clear and well-defined (it is video originated) and the stereo is well balanced and full-sounding. There was just a minimal amount of white speckling during Act III (a night scene) on the review pressing. If all LV discs were to this high standard we'd have nothing to grumble about and I have no hesitation in recommending this excellent performance of *Carmen*.

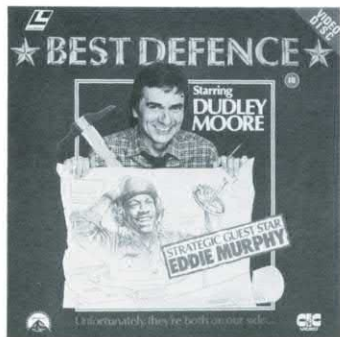
As indicated by the catalogue number, this is the last of the present series of forty AI opera and ballet discs. Let's hope that the future will produce a further series. The most immediate title that cries out for commitment to disc is the recent Glyndebourne production of *Porgy & Bess* which has been receiving rave reviews and could easily vanish without trace if somebody doesn't take action within the next year.

[KEITH ARNOLD]

BEST DEFENCE

CIC-PARAMOUNT LVG 2167 £19.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1984 90mins Rated 18

Starring: Dudley Moore, Eddie Murphy,
Kate Capshaw
Director: Willard Huyck



With the limitation of an 18 rating, brought on to protect young ears from a liberal dose of four-letter words, *Best Defence* is likely to be denied access to a large part of its target audience.

Some action sequences with an experimental battle-tank, shot on location in Israel (where Eddie Murphy

manages to deliver a few jokey lines aided by a couple of 'popsicle-type' army sidekicks, have been slotted in to a story about the trials and tribulations of its gyro's designer (Dudley Moore) working back at the plant in California. Moore and Murphy do not appear on screen together.

The screenplay alternates between heavy-handed, obvious slapstick and some moments of more subtle wit. Dudley Moore's natural humour is rarely allowed to blossom but the film still has its moments. The most sustained burst of energy is his encounter with a hip-talking Russian agent (David Rasche). In many ways *Best Defence* gives some credence to the argument that says films are to be rented rather than bought.

The Disc: Transfer quality shows some similarities to the pastels and some times grainy appearance of that other recent PARAMOUNT title *Beverly Hills Cop*, though some of the Israeli location sequences are of a noticeably unsharp and budget-level appearance. The optical soundtrack, however, is no match for *BHC*, and while the music is reproduced well, the dialogue is a little compressed and a bit edgy - though there are only a few moments of actual overload distortion. It is OK listened to a modest volume.

MASK

CIC-UNIVERSAL LVG 1183 £19.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1985 115mins Rated 15

Starring: Cher, Sam Elliott, Eric Stolz
Director: Peter Bogdanovich

To say *Mask* is a modern-day version of *The Elephant Man* would be an overstatement, but they have a common theme; all is not what it seems, all that's gold does not necessarily glister and beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder.



Rocky Dennis is a teenager who has grown up with a congenital and little understood bone disease. The calcium in his skull won't stop accreting - thus he has an overly high forehead, a greatly elongated jaw and prominently protruding cheekbones - all of which give him a face that could most kindly be described as 'lionlike', at worst, a grotesque carnival mask from whence the title is derived. Rocky (superbly played by Eric Stolz) lives not only behind the nightmare of his face, but also in the chaotic and decadent sex and drug strewn life of his strikingly beautiful mother, Rusty (Cher), with its attendant emotional rollercoaster of highs and lows. In reaction to this post-hippy/biker dissipation Rocky

seeks to make the most of his abilities - an excellent memory, great sensitivity and understanding, and an articulate intelligence. At school he becomes a popular achiever. At home he organises. He is the emotional rock that his mother desperately needs. A pivotal scene is his craving a suit for graduation - the ultimate outward conformist symbol - the unconformist but 'hearts of gold' bikers club together to provide it for him.

In the background throughout is Sam Elliott as Rusty's main, but intermittent lover, Gar. Periodically he gets tired of trying to hold Rusty's life together and leaves. It's a solid performance but he isn't given enough to do - which in the end is how I felt about the movie. It's well put together and genuine of purpose, but lacks the power of Bogdanovich's earlier work such as *The Last Picture Show* (a classic). The film deals with superficiality - so many see the mask, retreating from the strangeness in disturbed silence or fending off fear with hurtful jibes or self-comfortingly demeaning labels like "retard". They fail to go deeper. Unfortunately the film itself seems superficial. Cher, good as she is, is just too perfectly beautiful; the bikers just too kind-hearted to a man. Some of the scenes only come across as stock examples of Rocky's good attributes and he's only allowed to lose his temper once. His relationship with a blind girl met at a summer camp lacks any depth. The faults seem to lie with the script rather than the performances - the leitmotiv of Rocky's dream of riding a motorcycle across Europe is just a mite too obvious in the way that it is presented.

Having voiced these reservations I guarantee you'll have a lump in your throat by the end, but I feel that it is an appeal to sentiment rather than to real emotion. The movie just doesn't fire on all cylinders. I want to watch it again because of the performances, but it is no classic.

The Disc: The same could be said of the disc transfer. The picture looks a little flared and diffused and shows a bit of noise in the video. As a result the colour is pale. The sound is clean but of limited dynamic range and a little tight sounding. It is quite watchable but bears no comparison with the transfer quality of the simultaneously released UNIVERSAL title, *Brewster's Millions*. [ALAN BELL]

THE GOONIES

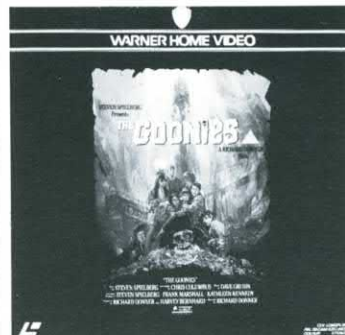
WARNER PEL 11474 £19.99
CLV COLOUR STEREO
1985 109mins Rated PG

Starring: Sean Astin, Josh Brolin, Jeff Cohen, Corey Feldman, Kerri Green, Martha Plimpton, Ke Huy Quan
Director: Richard Donner

The hardest part of the plot of *The Goonies* to swallow is the bit about the family being forced out of their house by developers. Not only is it a great house, but the whole neighborhood looks pretty neat and there is no way you can imagine anyone wanting to level the whole lot to make way for a golf course. All the rest about pirates and the like seems quite credible by comparison. But then you do run across these inconsistencies when looking at what is essentially a kids' film through adult eyes. The appeal is to

those of an age who can believe that all manner of exciting discoveries can come to pass by a deft mixing together of the contents of the cupboard under the kitchen sink, or better still, can believe that there's treasure just waiting to be discovered in that dusty attic.

It's not quite that easy for the Goonies - all they find in their attic is a map - but where it leads them is everything that could be imagined, and in 109 minutes, possibly more. It's value for money at least, if veering towards slushy sentimentality in weaker moments.



Young Mikey's romanticised observations (is this the Spielberg, writer of the story, reliving his childhood?) give the audience a much-needed breather from the otherwise frantic pace of the action as the seven-member gang continue their journey through the underground labyrinth pursued by a gang of crooks, but some of the verbiage will have you squirming in your seat (Side 2, 0:06 - "Goonies never say die" speech. Cringe, cringe). But it helps matters for older viewers to identify with one of the gang. Me, it would be the fat kid, a connoisseur of gluttony if I ever saw one, with a scream like an air-raid siren - you'll love the hand-in-the-blender torture scene (Now you see why it has a PG certificate). A detailed, well-produced film capable of re-viewing.

The Disc has a pretty good soundtrack that adds much to the film's appeal. The mix favours the music and the effects, and the dialogue is a little indistinct and tonally flat. The video transfer is definitely lacking in vigour. Both indoor and outdoor scenes are dull - and although one imagines the original colouring to have tended towards subtlety - one craves more, as well as wishing for some added resolution to what is only a just adequately sharp picture.

FLETCH

CIC-UNIVERSAL LVG 1191 £19.99
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP
1985 93mins Rated PG

Starring: Chevy Chase, Joe Don Baker, Dana Wheeler-Nicholson, Richard Libertini, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Tim Matheson
Director: Michael Ritchie

Fletch is a fairly low-key affair - a comedy/thriller with some nice touches, one of which is not the rather raucous soundtrack music from Harold (Beverly Hills Cop) Faltermeyer that is mixed rather too loud in an attempt to force up the pace of the proceedings. Chevy

Chase is Fletch, and Fletch is an undercover newspaper man researching a drug-trafficking operation who finds himself caught up in a fake murder attempt that appeals more to his investigative sensibilities - and also provides more opportunities for him to assume a variety of disguises in pursuit of his story.



The humour is mostly of the spoken variety (although there is the obligatory car chase). Sustained attention will reveal some more subtle visual gags - but it is not a slapstick movie. Without being able to think of a reason off-hand, there must be some significance to the expenditure of a considerable chunk of the budget in flying all the way down to Rio to shoot what amounts to just 35 seconds of actual screen time.

The Disc: While the colour is a touch pale and there is the smallest amount of noise in the video, most people will find the picture quality very acceptable - it has a nice open feel and is averagely sharp. It's more than evident that you're looking at a LaserVision disc. As already mentioned, there is plenty of volume to the music, and it has quite a full sound, but while of reasonable clarity, the dialogue is less dynamic.

THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN IN THEIR FLYING MACHINES

20th CENTURY FOX 1033-70 £9.99
CLV COLOUR STEREO
1965 127mins (3 sides)

Starring: Gert Frobe, Stuart Whitman, Sarah Miles, Alberto Sordi, Robert Morley, James Fox, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Irina Demick, Eric Sykes, Terry Thomas, Benny Hill, Yūjirō Ishihara, Flora Robson, Red Skelton, Karl Michael Vogler, Sam Wanamaker, Tony Hancock
Director: Ken Annakin

Describing this as a family film might imply an element of compromise in the production that is nowhere near the truth of it. Not only does *Those Magnificent Men...* reveal a certain timeless quality, it may even be the case that it improves with age. It's very easy to expect too much of any movie done in the grand style, but the passage of the years (and the relief from the pressure to take it all in at one viewing afforded by the advent of home video) allows the film to be judged on merit rather than its publicity.

You must know the plot. It's all about a race to cross the Channel, sponsored by wealthy newspaper tycoon Lord Rawnslay (Robert Morley). Sarah

Miles plays the daughter whose affections are fought over by the young military man (James Fox) and the visiting American smoothy (Stuart Whitman). Much of the humour is derived from drawing some ridiculously nationalistic stereotypes, but everybody gets a fair crack of the whip and regardless of what corner of the world the disc turns up in, no foreign viewer is likely to feel seriously aggrieved.

Ken Annakin (who along with Jack Davies wrote the screenplay) directs with some precision and discipline, and while the pace flags a little towards the end, the overall result must be considered a success. The scale of many of the stunts takes a second viewing to appreciate thoroughly. And some of those planes just don't look like they were meant to fly at all! Pretty certainly, some of the more bizarre specimens didn't - but the mood is so convincingly set that one's critical faculties can comfortably take a back seat. (As long as it's not in one of those string and paper flying machines.)

There is more to the cast than the credits indicate and small parts fall to the likes of William Rushton, Fred Emney, Eric Barker etc. In just over two hours nobody really hogs the screen too long, with the possible exception of Stuart Whitman who doesn't quite manifest the spirit of the rest of the cast.



The Disc: Picture quality is much as remembered from a TV broadcast and the disc could possibly be sourced from the same transfer. It suffers a bit from definition losses due to the (quite passable) cropping of the TODD-AO widescreen frame and the colour is a little suspect with its slight sepia hue (that doesn't look intentional). But overall it is a watchable picture and a fairly typical transfer of its vintage.

The sound is good and makes you wonder how some newer films can sound so bad by the time they get into the home. The music sounds full (and if you can't quite remember the film there is every chance you'll find yourself able to sing along with at least a couple of lines of the title tune when you get to hear a few bars of the intro), but be prepared for odd moments of dialogue where the stereo can't make up its mind which speaker it should be coming out of. It's a pity that the disc lacks the entr'acte that was included on the recent US issue of the film and it would be nice to have the complete movie in PAL sometime. A remaster might also present an opportunity to chapter the disc to facilitate access to the more interesting stunt sequences.

The first copy of the disc reviewed looked almost impenetrably spotty on side three. A replacement proved much better, but could have still benefited from further improvement.

THE BLUE MAX

20th CENTURY FOX 1062-70 £9.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1966 146mins (3 sides)

Starring: George Peppard, James Mason, Ursula Andress, Jeremy Kemp, Karl Michael Vogler, Anton Diffring
Director: John Guillermin

Set in a similar time - and made in a similar time to the previous film *The Blue Max* is again, by virtue of its action sequences, a film in the grander style.

Bruno Stachel's (George Peppard) rise as a WWI German air ace amidst the resentment of his more aristocratic fellow officers (curiously lacking the duelling scars usually employed to establish such intricacies of German social standing found in other dramatic presentations) gets in the way of some interesting flying sequences and other examples of contemporary military memorabilia.

Some of the back projections look a bit weedy and the scanning and cropping of the widescreen frame is a mite clumsy but the presentation can still be enjoyed to a degree. Bruno has a bit of a fling with Kaeti, the Count's wife (Ursula Andress), and in an interesting twist to the plot he also comes into conflict with the Count himself (James Mason) and becomes but a pawn in a display of political ruthlessness matching the unrelenting personal ambition of the aspiring airman.

Even though this disc is reviewed in vague conjunction with *Those Magnificent Men* readers would be well advised against watching the two back to back. Karl Michael Vogler manages to play almost the same part in both movies, and while there is a lighter element to *The Blue Max* it is undoubtedly of no help to one's immersion in the plot to be continually recalling his previous over-the-top efforts.

The Disc: Any comment on the print quality here would incline to compare it in style with the previous



film. However, the sound appears to be just re-processed stereo. It's not the real thing and there is no audible movement between the channels - just a pronounced bassiness in one and a slightly greater hiss in the other. The optical sound is a bit thin and not obviously distorted, but one would

have probably been less critical if expectations had not been raised by the stereo labelling.

Pressing quality was again suspect and it was another case of seeking replacement for a spotty side three.

BLUE HAWAII

20th CENTURY FOX 2001-70 £6.99
CLV COLOUR STEREO
1961 101mins Rated U

Starring: Elvis Presley, Joan Blackman, Angela Lansbury, Nancy Walters, Roland Winters, John Archer
Director: Norman Taurog

We had to review this - even though you sort of know that playing the thing is going to reveal a murky NTSC conversion that is well below what the LV format deserves. The fact that the disc has been off the market for two years and has now re-appeared (but for how long?) - at a budget price no less - demands some mention be made of it.



Of course the worst thing that Elvis could do in a movie was to take his shirt off and reveal that puny chest (albeit that it served as a more than adequate receptacle for a great pair of lungs). But admiring fans can be very accommodating. In *Kid Galahad* they even swallowed him being cast as a boxer!

Here he's a Hawaiian beachboy, returning home after a two year stint as an army conscript in Europe - a suspiciously convenient echo of reality that the Colonel probably found very appealing insofar as he'd be getting the U.S. Military to cough up for Elvis' screen apparel as well as being able to avoid wasting unnecessary rehearsal time on the first twenty pages of the script.

You'll have to take our word for it there was a script - even if it's a fairly typical formula piece. The main theme is that of youth breaking away from parental control and the rejection of the perceived values of the American way of life - although an intuitive understanding of the free-enterprise system is soon revealed and the true essence of the conflict can be seen to be the lack of communication between generations brought about by the pace of cultural evolution. As is usual for an Elvis film, the message is conveyed through several scenes featuring children and dogs, a display of fisticuffs in a bar and various misunderstandings about the validity of his romantic involvements with the female members of the cast.

There are 14 songs - *Blue Hawaii*, *Rock-a-Hula-Baby*, *Can't Help Falling In Love*, and *Hawaiian Wedding Song*

being the best known.

The Disc: The transfer does turn out as expected and is rather modestly defined and strangely hued. It must be a good ten years old and was probably acceptable in its time - but one wants for better now. The scanning tends to be a bit creaky and many of the well-lit scenes are spoilt by the impression given of everything being viewed through a dirty TV screen. The sound is genuine stereo and not terribly hi-fi, but adequate, and with only some occasional slight extraneous background noises. The pressing of the disc is fairly early and the review copy showed rather too many spots for comfort on side two.

Packaging aficionados will appreciate the better-than-average sleeve notes that list all the songs and provide some interesting snippets of info on the background to the making of the film. Fans tend to appreciate this sort of thing. (Though they might quibble with the still on the rear that comes from a different Elvis movie!)

THE SALAMANDER

PRECISION LVITC 0016 £4.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1981 97mins Rated 15

Starring: Franco Nero, Anthony Quinn, Martin Balsam, Sybil Danning, Cleavon Little, Christopher Lee, Paul Smith, John Steiner, Claudia Cardinale, Eli Wallach
Director: Peter Zinner

A planned fascist overthrow of the Italian government provides the background to a thriller that goes light on the action and heavy on the dialogue. The intensity of the latter requires that some attention be paid to it in order to retain a sufficiently strong grip on the twists and turns of the plot. A bevy of well-known names on the cast list is not just an excuse in itself to make the movie and there is some substance here - but it lacks the sparkle to make for a really memorable viewing experience.



There is a love story too. With a weepy-eyed look shared with that other ladies' favourite Omar Sharif, Franco Nero plays an Italian intelligence officer who falls for Sybil Danning. Anthony Quinn puts in a brisk performance, and Martin Balsam has a smaller role that leaves a significantly larger impression. The photography looks nice - in a matter-of-fact sort of way.

The Disc: In the manner of *Ruckus*, *Hoodwink*, and *The Fruit Is Ripe* this

is another sharp transfer from the PRECISION catalogue worthy of the disc. Their titles tend often to be not so strong in the sound department but this is OK - it's an optical track with some clarity, no distortion and just a mild hiss that rarely intrudes. Considering the nature of the film the soundtrack could be regarded as acceptable.

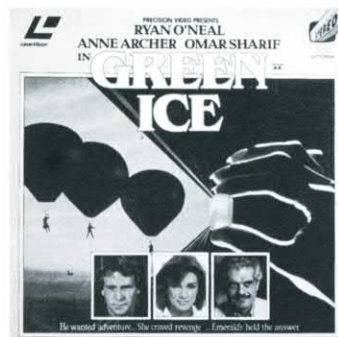
GREEN ICE

PRECISION LVITC 0004 £6.99
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP
1981 112mins Rated AA

Starring: Ryan O'Neal, Anne Archer, Omar Sharif
Director: Ernest Ray

You want Omar Sharif? We got Omar Sharif. And with material like this you understand how he came to get that look in his eyes.

'Green Ice' is smart-talk for emeralds. Ryan O'Neal is an American



tourist passing through Mexico who becomes involved in a smuggling operation being conducted by Bolivian rebels. Omar Sharif is the Mr Big of the country's emerald industry whose stash of gems secreted in his penthouse headquarters ends up the target of a balloon-led raid by O'Neal and friends. Anne Archer is the woman both men do it all for. In the opening scenes of the film one notices a similarity between the background music and the Bill Wyman hit record - *Je Suis Un Rockstar* - and the said Rolling Stone turns out to be responsible for the entire score, as well as the two songs sung by Maria Muldaur.

From the company that brought you *Raise The Titanic*.

The Disc: Picture quality is a bit smeary and diffused for a PRECISION title, but what you see may be governed by the fact that the disc is an early pressing and some of the blame may lie here. It's watchable but no more. Side two of the review copy had too many spots and dropouts for comfort and is going back straight after. The sound is a reasonable optical track though there are isolated moments of distortion in some volume peaks and about ten minutes towards the end of side two is a bit crackly throughout.

Postscript: The replacement disc, as can be the case with the earlier UK pressings, showed some interesting differences to the reviewed copy. The disc was much cleaner and had a noticeably more vivid picture, although it was the reduction in the sound distortion that prompts the greatest

comment. There have been occasions when readers have pointed out that their copy of a disc has had sound characteristics at variance with the magazine review, but this is the first one we have stumbled across. PAL discs have always supposedly been free of the variation in sound quality that was such a problem on early NTSC discs, but it has obviously happened - even if only to a much less significant degree - on some of the early PAL pressings too.

PURPLE RAIN

WARNER PEL 61398 £19.99
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP
1984 106mins Rated 15

Starring: Prince, Apollonia Koteroy, Morris Day, Olga Karlatos, Clarence Williams III
Director: Albert Magnoli

More than likely to be written off sight unseen *Purple Rain* is a well-conceived musical film that achieves a coherent blend of song and drama. It is a step away from convention. There are no obvious breaks in the continuity for the purpose of inserting a tune and everything just seems to fit together - a designer musical? The energy is right too - commitment triumphs over both experience and expertise. Prince (who seems like a nice boy) manages to put a bit of glamour to the obvious emotional squalor of his family situation without diminishing its dramatic effect. You see, there is an underlying message to it all. And there is a depth to the production which can be substantially attributed to director Albert Magnoli's hand in the writing of the script (along with William Blinn). The advantage the writer/director situation confers is that of being able to adapt the shooting to cope with problems (and fresh ideas) as they occur, and not be inflexibly hindered by the rigidity of what already exists. The film has not become indulgent as a result, though keeping the story within a natural Prince environment aids the exercise.



Even with its generous running time, the viewer is still left wanting for more and the film is enjoyable re-viewed in large doses. (Just for once, the disc would appear not to suffer from being un-chaptered.) It will be interesting to see whether subsequent Prince movies maintain the standard.

For fear of unsuspecting readers being misled by the merest whisper of the term "musical", it should be pointed out that *Purple Rain* is not out of the MGM-Classic mould and you should be prepared for some fruity language and a few sexy scenes that you might think

worthy of even an 18 rating.

The Disc: In common with many of the WARNER titles, the film is well scanned down to the proportions of the TV screen. Transfer quality is only just adequate - the outdoor scenes look fine, but most of the action takes place inside or at night (usually both) and there is too much grain to the picture (the effect exaggerated by a light leak creeping in from the right-hand side). The sound is OK (there is an odd bit of distortion on some of the music) but the content really demands a separate, full-range magnetic audio transfer. What there is in harmony with the picture though.

THE CARE BEARS MOVIE

VESTRON VLV 15082 £19.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1985 75mins Rated U

The *Care Bears* spread love and togetherness sufficient to have you scraping the sugary residue from the bottom of your TV with each viewing. Narrated by Mickey Rooney and with musical accompaniment provided by Carole King and John Sebastian (ex-Loving Spoonful) - and to a lesser degree NRBQ and the Tower Of Power - *The Care Bears Movie* makes for 75 minutes of comfy cartoon entertainment



that some may find a little overpowering in its cuteness. (Trivia buffs might care to know that Harry Dean Stanton is the singing voice for the lion on the tune *Home Is In Your Heart*.)

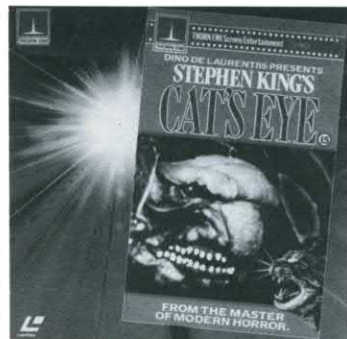
The Disc looks appealing with its vibrant colour and the picture is averagely crisp by cartoon standards. The optical soundtrack is clear and adequately detailed.

CAT'S EYE

THORN EMI TLY 90 3516 1 £19.99
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP
1985 90mins Rated 15

Starring: Drew Barrymore, James Woods, Alan King, Kenneth McMillan, Robert Hays, Candy Clark
Director: Lewis Teague

Three unrelated short stories from Stephen King brought together via the travels of a roaming cat. In the first, James Woods is making a reluctant attempt to give up smoking by enrolling at a rather unconventional clinic. To a non-smoker the premise looks a little dubious but Robert Hays' clambering along a narrow ledge high up on a tall building in the second episode illustrates the point that we all have personal fears ripe for dramatic exploitation. He doesn't take



on the lofty stroll willingly - it comes as a result of a perverse wager, made in order to avoid being set up on a bogus drugs charge by a jealous husband anxious to put a stop to the man's philandering - at least as far as his wife is concerned. Robert Hays is reasonably convincing in the part, but at the crucial moment when the unsavoury challenge is thrown down the viewer is momentarily on tenterhooks in expectation of him lapsing into his Ted Striker role to utter "What a pisser!" to the watching camera.

Carlo Rambaldi gets to manufacture the little monster depicted in the final episode that features Drew Barrymore (*Firestarter*) as a little girl with a most unwelcome nocturnal visitor to her bedroom.

The compilation amounts to an entertaining 90 minutes but leaves no significant lasting impression.

The Disc: The credits and opening sequences are in widescreen and the picture looks sharp and colourful - momentarily. But when the first feature gets under way the cropping fills the TV frame and the transfer is grainy and ill-defined thereafter. The optical soundtrack is very good but the stereo effects are too pronounced and draw the viewer's attention away from the screen on occasions. The stereo should sound more balanced through the closer-spaced speakers of a stereo TV.

A disappointing aspect of the presentation is the changeover point at the end of 55 minutes of playing time on side one which occurs right in the thick of a story. The episode concludes only three minutes after turning the disc over and these closing moments could have been comfortably accommodated on side one. If those responsible for this care so little about the disc's presentation they would presumably be equally unconcerned that we didn't spend our money on buying it.

ESCAPE TO VICTORY

GUILD GHLV 1447 £6.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1981 111mins Rated 15

Starring: Sylvester Stallone, Michael Caine, Max Von Sydow, Pele
Director: John Huston

There were two ways to finish this movie and the inference is that they did the wrong one. That it should matter sufficiently to care about proves something about the overall production even if it is a little overblown and far-fetched. It's fairly

obvious that the thing was written backwards - disciplined by the requirement to involve as many celebrity soccer stars as possible (the diversity of nationalities presumably being to ensure box-office appeal in as many countries as possible) and an American star, Sylvester Stallone, in what is really just a story about a WWII escape plan by a bunch of British POWs to be attempted under cover of a Allied/German international in occupied Paris.

The timing of the escape favours sentimentality and misses the more dramatic alternative which the review cannot really discuss without spoiling your first viewing. One of the aforementioned formula ingredients that is the downfall of this version at least is Stallone's emotional farewell to his girl (yup, they managed to work a bit of 'love' interest into a WWII POW drama. It can be done). It looks overplayed and you realise that some rather jumpy editing immediately beforehand probably indicates the snipping of a few moments that might have qualified the parting embrace.



The Disc reveals a typical older GUILD transfer - reasonably open and well-defined but a little grainy and with that slightly off-colour look they have. Some of the scanning makes itself a bit obvious but there is enough of a picture left to involve yourself in what is going on. The film was made in stereo but the disc version is only mono. What there is is clear enough and without any obvious defects, but don't expect to get too much volume out of it. The disc pressing showed a few dropouts but was otherwise OK.

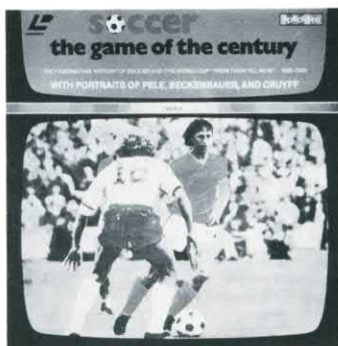
SOCCER - THE GAME OF THE CENTURY

SPECTRUM 790 031 1 £9.99
CAV COLOUR MONO
1978 53mins

You don't get to see that many clips from the 1939-45 era in *Soccer - The Game Of The Century* (would you believe none?), because as the underlying theme is that of a history of the World Cup over the last 60 years (1920-78), there is a predictable jump between France in 1938 and Brazil in 1950. But in neither event do you notice the shaggy haircuts and passionate after-goal embraces evidenced in *Escape To Victory*. As this is the documentary it's probably the more accurate and the fact that you don't see the hugs and kisses may not mean that it wasn't the fashion - you often see players rushing toward each other but their paths always converge

just off the edge of the screen.

Where the accuracy of this disc does fall down is the faked crowd reaction dubbed on to all the older match excerpts. What possesses compilers of



historic sporting footage (and war material for that matter) to believe this enhances the visuals rather than being a corruption of the truth and an annoying distraction (it's so phoney!) is some indication of their lack of appreciation of the alertness and intellect of the viewer. This is our history they're fooling with.

With the audio muted in slow-motion you can fractionally decrease the speed of the older footage to good effect. While this does make the movement noticeably jumpier the people become more life-like and less reminiscent of silent-movie comedians. The speed adjustment gives them a personality and comparison with the modern players becomes a useful exercise.

But it would be wrong to imply there is extensive vintage material on hand here. Much of the programme is devoted to profiling Pele, Beckenbauer, and Cruyff and this makes the presentation of the disc a little uneven. However, it's worth having for frames 02226 - 02233 on side two where a certain goal from the 1966 final can be put under still-frame inspection. Your editor had occasion to give a lecture on Laser-Vision last year (really, no joke) to a roomful of doubting educationalists. All proved fairly uneventful (ie, boring) until the aforesaid sequence was thrown up on to the video projector. To a man (sorry, 'person') they sprang into life and a good 10 minutes of vigorous debate ensued. This is interactivity!

That excerpt included, the picture quality of a lot of the material on the disc is not particularly stunning. It is what it is - a documentary compilation of all manner of diversely sourced footage. It has been transferred a little on the pale side and the disc looks better with the brightness reduced on your display. The commentary is unfortunately crackly throughout and only bears listening at lowish volume without too much treble emphasis.

BOTHAM'S ASHES

BBC VIDEO BBCL 5015 £19.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1981 109mins

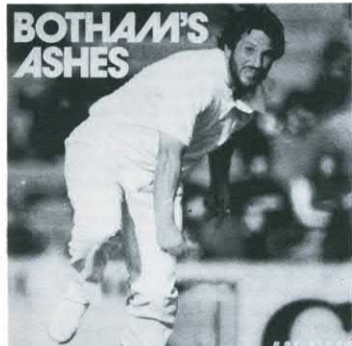
"England were teetering on the brink of defeat...." Ah yes, stirring stuff. A moment of the '81 Test series when Ian Botham saved the day and put the Ashes in their rightful place.

Of all the sports the laser disc is least equipped to handle, cricket must

be somewhere at the top of the list. Usually it is a case of a sport just being unsuited to the preferred CAV format (ie, a game of football on one disc; a full boxing match on one side uninterrupted), but even accepting the second-best limitations of the lengthier CLV playing time, it's still five days!

In practice the disc is just a straight re-release of the tape issue and is in many ways an adventurous addition to the LV catalogue. One would wish it some measure of sales success.

Most of the footage consists of selected highlights of the third, fourth and fifth Tests and the original commentary is left intact. Unlike many other sports presented on TV the standard of cricket commentary remains high and thus stands repetition. Richie Benaud conducts an interview with Botham that is spread around the disc. It is a pity there are no Chapters - being a CLV disc it is very difficult to access chosen sequences. One shot of twenty-two cricketers standing in a green field tends to look very much like another in Scan mode.



The Disc: There is something definitely 'not quite right' about the master used for this disc. The level of grain is colossally high, to the extent of making the image indistinct when it comes down to resolving fine detail (the ball!). Sometimes you'll also notice five strips of even coarser grain spread across the picture. About 24 minutes into side two, and halfway through the day's play, the grain vanishes and the picture quality is to the standard you would expect. At about the 42:00 point the bands of grain re-appear momentarily and the side is unpredictable thereafter. You should maybe get to audition this disc before you buy it. The sound is of acceptable documentary standard and without any flaws.

GIRL GROUPS

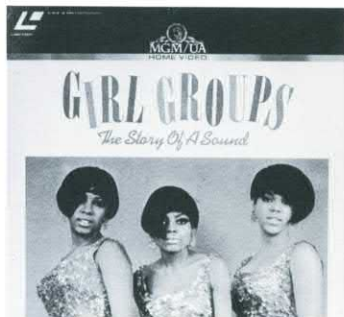
MGM/UA UMLV 10194 £4.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1983 62mins

Girl Groups is another production from DELILAH FILMS, who appear to have taken on the role of documentary historians of America's popular music culture. It pitches straight in with Bob Feldman and Richard Gotterhrer, two-thirds of the '60s songwriting team that ended up performing in their own right as the Strangeloves, putting some background detail to the Angels' *My Boyfriend's Back*. Making hit records sounds easy the way they recount it.

Ronette, Ronnie Spector, cites

Frankie Lyman as a major influence and the juvenile star is seen lip-synching in a 1964 US TV show shortly before his death from heroin addiction while barely into his twenties. His big hit *Why Do Fools Fall In Love* made him a star at 14 and even had him topping the bill at the London Palladium in 1957. There is a theme of manipulation and exploitation that runs throughout the documentary, with few of the artists appearing to be more than vehicles for fulfilling the ambitions of their 'mentors'. The viewpoint is implied rather than stated, but it is bound to give the viewer who might have innocently bought some of the records at the time a wholly different perspective.

Many of the clips (mostly from American TV) feature live performances of familiar songs. It's interesting to see RED-BIRD stars, the Shangri-Las, going at *Give Him A Great Big Kiss* (but what wouldn't you give to see



Past, Present & Future instead?). The interview with Ronnie Spector can't help but include a brief look at the enigmatic Phil Spector. Darlene Love comes over as a true survivor in spite of a financially unrewarding spell with the Crystals and as general PHILLES dogsbody. The vintage clip of Phil and the Crystals in rehearsal is pure musical magic.

It seems a bit unfair to see Shindig session group, the Blossoms, covering the Velvelettes' *Needle In A Haystack* - but it does tend to reinforce the secondary significance of the performers in relation to the sound. Live clips also show Mary Wells, The Exciters, The Angels, Martha & The Vandellas, The Dixie Cups, The Marvelettes, The Ronettes & The Supremes and there are more excerpts still of mimed performances.

On side two the theme cedes into a Supremes life-story that stretches the generic nature of the title, but given that it's not really meant to be a studied and complete survey the disc still offers up some intriguing insights into what was more a style of music than the major trend the unwary viewer might be led to believe was the case.

The programme was inspired by a book of the same name but we will give it no greater mention than that because you can bet that it says sod all about this disc. Some time in the future, when people come to understand all this newer technology, they'll stop needlessly chopping down trees for such uses and put the stuff on the end of the disc.

As with the other documentary *Coal Cats* the blending of the many audio sources has been well done and the disc

is listenable at reasonable volume, even though you know the original audio must have been pretty rosey on more than one occasion. It looks like the other disc too.

WITNESS

CIC-PARAMOUNT LVG 2165 £19.99
CLV COLOUR STEREO
1985 108mins Rated 15

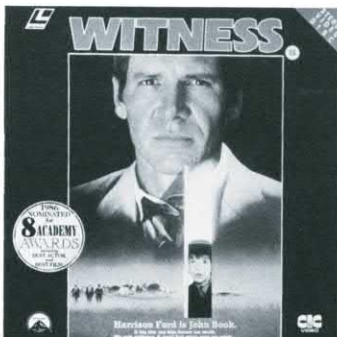
Starring: Harrison Ford
Director: Peter Weir

For many people - audiences and critics alike - *Witness* was the best film of 1985. It attracted no less than 8 Oscar nominations and did splendid box-office business in all countries.

It also proved that Harrison Ford is a fine actor as well as a big star. His performance as a conscientious police detective is entirely believable and he is well-served by equally sensitive direction (from Australia's Peter Weir), and an intriguing script (by Earl W. Wallace & William Kelley).

The story set in modern-day Pennsylvania concerns, in its broader sense, a clash of life-styles. On the one hand there is the Amish community - a religious order similar in some ways to the Mormons - who live their peaceful lives without any regard for twentieth century amenities or its mercenary philosophies. On the other hand, there is the hard-bitten criminal element of the big city (in this case, Philadelphia).

These two factions are brought together when an attractive Amish widow (Kelly McGillis) and her son (Lukas Haas) travel to Philadelphia where they become involved in a murder case. The young boy has witnessed the killing of a police officer. In an attempt to protect them from the killers, police captain John Book (Harrison Ford) is shot and wounded. He takes them back to their rural Amish community where he is nursed back to health. Soon the killers, corrupt police colleagues of honest cop, Ford - find out where he is and set out to kill him. Along the way, Ford has a romance with the attractive Miss McGillis. And that's about all there is to the story.



What makes *Witness* an outstanding film is the care with which it has been made. The characterisation is wonderfully projected. The tight economy of the dialogue is perfectly suited to Ford's deadpan, Bogart-like delivery. And the way that director Peter Weir handles the varying moods of the story - from the gritty violence of the criminal underworld to the gently bucolic Amish country life - shows an extraordinary perception. There's a welcome absence of didacticism here;

without resorting to symbolism or melodramatics, the opposing factions are perfectly portrayed.

The Amish sequences, particularly, have a John Ford quality which indicates that Mr Weir knows what great cinema is all about. Maurice Jarre, who wrote the music, has never been one of my favourite screen composers. But, on this occasion, he has caught the required moods with skill and elan (even if I still have the feeling that he has been greatly assisted by the efforts of a gifted orchestrator).

Witness is an exemplary piece of film making. A film to treasure and one that lends itself to repeated viewings. As a film I cannot recommend it too highly, but as an example of laser disc reproduction it leaves something to be desired. While the film print is not a bad one, either the video transfer or the disc mastering is below what it should be. Side two has an excessive herringbone veiling that some LV fans might find difficult to live with. The stereo is quite lively and the sound quality isn't bad, but one can detect the odd pop and click which, of course, comes from the print and is not the fault of the disc.

[KEN BARNES]

GREYSTOKE

WARNER PEL 61375 £24.99
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP
1983 129mins (3 sides) Rated PG

Starring: Ralph Richardson, Ian Holm, James Fox, Christopher Lambert, Andie MacDowell
Directed by: Hugh Hudson



As the full title indicates *Greystoke - The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes* is the 'prequel' to all those scores (hundreds?) of Tarzan movies of varying awfulness of which nearly everyone must have seen at least a representative sampling. It takes the familiar tale of the English baby brought up by apes in the jungle completely at face value. Any inconsistencies - what breed are these apes, and why is Tarzan wearing underwear? - are simply ignored. A less confident director would surely have felt compelled to give us an eccentric anthropologist to deliver pseudo-scientific explanations of the phenomena as they crop up.

It is clear from the outset that this is the film that the story has been waiting for. No freshly-mown jungle clearings or neatly manicured tropical herbaceous borders in sight - just the extraordinary, dense tropical rain-forest of Cameroon. In the pre-title sequence we have our first glimpse of

the apes who play such an important part in the story. While commonsense tells us that there must be people inside most of the skins, the effect is astonishingly convincing.

No less impressive are the sequences set in England. Helped along by *Elgar's First Symphony* the atmosphere of life in the great houses (as it probably never was, but one hopes it might have been) is beautifully evoked.

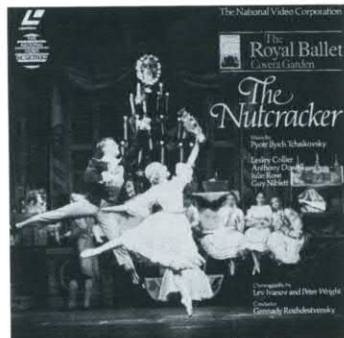
The script is well served by the distinguished (mainly British) cast; the lion's share is, however, borne by the young French actor, Christopher Lambert, who is as convincing in the physically demanding jungle sequences as he is in the more conventional scenes filmed in England. In the much smaller, but very important, role of the old Earl of Greystoke, the late Sir Ralph Richardson reminds us of what a sad loss his death was. I am not sure whether this or Paul McCartney's *Give My Regards To Broad Street* was his last film, but there can be no doubt as to which is the more fitting memorial.

Director Hugh Hudson was clearly at pains not to over-glamourise the film, with the result that some of the jungle scenes (in particular) are rather underlit, as indeed the locations are in real life. Although the transfer to video is good (the resolution is significantly better than the majority of the first batch of WARNER titles), and the picture is certainly sharp enough, this liberal use of shadow inevitably leads to a certain loss of detail when viewed on the TV screen rather than in the cinema. The stereophonic sound, on the other hand, is amazingly vivid - oh for a DOLBY surround sound decoder - with almost too wide a dynamic range. It is rather hissy, in absolute terms not enough to distract at reasonable volume level, but I would be interested to know whether this is an accurate reflection of the master, or whether it is the best that the format can offer without noise reduction. [PAUL RONCHETTI]

THE NUTCRACKER

ARTS INT 01 AI 039 £19.99
CLV-Ch COLOUR STEREO
1985 100mins

Featuring: Lesley Collier, Anthony Dowell, Julie Rose, Guy Niblett, Michael Coleman
Conductor: Gennady Rozhdestvensky
From a performance by the Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden on 30th January, 1985.



The story of the ballet is based on the fairy tale *The Nutcracker & The House King* by E.T.A. Hoffmann.

Marius Petipa derived the ballet from an adaptation of the story by Alexandre Dumas, the elder. But Petipa was taken ill and his assistant, Lev Ivanov, finally put the ballet into production in 1892. This production by Peter Wright is based on Hoffmann's original story with much of the original Ivanov choreography retained. Many versions make much of the psychological significance of Clara's dream, but Peter Wright has chosen to stick to the plain dramatic plot and place the emphasis on Drosselmeyer.

The ballet is in two acts; Act 1, Scene 1 is set in the Stahlbaum's house in early 19th century Nuremberg, during a Christmas party; Act II takes place in the palace of the Sugar Plum Fairy in the Kingdom of Sweets.

Drosselmeyer is a magical maker of clocks and automata. His nephew has been turned into a Nutcracker doll by the Queen of the Mice in vengeance for Drosselmeyer's invention of a most effective mouse-trap when he was employed by the Royal Palace. To break the spell the Nutcracker must kill the Mouse King and win a young girl's love despite his ugly appearance.

The set designs and costumes in the first act are of 19th century Germany, while the sets in the second are reproductions of sugar paste constructions. All were designed by Julia Trevelyan Oman and give good atmosphere and credibility to the plot in both acts.

Michael Coleman, as Drosselmeyer, is not such a threatening a character as in some productions. He manages to impart an air of magical mystery but still remains convincing in this non-dancing part. Guy Niblett, as the Nutcracker, does all his dancing in Act 1 - the main part of his action being in the battle with the mice. Julie Rose, as Clara, dances competently but finds it rather difficult to express the wonder and emotions of a 14 year old girl. Simon Rice, as Fritz, works his part out rather better. The two big names, Lesley Collier and Anthony Dowell, are kept for the set pieces in Act II. Both are first-class, experienced dancers and are right for the grand pas de deux. The general standard is high and the children's dances in Act 1 are particularly effective; the angels less so. The Royal Opera House orchestra plays admirably under Gennady Rozhdestvensky who conveys the full feeling and brilliance of Tchaikovsky's music without descending into sentiment.

The ballet was directed for BBC TV by John Vernon and co-directed by Peter Wright. Peter Wright trained as a TV producer with the BBC after his dancing career was over and he has produced a number of films and TV programmes about dancing. This version of the ballet is a definite success.

There has been a long wait for a good quality disc of *The Nutcracker*. It is unfortunate the PIONEER disc of the American Ballet Theatre's version with Mikhail Baryshnikov has not transferred well into the PAL format. It would have been nice to have had the two versions in the catalogue, but as Bruce Stewart, writing from Australia commented in LDR-5, the PIONEER master must be "just plain crook" and this latest disc is really the only one worth considering.

The picture is well defined, with very little videotape noise. The

scenes are well lit and cuts from long-shot to close-up are well timed. There is no doubt that for ballet to work on film or video the dancers have to make more use of facial expression than they would if the production were just being viewed from the stalls in a theatre. The soundtrack is naturally in stereo and the stage noise is well suppressed.

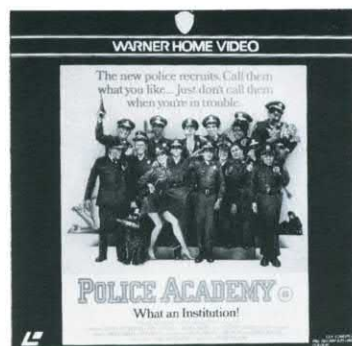
The review copy of the disc was a good pressing and, I trust, representative of the rest of the batch. The ballet can be recommended for both its dramatic interpretation and its laser disc quality.

[TONY WELLS]

POLICE ACADEMY

WARNER PEL 70016 £19.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1984 93mins Rated 15

Starring: Steve Guttenberg, Kim Cattrall, Bubba Smith, George Gaynes
Director: Hugh Wilson



Although set "in a US city" *Police Academy* is made in Canada and its possible grosser moments are moderated as a result. The story is of the city's new mayoress demanding a relaxation in the entry qualifications, so as to make the Police Department open to a wider range of recruits - losers in all but name. What turns up at the Police Academy for training is nothing but bad news for Chief Hurst and his seasoned professionals. Those looking for ninety minutes of undemanding comedy that does its work without resorting to an excess of coarse language and unnecessary crudity might find something here. (Even the presence of porn star Georgina Spelvin - who makes a brief, and clothed, appearance in order to put a smile on Commandant Lassard's face in mid-lecture - is managed with some 'tasteful' restraint.)

The Disc: Without being particularly stunning the picture is at least watchable, if lacking in ultimate resolution. However, image quality definitely improves as the film progresses and there are some tonally very pleasing outdoor scenes on side two. The 'WARNER spots' show up in the darker scenes and it is really only these that compel us to advise caution with our more quality conscious readers. The audio is a clear optical track.

POLICE ACADEMY II THEIR FIRST ASSIGNMENT

WARNER PEL 20020 £19.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1984 84mins Rated 15



Starring: Steve Guttenberg, Bubba Smith, David Graf, Michael Winslow, Bruce Mahler, Colleen Camp, Art Metrano, Marion Ramsey, Howard Hesseman, George Gaynes
Director: Jerry Paris

Well, somebody must have liked it. And just look at all those stars! There are some fresh writers and a new director, and the story just tags on where the last one left off - our now-trained recruits setting off into the real world of law enforcement. They come to the aid of stressed Captain Lassard (played by Howard Hesseman), the hip DJ from *WKRP In Cincinnati*. As the name indicates, he's the brother of the Commandant and the two share a funny scene in a Chinese restaurant but generally the humour is a little strained and the continuity is a little suspect. Both language and humour are a little more basic. An unmistakable follow-up.

The Disc: Image quality compares with the first film but exhibits a bit of a sepiatone throughout and is possibly less appealing. There aren't any white spots though. The sound is not as good, without doubt. It has the clarity but is a little raspy in the treble regions and won't take as much volume as the first disc.

James Bond 003

There was a time when it seemed we'd never see James Bond on PAL disc - at least not while they were still being made. The patience of fans has been rewarded with a generous trio of titles which have met with good sales reaction. That means we'll probably see more of them in future. Their appeal is understandable. In spite of the apparent corniness and superficiality (you know James is going to make it through) the formula is well-honed to provide two hours of pure escapism for all the family - plenty of thrills, plenty of the glamorous high-life, and find any excuse to shift the action from one corner of the globe to the next as soon as the pace shows the slightest hint of flagging.

A VIEW TO A KILL

WARNER PEL 99213 £24.99
 CLV COLOUR STEREO MP
 1985 125mins (3 sides) Rated PG

Starring: Roger Moore, Tanya Roberts, Grace Jones, Christopher Walken, Patrick Macnee
Director: John Glen

The latest and last Roger Moore episode shows the formula still works. Casting Patrick Macnee as Bond's

aristocratic help-mate has been flawed by bumping him off mid-way, and he is presumably lost to the series where his bumbling humorous style could have done much to help the new Bond through the early stages.

Side three has a fire-engine chase, a big finale in a mine, and just when you think it's all over, a dicing-with-death battle with an airship on top of the San Francisco Bay Bridge. All in a day's work for our superhero as he attempts to prevent the crazed industrialist, Zorin (Christopher Walken), cornering the world's silicon chip industry. The film will be of some interest to those fond of counting stunt doubles, who are remarkably badly disguised in their appearances here.



The Disc: The master looks rather too grainy and diffused to be good enough for disc release though, like all the Bonds, it has a pleasant 'open' feel to the picture. You just wish for that bit more detail. Good use is made of the stereo (the mine scene will have you looking up as well as left and right) and the overall sound is pretty good. It is reasonably dynamic though there is a modicum of hiss present.

NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN

WARNER PEL 61337 £24.99
 CLV COLOUR STEREO MP
 1983 128mins (3 sides) Rated PG

Starring: Sean Connery, Klaus Maria Brandauer, Max Von Sydow, Barbara Carrera, Kim Basinger, Bernie Casie, Alec McCowen, Edward Fox
Director: Irvin Kershner



In something of a throw-back to an earlier style of Bond we have Sean Connery doing the business with a little less reliance on novelty and without the now anticipated big climactic ending. There's still the evil industrialist - Largo (Klaus Maria Brandauer) - this time tied up

with a SPECTRE plot to ransom some captured nuclear missiles and James does still have a few hi-tech toys provided to deal with his evil adversaries.

The Disc: Of the three, *Never Say Never Again* has the best picture quality, and though it lacks resolution (which to some extent is a by-product of the scanning) it has little grain and some of the outdoor scenes are quite pleasantly defined. There are some white spots but these are less noticeable than on some of the other WARNER discs. The sound is reasonable but sounds slightly masked and dull in the treble and retains a level of hiss that might be distracting at volume. As a couple of readers have already pointed out, the stereo is the wrong way round.

OCTOPUSSY

WARNER PEL 99212 £24.99
 CLV COLOUR STEREO MP
 1983 125mins (3 sides) Rated PG

Starring: Roger Moore, Maud Adams, Louis Jordan, Kristina Wayborn, Kabir Bedi, Vijay Amritraj
Director: John Glen

Octopussy will give you jet-lag keeping up with the location changes and the plot seems more complicated than it really is, involving as it does a delinquent Russian general's (Steven Berkoff) attempts to upset the East-West balance-of-power by exploding a nuclear bomb in West Germany with the aim of making the Allies believe it was a nuclear accident, and as a result, voluntarily disarming and leaving Western Europe open to Russian invasion. (If you didn't quite follow all that it may be for the best as there is a rather menacing semblance of logic involved that might cause a few sleepless nights trying to determine its flaws.)



In some ways the settings - in India and in the circus where the bomb is planted - are a bit too lightweight to fulfill the dramatic demands of the plot and it is a little less believable than it might have been. But does that matter?

The Disc: Picture and sound quality are very much a match for *A View To A Kill* so if you found yourself happy with that....

[Editor's note: We did make an attempt to get some of these Bonds done in CAV on side three, but in spite of no apparent objections from either L & G or PHILIPS nothing materialised. Maybe we need an "Equal Rights With VHS Owners" march to wake these people up!]

ZARDOZ

CBS/FOX 1208-70
CLV COLOUR MONO
1974 101mins

£4.99

Starring: Sean Connery, Sara Kestelman, Charlotte Rampling, John Alderton
Direction, Production & Screenplay by John Boorman



Enough of the impregnability of the James Bond character must have rubbed off on to Sean Connery to mislead him into thinking he could do a complete movie clad only in thigh-boots and a pair of red Y-Fronts. And this is science-fiction????

Set in 2293, the Earth has suffered industrial collapse, yet a group has survived the ravages of the pollution by enclosing itself in the Vortex, - a protected zone of idyllic rural tranquility which Connery, as an excluded barbaric warrior of the old ways, guards with the others of his tribe.

Well, that's what it says on the sleeve, but to most people it will look more like just a bunch of hippies getting spaced out in some ornate stately home and there are more than a few touches of the stylish whimsy of such as *The Prisoner* and *The Avengers* here. It loses any credibility as serious science-fiction the moment John Alderton strolls on to the set sporting a curly blond wig and a natty mauve frock.

Because the film was originally shot in wide-screen, Charlotte Rampling's lecture on penile erection of the human male is not as informative for the home viewer as the cinema audience. She manages OK with the 'before' slide (that fills the screen with some clarity), but the 'after' diagram unfortunately conveys most of its message unseen somewhere past the left-hand extremities of the TV screen.

Undoubtedly there is some loss of scale to the undertaking in the transfer to the small screen and the efforts of cameraman, Geoffrey '2001' Unsworth, are not readily apparent. The sound on the disc is too hissy, but underneath it shows reasonable range and body (could it have been a stereo film originally?). The picture is a bit murky and is what might be considered typical of FOX's NTSC conversion style of transfer. There are some spots on the film print that show, but the review pressing added a few of its own that might be thought average for a disc of this vintage.

Incidentally, there is an explanation of the movie's title that is best left to an actual viewing of the disc for enlightenment where, at the same

time, you will be informed of the correct pronunciation. However, we say 'Zar-dross'.

THE WICKED LADY

GUILD GHLV 9229 £6.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1982 95mins Rated 18

Starring: Faye Dunaway, Alan Bates, John Gielgud, Denholm Elliott, Prunella Scales, Oliver Tobias, Glynis Barber
Director: Michael Winner

What is this? Faye Dunaway, a 17th century nobleman's wife with a roving eye and an aversion to the slow pace of country living, takes up highway robbery in order to fill out the long winter nights. It's not quite funny enough to be a comedy - but it has its moments.

The sleeve carries a couple of quotes from some press reviews that include the phrase "a bawdy tongue-in-cheek romp". If such a hype raises your suspicions they would be well justified. Of course, bawdy in this context is a circuitous way of implying that the viewer will be treated to occasional glimpses of bare female breast, and for good measure they've thrown in a nude love scene between Glynis Barber and hunky Oliver Tobias. But what probably brought forth the beads of perspiration on the censor's troubled brow as he



anxiously fingered the inside of his collar was the scene at the public execution where Faye Dunaway engages in a prolonged whip fight with a competitor for the affections of a soon-to-be-hanged highwayman (Alan Bates). With a few deft strokes she lashes the unfortunate girl into a naked-to-the-waist state of deshabille and thereafter the two adversaries tumble about on the grassy tufts to the great delight of the assembled crowd of onlookers. Michael Winner directed the movie.

The Disc: The picture quality of the transfer is encouraging even though there is room for improvement in the sharpness, and the colour appears a little more muted than may have been intended in creating the period feel of the original production. But it was worth putting on disc as it amply demonstrates the fact that both the costumes and settings obviously had a few bob spent on them. The optical sound looks to have had its cinema equalisation left uncorrected and is very energetic in the treble regions and prone to sibilance. But you adjust to it at moderate volume. The pressing of the disc was a little suspect with some flickery horizontal white bands cropping up in some of the darker scenes but was otherwise clean on the

review copy.

CLASS

RANK VIDEO LVRK 1081 £6.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1983 94mins Rated 15

Starring: Rob Lowe, Jacqueline Bisset, Andrew McCarthy, Cliff Robertson
Director: Lewis John Carlino



Because he didn't make a very good job of it first time round they probably kept director Lewis John Carlino in detention and made him do it over. The mistake was to put both versions together. One is a teen comedy with all the kinds of pranks you would expect to find; the other might have been a fairly sensitive piece of drama, ostensibly about an older woman falling for a younger man, but just as it starts to lead on to something of more substance the film fizzles out.

Class is the sort of movie you'll put on every now and again expecting it to improve - but it's not likely to - and it will remain a collection of good moments badly put together. The quality of the production is high, the individual performances good, and the intentional moments of humour are indeed funny. Hmm... 4/10 - Could try harder.

The Disc: The transfer is one of RANK's second-grade affairs, with poor colour and minimal shadow detail, and falls into that category along with *Class Reunion*, *Breathless* and to a degree *Educating Rita*. The picture does have the usual RANK sharpness. The sound is a bit tiresome. It's not so much the thinness of the soundtrack as the ever-present hiss which tends to have a masking effect on the dialogue, even though it is not in itself particularly loud.

FANTASTIC VOYAGE

CBS/FOX 1002-70 £4.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1966 96mins

Starring: Stephen Boyd, Raquel Welch, Edmund O'Brien, Donald Pleasence, Arthur O'Connell, William Redfield, Arthur Kennedy
Director: Richard Fleischer

The pace at which *Fantastic Voyage* starts out is more than impressive. When Edmund O'Brien appears, an actor who has never been known to take two breaths when one will do, you know that the movie is on course. But what of the plot...

A bunch of surgeons in a race against time to operate on the brain haemorrhage of a defecting Czech scientist has exhausted the

resources of conventional medicine. C.M.D.E. (Combined Miniature Deterrent Forces), can shrink anything down to minute proportions. Usually it's for military reasons, but by reducing the surgeons to microscopic dimensions the 'impossible' operation can be carried out from the inside of the man's brain. This is the 'fantastic voyage' they are about to embark upon.

The catch is that they can only be miniaturised for a mere sixty minutes - after which time begin to revert to normal size. Hey, this is exciting! In the crew briefing Donald Pleasence uses an epidiascope to demonstrate the plan of attack. After he utters the magic words " ...and dissolve the clot with a laser beam" you know you can relax in the sure feeling that technology will win out (let's face it, how many brains can you fix with a VHS recorder?).

The running time on the sleeve of 108 minutes looks like a mistake and the actual 96 minutes it runs for is more than likely correct.

The sound is quite well defined but



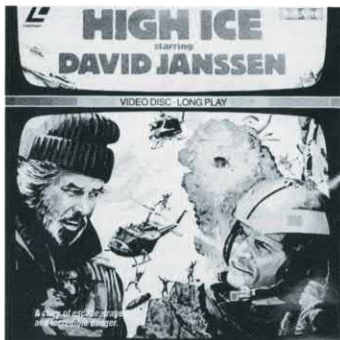
is undeniably crackly at anything more than modest volume. It is listenable that way at least. This is a disputed stereo disc - there is a difference in the output of the two channels but, as far as can be made out, it is of the re-processed variety. There are some obvious left/right movement opportunities in the film but no directional change was apparent. Picture quality is of a dated nature - a pretty lo-fi NTSC conversion type transfer but it is better than some. The movie will probably never look its best till a way of getting wide-screen TVs in the home comes to pass. Lastly, there are some spots and damage marks on the film that show now and again.

HIGH ICE

SPECTRUM 791 510 1 £4.99
CLV COLOUR MONO
1980 93mins

Starring: David Janssen, Tony Musante
Director: Eugene S. Jones

So-so TV movie about a bunch of climbers trapped on a cliff-face following an avalanche. Inability to sympathise with the plight of the luckless trio diminishes the intended suspense - they're just boring people. David Janssen is the wily mountain man who finds himself at odds with the know-it-all Army Lieutenant who, striding arrogantly across the parking lot of the mountain resort complex where the rescue operation is being co-ordinated, shouts to Janssen over



the din of the helicopter - "What is this place?" - and yet, filling the screen within arms reach is a sign the length of a bus saying 'WHITE HORSE MOUNTAIN LODGE'. Would you trust this man to pick you off a mountain?

The Disc: Superficially quite a pleasant, crisp PAL transfer, there are periods when some of the scanning lines go missing and this can be distracting with larger TV screens. At times the resolution is sufficient to enable differentiation between the real snow on the mountain and the fake grains in the studio shots, but when the lines go missing even relatively large details (such as people's eyes) cease to be adequately defined. The sound is optical and quite clear.

OH! HEAVENLY DOG

CBS/FOX 1164-70 £6.99
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP
1980 100mins

Starring: Chevy Chase, Benji, Jane Seymour, Omar Sharif, Robert Morley, Alan Sues, Donnelly Rhodes, John Stride
Directed & Produced by Joe Camp

One of the disguises Chevy Chase didn't resort to in *Fletch* was of a dog, but anything is possible when you have the services of canine star, Benji, on hand. Benji, the star of children's movies in his own right (aided, as

here, by Joe Camp) moves into grown-up film-making when taking on the physical reincarnation of private-eye Chase - stabbed when in human form and sent back en route to heaven in the only body that was readily available. ("You can't go back in your old one. It's got a hole in it.")

Although appealingly conceived the film feels a little slow and Camp dwells rather too heavily on the undeniable charm of Benji's antics to sustain either the comedy or adult interest. Professionally done though, it must have been the easiest week's work Chevy Chase has ever done. He is only on screen a small amount of the time and probably spent longer in the dubbing rooms putting his voice to the dog's actions. A few Elton John and Wings records are used on the soundtrack to good effect.



The Disc: Set in a different league from most CBS/FOX transfers there is some immediacy to the picture that makes the film eminently more watchable than usual. It's not super-sharp by any means and there is an element of graininess - especially in the few darker scenes - but it is not to a level that will likely disappoint. The sound is from an optical track and pleasant at modest volume although it shows a bit of hiss played louder - it could have been a mite brighter in tone.

Subscriptions and Back Numbers

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The most reliable and cheap way of obtaining LDR is by subscription. See page 3 for rates and full details. Act now and avoid an impending price increase.

BACK NUMBERS STILL AVAILABLE

- Issue 4 - Reviews of VLP830 & LD700, Surround Sound. How LV is sold in the U.S. German & Dutch disc lists.
- Issue 5 - Complete guide to NTSC LaserVision. Player Survey. Summary of all previous disc reviews. Includes the Autumn '85 Philips Album List.
- Issue 6 - Looking at Future LV developments. Japanese Report. 49 disc reviews, including PAL imports.
- Issue 7 - Reviews of Pioneer CLD900, LD707, and PX-7 Computer. The American Space discs.
- Issue 8 - Forthcoming A/V Products. Japanese Report. The Dutch Space discs and Dutch catalogue update.

Issue 4 costs £1, Issues 5-8 are £1.25 each. Subscribers are entitled to a discount and can buy Issue 4 for 90p, and Issues 5-8 for £1.00 each. (These rates also apply overseas, but only for sea-mail delivery. Air rates by quotation.)

PINOCCHIO

WALT DISNEY 239 AS (USA) \$29.98
CLV COLOUR MONO CC
1940 87mins Rated G

There is really not much point commenting on the content of this, is there? It's the sort of disc you either know you want or you don't.

Picture and sound are in encouraging condition and the impression of a conscientious transfer is conveyed, even if cartoons on NTSC disc do tend to hold their quality quite well anyway.



Avid DISNEY enthusiast Vaughan Williams informs us that there is almost exactly one minute cut from the original print on this home video version. While the new DISNEY company have been quite forthcoming recently in releasing classic titles from their back-catalogue they obviously plan to ensure their copyrights are still as well protected as possible. Apparently the cuts are subtle and no other review the magazine has seen has even noticed. Vaughan also advises of some cuts in other DISNEY titles on disc - *The Sword In The Stone*, *Pete's Dragon* (the song *I Swear I Saw A Dragon*) and *Escape To Witch Mountain* (in a nursery scene where the two puppets come to life).

UK laser fans usually get upset (quite justifiably) at the prospect of any cuts on films committed to disc but would no doubt still pounce on *Pinocchio* with reckless abandon if it ever appeared in PAL.

THE GLENN MILLER STORY

MCA 17009 (USA) \$34.98
CLV-Ch COLOUR STEREO MP CX
1953 113mins Rated G

Starring: James Stewart, June Allyson, Henry Morgan, Frances Langford, Louis Armstrong, Gene Krupa
Director: Anthony Mann



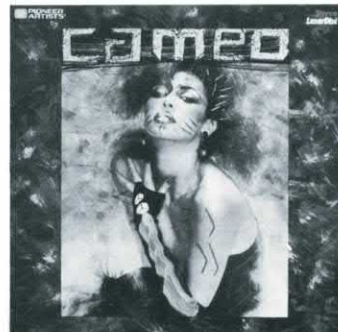
Recently restored with the collaboration of Jimmy Stewart, whose recollections of the original release version were used to determine the cuts to be made in the unedited 118 minute negative master that has lain in MCA's vaults these past decades, this disc offers up arranger and band-leader Miller's biopic in a reassuringly respectful condition. The soundtrack has benefitted from digital remastering and enhancement with DOLBY Surround. Although the film was made in stereo (which is used to effect on the musical numbers - the dialogue sequences are fairly one-dimensional) there was obviously no DOLBY MP format in existence at the time, but it is possible to add the encoding where the original multitrack sound master still survives. Do not let the digital reference lull you into expectations of noise-free audio - the soundtrack still retains a modicum of background noise in places, but not to a level that would raise a comment were it not for the possibility of misunderstanding brought about by the merest whisper of digital magic. The print shows a few flaws brought about by the passage of time, but the tonality is very pleasing overall and one suspects that a transfer to PAL disc would pull out still extra crispness. As it stands the disc exhibits picture quality comparable to many PAL discs sourced from material of this vintage (and is better than some).

The disc has 10 Chapters for the songs and side one has a nice still-frame/fade-to-black effect at its conclusion.

CAMEO - THE VIDEO SINGLES

PIONEER PA85-105 (USA) \$19.95
CAV-Ch COLOUR STEREO CX
1985 30mins

Side 1: *She's Strange/Talkin' Out The Side Of Your Neck/Be Yourself/Flirt/Alligator Woman/We're Going Out Tonight/Shake Your Pants*



A seven track selection of video promos from US disco-funksters, Cameo. The lead track is the raison d'être of the compilation offering up more lavish production values than the bulk of the disc, the majority of which are just straight studio lip-synch jobs. While Cameo's style of music does not immediately suggest listening over dancing, most of the tunes manage to incorporate at least one catchy hook that establishes an identity sufficient to justify horizontal auditioning.

Opening and closing credits incorporate an LV disc in the design and the 29'59" running time (near choc-full for NTSC CAV) indicates some deference to the medium. Unfortunately picture

quality is non too special - the disc looks grainy and somewhat veiled - and while the sound is plenty dynamic, it is a bit topky and prone to sibilance on some tracks. The CAV is of the type that does not always give a perfect still, but is an appreciated embellishment that adds value to the package - even if it's not likely to see a lot of use in practice.

PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE

WARNER 11523LV (USA) \$34.98
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP CX CC
1985 92mins Rated PG

Starring: Pee-Wee Herman, Elizabeth Daily, Mark Holton, Diane Salinger, Judd Owen

Director: Tim Burton

Dwight sent this Pee-Wee disc over. The note said "Er... I don't know quite how to explain this. I think the idea is that he's a big kid. If you were 11 years old but found yourself suddenly with an adult's body, no parents, and enough money to do about anything you wanted, you'd be Pee-Wee Herman." Or you could be the editor of a *LaserVision* magazine.



Somewhere between Jerry Lewis and Norman Wisdom is Pee-Wee Herman and the movie is just the sort of thing to either drive you up the wall or to demand obsessive re-viewing. Under-8s would probably lap it up for real (yet the PG rating gives away the fact it's not really a kids' film). Older folks would tend to dismiss it out-of-hand, but if you kept an eye on them you'd probably catch sight of a suppressed giggle every now and then.

Pee-Wee Herman is really Paul Reubens, an improvisational comedian of the '70s who took on the Herman persona some eight years back. And this is what it's come to. Pee-Wee has his bicycle (Ah!) stolen and the film is all about his efforts to retrieve it. Pee-Wee has no trouble stirring sympathetic yearnings in some most attractive females he meets along the way (See - it's just like being an editor of a *LaserVision* magazine!) and the movie climaxes with a chase across the WARNER lot. A 'kid' could ask for no more. You have been warned.

The Disc: Some enthusiastic art direction means there is enough colour here for two discs. The picture is bright and crisp. You'd notice it didn't have the bite of a PAL disc, though having now seen some UK WARNER discs it may be that many people would find the image quality quite comparable. Some patterning of the type found on *The Killing Fields* is in evidence in the darker scenes. The audio is an excellent dynamic optical track.

RCA-COLUMBIA	30537 (USA)	\$19.95
CLV	B & W MONO	CC
1952/3	58mins	



Inspection of the contents reveals Gracie Allen to be rarely genuinely relaxed and the easy-going, scatterbrained image was evidently sustained under some internal pressure. On the other hand, George Burns is every bit the casual operator you always thought. Their humour does stand up to more than a single viewing, even if the age of some of it is evident.

One doubts they plan to re-issue the entire series, although there is probably scope for a few more episodes. It was a good idea to include a programme with a guest appearance by Jack Benny, as was the decision to make the disc available at a lower than average price.

We covered Vol 1 of this series of Playboy discs, their attempt at bringing the pages of the magazine to 'living' video, in issue 5. That one was a PAL release in Holland - for the rest of the series you need to turn to the USA.

The style of presentation is identical to the first – it seems to be in the Playboy tradition – to find a formula and stick to it. By Vols 3 & 4 the series is into its stride, with a good balance of contents, assuming that you find the printed magazine to your liking, and some necessary musical interludes (the discs are a bit heavy-going watched through solidly), but Vol 6 lacks verve and it

The contents of the individual discs are listed below. While the discs have long sleeve notes they are always out of sequence and do not list all the contents. Production values are high but picture quality varies from segment to segment. The interviews are nicely crisp but the insistence on using lots of soft-focus effects on the Playmate features and the Ribald Classics does the video image no favours. Sound quality is very good, more hi-fi than most documentary-type material, and a lot of it is in stereo. Vol 2 is mastered in the original NTSC CLV configuration and retains a little noise in the colour signal and the pressing lacks the vibrancy of the later discs.

CBS/FOX 6202-80 (USA) \$29.98
CLV COLOUR STEREO CX
1983 81mins

The Great Playmate Hunt - Background to the search for the 25th Anniversary issue Playmate, Candy Loving/Sylvia Kristel Profile(4')/Ribald Classic/Playmate Playoffs - Alternative outdoor athletics(8')/The Most Versatile Word, with Howard Smith/Video Jukebox - Duran Duran and Girls On Film (grim picture quality on this video clip)/



Dudley Moore Interview - 12 minutes of chat including a song round the piano with Susan Anton/California Girls - Still photo montage/Secxcetera - A visit to the Youngs Rubber Co to see how condoms are manufactured/Video Playmate feature - Lynda Weismeyer(11')

CBS/FOX 6203-80 (USA) \$29.98
CLV COLOUR STEREO CX
1983 81mins



Photographic Fantasy - Documentary on photographer Craig Blankenhorn's attempts at nude photography in public places(4')/Video Playmate - Charlotte Kemp(11')/Queen Of Burlesque - Sixties toppers dancer, Carol Doda, still at it(6')/Video Jukebox - Pointer Sisters singing I'm So Excited/Ribald Classic/Dancer's Dream - Disrobing to the accompaniment of Lonette McKee's Maybe There Are Reasons/Cheech & Chong Interview(12')/Playmate Of The Year - Marianne Gravatte(16')

CBS/FOX 6204-80 (USA) \$29.98
CLV COLOUR STEREO CX
1984 85mins

The Girls Of The Comedy Store -
Raunchy humour from artistes of the
Hollywood comedy spot(8')/Flashdancers
- Still photo montage(3')/Video
Playmate - Barbara Edwards(14')/Lone



Star Legend - Willie Nelson interview
and song(10')/Dream Lover - Video
fantasy sequence/Queen Of X - Marilyn
Chambers interview(6')/Ribald Classic/
Dorothy Stratten - Tribute to the
late Playmate(16')

CBS/FOX 6206-80 (USA) \$29.98
CLV COLOUR STEREO CX
1985 71mins



A 'Rude' Guide To Food & Wine -
Nudes with food by London photographer
David Thorpe(71)/Women Of Steel -
Still photo montage(31)/Ribald Classic/
Interview with Timothy Leary and
G. Gordon Liddy(14)/Preview - Trailers
for Vols 3 & 4 and the Playmate
Workout discs(3)/French Pin-Ups -
Interview with French erotic artist
Alain 'Aslan' Gourdon(51)/Aphrodisiacs
- A history in a cartoon montage(31)/
Video Playmate - Tricia Lance(13)

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

Everyone's a Winner

Our little Culpepper Cattle Company competition produced just two entrants who both worked out the right answer. The film was *The Seven Minutes* and the *Munsters* connection was Yvonne de Carlo. Congratulations to M.J. Stobbart (who being first got the disc) and Martin Davis of Watford who, by means of consolation, will have an extra issue added to his subscription. Competitions like this that don't take up a lot of time seem like a good wheeze so here's another obscure gem.

The photograph shows the very last frame of a UK CAV disc which, inspite of being a couple of years old, shows



that PHILIPS were pressing discs past 54,000 frames longer ago than we thought. All you have to do is guess the title. No clues (other than it has not yet been reviewed). The first correct entrant will be offered a disc from the rack of ex-review cheapies.

Bits & Pieces

||||| HDTV put on hold at recent broadcasters meet in Yugoslavia. SONY nevertheless showing signs of developing HDVS disc format for cinema use after good NAB, Dallas reception ||||| Unreliable? Several disgruntled readers have been complaining of non-arrival of disc orders from RELIABLE VIDEOS. Peter Lennon, proprietor, has now promised to refund on unobtainable titles. Meanwhile, supplier of German discs - AV REPORT - has still not fulfilled orders from last year. We advise not dealing with this company until they show signs of replying to correspondence at least ||||| 250,000+ large-screen/projection TVs (over 27") sold in U.S.A. last year ||||| LDR now has subscribers in 26 countries. When we started out we didn't even know there were 26 countries ||||| And now for the bad news. LDR will increase in price with the next issue. Don't hesitate - Subscribe now at old rates ||||| In the Silver Disc Club? (Why not, it's free.) Don't forget to fill in the Questionnaire - they still need reminding of the sorts of LV titles you want ||||| Back around Xmas |||||

Disc Reviews

[Continued from page 19]

NO EVIDENCE

While on the subject of faults on discs we should make some mention of *Witness*. We queried this disc just before presstime but did not manage to ascertain a cause to the problem. The latter part of the disc is wrecked with a herringbone patterning that considerably desaturates the picture and destroys one's immersion in the contents.

PRESSINGS

Apart from a couple of sample faults (two discs skipping due to internal blemishes) every one of the most recently received discs was pleasantly clean and continued the trend of the later discs reviewed in issue 8. There still seems to be room for improvement on the audio side of PAL LV - especially if we are likely to continue with film titles being issued in analogue. What can be the reason for at least not experimenting with a couple of CX-encoded discs in order to test reaction and compatibility?

Small Ads

The SMALL ADS column is an ideal way for readers to dispose of unwanted discs and communicate with others. At present this is a free service. List details of your entry briefly, and on a separate sheet of paper from any other correspondence. It is not possible to take particulars over the phone. Next deadline - 28th November.

DISCS FOR SALE / EXCHANGE

£6 - ELKIE BROOKS, BODY MUSIC, URGH! A MUSIC WAR. £10 - ORIENTAL DREAMS, TROPICAL HIGH NOON, GROVER WASHINGTON.

Les Norman - Hastings (0424) 442802.

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£5 - BREATHLESS, LIANNA, MAKING LOVE. £7 - VIDEO THEQUE, HUNGER, ROD STEWART, GREAT RAILWAYS, TARZAN. + assorted Compact Discs. Phone - 0924 - 825186. J. Robertson.

PHILIPS VLP 600. Little used. £95 ono.

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£7 - ANIMAL HOUSE, DEATH HUNT, RACE

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Tel: Per Jensen 01-204 1735.

Wanted: Continental discs, catalogues.

Alan - Stonehouse (045382) 3827.

READERS' CONTACT

B. Stewart, 13 Dougherty Street, Roseberry, Sydney, Australia would like to contact other NISC LV owners in Australia.

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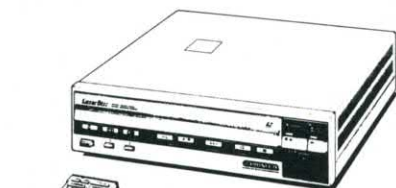
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The Laser Calendar

New LV releases, now available

CBS/FOX - A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET
CIC - BEST DEFENCE, FLETCH(S), WITNESS(S)
THORN-EMI - CAT'S EYE(S)
WARNER - BLADE RUNNER(S), CITY HEAT(S), GOONIES(S), GREMLINS(S), GREYSTOKE(S), MAD MAX II, MAD MAX BEYOND THUNDERDOME(S), THE NEVER ENDING STORY(S), NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN(S), OCTOPUSSY(S), POLICE ACADEMY, POLICE ACADEMY II, PURPLE RAIN(S), ROCKY, ROCKY II(S), ROCKY III(S), TIGHTROPE, A VIEW TO A KILL(S)

Previously announced, due August/early September

CBS/FOX - COCOON[S]
WARNER - MAD MAX

Previously announced, could arrive anytime September on

WARNER - PALE RIDER[S], SUDDEN IMPACT, WAR GAMES[S]

New releases, due between now and Xmas

Winter release package of approximately 20 titles due for mid-September announcement. Check with your dealer for full details. (Only CBS/FOX' - SUPERGRASS confirmed as of press-time.)

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