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NOVEMBER 1987

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# LASER DISC REVIEW

NOVEMBER 1987

ISSUE 14

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## Three Years and Counting

Alright, so you can't divide 14 by 3 and come up with any sensible result, but taking it from the starting date this really is the third anniversary issue. We're a little ahead on our quarterly schedule, that's all.

Our third anniversary turns out to be nicely commemorated by PHILIPS' imminent launch of a player in the UK that takes three sizes of disc. We didn't ask them, but the thought is appreciated.

Nobody actually knows for sure when CD Video is going to hit the streets - September 14th is the earliest date anyone's claimed to have bought a disc in a UK store (see page 23) - but the arrival of the players is still in the balance at the time of writing. We've waited this long. A month or two more won't make much odds.

This is the appropriate occasion to thank all those who have contributed to the magazine over the years. Their rewards (financially) have been non-existent, but they have displayed a wealth of faith. Thanks too to the readers. Not only for buying the thing, but for taking the time to write. It's all helped.

To the specifics of this issue. The CD-V article (all seventeen pages of it) will be of use in gauging the current state of the launch effort. There will be lots of false alarms and rumours over the coming months and it should help give you a basis on which to assess such speculation. An apology is due for the absence of Part II of 'Made In Blackburn'. The proofs went up for correction and were due to come back in good time (with some photos they've nicely dug up for us to illustrate it), but the package has gone missing en route back to us. There was no time to manage a replacement.

When we get it, though, it will give us a head start in putting the next issue together. And thanks to the folks at PIONEER, LDR-15 will also feature a

review of their new CLD-1050 Combi Player. Yes, a PAL one! This is about as good a way as anyone could imagine starting out on year four. Even if the player review is only of immediate value to our fortunate German subscribers who can go out and buy one right now, it can't be too long to go before other PAL area readers are in a similar position.

So, let's get this one bundled up and off to the printers and let the party begin. Hey, break open the cream sodas, somebody.....

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# LETTERS

**From: Paul Petula, Lancashire**

With reference to your article entitled 'Video Recordings Act Update' in LDR-12, you mention that the 50% recertification fee would add £250 to the preparation cost of a two hour film to be released on disc - "presently too much for the videodisc market to bear on its own". I would strongly disagree with this statement, especially with big sellers like *Indiana Jones*. If you consider this extra £250 on a production run of 1,000 discs (which I am sure has been exceeded for this film) that adds an extra 25 pence per disc. Not much in the light of the £20 it costs for the disc in the first place! This would be easily absorbed by dealers who must enjoy a large mark-up (50%+? - how else can they offer 10% discounts and still make profits). However, this will not help much when it comes to censored 18-rated films like *Commando*!!

Looking at the number of deletions that now exist prompts me to ask the question - "Why?". Any disc that is out of stock should be immediately repressed (where contracts allow), so people like me are not left with three *Fawcety Towers* discs and unable to get the fourth etc. It does seem totally absurd.

- The additional cost is the reason given for alternative versions of movies not being made available on disc. It is also the same reason given for not providing proper sleeve artwork on some other companies' titles. (By the way, a 50% dealer mark-up is a bit of an exaggeration.)

Deletions will continue to whittle away the UK catalogue (presently standing at just over 500 titles) until CD Video bursts upon the scene. Even then there will still be deletions. It is a reasonable likelihood that any popular title will be brought back into catalogue when the player population has increased. (It's not really practical to re-press discs just to satisfy a demand for a few dozen copies, as is often the situation now.) One piece of advice to collectors is to go after any title that didn't seem worthy of disc release in the first place. (On the assumption that it is on your wants list!) These more obscure flops are often available at low prices and once out of stock are most likely to remain so. It is the big feature films and the popular TV programmes that are most probable candidates to be brought back into catalogue eventually.

**From: Ian McTear, Cumbria**

Regarding the terminology used for the various sizes of discs being planned for the near future, ie. 8" LV, CD-V etc. I would use the following method of identification. If the disc had a large centre hole and a label surrounding it I would classify it as a LaserVision disc. If, however, the disc had a small centre hole, no label around it and was under 5" in diameter I would class it as a Compact Disc.

I hope that when the new players arrive there will be one with a digital frame store device among them. It would be very nice if SONY would sell a PAL version of their LDP-730 as I am not at all interested in the CD-V Clip disc.

I would also like films to be released in full active play. The last side in active play may be satisfactory for films where all the action occurs

neatly at the end. *Aliens*, for example, is a film which is action from beginning to end and a prime candidate for being released in full active play. There are numerous moments where I would have liked to still frame the movie on side one and side two. All the good views of the large spacecraft were on those sides. A still frame library would have been nice too.

**From: S. Roberts, Sussex**

On my copy of *Kate Bush/The Whole Story* there appears to be (as the final credits go up) some form of music. I only noticed this as I was playing the disc loud through a set of headphones. Does your copy have this? Also, the videos which appear on the disc do not have the same sound quality as on *The Singles File*.

When will the manufacturers get round to producing a player that can be used for both NTSC and PAL at the turn of a switch - even if a multi-standard TV is still necessary?

- Probably. (The disc has gone back.) At least such unwanted noise hasn't intruded into the main body of the programme, as was the case on side one of *Prizzi's Honor*. Certainly *Wuthering Heights* is different from the original hit recording - the equivalent audio CD (also called *The Whole Story*) lists the track as having a new vocal.

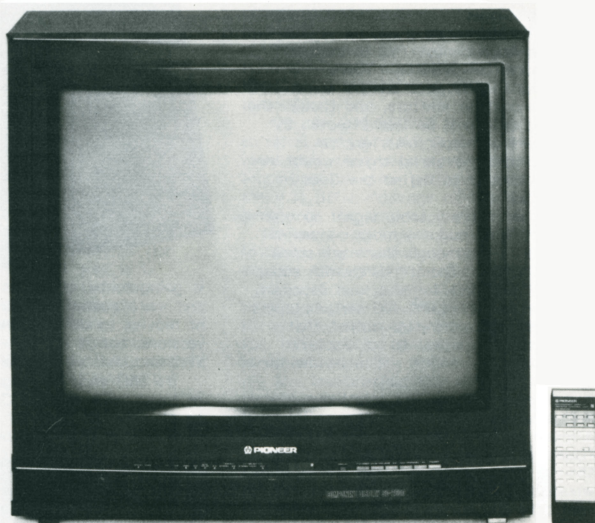
**From: M. Evans, Gwent**

On the subject of digital audio on video discs, would it not be possible go fully digital and have a digital picture too? If the picture was digitally stored, would this mean, at long last, a truly universal video disc that could be reproduced on any system - PAL, NTSC etc? Surely if the information is digitally stored, the same information is available to any system, the electronic circuitry of the player/TV monitor being the deciding factor as to how this information is converted and ultimately displayed. Would that not be the best thing ever to happen to a video format?

The current release of software obviously leaves a lot to be desired and things seem quite slow. Maybe the advent of a combi player this Christmas (?) will help things to accelerate. What will happen to the pricing structure? With many LaserVision discs selling at below £5 it is difficult to imagine any justification for the extreme high pricing of Compact Disc. Will these prices (sensibly) drop or will LaserVision prices rocket in proportion? Time will tell.

- The proposed CD Interactive (CD-I) format will have a digitally coded picture but the quantity of information required for digital video is so great that it won't be possible to display more than one picture a second in its highest quality mode. That is 24 frames uses a second short of what is required to provide moving pictures (in PAL). Even reducing the picture quality only enables 10 frames a second to be displayed. The proposed RCA Digital Video Interactive (DVI) format also has a digitally coded picture signal, but again, well below the quality level we are presently used to. However, now that digital video is creeping into the world of broadcasting (such as with the SONY DVR-1000 videotape recorder) it must





[ The current trend in the US and Japan is to quote the picture resolution of any new video/TV product - both in order to establish the performance level and at the same time try and outdo products of competing manufacturers. This PIONEER SD-2600, recently introduced in the US, is one of the new breed of 'more lines the better' combatants in the resolution wars with its 560 line performance claim. ]

mean that domestic digital video is that much closer. It would be much cheaper to introduce a domestic digital videodisc player than VCR - a disc player only has half the work to do of a recording device. There would also be benefits in respect of the discs not having any spots.

**From: Simon Bonython, Thailand**

In spite of the fact that the PAL picture is comprised of 625 lines, while the NTSC picture has only 525 lines, I have been told by many people that the NTSC system is capable of much higher resolution than is possible with PAL (which apparently has much more video noise). Also, I am confused as to how the Japanese can already have come out with NTSC monitors featuring 560 line horizontal resolution. How is that possible with a system whose picture is made up of only 525 lines? An example of such a set is the NATIONAL (PANASONIC) 33" model, TH33A1. It is claimed that NATIONAL will also soon come out with a 700 line resolution monitor operating on the NTSC system. I find this confusing and perhaps you could shed some light on the subject.

● First off, it is important to differentiate between horizontal and vertical resolution. The vertical resolution of a TV picture is fixed by the TV standard being considered. In NTSC the vertical resolution is 525 lines, and in PAL 625 lines. In practice, not all vertical lines are active picture lines and in PAL, for example, only 575 lines are visible on the screen. This line count is consistent from one TV monitor to the next and the figure is not subsequently quoted as a performance specification because you cannot have more than the number of lines defined by the TV system. (Slightly different rules apply with computer screen displays.)

With horizontal resolution the picture is a little different(!). This

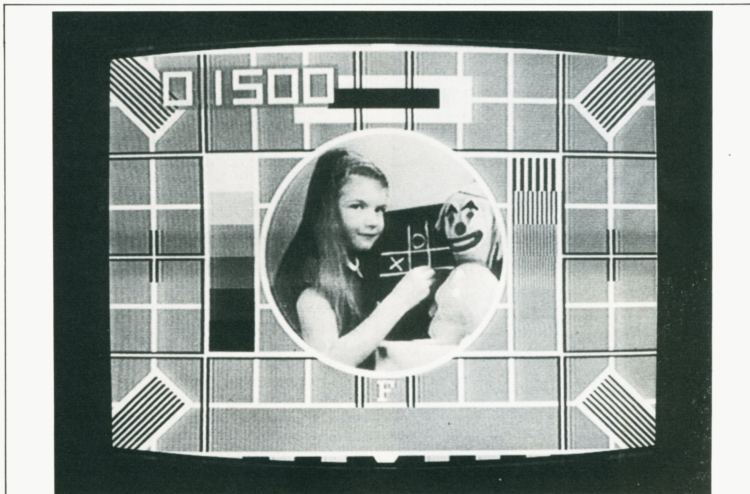
horizontal resolution figure represents the detail/resolution performance across the picture (ie. horizontally). The more 'lines' the better. There are obviously no horizontal scanning lines visible on the TV picture but this method of measurement is often used in the USA and Japan to determine a performance specification. Bandwidth (in MegaHertz) is the more normal means of measurement in Britain and Europe, but the two measurements are related.

Just to confuse the issue slightly, there is some difference of opinion as to how the horizontal resolution figure is measured, but whichever way it stems from the 52 microseconds taken for the electron beam to scan across a picture line. This waveform will have 104 peaks, representing alternating black and white pieces of picture information (lines). Because the TV picture is wider than than high by a ratio of 4:3, this figure of 104 lines is sometimes

reduced proportionally to harmonise horizontal and vertical resolution measurements, and a figure of approximately 80 lines derived. Either of these figures can be related to 1 MegaHertz (MHz) of bandwidth.

Depending on the figure chosen, a 560 line monitor would be laying claim to display a bandwidth of picture of either 5.5MHz or 7.0MHz. Both figures are comfortably more than is required to reproduce the NTSC broadcast standard signal (say, 4.2MHz maximum) and also sufficient for the PAL signal of 5.5MHz.

Because it is not yet fashionable to specify picture performance here in the UK it is difficult to determine the quality of a TV you might be wishing to purchase from reading a description of it. However, the BBC Test Card shown during off-peak transmission periods carries a series of six resolution grids (immediately to the right of the circle) that represent levels of picture





## Subscriptions

A 4-issue (approximately 1 year) subscription to **LASER DISC REVIEW** (to be sent anywhere in the world) costs just £5-00 - saving £1-00 over the single issue price. The rate for a 6-issue subscription is £7-50. For readers outside Europe requiring speedier airmail delivery the rates are £8-00 (4 issues) and £12-00 (6 issues).

## Back Numbers

The following back issues are still available at a cost of £1-50 each (only £1-25 each for subscribers). The airmail rate is £2-00 per copy. Any order for back numbers exceeding £10-00 total value is eligible for a 25% discount (ie, for an order totalling £12-00, send only £9-00).

- Issue 4** - Reviews of VP830 & LD700. Surround Sound. How LaserVision is sold in the USA. Some German & Dutch LV disc lists.
- Issue 5** - Guide to NTSC LaserVision. Player Survey. Summary of all previous disc reviews. Includes Autumn '85 PHILIPS LV list.
- Issue 6** - Looking at future LV developments. Japan Report. 49 disc reviews, including some PAL imports and porno discs.
- Issue 7** - Reviews of PIONEER CLD900, LD707 & PX-7 Computer. Looking at the American space discs.
- Issue 8** - Forthcoming A/V products for '86. Japan Report. Dutch space discs. Dutch catalogue update.
- Issue 9** - Towards a combination LV/CD player. Video Recordings Act. Dolby Surround & MARANTZ RV353 review. Includes list of Dolby encoded discs.
- Issue 10** - HDTV on disc at IBC. Review of NEC AV-300E Surround Amplifier. 5000 more discs in NTSC. Presentation & packaging of LV discs.
- Issue 11** - YAMAHA CLV-1 LV/CD player. SONY LDP-730 LV player with digital still frame. PHILIPS 400 series specs. CD Video stirrings. Document & Data storage on optical disc. LV Catalogue corrections and update.
- Issue 12** - The PHILIPS/POLYGRAM Amsterdam announcement of CD Video. 12 page report includes CD Clip specs. What Is CD-I? DOLBY Surround Mixing. Video Recordings Act Update. Big new list of LV deletions.
- Issue 13** - CD Video's Chicago launch. Full list of opera & classical music titles. New Audio Video products. How LV discs are made - Pt 1. The Ecodisc. 3M speaks out on Laser Rot.



resolution. The coarsest zone (at the top) equates to 1.5MHz and the series continues through 2.5, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5 to 5.25MHz at the bottom. Viewing this test card in a dealer's showroom may help determine the relative merits of TVs but you can expect most TVs to become indistinct after 3.5MHz. There will be colour interference on the 4.0/4.5MHz grids to confuse matters, and though the 5.25MHz grid will be less affected by such spurious colour interference it is unlikely that the aerial signal would be reliable enough to define the lines in this sector.

A more predictable signal such as an LV disc would make a more convenient test source - although there are some complications. The LV bandwidth rolls off past 5.00MHz for one, and secondly, only the new PHILIPS 400 series players have the RGB converter output that allows the full signal to be displayed in special play modes. (The bandwidth of conventional PAL LV players is compromised as soon as you leave the normal linear play mode - you will never achieve quite as sharp an image in still frame as in play.) Accordingly, more than a single frame showing a test card would be required and a minute or so of real time displaying of the card would be needed. This could then be kept in an interval repeat mode for as long as one needed to view the image.

The BBC test card illustrated on the previous page is similar to the one used in test transmissions but comes in this case from *The Domesday Disc*. Played in still frame on a 400 series player through an RGB monitor of sufficient quality we are advised will realise the lines on the disc's 5.25MHz grid.

### From: Mark Dowd, Merseyside

I have just finished watching a newly acquired disc of one of the best fantasy films ever made, and certainly one of my personal favourites. The film in question is *Highlander* and having a problem with this film has upset and angered me so much that I felt I should write to you about it. I say problem with the film and not the disc as that is blemish free (a rare occurrence). My problem lies with the contents.

There is an edit made to the love scene between Russell Nash and Brenda Wyatt on side two (0.33). Just as the scene begins it cuts out. The full length scene is present on the VHS cassette version. The cut scene is tastefully directed and not the least bit vulgar and contains the most beautiful piece of music in the film.

The edit to the disc version is no accident either as it cuts off in the middle of a shot so as to make the music flow. Why is it that LaserVision, being a predominantly adult market, is treated more like a children's market than tape (which is more widely available to under 15s)? On reading your review of *Highlander* in LDR-11 I had assumed that I would receive a full version of the film, the only cut being that of the treble regions of the soundtrack. Please could you tell me if the review copy you had has the same omission, and if so, why?

● The review copy of the disc has the same omission. Since running the review someone else has commented on the missing bedroom scene and re-inspection of the disc does reveal a flaw in the continuity in the passage described. It



is going to be more and more common for video versions of movies to differ from cinema versions, but it is unlikely that VHS and disc versions will differ.

To this end the magazine has now got in touch with the BBFC, whose job it was to classify the film for home video. They advise that only one version of *Highlander* was passed for video release and this was with a 15 certificate and ran for 1 hour, 51 minutes, 29 seconds and 2 frames. The running time is determined from the point immediately after the BBFC certificate disappears or the moment the film company logo appears (disregard the earlier video company logo) till the end of the film when the credits finish and the last note of music dies away.

To decide whether the disc version is the correct one it will be necessary to time your disc in accordance with this timing procedure (making allowances on the disc for the side change). If the disc does not run for the stated time it will be an illegal version under the terms of the Video Recordings Act. If the disc runs for the correct time then it looks as though someone slipped up with the VHS version.

If it is the disc version that is at fault then it should not prove a problem to obtain a refund on the disc through your dealer. This will not leave you with a copy of the film in the condition you wish it, but at least you won't be paying for something of diminished value that is not what you really want.

It is often difficult to tell whether programmes (not necessarily just films) are cut when they appear on disc. Recently LDR has taken to making specific enquiries with some of the video companies to ascertain if there are any cuts in new releases, but a film can still be claimed as uncut if it is the same as the UK cinema version. This procedure is therefore not always reliable and at the end of the day there are always going to be titles that slip through. As is illustrated by this letter it is most important that readers point out discs that contain cuts when they are certain of their facts. (It will come as no big surprise that people often imagine they saw things in the cinema that they actually didn't.)

If you've found out about any cuts after you've bought a disc it will obviously be too late for you, but the information can at least save others from making the same mistake. LDR disc reviews are not infallible - the aim though is to do the best job possible. There is a basic list of cut films in LDR-11 which readers are encouraged to study. If there are omissions please pass the information on, the sooner the better.



## Laser Juke

PIONEER is now planning to launch its video juke box system in Europe, following its successful application in Japan. In its August 28th press statement PIONEER voiced its intention to establish the initial installations in Spain by mid-September, to be followed by other European countries at a later date.

Based around the 20cm (8") videodisc, the 'Laser Juke' system will be targeted at fast food outlets, lunaparks(!), cafes, bars, pubs, hotels and clubs, and PIONEER announces it has completed arrangements to acquire the latest videoclip entertainment material for transfer to the 'junior'-size discs. The software will be offered to Laser Juke system providers as a complete package of several 20cm discs, with music programmes custom-tailored to an installation and updated on a monthly basis. Discs are rented and returnable by a pre-specified date. Disc compilations under the category of 'Eurodisc' (multi-national appeal, sourced from several countries' artistes), 'Natdisc' (local artistes and interest) and 'Comdisc' (multiple country artiste sourcing, but for local market).

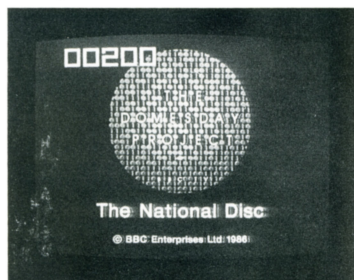
PIONEER claims over 20,000 previous installations in other territories is testament to the proven reliability of the Laser Juke equipment.

Further info: PIONEER INDUSTRIAL DIVISION, 1-6 Field Way, Greenford, Middlesex UB6 8UZ. Tel:01-575 5757, or through PIONEER INDUSTRIAL DIVs. in local national area.

## Domesday Fun

Adult consumers just getting used to being treated like children (now that the Video Recordings Act is resulting in all manner of 'cleaned-up' versions of our favourite movies) may be relieved to know that their children do not have to endure such overbearing censorship when watching videos at school. Leading the way in this encouraging trend is the innovative BBC *Domesday* disc which, with the benefit of generous government subsidy, is now bringing all manner of interesting four-letter words to their attention in primary and secondary schools throughout the land.

To be perfectly accurate, we have so far only encountered the one four-letter



word, but that one word has so far managed a couple of appearances at least



- on one occasion, twice on the same page of text. Judging from the fact that it took your Editor less than five minutes to come across the 'offending' page at his first hands-on experience of the disc (that is reputed to offer several years of viewing pleasure) bodes well for future discoveries.

This first one came as result of attempting to locate the old birthplace (Cheam in Surrey) on the 'wrong' disc. (There are two discs in the *Domesday* package.) This birthplace search is a bit of a party piece everyone is supposed to try on the *Domesday* disc. The idea is that punters are told to enter where they were born and are usually rewarded with a pile of information about the place and are impressed accordingly.

So, if you only have the *Southern* side of the *Domesday* disc available for investigation you should do a search on 'Surrey', selecting 'Text' to bring up a list of articles available on the

subject. (There are none on Cheam.) Item one on the list is *Red Stains In The Sunset*, a short excerpt from a newspaper article, and it is in this that the non-U word appears (twice), though I'm -ed if I'm going to print it here. (This is interactive video. Find it our for yourselves!) Readers are therefore encouraged to pursue the search procedure described above anytime they encounter a *Domesday* demo at an exhibition or somesuch. (We now do this, everytime - and leave it up on screen and walk away.)

Those readers more au fait with computer-driven disc players may care to try and call up the interview with Scritti Politti that is similarly fruity.

It would be wrong to pretend any offence (in the sense of feeling, not legislatively) caused by this, of course, and we're mentioning it here purely to illustrate yet one more ludicrous aspect still of the wretched Video Recordings Act.



## Dragon's Lair

We carried a report on the proposal by the computer software company MICRODEAL to market a laser videodisc-based game *Dragon's Lair* for use with ATARI ST computers in LDR-11. When we wrote it up the company was still contemplating the cost of pressing the discs (the computer program is already done) in the face of an uncertain demand for the finished product. (The number of LV players suitable for computer interfacing is fairly small at present; only PIONEER LD1100s and LD700s exist in the consumer market.)

Quite independently of this, the magazine has now received a phone call from a dealer in California who finds himself sitting on a pile of already-pressed *Dragon's Lair* discs in PAL! The actual disc is a single-sided (CAV obviously) programme and carries a series of preliminary still frames for setting up in conjunction with an amusement arcade console. But it is otherwise a straightforward version of the *Dragon's Lair* game, with all the alternate routes through the castle assembled in sequence. There is no computer dump encoded on the disc and so it is equally suited to anyone who would be prepared to write a support programme to operate it.

Further investigation as to how this PAL title came to exist (the only one as far as can be made out) reveals that it was the result of a plan to launch videodisc based arcade games in Europe. Rather than make a batch of NTSC players specially, PHILIPS (who manufactured the disc) considered it easier to do the programme in PAL and use existing PAL hardware. In fact, the player planned to be used was a special VP831 variant (with an interface for the computer in the game console.) All this



happened a year or two back. The disc bears a 1983 copyright notice in the name of MAGICOM INC., but little other information is present. The disc has only a plain white sleeve.

We hope to have details of how to obtain a copy in the next magazine. Some possible ways of distributing the disc are being pursued in the meantime. The disc can be played on any PAL LV machine in conventional linear fashion, so even if you don't have (or wish to have) all the additional gubbins hooked up to your disc player, you can still view it.

## Bits and Pieces

[[[[]]] Surround sound fans might wish to take note of this. Idar Valkvae in Norway has written to us recently with some enthusiasm about the FOSGATE range of surround decoders. These American manufactured DOLBY Surround units have been available for a few years (before the current interest in cinema surround in the home really took root) and appear to have quite an enthusiast following. FOSGATE can be contacted at PO Box 70, Herber City, Utah 84032, USA. (Tel: 801-654-4046)

[[[[]]] Some disc buyers with outstanding orders still not fulfilled by RELIABLE VIDEOS have received notification of proceedings in Birmingham Bankruptcy Court in respect of £20,000 worth of liabilities outstanding against one Peter John Lennon, proprietor of RELIABLE.

[[[[]]] While on such unsavoury matters, a visit to the previous known address of AV REPORT in Berlin showed no sign of the organisation still operating from there. If anyone knows their present whereabouts, or that of proprietor Hannes Dahlberg, please let us know.

[[[[]]] On a more positive note, the Editor's trip to Berlin also resulted in an encounter with technology consultant and writer, Carlton Sarver, whose recent piece on NTSC Colour Reproduction (HIGH FIDELITY, March 1987) he advises is going to be followed up in the December issue by a companion piece on the confused topic of TV picture resolution.

## Laser Library

An approval service for the full range of new CD Video discs will be available from the LASER LIBRARY to UK users immediately following the launch of the new format. The LASER LIBRARY's approval service was devised for users of the original LaserVision videodiscs since, in the early days of LaserVision, it was found that retailers were reluctant to buy in stocks of the videodiscs. At 500 it is unlikely that the new CD Video machines will sell fast enough to encourage dealers to invest in the new software. The LASER LIBRARY's several years experience with LV discs means that most of the bugs inherent in a nationwide mail order approval service have been ironed out. Further info: LASER LIBRARY, Richmond House, Richmond Road, IPSWICH, Suffolk IP1 4DL.

## Laser discOUNT

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# To See CD-V

## The Editor goes in search of CD Video in London, Berlin & Berkhamstead

Always expect the unexpected. Inspite of their protestations to the contrary PIONEER has more than fulfilled LDR's expectations in putting a CD Video player on the market before anyone else. They did it in the US and Japan - even without the Clip discs being available in time - and you can bet they've been making plans for the PAL market that will similarly upstage PHILIPS' current efforts. In this instance they may not be first on the market, but don't believe the public image the company is attempting to maintain. This amounts to a "possible" CD Video involvement "if the software is forthcoming - possibly next year". Hmm.

Considering the chronic mistrust that appears to exist between PIONEER and PHILIPS in the UK (they do actually communicate - various executives involved with videodisc do admit to having lunch meetings - but such is the edginess over past LV marketing endeavours that it's difficult not to imagine a percentage of these encounters concluding with the opposing parties coming to blows by the time the gateau is on the table) it's understandable that PIONEER would be more than a little cautious about revealing any more of their marketing plans than absolutely necessary. PIONEER UK even had your normally cynical Editor disbelieving his own prediction in LDR-12 the the company would be "soonest" into the revitalised PAL LV market.

But then a phonecall from the folks at CD Review interrupted the daily chores. (CD Review is, or mostly has been, an audio/CD magazine but has been taking an active interest in CD Video, even to the extent of reprinting a condensed version of LDR-11's YAMAHA

CLV-1 review in their June/July issue. Some errors crept in during the process - some confusion over horizontal resolution most noticeably - but it all helps spread the word. And besides, we're expecting a cheque in the post any day now.) Editor Steve Bohling was ringing to say how they'd managed to get

## BERKHAMPSTEAD

hold of an NTSC CLD-70 LV/CD/CD-V player from Japan, via PIONEER in the UK. Unexpected to say the least. After all, if the company wasn't going to be putting out a PAL version, why would they want to provide a review sample and create the ensuing publicity for a product they "have no plans to introduce in the UK at the present"? Or was it just a case of getting their product reviewed to remind everybody that PHILIPS' player was not yet ready. (Gossip, gossip - where are the PHILIPS players? How come PHILIPS aren't - or can't - supply review samples so close to the US launch date?)

Sitting in the CD Review office, then, was a working CD Video player with a pile of Clip discs, and the temptation to zoom up to sunny Berkhamstead was an invitation too great to resist. And it was sunny that day too (which if you keep a weather diary you could narrow down to 31st July without any further clues). It made the cycle trip more than usually pleasant, inspite of the undue amount of hills one encounters past Stanmore and the incomprehensible signposting of the Watford ring road.

And it's not much further up the A41 from there that you start noticing cows and all that other rural stuff. How do they manage to get a mag out on time amidst all this relative tranquility? Mind you, they do have a proper set of offices that make the shambolic state of the LDR, er, 'workplace' look like the tip it really is. (But ours is closer to the boozier.)

Now this writer has spent some time tinkering with PIONEER's second generation combination player - known round the world as the CLD-7, CLD-909, or even (in the furthest reaches of the Japanese empire) the CLD-901 - although the machine sitting on the LDR shelf is actually a MARANTZ badged variation which that company calls the LV10CD. Whichever, one has become fairly familiar with the thing. PIONEER hasn't exactly stretched itself adapting the machine for CD-V. The CLD-70 has undergone some cosmetic changes on the front panel, which is now more angular and has a full set of function buttons for Play/Scan/Pause etc, but it is essentially the same box as the CLD-7



PIONEER's  
CD Video  
Combi player.





with a few new electronic tricks inside to accommodate the new Clip format.

There are three function lights on the front panel, to the left of the main display; one for LV, one for CD, and in the middle another for CD-V. Except this last one didn't work. It should have come on automatically when a Clip disc was inserted but didn't. Accounts of Japanese hostility to the very term CD Video suddenly took on renewed meaning, but the real explanation is likely much simpler than this 'malfunction' would suggest. The CLD-70 has been on sale on the Japanese domestic market since earlier in the year and come the June CD Video promotion it suddenly became Clip capable, with PIONEER offering to upgrade earlier machines to CD-V with a modification to one of the ROMs. Possibly someone omitted to connect a pin on this sample or maybe all CLD-70s have been Clip capable from the start - the 'upgrade' being no more than the making of a connection to switch the CD-V light on! We await further enlightenment on this matter....

Other than the Amsterdam press event I'd not seen any more Clip discs actually playing till this visit to Berkhamstead. For some unaccountable reason I'd taken to assuming the picture quality of Clip discs would fall short of what we'd come to expect from the full-sized disc (maybe as a result of the generally indifferent quality of all the disc excerpts played at Amsterdam),

the apparent reason that they were simply shot, video-originated pieces that didn't rely on any 'arty' effects etc to achieve their end. The player did seem a bit sluggish in starting up playing Clip discs - both in getting to the video portion (which is played first) and in then going from the end of the video track to the beginning of the first audio one. It needs to be snappier.

A few days earlier a letter had arrived at LDR asking what happened on the TV screen while the audio portion of a Clip disc was playing. Well, not much really. Just a blue screen with a time/track readout - as per the screen illustrations in LDR-11. At the speed CD Audio discs rotate at (200-500rpm) it is just not possible to generate enough information flow to produce full motion video.

With the target market these discs are intended for (teenagers) in mind one doubts whether it is the intention that Clip discs will be watched intently from start to finish, anyway. Much as in the manner in which the assembled group at CD Review (me, Steve Bohling and CD Review publisher, Graham Baskerville - none of whom could convincingly pass for teenagers) was doing, a disc would be put on and watched; when it finished



there'd be some talk while the audio played on as background, and then another disc would go on the player to be viewed. It's not a lot different from how people have played 45rpm singles all along - except that now they can watch something part of the time. If you don't have the TV on you can just play the things as audio only discs - they're sort of long EP/short LP length and fairly familiar in that respect. (In fact, the Shakatak Clip is on the LV10CD at this moment, while typing this article up. The video monitor is not switched on.)

If you insist on viewing the audio segment of a Clip with the TV on, the experience is about as exciting as that recounted in the description of the Dream Academy Compact LaserDisc reviewed last issue. Because CLDs are conventional videodiscs you at least get a static sleeve picture and the song title currently in play on the screen,

but it still doesn't amount to much more than the 'blue-out' you get with a Clip disc. (Or a 'green-out' as it is with PHILIPS' players.) However, there is supposed to be a graphics output capability with any CD Audio disc that is able to generate song lyrics and simple graphics, but no-one seems to have exploited this potential of the format all the time CD has been on the market. Maybe now someone will get round to employing the feature on Clip discs to get round this 'dead screen' problem.

All the Clip discs available for audition were Blackburn pressed production copies and not unduly troubled by dropouts and colour speckling - leastways not to a significant degree more than regular LV discs. There were odd speckles to be seen on some discs and it would have been nicer to have seen everything on a slightly bigger monitor. You know, it has been something of a running joke within these pages that the basic size for a videodisc display is 27" (and up), but the reality is that after a period of years of looking at discs on such a size screen anything smaller just seems to be a colossal waste of the benefits of disc; well, the benefits of a good disc. CD Review had the use of a similar SONY Profeel monitor to that used for LDR reviews, but one still felt there was more on some of the discs than this 20" screen could display. I turned the sharpness control on the monitor all the way up, and the one on the CLD-70, but one was still forced to the conclusion that bigger is better when it comes to matters of screen size.

While PIONEER UK didn't have any Clip discs of Japanese manufacture to put on the player they had furnished CD Review with a selection of conventional 30cm discs, mostly of Japanese origin. Star of the pile was undoubtedly the recent James Brown/*Live In Japan* disc - one of those programmes, such as those by Frank Sinatra, Rainbow, Barry Manilow etc that never seem to be released outside the country. They are not always huge artistic successes, admittedly, but what they lack in feel they certainly make up for in technical quality. One is rapidly coming to the conclusion that there are, in fact, three, not two TV standards when it comes to disc; PAL, NTSC and then Japanese NTSC. When they get round to their upgraded NTSC format (and the forthcoming Super LaserVision, presently being worked on to combat the threat of Super VHS and ED Beta) there'll be a fourth!



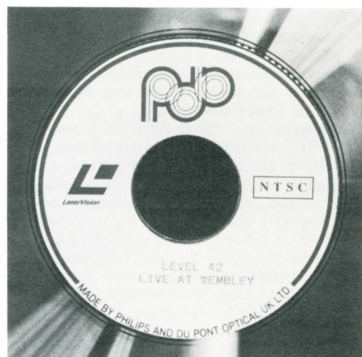
but this viewing experience would tend to contradict that impression. The first couple of discs seen (Robert Cray, Anita Baker) didn't look that wonderful, and the reason would seem to be the style of origination. Those of Freddie Jackson, Heart and Bananarama looked good - for

Another of the PIONEER Japanese titles turned out to be the Martha Argerich/Nelson Friere piano recital. This concert was recorded in Germany, at a guess on video, and so would have been standards converted to NTSC from PAL. While still comparatively clear, the colour was quite poor in comparison with the James Brown disc and it seemed as





though a similar weakness of colour was in evidence on the two POLYGRAM 30cm discs that had come fresh from Blackburn just a few days previously. (While the Clip discs have been coming out of Blackburn at a steady pace the larger format discs have been much slower in coming. We couldn't get hold of any specimens at all in time for issue 13.) In fact, these two POLYGRAM discs (Level 42 and Style Council) were grainy as well as colourless, and could conceivably have had to endure a similarly essential standards conversion process to get them out on NTSC disc. (This can't be said for sure. Sometimes NTSC is used as the originating format, even when programmes are recorded in PAL territories. When we get our hands on the discs and submit them to closer inspection it will be possible to tell one way or the other.)



And it wasn't only yours truly who noticed the lack of picture quality, but it proved quite interesting to observe how Steve and Graham paid more attention to the sound. Such a reaction is probably quite indicative as to how the general promotion for CD Video will be carried out ie. promoting the discs as audio discs with pictures rather than videodiscs that have good sound. Graham was familiar with the CD Audio sound of Level 42 and thought the bass on the videodisc "didn't sound quite right" - the sort of comment we hardly ever get round to within these pages because there are usually more basic transfer faults to be dealt with that invalidate extensive comments about the subtleties of both picture and sound recording. If this is a typical response from an audio oriented magazine it will be interesting to see how they deal with the more obvious negligence faults that crop up on film transfers, or the sorts of blatant dropout on the Queen/*Live In Rio* disc. (By way of contrast I didn't hear a major sound fault on any disc played that afternoon.)

Graham Baskerville is quite keen on CD-V. This is not typical of the

interest some magazines are showing in the format. There will always be good coverage for CD Video in the press as long as the lure of advertising revenue is there, but that's not quite the same as engendering the sort of dedicated approach to hi-fi found in some magazines that is pretty much independent of the pages of adverts such editorial generates. (Or vice versa.) That's not so say, though, that Graham is so convinced over the marketability of the larger format discs - valid as they may be contentwise. (He professes to enjoy live concert discs himself, the sort of programme likely to fill most of the early 30cm discs.) His comment is purely a marketing reality. Many of the people who have been won over by the CD Audio format to whom he has shown the larger discs perceive them (purely because of their size) as a throwback to the old technology of vinyl that they thought they had left behind. (This sort of consumer response gives some support to POLYGRAM's apparent obsession with changing the packaging of the larger discs.)

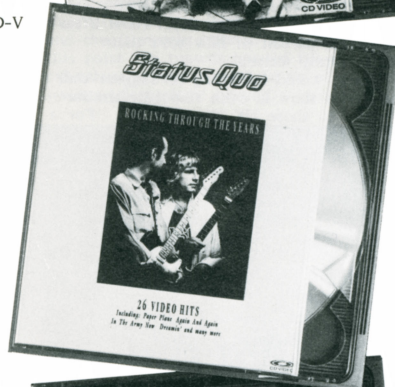
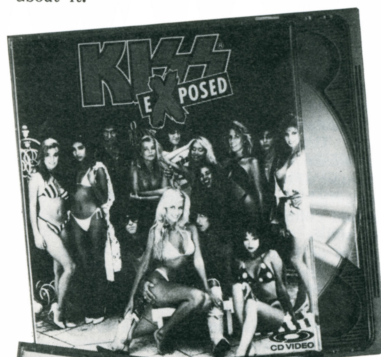
Graham thinks the Clip discs will prove quite a going proposition at £5 or so a throw - providing the manufacturers can get a dedicated Clip player down to near the price of a conventional player - not too much over £200, say. Everyone present was in agreement that the big problem with CD-V is to get people to integrate their hi-fi and video components ie. get the TV out of the corner of the room and the speakers out of the alcoves either side of the chimney breast. (Well, you can't really put the TV in the fireplace, can you?) And besides, the neighbours will probably start being less hostile towards you if half the sound from your woofers isn't being dissipated through the party wall.)



But that's when you're dealing with the family's communal living area. When it comes to reaching the teen market there are surprisingly encouraging short cuts that could make CD-V integration easier than might be expected. In the UK, at least, any teen prosperous enough to purchase (or have purchased) a Clip player will more often than not already be in possession of a colour monitor strapped into the bedroom computer. That means there won't necessarily be conflicts of interest over who views what on the living room TV. Most encouragingly, this sort of monitor is usually of far higher resolution than the family TV and will do more than justice to the superior picture quality

of the disc. Maybe PHILIPS should be thinking about making built-in CD Video drives to exploit this computer monitor market even further. It's certainly an approach that will come to pass when CD-I makes its appearance.

Coincidentally, towards the end of the afternoon's viewing the man from PIONEER showed up and was PIONEER-typically vague about the availability of this new machine in the UK - either in NTSC format (as a multi-voltage model) or, more importantly, in PAL format. But we'll keep phoning them about it.





# BERLIN

Most of what constitutes the known part of Berkhamstead would comfortably fit within the perimeters of the Berlin Funkausstellung exhibition it's that big. This bi-annual show is the main showcase for new consumer electronics in Europe although it is essentially targeted at the local German market. It would compare most closely with the sort of shows we in the UK used to get ten years or more back in London's Earls Court and Olympia halls. These were originally radio and TV shows that got caught up in the hi-fi boom of the seventies and disappeared soon after. For enthusiasts now forced to trek round one pokey London hotel room after another in pursuit of new toys their like is sorely missed.

But it would be wrong to suggest that the Berlin show is even remotely similar in scale to those UK shows of old. For a start it runs for 10 days, attracts more than 300,000 people and fills 25 halls

arranged around a large open area that is additionally filled with pavilions and display areas. (The photo is of the conference centre annexe that did not contain much of the actual exhibition, but it's a good angle to photograph the radio tower from. One is bound to think the architect for the building spent his formative years watching every Gerry Anderson production from *Supercar* on!) As a further hint to its size they offer a reduced rate season entry ticket that needs to be used for three days before you gain any price advantage. At first that doesn't seem much of a deal, but I was there two days and didn't see half of what was going on. And that's with a known number of stands to visit to see a specific product. Browsers would easily have occupied themselves for a week.

It begins to make even more sense why they chose Germany to launch CD Video when you see the general level of prosperity of the crowds milling about. Besides, they've had stereo TV for some time in Germany now and would be more clued up as to how to connect their audio and video components (bet more German TVs have SCART or direct video inputs than in the UK) and, of course, there is just the publicity for the new format that the show itself can generate. (There is a heavy broadcasting input at the Berlin show that involves live transmissions and the like.) If they can't drum up a bit of interest here it won't be for lack of exposure.

Unlike in Chicago last May there was no POLYGRAM-sponsored generic CD Video display area combining all the manufacturers' hardware introductions. This was due to an unfortunate chain of circumstances rather than any apparent cooling of interest in the format. AMK (the organisers of the exhibition) do not allow mixed occupancy of stands too easily, and as this CD Video display area needed to be booked some 18 months ago there was no option to assemble such a group exhibit. They didn't even re-use the Chicago concept of various domestic room/lifestyle simulations. Instead there was a large first floor-

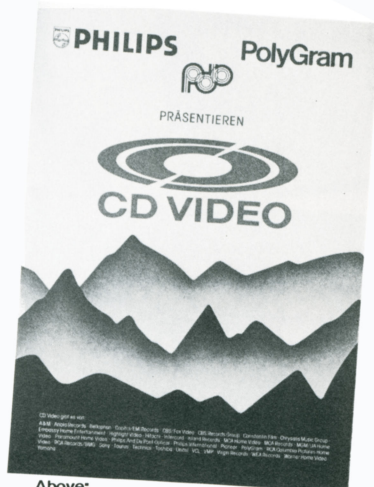
level-platform built on a scaffolding-type erection that must have held around a couple of hundred people. The audience could look down on an enormous 64 screen Vidiwall multi-screen display showing the Humphrey Bogart demo disc. It seemed to draw a crowd.

Underneath this platform, on ground level, was a corridor containing some individual PHILIPS/PIONEER players on personal dem. The PHILIPS players (CDV 475) were running in PAL, the PIONEERS taking care of the NTSC displays - all on Matchline 3 monitors. Most of the remaining space under the platform was done up like a garden with hundreds of 30cm LV discs sticking end-on out of the ground - like blossoming flowers, I suppose. (Who really knows what these exhibition designers have in mind?) Around the perimeter of the hall itself was rack after rack of CD Audio discs and one wall of opera/classical music titles in their jumbo jewel boxes. (But those were only display samples.)



A spokesman for POLYGRAM, Germany spoke of 1200 of their dealers for CD Audio products being primed for the CD-V launch. They had had requests from a few major multiples to allow them some exclusive pre-general availability of product, but it looks as though everyone is going to be dealt with equally in the beginning. There will be no promotion of CD Video through video outlets in Germany.

POLYGRAM, Germany has been promised software availability after the launch (from the presses of PDO) to a level of up to 9,000 Clip discs a day and up to 3,000 a day of the larger format titles. Disc prices are being suggested (the final decision being the option of the individual labels) at between DM14-17, for the Clip and DM39-49, for 30cm pop titles. There will be



**Above:**  
The promotional leaflet for Germany claims widespread software support at the foot of the front page.



no attempt to weight the prices of the larger pop discs on the basis of whether they are one-sided or not. Although there are obvious differences in disc mastering cost between single and double-sided discs, POLYGRAM's opinion was that you can't muck about with disc prices on this basis, confusing and maybe provoking resistance in the consumer as a result. They've set a retail price to accommodate both single and double-sided product and they'll take it as it comes. Quite sensible.

20cm pop discs will probably sell for around DM30, and film titles on 30cm disc will likely be in the region of DM49-59. (The present exchange rate is near as dammit DM3, to the £, so working out comparisons is not too difficult. There is no guarantee the exact same prices will pertain here, though.)

However, seekers after items from the UNITEL catalogue of opera/classical music product will have to contemplate a shop price of DM89, for their discs. There is some logical reasoning behind



this price structure, though one possible hardware participant in the CD Video campaign caustically suggested that it was because POLYGRAM INTL had paid a hefty (rather too hefty in his opinion) price for the UNITEL catalogue in the first place! What POLYGRAM suggests is that an opera CD will occupy two audio CDs in the normal course of events and therefore sell at a premium, maybe twice the regular price. To get the same running time with a picture on CD-V should enable them to justify the DM89, price.

Like probably every territory that gets CD Video early on, Germany will see its large format discs turn up in the original jewel-box design. There'll be about 50,000 discs sold in these boxes before the new-design, hinged box can be put into production. POLYGRAM didn't like the original design (for all the obvious reasons - wait till you see and hold one!)

There isn't a launch catalogue available yet - there won't be till pretty near the actual day - but the company was distributing literature containing software company names and artistes with discs already lined up for release. November 16th is the date set for German CD Video launch.



## Alphabetisches Verzeichnis von Künstlern mit Musik-Video-Programmen im Startangebot von CD-Video

Gregory Abbott	Aretha Franklin	Motley Crue
ABC	Glenn Frey	Mr. Mister
The Andrew Sisters	Georgia Satellites	Alexander O'Neal
Aha	Godley & Creme	Randy Newman
Bryan Adams	Go West	Nu Shooz
Alabama	Terri Gonzalez	Robert Palmer
Jon Astley	Lou Gramm	Jeff Paris
Wally Badaron	Gwen Guthrie	Alan Parsons
Anita Baker	Hall & Oates	Papsi & Shirlie
Bananarama	Heart	Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers
The Bangles	Herbie Hancock	Tom Petty
Pat Benetar	Debbie Harry	Pink Floyd
Blow Monkeys	The Hooters	Poison
Bon Jovi	Bruce Hornsby & The Range	The Police
Laura Branigan	Bruce Hornsby	Elvis Presley
The Breakfast Club	Housemartins	Pseudo Echo
Bucks Fizz	Whitney Houston	Stacy Q
Cameo	Billy Idol	Queen
Belinda Carlisle	Inxs	The Rainmakers
The Cars	Freddie Jackson	Ready For The World
Rosanne Cash	Janet Jackson	Refugee
Cinderella	Jermaine Jackson	Kenny Rogers
Cock Robin	The Jets	Mason Ruffner
Phil Collins	Billy Joel	RUSH
Company B	Elton John	Teddy Ruxpin
Robert Cray	David Lyn Jones	Scorpions
Bing Crosby	Grace Jones	Carly Simon
Crowded House	The Judds	Paul Simon
The Cure	Kenny G	Simply Red
Curiosity Killed The Cat	Tom Kimmel	Lynyrd Skynyrd
Cutting Crewe	KISS	Rick Springfield
Roger Daltrey	Kool & The Gang	Bruce Springsteen
David and David	Patti LaBelle	The Starship
Dead or Alive	Lace	Sting
Deep Purple	Cindy Lauper	The System
Dexys Midnight Runners	Julian Lennon	Tears for Fears
Dire Straits	Level 42	Thompson Twins
Duran Duran	Leverit	Til Tuesday
G. Estefan with Miami Sound	Huey Lewis & The News	Jethro Tull
The Eurythmics	Living in a Box	U2
Fabulous T-Birds	Fleetwood Mac	Ultravox
Donald Fagen	Madame X	Visage
John Farnham	Madonna	Jenniver Warnes
Fat Boys	Brantford Marsalis	Dionne Warwick
Aleem Feat. Leroy Burgess	Nancy Martinez	Roger Waters
Five Star	Mel and Kim	Jody Watley
Force MD's	John Mellencamp	Kim Wilde
Frankie Goes To Hollywood	George Michael	World Party
Aretha Franklin & George Michael	Ronnie Milsap	Yes
	Moody Blues	



**Top Right:** No German CD Video launch catalogue was ready for the show, but but there was a list of artistes with discs scheduled for release.

**Bottom Right:** The raised viewing platform overlooking the CD Video Vidiwall.





One end of the POLYGRAM hall was given over to a display from the TAURUS FILM-VIDEO company which is contemplating putting movie titles out on CD Video. These will be most entirely German language (dubbed in the case of foreign language films) and they were displaying several dozen jewel-boxes containing mock-up sleeves, the idea being to elicit response as to the type of movie German consumers want. Much of what they showed could be a little obscure to us in the UK but there was a recognisable *La Strada* and *Carmen* (the Carlos Saura version) to be seen. The company had even gone so far as to have a 20cm demo disc made up of movie excerpts which they were playing on a PHILIPS CDV475 on their part of the floor.



The colour leaflet put out by the PHILIPS - POLYGRAM - PDO triumvirate (see bottom corner two pages back) lists these other software companies among the supporters of CD Video:

A & M, ARIOLA, BELLAPHON, CAPITOL/EMI, CBS/FOX VIDEO, CBS RECORDS, CONSTANTIN FILM, CHRYSALIS, EMBASSY HOME ENTERTAINMENT, HIGHLIGHT VIDEO, INTERCORD, ISLAND RECORDS, MCA HOME VIDEO, MGM/UA HOME VIDEO, PARAMOUNT HOME VIDEO, RCA/COLUMBIA PICTURES HOME VIDEO, RCA RECORDS, VCL, VMP, VIRGIN, WEA RECORDS, WARNER HOME VIDEO.

Being written in German there should really be no misunderstanding about whether some of these companies will be putting out product in PAL format (but of course there is). It will be more than interesting to see whether some of the very significant names contained in the list come to issue titles in Germany.

## HARDWARE

Because the Berlin show is a combined trade and public affair the display of products on manufacturers' stands is not always a straightforward matter. Some exhibit what they have to sell and keep future products and new technology out of sight. Others put future products on display to gauge public reaction before they'll commit themselves to a marketing date. Sometimes this gives a clue to their marketing intentions with CD-V but, just to make things interesting, sometimes it doesn't.

### Yamaha

YAMAHA had a couple of modest stands in different places - the one in the special 'high-end' area containing a private dem room containing the company's two new (NTSC) machines. YAMAHA won't be coming into the PAL market till nearer the main Spring 1988 push on CD Video.

The CDV-1000 combination player (pictured opposite, top) is wider than the CLV-1 player previously reviewed in LDR-11, but it is still a pretty trim machine. YAMAHA has improved upon the previous machine's feet, which are now much more satisfactory looking, but the casing has neither the usual spartan (but quite pleasing) YAMAHA 'technical look' or the diminutive charm of its predecessor. There is a bevel to the top edge of the new box that doesn't seem to achieve much.

But it's what's inside that really counts. The front panel claims the machine to have a "Super Tracking Tilt Servo Laser System" and a "High Resolution Direct FM Detector". The only spec known is of a claim of 430 line picture resolution. The front panel controls and the remote control are pretty much as with the CLV-1.

The photo below shows the CDV-S100 Clip player. (It's sitting on top of a DTR-1 DAT tape deck. The large

**Left:** Under the the ramped audience area on the POLYGRAM stand was a hands-on demo display of PAL & NTSC machines.

YAMAHA badge above we believe to be removable, and not part of the CDV-S100's own casing.)

The Clip machine is not noticeably smaller than the Combi player. The empty front panel space resulting from the narrower drawer is utilised to carry a full set of control buttons - the remote being a much simpler affair altogether. Again the bevel edge approach has been taken with the design of the front panel.



Product Manager Volker Dusing spoke of having requested Japanese head office to make some attempt to come up with a player able to cope with both PAL and NTSC discs (being aware of the problems that might arise on this area) but a suitable product does not look likely in the short term.

One of the players was putting out a picture on a MITSUBISHI-tube based 35" monitor in the dem room (Kool & The Gang) and this looked a little the worse for dropout than would be considered ideal.

### Hitachi

HITACHI demonstrated both types of CD Video hardware too, and again out of sight in their dealer dem room. The Clip player is styled totally in keeping with HITACHI's upmarket hi-fi separates (of which we don't get to see much of in these parts, the company tending to concentrate more on mainstream audio and video). The combi unit is very similar in appearance to the current range of LV-only machines (of which there were a bundle elsewhere in the room being used to generate picture displays on all manner of HITACHI large screen monitor TVs not yet available in PAL versions). If you take a look at the photo of the VIP-25DX in LDR-13 (p. 16) you'll get an idea of the design of the new combi player which is just a bit higher but the same width and depth. Because HITACHI's LV players are only 86mm high the new combi still rings in with pretty trim dimensions. The combi player is called the VIP-Y35 (in Japan anyway) and boasts 400 line resolution and 45dB video S/N. On the audio side it employs digital oversampling with 95dB S/N. The DA-VI Clip player is the same width as the big machine but has been engineered with a very low height measurement. (Sorry there are no pics.)

Yet inspite of HITACHI's obvious ability in turning out the hardware, they have reservations about introducing PAL versions. For some reason the company seems sensitive about its CED involvement a few years back and was testing out dealer reaction in Berlin to see whether it should put players on the German market. These, being the opening days of the show, it was too early for the company to have gauged dealer response sufficiently.

**Facing Page:** At the top is the YAMAHA Combi player, below the Clip machine.







## Sony

SONY had a press conference on the first day of the show (28th) and issued a release about their new PAL CD Video player, the MDP-101. As in Chicago, this is still at the prototype stage. On the SONY stand the next day they had an NTSC machine, but an assurance was given that they did actually have a PAL player.

The interesting thing about the SONY machine is the drawer configuration. The disc well for the 20/30cm LaserVision discs is where you'd expect it to be - dead center of the slide-out drawer. But the 12cm CDs go into a totally separate well position, situated at the front, right-hand corner of the drawer. It almost gives the impression that you could put two discs in at the same time! (Which is not the intention, it should be pointed out.) The photo (top, opposite) just about shows the CD well.

The SONY player (better shown in the photo at bottom, right) is fairly average in size and the facia and overall design not particularly evocative of any other SONY product one can recall. Possibly the production model could be quite different in appearance.

There will be production models, yes in PAL, in spite of all those statements from SONY over the years that videodisc was not seen by them as a consumer product. The current position is that the CD Video System (this 'system' approach figures greatly in all SONY's utterances) is the next logical extension of CD Audio. The idea is that the audio disc has been established; the players can be made without too much trouble and the public is aware of the quality. And, as the quality is pretty much as good as the typical customer wants, the sensible thing to do is broaden the horizons - and do it before it is too late. With an eye on the vinyl deck replacement market the aim is to achieve enough consumer interest to make the product a quantity selling item. If they can make enough they can get the price down to (hopefully) the DM1,000. level, even if it is necessary to start the player off at a bit of a premium. Translated that suggests a starting price of around £500, reducing to £350 if the sales are there.



This thing about consumer acceptance is really crucial (as was the case with CD Audio, LV, and dare one say, Elcaset). But in spite of SONY's sensitive position as regards the diminishing Beta VCR market and the often hostilely reported on 8mm format, the impression is that the company wants to put as much into CD Video as possible, while at the same time being able to extricate itself with dignity if the whole exercise (in the PAL area, at least) proves unsatisfactory. As to Japan, SONY plans to market its CD-V Combination Player later this year and, according to the Berlin press release, "will continue to co-operate with other hardware makers and the software industry in order to develop the potential of CD-V".

The PAL player was duly in place first thing on the Sunday morning and

functioning with the handful of Clip discs available for the show. It's worth noting that each time I passed the SONY exhibit there was always an eager group of viewers (usually young in age) peering at the Profeel monitor screen. Indeed, when the photos were taken on the Saturday night it had proved difficult to obtain a clear shot and the demonstrator himself was looking somewhat the worse for wear after the continuous stream of visitors.

This sort of interest in CD Video proved fairly common throughout the show wherever anyone was presenting a 'live' (ie. a human demonstrator being present). The interest was significantly from younger visitors and of a considered/contemplative nature. No-one was being overawed, but they were looking and listening in more than a casual manner.

## Technics

Whatever glamour the SONY name can bring to CD Video, MATSUSHITA (in the more recognisable brand-names of TECHNICS and NATIONAL/PANASONIC) brings sheer scale, being the sort of Japanese manufacturing conglomerate of PHILIPS complexity and size. The new TECHNICS SV-XC200 Clip player is an intriguing beast that well deserves its two photo representation (see over) in these pages. The official line given at the Berlin show was that this NTSC player was a demo-only product, with no plans for an introduction into the German or even PAL market.

What is more intriguing, though, is quite where the company stands in regard to the NTSC (and particularly) the Japanese market. At one time MATSUSHITA developed its own videodisc format (VISC) that never reached the market-place, the company foregoing its own technology in favour of that of JVC subsidiary's VHD/AHD system. To all intents and purposes VHD only ever got going in Japan, and has gone from being the disc format supported by the majority of Japanese hardware manufacturers to one being rapidly deserted in favour of optical laser disc.

For MATSUSHITA to change horses midstream and drop VHD for CD Video/LaserVision is a problem of some dimension that the production of a dedicated Clip player combats with some delicacy. Without abandoning its VHD commitment the company gains a foothold in laser videodisc while still appearing to support the old technology. The Clip disc, being an obvious outgrowth of the CD Audio disc about which there is little in the way of standards controversy (even JVC have been in with CD Audio from the start), provides just that convenient entry.

But just look at their player! While YAMAHA is able (with the CLV-1, at least) to build a LaserVision player the size of a CD player, the mighty MATSUSHITA doesn't seem to have the expertise to turn out a Clip player any trimmer than a current bog-standard LaserVision machine. Surely there must be something amiss hereabouts?

Studying the two photos of the SV-XC200 tells quite a lot about what could really be going on. The bottom photo is the one that gives the game away, and funny enough, wouldn't have been taken had it not been for the obliging and courteous demonstrator volunteering to show the operation of

the disc drawer. She pushed the button on the remote and the drawer containing the Clip disc poked out. It was at this moment one realised how dopey the whole thing looked - one huge battleship of a player thrusting forth this tiny gold disc. A look at the top photo shows how scrappy this drawer, on an otherwise clean-lined machine, looks. One is tempted to think that at some future date, when it is publicly acceptable to do so, this rather unsatisfactory 'split-drawer' arrangement might give way to a single large drawer design, thus allowing this bulky device to grow into a proper disc player!

In the meantime this 430mm width Clip player claims 400 line resolution and 45dB S/N figures plus a 95dB audio S/N. The front panel bears these words just above the 'Digital' badge - "Super 1 Chip Video Signal Processor", "Super Clean Digital Filter", "CMOS Direct FM High Resolution Time Base Corrector" and "Wide Band 4 Wire Suspension Optical Pick-up System".

## Philips

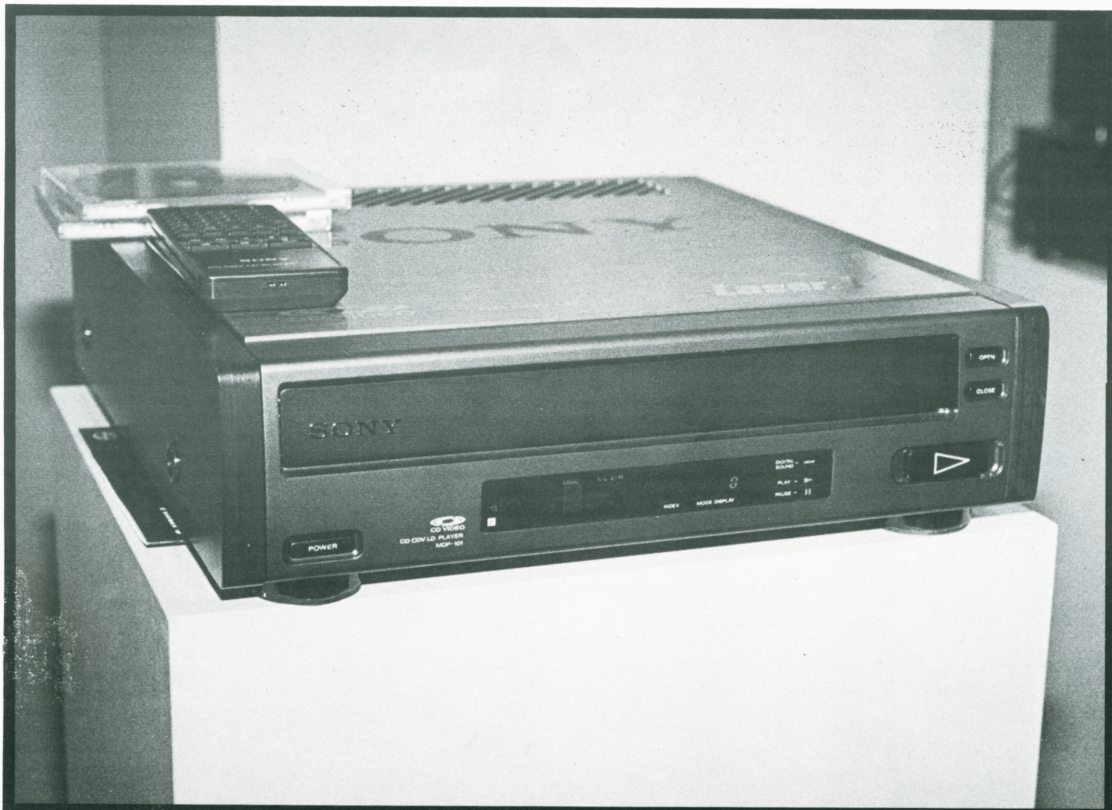
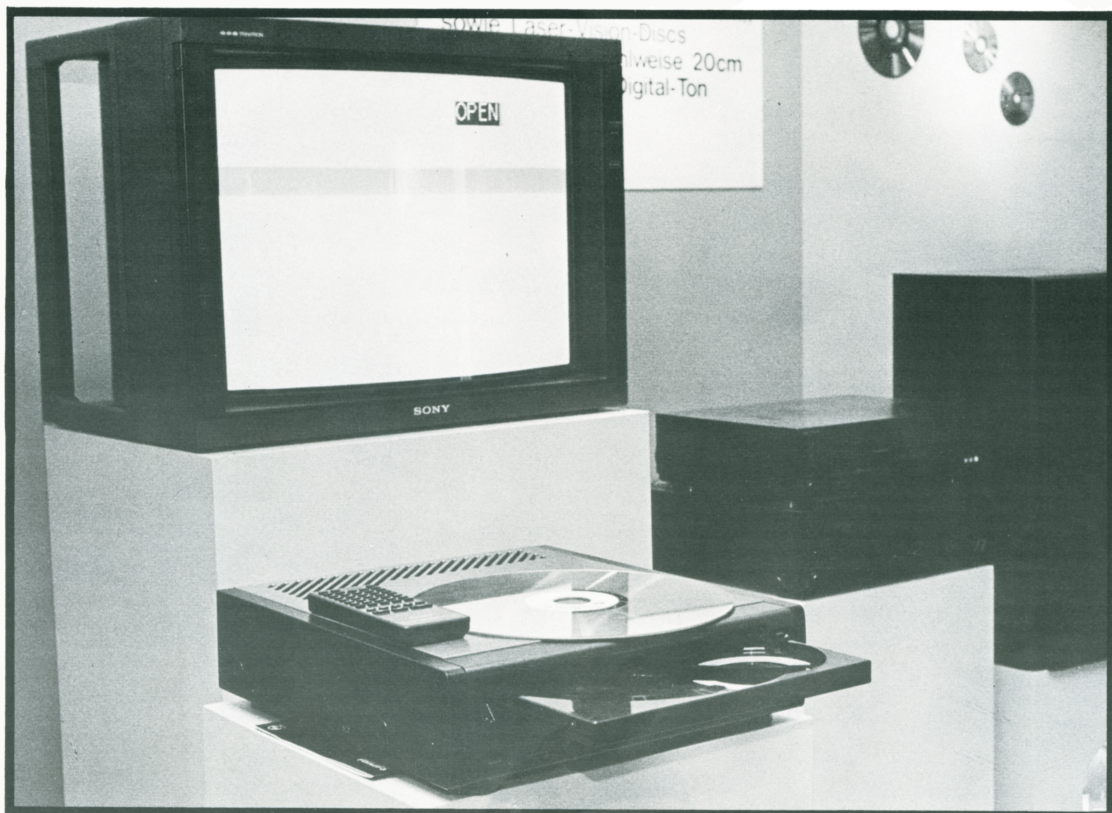
PHILIPS players working in PAL were on show in the PHILIPS pavilion as well as at the POLYGRAM software display. The main PHILIPS pavilion was set in the grounds of the exhibition and most everything they had on display, from MSX computers through to hi-fi separates, was being eagerly pawed over by the bustling crowds. There were a couple of CDV 475 players demonstrating CD-V in a hands-on area, but outside PHILIPS had built a special CD Video viewing theatre which, I have to confess, I didn't have time to visit.

The CDV 475 has undergone some slight cosmetic changes since first glimpsed those few months back in Amsterdam. The increased size of the status display is about the most noticeable difference. The player is not really yet ready, and though the quantity of machines seen around and about would suggest otherwise, there is still some work to be done to improve the video noise aspect of the machine. Accordingly, discriminating viewers would easily notice the graininess of much of what was seen, but as there is so little CD Video software yet pressed up in PAL, any opinion as to whether it was the performance of the discs or the player being assessed would be difficult to make. No existing analogue LV discs were in evidence to use as test pieces.

They had a fairly comprehensive brochure ready which quotes some interesting specs. The Video Bandwidth is stated at 5MHz (-3dB). This appears unchanged from the original LV players, but they were always quoted within a -6dB tolerance, so the new machine is considerably better. Along with this bandwidth goes a substantial 48dB Signal-to-Noise figure that is presumably weighted (otherwise it would be an order of several dB better than a C Format VTR!). The new machine sports a Scart/Euroconnector socket which outputs not only the composite video signal (as well as through a separate phono socket) but also a converted RGB signal, similar to what was done with the PHILIPS 400 series players. That'll mean, to get the

**Facing Page:** At the top is the SONY prototype Combi player showing the CD well set off-centre in the drawer. Below, a closer view of the machine.











full bandwidth signal, you'll need a TV with an appropriate RGB input.

There is no RS232C interface on the machine, not even one of those 8-pin I/O ports as on the recent PIONEER LD700. PHILIPS are looking to do something more computer oriented with subsequent players and the only interfacing likely to be possible with this machine is going to be via some remote in/out sockets designed to tie the machine in with PHILIPS integrated A/V remote control system.

There are also two audio phono outputs, a digital output (for separate audio D/A converters or even CD-I type applications) and RF/antenna sockets (for those who insist on using them). Dimensions are 420(w) x 100(h) x 393(d)mm though you have to allow 613mm of depth to fully extend the front drawer. Weight is 8kg approx and power consumption put at 55 W approx.

Audio specs are more comprehensive than on any other videodisc player ever encountered. They quote frequency response of 20-20KHz, Amplitude Linearity of  $\pm 0.1$ dB, Phase Linearity of  $\pm 0.5$  degrees, S/N Ratio of  $>100$ dB, Dynamic Range  $>96$ dB, Channel Separation  $>96$ dB (1KHz), THD  $<0.003\%$  (1KHz), IM Distortion  $-90$ db (max output level), Out-band Rejection  $>60$ dB (frequencies  $>24$  KHz), and for Wow & Flutter they just say "Quartz Control Precision". Needless to say some of these figures make analogue videodisc specs look a bit of a joke and one looks forward to putting some of the new software to the test. There is a headphone output with a volume control on the front panel of the player which has Stop/Open/Close/Play/Standby/Pause buttons on it as well. Most of the flashy control work is done with the remote control, which is 20 track programmable and does most everything all the other recent videodisc players we've covered in these pages do (as far as can be made out from a quick perusal of the specs).

PHILIPS says the machine features its CD-2 all-integrated digital audio decoding circuitry, as used in all their best CD players, and this CD-2 has an improved version of its 16-bit 4x oversampling and digital filtering as well as the dual 16-bit digital-to-analogue converter.

There isn't a price quoted for all this technology, but a tentative DM1,500 was suggested.

Specs will obviously be a little different for the American NTSC machines which are theoretically supposed to appear on the market before the PAL launch, but none of the NTSC versions was in evidence anywhere at the show. (POLYGRAM was having to use PIONEER players to display the NTSC Clip discs on its stand, remember.)

## Bits and Pieces

There were several other exhibitors of CD Video hardware at the show whose intentions on marketing are less clearly defined. TOSHIBA, for example, made some mention of their XR-100D Clip player and XR-L100D Combi player in a press release, but neither was in evidence on the stand. They could have had the things stashed away in the back room, but I was unable to gain access to

**Facing Page:** The TECHNICS "Clip" player showing (top) the rather untidy drawer and (below) the enormous size of it.



this in the time available.

The FISHER stand was a bit of a surprise, for among the components in its A/V display was a full-width CD Video Combi player (NTSC) of no obvious manufacturing derivation. FISHER itself didn't seem likely to have made the thing, but determining the source of manufacture would be no more than a

one of the few

Japanese-pressed discs seen at the show. (Most of the discs used on the various manufacturers' displays were PDO, Blackburn made.)

There was a Japanese-pressed Clip disc on the DENON stand, however. Called *City Swimmer* by Kazuo Zaitzu, it bore the catalogue number TDV-1 and utilised the now discontinued CD Video logo. The DENON player, the DCD-GX, would have to be rated the most attractively styled piece of CD Video hardware at the whole exhibition, being of modest YAMAHA CLV-1 dimensions but styled in contrasting black and grey in such a way as to make the end result both functional and elegant. The player was ensconced in a glass case that made



stab in the dark. The machine (the CLV-88S) was black finished, very slim and unadventurously styled. Though no-one on the FISHER stand was really aware of the company's position with CD-V, there was some mention made of a possible PAL version in Germany in the course of 1988. One of the discs they had to demo was a Janet Jackson disc on A & M, pressed by CANNON in Japan,

**Top:** PHILIPS specially constructed CD Video theatre for giving demos of the new format.

**Bottom:** The CDV475 is on the left.





photography a little difficult, but it seemed prudent to bang off a few frames before the device was squashed by the TV monitor (a 21" DENON model boasting surround sound). The reason for the player being behind glass, with a selection of other new technology products, was because there are no plans at present for a PAL/German introduction.

SANYO had an obvious YAMAHA CLV-1 clone on its stand, catchily called the DC-WO15LVP. The man from SANYO, Germany was a bit wary of the company becoming involved in CD Video, though if the market is there they'll go ahead and order up a batch of PAL players from Japan.

There has to be at least one false alarm at a show this size, I suppose, and that came in the shape of several unexpected CD-V players on the SANSUI stand. These turned out to be standard audio CD machines on closer inspection, but the joke is that SANSUI has been using the letter prefix "CD-V" to describe certain of its CD players for some time now - although they may stop doing so when angry customers start



There are some European manufacturers who have been showing a bit of interest in the idea of CD Video (companies who have quite a high profile on the mainland, but not really in the UK) but there were no signs of hardware on display. On the plane to the show someone saw a BANG & OLUFSEN commercial containing a few seconds of a large format videodisc being handled but B & O had nothing on open display in their Berlin marquee.

From this brief visit (early on the in the show) the PAL launch of CD Video would seem to have got by if nothing else. One calls to mind something the POLYGRAM man said about the show. "We could have done with all this a bit later" were his actual words. However, it looks as though it might all come together given those extra few months.

[There were a couple of other interesting non-CD Video things at the show that will receive a mention next issue.]

complaining that they can't get any pictures out of the things!

Though the PIONEER press conference on the Sunday morning was missed, I passed through their stand an hour or two later to see much activity with videodisc players. PIONEER will be marketing a PAL Combi player (based on the CLD-70/1010) in Germany in October, priced at DM1,998. This PAL machine will be called the CLD-1050 and they actually had a PAL sample up and working. Most of the machines on the PIONEER stand were NTSC models (now bearing the CD Video logo in the bottom right-hand corner of the fascia) and the general theme was of one player for all sizes of disc, there not being any apparent interest in introducing a dedicated Clip machine for the German market.

**Top:** FISHER CLV-88S (on plinth).  
**Middle:** DENON GCD-GX Kombi player.  
**Bottom:** Massed PIONEER players emphasising the Combi approach.





The very morning after returning, the postman dropped a postcard through the letter-box telling me all about the PAL CD Video launch in Berlin. I could have stayed home! Everyone in the Silver Disc Club (PHILIPS' register of LV owners that distributes info on the system and which is due any day now to be circulating details on a CD Video incentive purchase scheme) should have had one.

Most folks received a card depicting a Berlin church looking the little worse for wear. (Believe me, the rest of Berlin is in better condition.) If you got the aerial shot (there were different views sent) and you look at the top left you can see Savignyplatz Strasse. Half an hour's stroll along that brings you to the Berlin Radio Tower, where the Funkausstellung was held. Just down in the right-hand corner (third tree up) is where one recalls finishing off the remnants of the 'specially imported' cheese sandwiches at the ungodly hour of the morning chosen by German Railways to schedule their overnight train to arrive in Berlin. There was nowhere to stay the following night either. Oh yes, don't believe all this stuff about the exotic five-star high-life of us 'international journalists!' Such was the influx of tourists to Berlin (for both the show and for the City's 750th Anniversary celebrations) that accommodation was scarce to the point of non-existence. For fellow travellers caught in a strange city in a similar predicament one can but recommend the all-night cinema as a last ditch option. Apart from being cheap (£4!), in this instance it also promised the opportunity to bone up on some German movies. Needless to say, none of the 12 examples on offer that Saturday evening showed any sign whatsoever of emanating from a German studio, other than for a brief visit to a local dubbing suite to put on a German dialogue track.

But, in a manner of speaking, one has now finally had the opportunity to see the much-sought-after disc title *Katzenmenschen* (Cat People); to endure

## LONDON

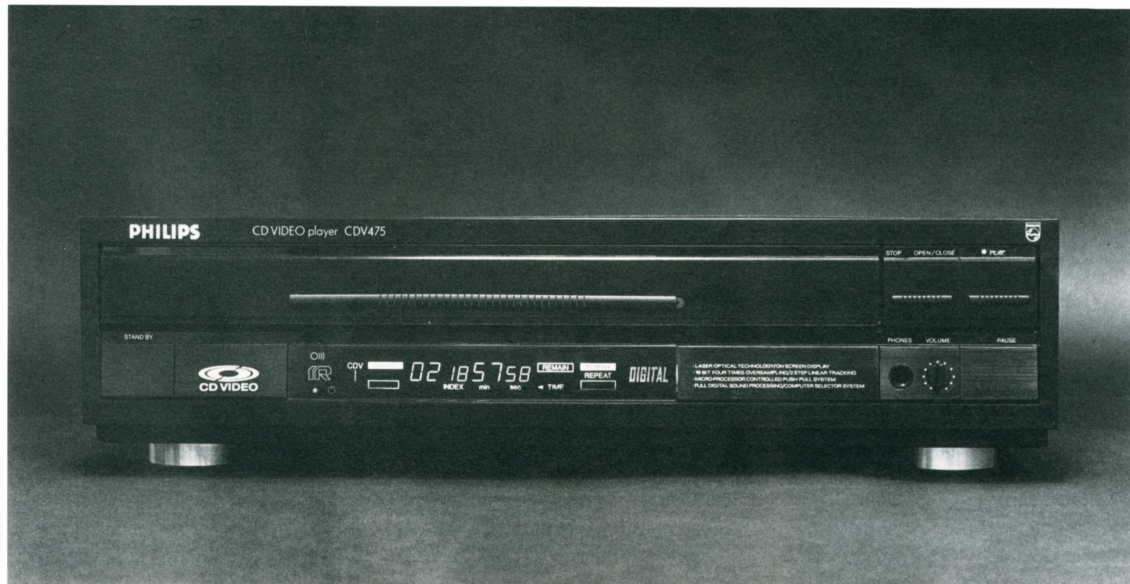
*Der elektrische Reiter* (The Electric Horseman) - which to its credit did provoke the onset of some much needed kip; and to sit refreshed through a completely unintelligible *Car Wash* (Car Wash) which, apart from the title, only brought forth one other word of dialogue comprehensible to a non-German speaker. (During the scene where they are throwing a urine sample about they suspect to be a bomb.)

And, in a round about way, that brings us to the next stage in the marketing of CD Video - a UK press launch at Kensington's swish Roof Garden niterie. Well, it was called a press launch, but they held it at night, and instead of imparting any particular product information, plied the gathered multitudes with generous quantities of journalistic lubricant. In the words of the more seasoned professionals present one understands the event to be what is normally referred to in the trade as "a

bit of a piss-up".

PHILIPS and POLYGRAM (the joint hosts) were celebrating the sale of the 1,000,000th CD player in the UK, only five years after its introduction. It's on top of that they were announcing CD Video to the British media, and the assembled throng was then treated to a little audio-visual history of the UK since the 1950s (commentaried in person by Paul Gambo-thingy, the disc jockey chap). This culminated in the showing of the CD Video Combi player (the CDV475) and the announcement of the first PAL CD Video disc, *Curiosity Killed The Cat's Free*.

At the appointed big moment the player appeared from a concealed compartment in the wall and the disc was ceremoniously plonked on. The video was shown (though not from the disc player!) and the fireworks outside went up. At this point the crowds headed for the refreshments and several hours of serious 'discussions' ensued.







Fortunately, due to the efficiency of PHILIPS' PR people, a press kit arrived a day or so later recounting the details of the event (which I now pass on), plus some other tid bits of news it contained.

First the nice photograph. (It's a nice photograph because it's one of the very few photos we ever get that, regardless of its visual merit, is at least technically up to scratch - so few of them ever are!) On the left, the Cat people are seen crowding the CDV 475 Combi player, to be priced (and we quote) "between £400 and £500, and (it) will be available in selected outlets in London from November and nationwide from January". They also go on to talk about the Clip player, a mock-up of which can be seen on the right (the white box). More quotes - "The CD-V Clip player will be launched in the spring of 1988. The machine will play only the 5" CD-V single and the ordinary CD Audio-only discs. Coloured black or white, the player measures 360mm, allowing it to fit neatly with all midi-sized systems and separates".

Close study of the Clip mock-up suggests it won't make a very wise purchase when it is first put on sale. How can one say this? Well, for the same reason one has already studied with suspicion a previous piece of equipment sporting a 'three-piece drawer'. In TECHNICS fashion, this forthcoming 'Clip player' may eventually grow into something bigger - a Clip and 20cm (EP) machine maybe? Of course, one could be quite wrong...

(There is a certain groundswell of enthusiasm for the 20cm disc, based very much on its user-friendliness and general visual appeal. The impression is that programmes will, in time, be made

especially for it; for the youth market particularly. It is undoubtedly the largest disc that could be considered to be enhanced by the jewel-box packaging.)

Then there is a quote from Simon Turner, PHILIPS' Group Marketing Manager - "The launch of CD Video is a natural extension of Compact Disc. We have formed agreements with record companies and the film industry and together we will ensure CD and CD Video is the medium, for many years to come." For further enlightenment we then have to go to POLYGRAM's contribution to the press package.

Here it says "CD-V singles will sell for around £5 and not only will POLYGRAM's leading roster of artistes be quickly available on it, but the rest of the industry too. Over 250 titles will initially enter the CD-V market. Rock concerts and larger collections of video clips will be released on 8" and 12" discs at prices ranging from £10 to £20. CD-V is for collecting. Now the classic movies will be released at affordable prices on discs which will do justice to the quality of the film shot on 35mm, with soundtracks that even in the cinema are rarely played back at their full quality potential. Over 150 titles will come onto the market initially through an exciting series which will have great collector appeal. The great studios, through WARNER HOME VIDEO, CBS/FOX, DISNEY and CIC are already backing it". Attentive readers will have probably felt their pulses switch into overdrive after that last bit. (More to follow on this later in the saga.)

Beyond the press kit report, little of the blur of conversation from the evening remains etched

in the memory with any marked clarity. A fellow guest certainly told me that there were plans afoot to build an all-size/all-format optical disc pressing facility (unconnected with the PDO group) in a location a few hundred miles west of London; next year apparently.

One remembers bumping into Steve Keaton (Assistant Editor on 'What Video', or 'What Supplement' as some wags in the biz have taken to calling it of late!) and enquiring about the forthcoming 'CD Video' magazine they have been trailing these last few issues (at the foot of the contents page). This indeed might appear as a supplement (!) of some sort early next year. Look out for that. (S.K. was not much more communicative past that, being mostly drawn to extended ogling of Barry Sheene's motorbike that had been winched up by crane to the roof garden for the occasion.)

'New Hi-Fi Sound' Editor Neville Farmer tells me that they will be running the first review of PHILIPS' Combi player in the December issue (on the street sometime in November). A close encounter with writer Barry Fox (who stimulates much in the way of angry letters from LDR readers) took place, resulting in him thrusting his business card between the whitening knuckles of my right hand while simultaneously exhorting me to pass on the phone-number to readers, so as they can call him any hour of the day and night should in future they find anything he writes to be in the slightest way off-target. Leastways, I think that's what he suggested, though by this time the onset of exhaustion was beginning to manifest itself, so I made my excuses and left.



# CD Video Launch ?



Level 42's CD Video disc 'It's Over' went on sale in September.... but there are more waiting in the wings.

CD Video discs have started appearing in UK shops. At least, on September 14th someone bought Level 42's *It's Over* Clip disc in an OUR PRICE outlet in Victoria, London. The sales-staff were unsure of the price to charge but head-office reckoned £6.49. Probably it should have been a little less, but at this stage of the game they're still collectible novelties and so it may take a while for them to drop to near their supposed £4.99 target price. Still, within a few weeks of the first PAL production samples rolling off the presses at Blackburn, a few record companies have seen no reason to delay putting the things on sale here - even if only as spasmodically distributed novelties. Don't expect to be able to go into your local record store and order one up as you would a normal disc.

But who knows where this latest development will take us. Though the audio is perfectly playable on any CD player, the video portion remains frustratingly dormant. This jumping of the gun may do something to stir up a bit of word-of-mouth publicity for CD-V and it may allay any industry enthusiasm for the SONY-promoted 7.5cm audio-only single, but it's all putting pressure on PHILIPS to get a player onto the UK market.

The latest situation (as of September 16th) is that there might be some PHILIPS players available before Xmas. The likelihood of this coming to pass seemed to hinge on some machines intended for the German launch being siphoned off for sale here. It all seems a bit touch and go. A question to PHILIPS here in the UK as to whether there was any embargo on other manufacturers introducing players before certain set dates remained unanswered. Logically, one concludes there is a European timetable of Combi and Clip player hardware introduction that (sensibly) gives PHILIPS an opportunity to promote its own product first. The manner in which things are shaping up behind the scenes suggests the PHILIPS players are later into production than they would like and their window of opportunity is momentarily jammed shut.

Meanwhile, an outline plan for software availability is taking shape via the POLYGRAM side of the operation. A provisional release of 40-50 Clip titles is being readied for Germany, to be accompanied by 4 x 20cm and 4 x 30cm pop titles and between 10-15 x 30cm classical titles. This is the basic POLYGRAM group of record companies package (POLYDOR, PHONOGRAM, MERCURY, DG etc) to which other companies are being encouraged to add their own releases. Potentially any of the 'German' Clip discs could be creamed

off for sale anywhere else as CD Singles. No-one outside Germany will have a PAL Combi player so there will be little reason to distribute the videodiscs-proper outside Germany. They won't play on existing analogue LV machines.

Depending on player availability, POLYGRAM is anticipating having a more substantial catalogue readied for the first quarter of 1988 (Spring) to launch CD Video properly in the UK, France and The Netherlands. Here we are probably talking about a few hundred titles, as suggested in the CD Video promotional material.

## FEATURE FILMS

After what seemed to be almost an intention to avoid the movie market with CD Video (ie. the movie companies didn't really go with it first time round, when it was LV, so concentrate on the music this time - at least as far as the PAL side of things is concerned) there now seem to be meetings of various sorts going on to try and organise something in this area. It is a little confusing; people who should be aren't talking very much. What started out to be a quick ring round of a few UK video companies to gauge current attitudes to the CD-V concept turned out to be little more than a waste of time in respect of obtaining hard information worth passing on to readers. Half the trouble is that many of the UK operations are but local outlets for companies that make their real decisions back in the USA. That, though, doesn't really account for the continuing avoidance of communication by anyone at RANK (who should have some finger on the pulse of what is happening with the DISNEY product mentioned in the London CD Video launch PR handout). MGM/UA gave as their excuse for not talking the fact that "the auditors were in" that week. The following week the "only person able to talk" was "away on holiday". This was getting to be a waste of time.

It came as little surprise that WARNER UK were both obtainable and willing to talk. They seem to be organised. It is too soon for them to outline plans but the underlying commitment given by Warren N. Lieberfarb last March in Amsterdam seems to be still holding in respect of the UK market. "You'll see a substantial amount of software from WARNER, I'm sure" were the words of UK Head, David Rozalla.

Other sources suggest it may well be a month or so before any firm outline of movie product on disc might take shape. And this will involve more than just the UK. A meeting mid-September involved

## MAYKING RECORDS

Most everyone who sees any potential in the whole CD Video promotion is going to have no trouble in working out the fact that for it to work depends not only on the suppliers of software and the makers of the hardware, but also the disc pressers. All of a sudden we are facing a situation where audio disc makers are looking at CD Video for what it can do for them in the way of new business. From the consumer's point of view, the more the merrier.

It shouldn't be too much of a problem for CD Audio pressers to switch some of their capacity to making CD Video Clips; the basic pressing process remains unaltered. (Though one is bound to contemplate that moving from audio to video means blemishes and dropout previously obscured by the marvels of digital encoding will be mercilessly laid bare on the analogue video portion of the signal.) Only some re-equipping of the mastering suite is necessary to cope with the new disc.

It doesn't therefore cause any great surprise to hear about MAYKING RECORDS looking for business pressing Clips at their MPO, France CD plant. What causes a lot of extra interest is the positive manner in which MAYKING's Brian Bonnar spoke of quickly moving into production of 20cm discs (before the end of the year), and sometime next year even into 30cm. But it's the 20cm barrier, involving a definite upheaval to the pressing lines, that is most immediately significant. Bonnar expects to be able to use much of the existing pressing equipment to produce the EP disc, which he personally sees as a useful member of the CD Video family. He is more hesitant about the viability of the big disc.

He finds the limitation of the single-sidedness of a disc intended for movies puzzling, because he can't come to grips with the prospect of having to turn a disc over halfway through a movie when the same movies the company duplicates through its associated VCR duplicating facility (VIDEOPRINT) play all the way through without interruption. However, investigation of the pressing equipment and related process modifications is going ahead because the company is already getting enquiries from movie clients looking for capacity in Europe.

MAYKING plans both PAL and NTSC mastering so will be able to offer a full service to record companies from the one plant. The company is also supporting with some enthusiasm the proposed 75mm audio only single that as yet is to receive unanimous support from the hardware companies.

The first CD Video contract likely to be fulfilled by MAYKING/MPO is a 12cm Clip disc for CHARLY RECORDS featuring the Nina Simone title *My Baby Just Cares For Me*. The video track will feature a specially commissioned piece of animation to accompany the song, an oldish track that recently was made available in a re-edited extended version.



parties from Germany, France, and The Netherlands as well as the UK. We'll therefore just have to let this one go till next issue.

Whenever the WARNER push might occur, though, their current titles show immediate sign of drying up through the existing LIGHTNING distribution deal. LIGHTNING's current 'caretaker' role in releasing LV discs will continue for the foreseeable future for companies not interested in taking on their own releasing and distribution.

(As a reminder of how it operates now, LIGHTNING takes care of such matters for the video companies so all they have to do is come up with the mastertape, the financial risk and the day-to-day administration being taken care of by LIGHTNING. Effectively, the video companies have little responsibility for their product once the tape has gone off to PDO in Blackburn and been approved at the tape check stage.)

Most of the labels they presently release on disc are on fairly short-term distribution contracts, contracts that could theoretically be withdrawn or cancelled at a moment's notice. CIC (which represents MCA/UNIVERSAL and PARAMOUNT) is a slightly different case and they have a deal with that company that runs till well into 1988. (There is a technical get-out in it, though, depending on whether it could be argued 'CD Video' discs are intrinsically a different product from 'LaserVision' discs.)

LIGHTNING plans on doing movies in digital on CD Video (and, while recognising the drawbacks, in the new jewel-box packaging too). Defining a changeover time from analogue to digital is a decision that they cannot commit themselves to - till there is a showing of the new players in quantity.

If all the new player owners (either ex-LV or from-scratch buyers) start demanding movies, then it will happen sooner. If not, it will happen later. (Back to PHILIPS. Recently it was suggested by a UK spokesman that maybe existing LV owners wouldn't be that fussed over having movies in digital sound. Not that they wouldn't want it all, but that it would not necessarily be a major priority. Possibly so - and an interesting change of tack from the plan put forward in Amsterdam of an 'overnight' changeover. Additional to this, the basic shortage of suitable film masters is worth considering. For example, even in the US with several years of digital sound availability, the largest label, RCA, has yet to issue its first title in digital. CBS/FOX has been almost as reluctant. These companies don't have the production facilities for digital as yet and many UK companies are similarly behind. Considering the fact that continuing to issue the majority of film titles in analogue makes for accessibility to all the players - new and old - may there be some softening of the original PHILIPS position on this matter?)

Either way, LIGHTNING is having to face a higher manufacturing cost for digital discs from PDO - mainly in respect of disc mastering costs, which would hopefully be recoverable in increased disc sales. (The mastering cost is fixed within reason. As long as it is possible to increase sales the price rise can be absorbed.) At the time of writing they were still awaiting a full break-down of the new disc

manufacturing costs from PDO, but though scaremongers may try and suggest otherwise, it is unlikely that the retail price could increase without destroying the whole thrust of the CD Video launch. It is, after all, a sell through product.

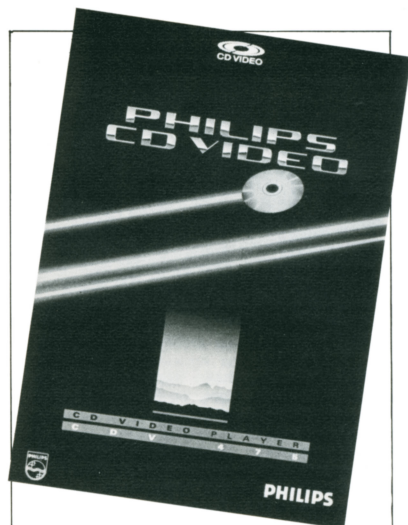
The past two years of LV distribution have been satisfactory for LIGHTNING, if not a huge success. This is not because the product has not sold. The resilience of the LV market seems to have surprised them early on in the exercise. By way of contrast, having just previously taken V2000 software releasing on in a similar manner they were surprised as to how much energy there was in the LV market and the dedication of its users. With V2000 it was a pretty dead market in a continuing decline, the stuffing well and truly knocked out of it by the time they got their hands on it. With disc, sales have been strong whenever the title selection has been right, and it is only the fixed size of the market (ie. no new players being sold) that has stopped it being even more of a success.

Between 20 - 30 new titles are likely to be scheduled for the period up to Xmas, and once PDO in Blackburn is back on stream LIGHTNING is expecting to get a couple of titles a week out to sustain the market after a particularly erratic period of disc issuing of late. (Apart from all the refitting for CD Video having been going on at Blackburn the plant has, of course, been pressing all the POLYGRAM group software in NTSC for the American launch.)

But we come back to several unanswered questions at the conclusion. Put simply it is too soon to know how the UK CD Video launch is going to take shape. The magazine has been promised a PAL Combi player to review by PIONEER, UK. (See, we did keep calling them!) This will feature heavily in our next issue. At present they have no date for putting it on sale here. By the time you read this it will have been shown at the 'Hi-Fi News' Show at the Heathrow Penta, but this is supposed to be only a showing, not a product launch. Similarly, pre-production sample/s of the PHILIPS machine will be shown at the Penta, but no really firm availability date was expected to be given.

For a product so close to its promised launch there are all manner of pieces of the CD Video jigsaw that have yet to be fitted into place and the only conclusion one can draw is that whatever does happen won't be quite as it was predicted to be.

One almost certain outcome of this early trickling of Clip discs onto the market will be that, if it hasn't happened already, somebody will soon be claiming sales figures for a 'videodisc' that will make all previous PAL disc statistics look pretty puny - and that may start putting a whole different complexion on the technology that is possibly what PHILIPS had in mind when they dreamt the whole CD Video concept up.



#### FOR YOU TO SEE CD-V

In the coming months PHILIPS are presenting CD Video demos in various parts of the country. If this magazine comes out of the printers in time you might catch the National Sound & Vision Show in Bolton, happening on October 3rd & 4th. Opening times are 10.00-19.00(Sat) and 10.00-18.00(Sun) and the venue the Last Drop Village, Bromley Cross.

In Edinburgh, the Hi-Fi Corner Show will be held at the Post House Hotel, Corstorphine Road on Saturday 24th October (11.00-20.00) and Sunday 25th (11.00-18.00).

In November the Paul Roberts Hi-Fi Show will be held at the Berni Royal Hotel, South Parade, Weston-Super-Mare. Times are 10.00-19.00 on both the 28th and the 29th.

Expect also to see some in-store demos of CD-V before Xmas. Locations suggested as possibilities are TOWER RECORDS and HMV in London's West End. Also COVENT GARDEN RECORDS at 84 Charing Cross Road, London W.1.





# U.S.A. REPORT

Though no Clip discs were available to sell with the CLD-1010 when it went on sale in June, PIONEER did have 1,000 copies of a Tina Turner Clip pressed up for dealer demonstration purposes (pressed back at the plant in Kofu, Japan). POLYGRAM started distributing demo copies of Clip discs to selected dealers in early August but it is looking increasingly as if no significant quantity of Clip discs will appear till late November/early December at the earliest.

The CRITERION label announced on August 16th its first licensing arrangement with a major studio, the result of which involves the videodisc rights for 17 films from the MGM/UA catalogue. Titles such as *2001, The Wizard Of Oz, West Side Story, North By Northwest, Philadelphia Story* and *A Night At The Opera* feature in the deal. Discs will start appearing towards the end of 1987 and will in many cases be in CAV, widescreen and have Digital Sound. Due for September release from CRITERION was *The Dream Machine* - a CAV computer animation disc.

Even mainstream companies are putting out more CAV titles. *An American Tail* is scheduled for CAV & Digital Sound release (there will apparently be no alternate CLV version!) and another cartoon *The Lady And The Tramp* will also see CAV release this Xmas (this time along with a CLV version).

Every August and September release from MCA is scheduled in digital; from the 1986 *Brighton Beach Memoirs* to the 1930 *All Quiet On The Western Front*.

The biggest selling US laser disc to date is *Indiana Jones & The Temple Of Doom* which reportedly has sold 100,000 copies.

Forthcoming from publishers NEW YORK ZOETROPE is a compilation of 1,242 past laserdisc reviews culled from the pages of the monthly LASER DISC NEWSLETTER. It will be called *The Laser Video Disc Companion* and will retail at \$16.95.

## New LV Releases

New titles for August/September are listed below. All information comes from PIONEER/LDC - IMAGE Release Sheets and specifications and release dates should only be taken as a guide.

All titles are 30cm/CLV/Mono unless otherwise indicated. Abbreviations used are 'Di' - Digital Audio, 'S' - Stereo, 'CX' - Analogue Noise Reduction, 'CC' - Closed Captions, 'Subs' - Subtitles.

### AUGUST

Jumpin' Jack Flash - CBS/FOX 1508-80 \$34.98-S,CX,CC  
Red Sonja - CBS/FOX 4733-80 \$34.98 - S,CX  
Baby - TOUCHSTONE 269AS - \$34.95 - CX  
Winnie The Pooh/A Day For Eyr - DISNEY 598AS \$24.95  
Stepfather - EMBASSY 75676 \$34.95 - S,CX,CC

Airport '77 - IMAGE ID5118 \$34.95  
Appaloosa - IMAGE ID5119 \$34.95  
It's A Gift - IMAGE ID5088 \$34.95  
Morocco - IMAGE ID5125 \$34.95  
All Quiet On The Western Front  
- MCA 21005 \$39.98 - CX,Di,CLV/CAV  
A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court  
- MCA40601 \$29.98 - CX,Di  
Jesus Christ Superstar - MCA 17002 \$29.98 - S,CX,Di  
Playing For Keeps - MCA 40563 \$34.98 - S,CX,Di  
Crocodile Dundee  
- PARAMOUNT LV1890 \$29.95-S,CX,Di,CC  
Heat - PARAMOUNT LV12584 \$29.95  
Police/Every Breath You Take  
- PIONEER PA-87-196 \$29.95 - Di  
Francesca da Rimini(Met.Opera)  
- PIONEER PA-87-180 \$59.95 - S,CX,Di  
Island Breeze (Robbi Naish)  
- PIONEER MS162-22LD \$34.95- S,CX,CAV  
Critters- RCA 32666 \$29.95 - S  
My Demon Lover- RCA \$29.95  
Billy Idol - VESTRON LV1204 \$29.98 - S,CX  
Eyes Of Fire - VESTRON LV5205 \$34.98  
Harem - VESTRON LV5201 \$34.98 - S,CX  
Kindred - VESTRON LV5203 \$34.98  
That's Life - VESTRON LV5203 \$34.98 - CC  
The Mosquito Coast  
- WARNER 11711 \$39.98 - S,CX,CC  
\*Round Midnight  
- WARNER 11603 \$39.98 - S,CX,Di,CC

### SEPTEMBER

Black Widow - CBS/FOX 5033-80 \$34.98 - S,CX  
Subway - CBS/FOX 6969-80 \$34.98 - S,CX,CC  
The Seventh Seal  
- CRITERION CC110L \$74.98 - CAV,Subs  
Hidden Fortress  
- CRITERION CC111L \$89.98 - CAV,Subs  
The Hubley Studios- DISNEY 762AS \$24.95  
One Magic Christmas - DISNEY 475AS \$34.95 - S  
Defense Of The Realm - EMBASSY 76896 \$34.95 - CX,CC

Red-Headed Stranger  
- EMBASSY 901536 \$34.95 - S,CX,CC  
Paradise Alley - IMAGE ID5116 \$34.95 - CX  
The Island - IMAGE ID5122 \$34.95 - S,CX,Di  
Nightmare On Elm Street 3  
- IMAGE ID5053 \$36.95 - S,CX,Di  
Mannequin - IMAGE ID5149 \$36.95 - S,CX,Di  
Otello (Zeffirelli film)  
- IMAGE ID5152 \$49.95 - S,CX,Di  
Playboy Video Centrefold Vol. 6  
- IMAGE ID5153 \$24.95 - S,CX,Di  
King Kong Lives - IMAGE ID 5154 \$36.95 - S,CX,Di  
Airport - MCA 10005 \$39.98 - S,CX,Di,CLV/CAV  
Brighton Beach Memoirs  
- MCA 40476 \$34.98 - CX,Di,CC  
Invisible Man - MCA 23007 \$29.98 - CX,Di,CLV/CAV  
Silent Running - MCA 40483 \$34.98 - CX,Di  
Comedy Theatre Vol.IV/Delivery Men  
- PARAMOUNT LV12534 \$29.95 - S  
Comedy Theatre Vol.V/Cutting Up  
- PARAMOUNT LV12531 \$29.95 - S  
Critical Condition  
- PARAMOUNT LV1879 \$29.95 - S,CC  
Some Kind Of Wonderful  
- PARAMOUNT LV31979 \$29.95 - CC  
Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home  
- PARAMOUNT LV1797 \$39.95 - S,Di,CC  
Star Trek TV No. 27/Ultimate  
- PARAMOUNT LV60040-107 \$29.95 - S  
Star Trek TV No. 28/Assignment  
- PARAMOUNT LV60040-108 \$29.95 - S  
Star Trek TV No. 29/Enterprise  
- PARAMOUNT LV60040-109 \$29.95 - S  
Star Trek TV No. 30/The Children  
- PARAMOUNT LV60040-110 \$29.95 - S  
Star Trek TV No. 31/Spectre Of  
- PARAMOUNT LV60040-111 \$29.95 - S  
Bolshoi Ballet/The Golden Age  
- PIONEER PA-87-199 \$39.95 - S,CX,Di  
Manhattan Transfer/Vocalese Live 1986  
- SIGNATURE PS-87-020 \$29.95 - S,CX,Di  
Casiopea/Perfect Live  
- PIONEER IMPTS \$34.95 - S,CX,Di,CAV  
Blind Date - RCA 30822 \$29.95 - S  
Quiet Cool - RCA 32768 \$29.95 - S  
Bedroom Window - VESTRON VL5209 \$34.98 - S  
National Geographic/Egypt:Quest For Eternity  
- VESTRON LV1076 \$29.98 - CC  
National Geographic/Maneaters Of India  
- VESTRON LV1077 \$29.98 - CC  
National Geographic/Kingdom Of Belize  
- VESTRON LV1078 \$29.98 - CC  
Around The World In 80 Days  
- WARNER 11321 \$39.98 - S,CX,Di,CC  
Bullitt - WARNER 1029 \$29.98 - S,CX,Di,CC  
Crimson Pirate - WARNER 11269 \$29.98 - CX,Di  
Mean Streets - WARNER 11081 \$24.98  
Time After Time - WARNER 22027 \$29.98 - S,CX,Di,CC

## Laser Video Discs

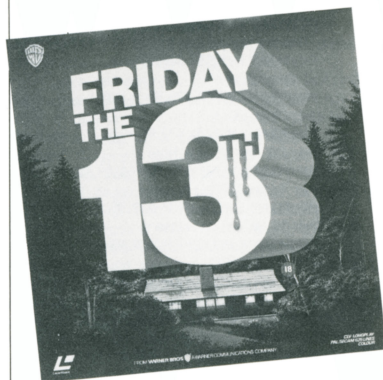
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## LASER DISC HOTLINE

Recorded message on new laser disc releases available 24 hours a day. (703) 430-0330.



# REVIEWS



New releases have started turning up in several different pressing variations this last month or so. That is the reason some identification has been made in the individual reviews. In practice, the pressing quality is fairly consistent between types (from what we've seen so far) so the immediate significance may be little more than of academic interest.

PDO, Blackburn has now installed its new disc mastering machine and the first 'new' title to appear was *Friday 13TH*. Close inspection of the 'grooves' shows it to be markedly different from anything seen before. It is a new type of CLV, but as yet we don't have a new name for it. So, in an inspired moment, we settled on "New CLV" as a makeshift designation.

Other pressing novelties are some Blackburn mastered but outside pressed (in Germany) discs that were done while some of the re-building work was being carried out at Blackburn.

## The Colour Purple

WARNER PEL 11534 £24.99

CLV COLOUR STEREO DS

1985 147mins (3 sides) Rated 15(V)

Cast: Danny Glover, Adolph Caesar, Margaret Avery, Rae Dawn Chong, Whoopi Goldberg

Music: Quincy Jones

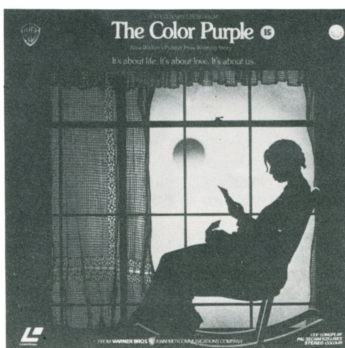
Photography: Allen Daviau

Director: Steven Spielberg

**MASTER:** The screen image is presented in a slightly wide screen format with a small black strip top and bottom of the picture. The absence of any panning and scanning means that the picture is of a constant sharpness throughout. The colour rendition and contrast are excellent, and even the black border has been done with more care than is normal. (There is no 'broken' line where the black butts

onto the image.) The ultimate resolution of the picture is limited, however, and there is some noise and patterning to the picture that the transfer would have been better without. The graininess aside, this transfer is one of the very few that turns up on disc looking like a real movie. The magnetic audio track is about as clear as one could imagine this type of film sounding on our present analogue system. There is much less hiss than on many other recent discs. There is, though, what appears to be some sort of flutter to the sound that reviewer Ken Barnes describes as "gurgling" and finds too distracting by far.

**DISC:** PDO, Blackburn mastered but SONOPRESS, Germany pressed.



As a feature film *The Colour Purple* has a lot going for it. Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Alice Walker, impeccably photographed by Allen Daviau, a touching music score by Quincy Jones (who also co-produced), a good script by Menno Meyjes, striking performances (especially Whoopi Goldberg, making

her screen debut) and all of it masterfully directed by Steven Spielberg (with stylistic bows to David Lean, John Ford and, on occasions, Sergio Leone).

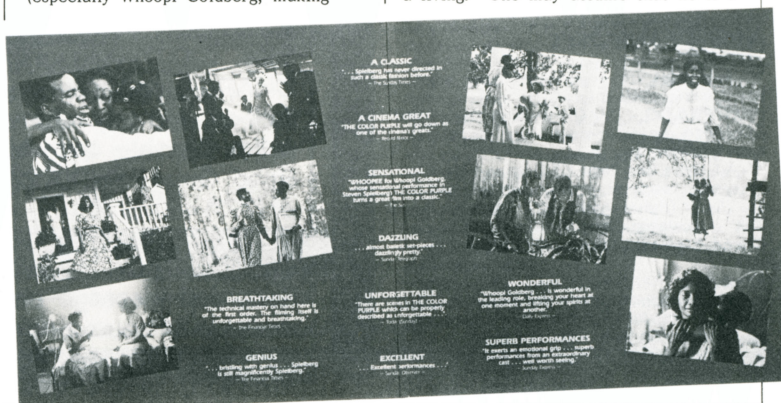
On an objective level, it is unquestionably a superior and compelling piece of work. But films - especially important films such as this - cannot be judged on a purely objective basis. Audiences care nothing for technical excellence. The average person reacts subjectively. In the final analysis it's the emotional impact that counts most.

*The Colour Purple* is the kind of film that will have your tear ducts working overtime, grabbing you in a relentless grip of emotion, or it will leave you stone cold - in which case you'll find yourself concentrating on its flaws instead of its moving storyline and rich gallery of characters.

Speaking for myself, I find the film not only fascinating but immensely satisfying. It is altogether different from any other film I have ever seen. I played it through twice in succession and enjoyed it even more the second time - despite the disc's awful audio transfer.

It's a sprawling saga spanning more than thirty years in the life of a simple-minded, downtrodden black girl in America's Deep South. Trapped in marriage to a brutish, oversexed moron (a well-observed performance by Danny Glover), she learns to stand up for herself and eventually attain a state of personal independence. Here and there, are other characters - some frustrated, others fulfilled, but always at the centre - a survivor.

The film's faults are not based on what we see and know of the characters - but on what we don't see. We are not told what the moronic husband does for a living. One may assume that he is a





sharecropper who works for a white landowner. But we never see any 'boss man'. On the face of things, this is the only logical explanation as to why this poverty-stricken family could come to be living in such an impressively large house. Perhaps Spielberg didn't think this was important to his telling of the story - but it certainly bothers a lot of people who have seen the film and remains the main basis of criticism that has been aimed at it.

There are other lesser faults that may or not bother people. But I would contend that the main thrust of the story and the passionate way it is told on the screen - not to mention its visual richness - are enough to make one overlook its flaws.

To me, *The Colour Purple* is a beautiful film - both objectively and subjectively. [KEN BARNES]

## Pirates



WARNER PEL 37170 £19.99

(CLV) COLOUR STEREO DS

1986 107mins Rated PG(V)

Cast: Walter Matthau, Cris Campion  
Damien Thomas, Charlotte Lewis,  
Olu Jacobs, Richard Pearson  
Music: Philippe Sarde  
Photography: Witold Sobocinski  
Director: Roman Polanski

MASTER: It may say WARNER on the sleeve, but the picture on the screen screams out CANNON/THORN. Yes, totally unsympathetic image cropping that comes in much too close, eliminating the merest hint of any of the compositional qualities of the original cinema frame. What remains comes from a print; the colour is dull and it isn't very sharp. The audio promises to be a good, dynamic optical track - a bit lacking in the highs (even with some cranking up of the treble control) - but with a certain mellow friendliness about it. The bad news is that a short way into side two a high frequency cyclical squeaking starts up (mostly) on the right-hand channel that prevents the volume being pushed anywhere near its true potential. There are some rather noisy reel changes too.

DISC: New CLV type - PDO, Blackburn.

In a previous Polanski movie - *Dance Of The Vampires* (that hinted at being something of the same sort of spoof *Pirates* might have been intended to be) - there was a wonderful moment where Terry Downes gave somebody an

enormous kick up the bum. If memory serves correctly, it was an unfortunate Alfie Bass who was on the receiving end. Were the same gag to be used in *Pirates* the boot would have been far better aimed at the director. Alas, there is no Terry. Alas, there is no film.

For the \$30,000,000 it is reputed to have cost to make it would be reasonable to expect more. Beyond a large boat of some period authenticity there is little evidence of the mega budget on the screen.

It has a major star in it. Walter Matthau plays a seasoned pirate captain - every bit the part visually - but with an English accent of varying degrees of consistency. At times it is convincing; at other times not. That such fluctuations should occur mid-sentence is off-putting, to say the least. He has a young sidekick (played by Cris Campion) whose French accent is more credible. At the start of the film the pair are rescued from a drifting raft and spend the next two hours getting in and out of various predicaments. All of these are incredibly slow-paced.

An effort has been made to inject a little vigour towards the end by some slightly snappier editing. The prison escape scene that goes missing as a result leaves the viewer confused without saving the day. *Pirates* has been listed with running times of both 124 and 115 minutes, but even this slightly shorter version does not solve its basic problem.

## A Room With A View



EMBASSY ELV 1856 £19.99

CLV COLOUR STEREO DS

1985 112mins Rated PG(V)

Cast: Maggie Smith, Denholm Elliott,  
Judi Dench, Simon Callow, Helena  
Bonham Carter, Julian Sands, Daniel  
Day Lewis  
Screenplay: Ruth Prawer-Jhabalava  
Music: Richard Robbins  
Photography: Tony Pierce-Roberts  
Director: James Ivory

MASTER: The master has been sourced from a cinema print and gives us a high contrast picture (slightly too high) with good sharpness, detail and colour. There is some graininess to it (which looks a little like the actual film grain rather than just noise), but overall this is a definite improvement upon the average transfer and so should be applauded and encouraged. The soundtrack is

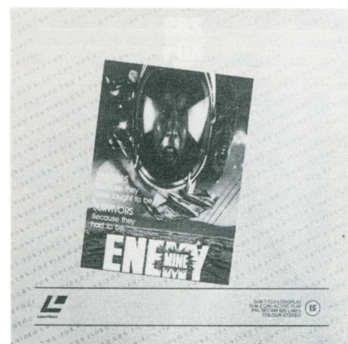
basically clean and fairly hiss-free, but the dynamics are not very detailed (although the sound has a pleasant open feel to it that matches the content). Some distortion is evident over the opening opera music (which was apparently the case with the film when shown in the cinema) and also there is a passage on side two where the sound becomes momentarily muffled.

The Ismail Merchant/James Ivory production team hit the jackpot with this exquisite adaptation of E.M. Forster's *A Room With A View* which ran to packed houses in London for over a year and is now repeating that success on video. The storyline travels from Florence to the English countryside, and deals with a love triangle between Lucy Honeychurch (Helena Bonham-Carter), her intended husband Cecil Vyse (Daniel Day-Lewis) and an eccentric young man called George Emerson (Julian Sands) who literally sweeps her off her feet. Society's varied reactions to Lucy's predicament are the backbone of the story and provide an excellent opportunity for such fine actors as Maggie Smith, Denholm Elliott, Judi Dench and Simon Callow to prove (if proof be needed) what gifted craftsmen they are, given such source material.

The Italian and English locations and the elegantly decked out actors (with costumes by William Pierce) are quite stunningly filmed. Operatic pieces by Puccini hit just the right note, and the whole thing is seamlessly edited together by Humphrey Dixon.

Everything about this production exudes warmth, wit and charm, and quite against my expectations, I found this delightful disc to be extremely repeatable (more so than many of the blockbusters that have appeared on disc). I can't remember seeing a film for a long time so lovingly produced and meticulously acted - you won't be disappointed. [PETER MOVERLEY]

## Enemy Mine



CBS/FOX 1492-70 £19.99

CLV/CAV COLOUR STEREO DS

1985 89mins Rated 15(V)

Cast: Dennis Quaid, Louis Gossett Jr  
Music: Maurice Jarre  
Photography: Tony Imi  
Director: Wolfgang Petersen

MASTER: Low contrast, fairly sharp transfer, the picture quality is reminiscent of the recent *Aliens*



master. There is quite a high level of grain to the picture that is distracting in the darker scenes (of which there are many). The audio transfer may actually be a little better than *Aliens* - it sounds magnetically sourced and has good range. However, it is too hissy. DISC: PDO, Blackburn mastered but SONOPRESS, Germany pressed.

Despite positive reviews, the theatrical release of *Enemy Mine* was low key and quick. Video is now the only way to catch it and it's fortunate it has made it onto disc. Boasting three excellent performances and a damned good story, the film is intelligently scripted and enacted before imaginative sets dressed with excellent special effects. The whole is well photographed and accompanied by a memorable, if 'Zvivagoesque', score from Maurice Jarre.

Xenophobia isn't the most attractive human attribute and it seems that in the 21st century things haven't altered that much. Whilst the earth is finally at peace, far out in inter-stellar space homo sapiens is involved in all-out war with a reptilian, intelligent race over mineral rights. Wars are always fundamentally economic, but whipping up racial, or in this case, 'speciel' hatred always helps fuel the fever.

Sealed into pressurised space fighters, the protagonists sole raison d'être is to blow each other, anonymously, to smithereens. Says Dennis Quaid (as 'fighter-jock' William Davidge) - "It's funny, but I'd never seen a Drac. I knew they were completely inhuman". In a fit of hate-fuelled vengeance he pursues a "toad-faced Drac" fighter too deep into the atmosphere of Fyrine IV, an uncharted planet. He wounds the enemy craft but sees the escape capsule eject. He can't pull up, the drag of the atmosphere is too great for the space fighter. He crash lands. His co-pilot is killed; he is alone on an unknown world, marooned, with only the sworn enemy for company.

Although charged with mutual loathing and distrust they have one common goal - to survive. They also have something else in common - intelligence; by co-operating they might live; alone, they will almost certainly die. Exploring the developing relationship between these two individuals divided by evolution, biology and aesthetics, but united by the unique ability of sentient intelligence to adapt, communicate and above all learn, the film presents us with a moving parable of the capacity for love and understanding to overcome and dissipate the reflex knee-jerk reactions of hate and aggression.

From its frail beginnings, the depth of this growing tolerance, understanding of and finally, respect for each other and their cultures is depicted thoughtfully, vivaciously and with a deal of humour. The invented language of the Dracs is cleverly believable - as is their history, religion and biology. Much of the credit for this must go to Louis Gossett Jr as Jeriba Shigan, the Drac. Acting through multiple layers of latex, false teeth and contact lenses he projects a character that genuinely will make you 'laugh and

cry'. His performance alone is worth several viewings.

Well, so much for the British version of *Enemy Mine*. The PAL disc release is as the British theatrical release - all 90 minutes of it. However, the US and NTSC disc (again on CBS/FOX, the catalogue number being 1492-80, price \$34.98) runs for 108 minutes. I've reviewed the PAL disc in isolation and thoroughly recommend it, but for those interested I've listed the cuts as follows. All the timings relate to the PAL disc index.

0.27 - We lose the first reference to the Drac's holy book, the Talam. We miss Davidge hunting the tortoise-like creatures with his bow and arrow which justifies the line "I'm going to improve the menu". (3 minutes)  
0.34 - Davidge begins his lessons in the teachings of the Talam, the Drac language and of Jeriba Shigan's lineage. (2 minutes)

0.51 - Apart from explaining why Jeriba wouldn't go exploring with Davidge and why he isn't "fat and lazy", there is more tuition in the Drac language and lineage. It is a particularly moving scene and serves to underscore how enmity has given way to trust. (7 minutes)

Frame 6172 - This is an important scene. Davidge tries to explain to Zammis (Jeriba's child) why all humans are not like him and 'the Scavengers' are to be feared. It's pivotal as regards David's relationship with Zammis and also the underlying message of the movie. It makes Davidge's behaviour in the final scenes more believably motivated. We also lose a delightful episode with Davidge attempting to teach Zammis American football. An important line "Your parent was my friend" is cut. (5 minutes) [ALAN BELL]

Footnote: If you like the movie, read the book. A tie-in novel (which I normally loathe) exists and is well written and obviously the story on which the first draft of the script was based. It contains a longer, more satisfying ending. Had they shot it this way we'd be reviewing a double disc!

*Enemy Mine* by Barry B. Longyear & David Gerrold. 192 pages. CORGI £1.95.

## Target



CBS/FOX	7097-70	£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	STEREO
1985	112 mins	Rated 15(V)

Cast: Gene Hackman, Matt Dillon, Gayle Hunnicut, Josef Sommer, Guy Boyd, Herbert Berghof, Richard Munch, Ilona Grubel, Victoria Fyodorova  
Original Score: Michael Small  
Story: Leonard Stern  
Screenplay: Howard Berk, Don Petersen  
Director: Arthur Penn

MASTER: Unsharp, slightly off colour low-contrast transfer - below standard. The lack of picture detail is in stark contrast to the spectacularly clear audio track that can be played at some volume (hiss permitting) without exhibiting any defects beyond some low frequency rumbling. (But, do see review comments.)

DISC: PDO, Blackburn mastered but SONOPRESS, Germany pressing.

*Target* is a routine espionage thriller with Gene Hackman and Matt Dillon playing a father and son chasing about in France and Germany. The direction is unstylish and the production has overtones of a well-budgeted TV movie. (Yet it is a cinema format film and some of the original frame composition has been compromised in the transfer. Without being familiar with the original, it looks as though they've gone in a bit too tight on the picture area.)

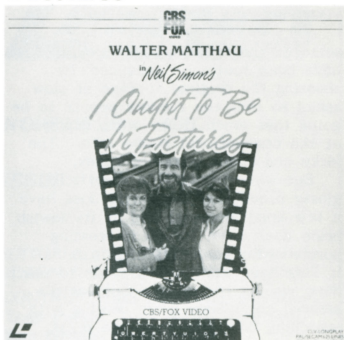
The movie starts out in the USA with Walter & Donna Lloyd (Hackman & Hunnicut) leading a fairly normal family life with their son Chris (Dillon). Mum departs on a trip to France and promptly goes missing. Father and son dash off on the first available plane to try and find her. Within minutes of arrival Walter is being shot at in the airport. It materialises soon after that before Chris came into the world his old man worked for the CIA and the kidnap of Donna looks like someone from the past is out to get something from him in exchange. Or maybe they just want him.

Attempts are made to inject plot details during the interludes between the action, but they are too complicated to take in and are found to be of little significance by the time the movie finishes. The sleeve note suggests the film is a thriller, which it probably is, but it is not a suspense thriller. The production succeeds or fails on how much you get from Gene Hackman and Matt Dillon playing out their roles.

The sound mix is a bit suspect. It exhibits that upfront feel of some foreign language dubbed movies, except that instead of the dialogue seeming to be spoken right in front of your face it is the effects track that has been boosted beyond all credibility. Everything squeaks, bangs, and rustles twenty times louder than it should. About half an hour in there is a wonderful scene in a restaurant where Walter and Chris are talking spy talk with the man from the CIA; they're talking so loud that everybody in the place must have been able to listen in. It's possible the sound mixer was totally out to lunch too at this point because someone forgot to fade out the background burble of the other diners as the action moves outside for the next scene. Hackman and Dillon are seen strolling down a busy, traffic-filled street and heard talking loudly over the usual din of car horns, footfalls, and less usually, knives and forks.



## I Ought To Be In Pictures



CBS/FOX 1150-70 £4.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1982 103 mins Rated 15(C)

Cast: Walter Matthau, Ann-Margret, Dinah Manoff

Music: Marvin Hamlisch

Screenplay: Neil Simon

Director: Herbert Ross

**MASTER:** Averagely sharp, low contrast American transfer. The colour is a bit subdued and the darker scenes are not as detailed as they might be. The optical audio is without distortion and has adequate clarity at modest replay levels but could have benefitted from a slightly extended frequency response and a bit less hiss.

**DISC:** Blackburn, Gold 2-P pressing.

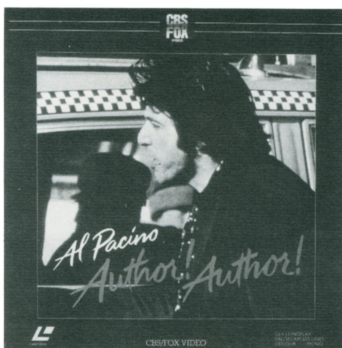
From comedy writer Neil Simon, but not necessarily to be tagged an out and out comedy itself, *I Ought To Be In Pictures* has its share of near tear-jerking, emotional moments. It's the sort of low-key movie that improves on subsequent viewings, after one has adjusted to the pushy and precocious manner of the main character, Libby (Dinah Manoff), the 19 year-old daughter of a once successful but now struggling Hollywood movie/TV writer Herb Tucker (Walter Matthau). She turns up out of the blue from New York to see a father she has not seen for sixteen years, and on top the believable forwardness of many a Jewish teenager, the hostility she projects to combat the nervousness of the situation fairly bristles through the TV screen. It's easy to take an initial dislike to her, but that wears off when you watch the movie a second and third time.

You do that because any movie with Walter Matthau in is worth persevering with. (Cautionary note: this is being written pre-*Pirates*.) Ann-Margret fills out the main complement of characters. It is a minor part (as Herb's current live-in/live-out girl-friend who would like to be more of the former if she could only break him out of a declining faith in his work and life), but an important one.

There is little in the way of visual diversion to the dialogue. (The movie is based on a Broadway stage play.) They all go to a baseball game once and he also goes alone to the race-track, but it's pretty much all talk. Fortunately it's the sort of talk that Herb would probably have been proud to have seen flow from his own pen were his writing career not at such a low ebb.

An uncredited Randy Crawford sings for a couple of minutes over the closing credits and one is left confronting the black screen with an overall good feeling.

## Author! Author!



CBS/FOX 1181-70 £4.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1982 105mins

Cast: Al Pacino, Dyan Cannon, Tuesday Weld, Bob Dishy, Alan King, Bob Elliott, Ray Goulding

Music: Dave Grusin

Writer: Israel Horowitz

Director: Arthur Hiller

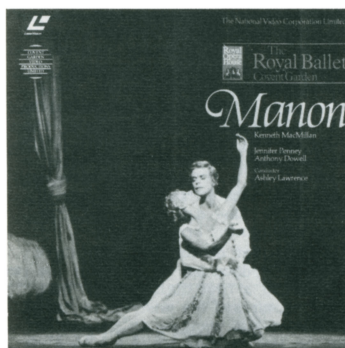
**MASTER:** Low contrast American transfer of unremarkable quality. There are a few isolated scenes of passable definition but for the most part the picture is insufficiently sharp. Some scenes have slight patterning visible. Additional bad marks are warranted for a clumsy end-of-side change. Fair optical sound. Not much range (and it sounds a bit tight) but it's clear enough at modest volume. **DISC:** Gold 2-P (Bl) pressing. Some dropout on review copy but it tends not to show that much.

## Back Catalogue

The sleeve photo looks more like a still from *Dog Day Afternoon* than from a movie about a New York playwright and his marital disharmony. Al Pacino is the playwright, working up to the production of his latest Broadway show against a background of domestic turmoil and upheaval. The turmoil is fairly usual, as would be the case in any house full of so many kids (spawned from a series of previous marriages), but the upheaval comes when it transpires that the present wife and mother (played by Tuesday Weld) is looking elsewhere for personal fulfillment. Well, more than that actually. Dyan Cannon turns up on the scene (as the rather improbably named Alice Detroit) and as well as taking the lead in the author's new play moves into the family home. And there's still a show to go on.

Like *I Ought To Be In Pictures* the movie is a comedy with its share of dramatic moments but is less emotionally intense. Visually the production is not strong. The performances are captured on film adequately but without flair. The movie needs to be judged on its other merits.

## Manon



ARTS INT 04 AI 002 £23.99

CLV-Ch COLOUR STEREO

1982 110mins (3-sides)

Featuring: Jennifer Penney, Anthony Dowell, David Wall, Derek Rencher & artistes of the Royal Ballet  
Choreography & Direction: Kenneth MacMillan

Music: Jules Massenet

Conductor: Ashley Lawrence with the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House

From a performance by the Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden on 19th January, 1982.

A BBC TV production

**MASTER:** Good quality PAL video originated master. The audio recording is quite dynamic but loses something in the treble regions, possibly the treble cut on the master being done to disguise the rather high level of hiss that reveals itself when playing the disc at greater volumes.

**PRESSING:** Circa 1984/5 Blackburn injection moulded pressing.

*Manon* is a ballet in three acts with a plot based on the novel *Memoirs And Adventures Of A Man Of Quality* by the Abbe Prevost, who published the story between 1728 and 1731. The book was

## Lee Harling

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long and generally forgettable, with the exception of the tale of Manon Lescaut which inspired a number of composers to create works based on it. Puccini's opera *Manon Lescaut* was reviewed in LDR-11, but both Auber (1856) and Massenet (1885) also wrote operas based on the story.

This ballet version of *Manon*, although using Massenet's music, uses none of the music from his opera. The music was compiled, arranged and orchestrated from his many other stage and orchestral works by Leighton Lucas and Hilda Gaunt.

*Manon* was Kenneth MacMillan's third full-length ballet and was first performed by the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden in March 1974 with Antoinette Sibley as Manon, Anthony Dowell as Chevalier des Grieux, David Wall as Lescaut (Manon's brother) and Derek Rencher as Monsieur G.M.; and this recording shows the original three male dancers but with Jennifer Penney as Manon.

The action opens with Lescaut awaiting the arrival of a coach bringing his sister to enter a convent. Monsieur G.M., a wealthy government official, arrives and is much attracted by Manon's beauty. At the same time a young student, the Chevalier Des Grieux, has instantly fallen in love with Manon and his love is reciprocated. Lescaut, an opportunist of the first degree, is meanwhile arranging with Monsieur G.M. to procure Manon for payment in gold. Manon and Des Grieux try to evade the deal and end up being transported to a penal colony for their trouble. Even here Des Grieux has to deal with the advances of the jailor towards Manon. He kills him and the couple are forced to flee into the Louisiana swamp. Manon, who is now delirious with fever, sees in flashback events from her life and in the final dance with her true lover dies in his arms.

The ballet contains at least three beautifully done pas de deux for the two lovers and a first class drunken duet for Lescaut and his mistress in Act II, where he just manages to support her at the last moment while manhandling her like a sack of potatoes.

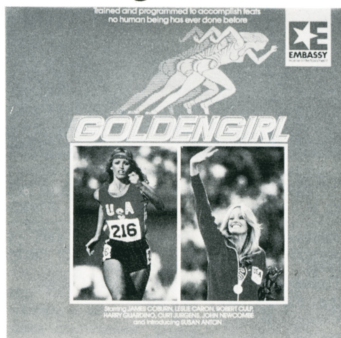
The story line is well maintained and the action does not flag. Manon is portrayed as a naive, beautiful young woman; a mixture of demureness and vivacity. The aristocratic Des Grieux casts all his principles to the wind and becomes totally infatuated. MacMillan's ballet shows the harsh reality of 18th century France with its great poverty and great wealth juxtaposed in a morally corrupt society. The costumes are based on the 18th century French pattern, and the lighting creates a rather gloomy antique atmosphere of browns and golds. The make up also gives a rather unreal, grotesque feeling with the use of rouged cheeks and powdered wigs.

The dancing is of a high standard throughout. Jennifer Penney portrays the kittenish Manon with a light-hearted grace until the horror of her deportation comes home to roost. Anthony Dowell manages to convey the agony of her young lover torn between love and common sense. The despicable Lescaut gets everything he deserves (and is well danced by David Wall) who does not flinch at selling his sister to the old roue G.M. for a fistful of louis d'or. Derek Rencher (as G.M.) treats all and sundry with the thoughtlessness and

arrogance of a well-to-do gentleman of the time. Gerd Larsen madams her way around the establishment ensuring that some of the reluctant girls satisfy even the most disreputable customers' requirements.

The production is well lit and recorded except for some slight (and occasional) microphony on one of the cameras. The performance can be recommended. It is pleasing to note that the temptation to squeeze the ballet onto only two sides has been avoided, and each act is thus presented uninterrupted. [ TONY WELLS ]

## Goldengirl



EMBASSY ELV 2069 £4.99

CLV COLOUR MONO

1979 101mins

Cast: James Coburn, Leslie Caron, Robert Culp, Harry Guardino, Curt Jurgens, John Newcombe, Susan Anton  
Screenplay: John Kohn  
Music: Bill Conti  
Director: Joseph Sargent

**MASTER:** Varying definition and grain levels occur in this moderately contrasty film to video transfer. Picture quality definitely improves towards the end. Most of it is adequately sharp, though, and it becomes quite watchable if you don't object to the coarse video look of the picture. The optical audio exhibits average clarity (with a bit of treble adjustment) for an older transfer, but there is hiss and a bit of whistling if the disc is played at too great a volume. A burst of very low level bass noise intrudes about 35 minutes into side two that lingers for several minutes, and there are a few random bumps and spits during the entire film. All this might make the disc sound like a real loser but it is not really that bad.

**DISC:** Gold 2P, Blackburn pressing.

An erratic TV movie that casts lanky Susan Anton as a suspiciously talented athlete (where does she get her superhuman speed and stamina?) being prepared for big-time exploitation if she can be coached to win three gold medals in the upcoming 1980 Olympics. It has good production values and a high calibre cast but there is an element of padding involved. This may appear a surprising comment for a movie that started out as 2 x 96 minute TV episodes, but clumsy edits (such as the one about six minutes into side

two) reveal continuity flaws that suggest a few sub-plots may have been excoriated in preference to some more visual but less dramatic scenes.

They might have more wisely cut some of the track running scenes which have been routinely 'enhanced' by shooting the original footage at slow speed so that the runners appear to be going that much faster when replayed at the conventional frame rate. The jerky end-result is rather funny.

But while basically a superficial, glossy production the movie does have a few good moments and at its lowish price does make for an interesting purchase for researchers after trivia. It may have some added value to readers wishing to emulate Goldengirl's assured confidence when dealing with searching questions from the press. Her success in this field she attributes (during a stroll on the seashore with James Coburn) to extended practice sessions with a vibrator. So, next time you see someone in a TV news report being besieged by reporters, but still managing an ear-to-ear smile, you'll know they've been practicing too. (Note: This cinema cut of the movie was re-recorded into DOLBY Surround but this version is disappointingly mono.)

## Small Ads

SMALL ADS are printed free of charge so please keep your entry concise and to the point. List details clearly on a separate piece of paper from any other correspondence. Deadline for the next issue is October 31st.

□□□ WANTED - Sound Of Music, Grease, Saturday Night Fever, Dire Straits, Star Trek movies (all), 2001, Faulty Towers/Germans. Paul - Tel: Bolton (0204) 793526 after 6pm.  
□□□ WANTED - Falstaff, Don Quixote, Manon. Also NTSC discs Hansel & Gretel, Un Ballo In Maschera, L'Elisir d'Amore, Tosca, The Nutcracker, Giselle(Jap), Wizard Of Oz, Pinocchio, Beauty & The Beast, Richard III. Stephen - Tel: Derby 553668.  
□□□ FOR SALE - Magnavox NTSC LD player (front-loading Pioneer LD700 clone) + 1 free NTSC disc - £200.  
Alan Bell - Tel: (0603) 620980.  
□□□ WANTED - Simon & Garfunkel/Central Park. L. Jones, Pfeufferstrasse 61, 8000 Munich 70, W. Germany.  
□□□ FOR SALE - 20 LV discs, new & old titles including 10 deletions. Offers around £200. Tel: Kingswinford 298683.  
□□□ FOR SALE - Philips VLP600 + 50 discs. £350 or reasonable offer.  
J. Teller. Tel: 01-802 4096, evenings.  
□□□ FOR SALE - Over 350 LV discs, many deletions. SAE for a full list.  
C. Holdstock, 10 Maes-Yr-Afon, Dee Hills Park, Holywell, Clwyd CH8 7HP.  
□□□ WANTED - Once Upon A Time In America, Philips Demo Disc, Cabaret, 1941 or may swap for my Blues Bros. - S. Ahmed 01-660 1990 ext 252.  
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The above specifications are confirmed when put in brackets thus ( ).

The condition of forthcoming titles can only be anticipated and they are marked provisionally by the use of [ ] brackets.

The above Forthcoming LV Releases are not scheduled in any particular order. When they arrive, they arrive. Those marked with a \* are possible early arrivals. THE FLY (mentioned last issue) is now apparently not to be scheduled till next year, and has been omitted accordingly. Further titles are anticipated for release before Xmas but until contractually confirmed have also been omitted from list. Following a partial initial shipment, ALIENS has (have?) now arrived in full force and is/are listed as 'Back In Stock'.

For what it's worth (though the 'officialness' of the release is still in some doubt) this is the CD Video schedule -

LEVEL 42/It's Over (S,Di) - POLYDOR 080 156-2 - £6.49 (12cm Clip disc)  
CURIOSITY KILLED THE CAT [S,Di] - MERCURY 080 108-2 - (12cm Clip disc)