

# LASER DISC REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 1986

ISSUE 8 £1.25

The magazine about LASERVISION

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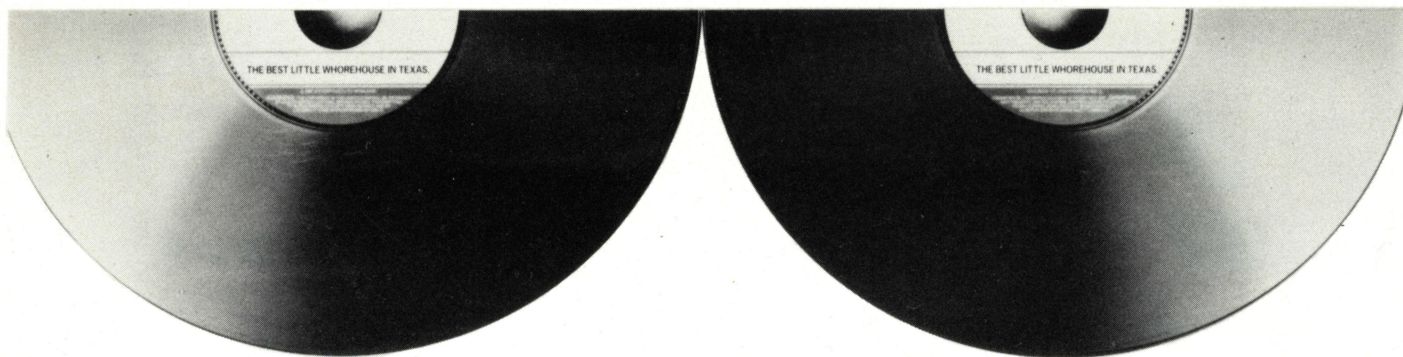
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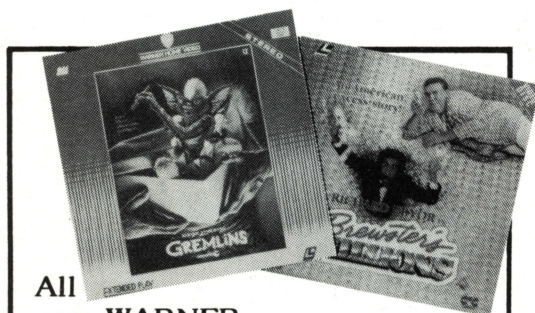
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# LASER DISC REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 1986

Issue 8 PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

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## New release news.....

Three months to prepare it all and we still end up squeezing all the important info about new discs etc in at the last moment! Some WARNER sleeves turned up just in time for the cover - the discs should have started appearing by the time you get to see the magazine. (Their delay is due as much to a premature announcement as with a few problems with the masters.) On this latter point there is some bad, but encouraging, news - though readers with *West Side Story* & *Casablanca* on their wants lists will probably find it difficult to be encouraged by the fact that their titles have been scrubbed - at least for the time being. WARNERS themselves consider the available tape masters to be not good enough quality to be put out on disc.

The pre-orders for these two titles (along with *Blade Runner* & *Gremlins*) were among the highest of the WARNER launch list, and if nothing else, L & G have been able to see just how big the demand for back-catalogue titles is. How about some others in their place?

A substantial number of titles on the back page should have appeared by the end of June. *Cat's Eyes* was held up due to the need to obtain a fresh master and a few other discs have been delayed for sleeve/artwork reasons. *Carmen* & *Nutcracker* have been released - they sort of snuck out without anybody realising. As to the coming months - there are other labels discussing bringing their titles out on disc (some people have even been approaching L & G to enquire about disc release for their programmes! Things **must** be looking up). One company won't be putting out product - MGM. They have been asked, but the answer is no.

Apart from doing badly for old film titles the disc buyer is also having a bad time with music titles, L & G feel the market is price sensitive and they

will not achieve sufficient sales when there is no price advantage over tape. This may be true for marginal titles but there are still some premium titles around that people will undoubtedly pay £14.99 for. Although we could do with some action sooner (last week, say!?), there may be more hard news in time for Vidtel (Sept) where there will probably be an attempt to announce a strongish Autumn release schedule.

We are beginning to have doubts over the trio of PIONEER discs (even though the Dolly Parton one is on the front of the company's disc catalogue). The situation with further PIONEER discs is unclear.

Keep an eye out for new supplies of back-catalogue items that PHILIPS have dug up out of their stores. More will appear in the coming months - some previous 'deletions' among them! There is a new list of deletions being prepared for discs that will definitely be going out of catalogue. Other back catalogue titles that go o/s may be repressed if the demand is considered sufficient (and hopefully not at the full £19.99 price). Look out too for another batch of cheapies amongst this latest ship-out - word is that there will be about 130 reduced price titles, many being different ones from before.

We'd have liked to have printed a few relevant lists but details were not finalised in time. A new SDC mail-out scheduled for sometime in June was intended to fill in a few details as well as coming up with a new price list and an up-to-date list of active dealers. On this last point PHILIPS are proposing a some promotional activities tied in with active local dealerships later in the year.

This problem of promotion of LV is a difficult one. The specifications of the new player have still not been finalised and PHILIPS are in the tricky

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# Letters

**From: David T.L. Kwok, Cambridgeshire**

Although LDR was quite informative about the new arrangements to produce LV discs under the LIGHTNING/GOLD banner, it still leaves a rather fuzzy picture about what actually went on before. If labels like RANK, EMBASSY, GUILD, and MGM were happy releasing discs under the old arrangement, why can't the L & G system run in parallel with it, thus increasing the number of titles even further? Was it PHILIPS who pulled out of the old deal or was it the film companies?

Speculating about the new PHILIPS LV/CD player and what it is going to look like - Is it a single or twin drawer machine? Will it have CD-ROM capability built in? Will it be an extension of Matchline, and will there be colour options?

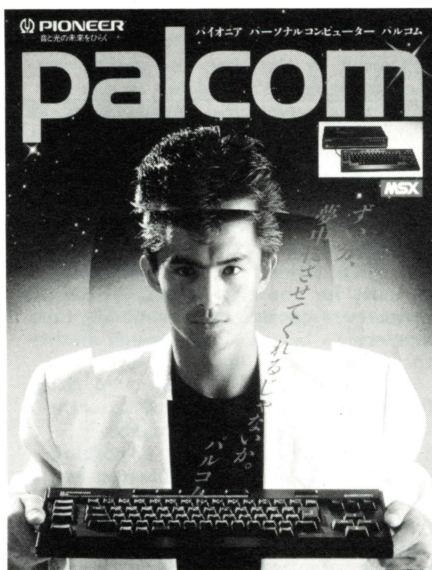
If the player is a twin-deck machine there could be further diversification of software - like playing your CDs as mood music accompanied by the picture of your favourite disc, or the CD could be an alternate language version of the audio on the LV disc. Could we also have digital soundtracks to replace the mono ones on the likes of *Staying Alive*, *Oklahoma* etc? All this assumes it would be possible to synchronise the two decks.

It was a interesting to read about HDTV in LDR-6. I hope when it comes we can have some kind of processor to enable us to watch our existing disc collections - I'd hate to have to put up with vertical borders on my HDTV screen! I don't mind having HDTV discs of ½ hour a side, but just think of the problems SONY will have in persuading people to revert back to a large chunky videocassette when they have only now introduced 8mm. (Just a little joke!)

After reading about the PX-7, I assume that in order to play the LV arcade games I'll need first to get hold of an NTSC disc, TV, and player - as mentioned in LDR-5. Do I also need the NTSC PX-7 and Graphics Tablet, as opposed to the Palcom versions advertised by PIONEER?

It would seem that SONY's Video 8 is being given plenty of support from software companies eg RCA & HERON. Why? The quantities involved can't be much larger than LV press runs for titles. Do you think that some of these new cheapies now being put out on tape by HERON, CHANNEL 5 etc will filter through to us poor LV fans? (Knees on floor.)

More on the twin laser machine idea. This was already discussed by the major manufacturers as early as 1984 when LV was starting to take hold in the USA - both on the film and arcade game front. They talked about twin lasers in order to facilitate quicker reaction times on games like *Dragon's Lair*, *Space Ace*, and *Firefox*.



The background to the present disc releasing situation was covered to some extent in LDR-3. The impression that the labels you mention were happily releasing their product before is a false one. It may have started out that way, but most of the companies became disenchanted with LV and left it up to PHILIPS to put out on disc whatever they were prepared to pay for. When the software companies see the chance of selling reasonable quantities of discs they may re-enter the market if they are not already participating in the L & G arrangement. Disc releases in future are very much dependent on what hardware materialises to give LV a fresh image, and the level of promotion put behind it.

The new player would ideally be a single drawer unit although there is some logic in the two-drawer & drive approach. One of the most obvious uses for CD-ROM in the home A/V field struck us by chance when viewing a movie on someone's TV. Came the moment when it came to debating over who a particular a member of the cast was and what other films they were in, someone obviously had to jump up and pull out their movie reference guide to look it up. How much better to have such a tome on a CD-ROM that you could call up, superimposed over the TV image. Though there is no certainty over whether the first combination player will have CD-ROM capability, one would expect it to come in time. The important thing to remember about a combination LV/CD player is not that it is an 'ultimate' machine but more of a marketing exercise to establish the concept of the whole range of optical discs in the home. In practice, with the continuing drop in price of the hardware one would

expect homes (& workplaces) of the future to be littered with optical disc drives dedicated to their many different applications.

As to the PX-7, you are indeed talking about a whole NTSC system in order to get into playing the existing games discs. As it is there are two PAL models of the PX-7 - the HB model is what you will get in this country (PAL/I). Certain other PAL broadcast areas require the HE model (PAL/G) which is also set for 220v mains. We have mentioned it before but PALCOM is only an Anglicised Japanese term for "friendly computer" or the like. Even in Japan the PX-7 carries the PALCOM logo.

**From: Michael Lohse, West Germany**

I don't know how many LV players were sold in Germany but those who bought them seem to be quite active still ordering discs through VVA at Gutersloh. Following the finishing of LaserVision in Germany the service was to continue only till the end of 1985. Now it has been prolonged until 30th June, 1986. Probably not many people took up PHILIPS' offer to buy their players back from customers who were prepared to buy a CD player instead. A friend of mine who wrote to PHILIPS saying he wanted to buy an 830 to replace his VP500 was told that they had had no 830s returned!

Judging from contact with other owners I'd say that 20-30% of the LV owners over here speak English enough to be interested not only in music programmes but in English language feature films too.

**From: Ray Fogarty, Australia**

I was recently in England on holiday and was fortunate to find some very good titles which we have not seen here in Sydney yet. I also found LDR and read it from cover to cover. Being an owner of both PAL and NTSC machines, I was particularly interested to read about the US releases and how people feel about the appalling situation concerning the issue of 'worthy' titles in the PAL format. The NTSC discs are being released very quickly - soon after their movie release.

Despite the many titles being released there though, the quality of some discs leaves something to be desired. Years ago there were many faulty discs - lately there seems to be a greater number which are free of the coloured flecks which would occur every third disc or so. An excellent PAL disc (eg. *Yes*, *Giorgio*) is difficult to beat. I only wish there were more titles available here so as to save me the trouble of importing them from the USA.

A recent NTSC disc I received



(*Oliver!*) had the first major blunder I have encountered in the format. The main titles are in **black & white** - without the correct main title music. Instead, they placed the overture music over the titles, and since this was slightly longer than the main title credits, the film continues in b & w until the music finishes and then instantly bursts into colour. The rest of the film is of excellent quality - stereo and CX.

Ignoring the ridiculous situation of having *My Fair Lady* and *Oklahoma* in mono instead of stereo, the one thing I find frustrating is that the PAL discs never seem to have an overture or playout music (except *Hello Dolly* - which would have been very difficult to erase anyhow). If a film is to be committed to laser, then it should be from a first rate stereo master with all the proper overtures. Laser is the ideal format for music as well as image - so why not include all the music: entr'acte and playout music as well should be included. The NTSC versions of *Ben-Hur* and *South Pacific* are a joy to behold - every frame of these movies is included - overtures, intermission music and play-out - as they existed on the original release version. Those responsible for issuing discs in PAL should be aware of not only **what** movie buffs want but **how** these movies should be presented. They will only have themselves to blame if collectors begin to lose interest.

**From: Carleton Sarver, U.S.A.**

Using a BRAUN multi-standard 26" TV and PIONEER LD700 players for both NTSC & PAL, I find the PAL disc picture much more pleasing than with NTSC. Assuming an excellent PAL pressing and an excellent NTSC one, there is always more picture noise in PAL (inherent in the PAL system), and current UK discs still have a rather high dropout rate. But that's more than made up for by the increased picture sharpness and, I might add, apparent greater care in making film/tape/disc transfers. In about 20 recent UK pressings, I have yet to experience a really bad disc (keeping my fingers crossed may have helped). By contrast, about 15% of American discs are defective when purchased.

It is interesting to receive letters that compare the formats from an NTSC point-of-view. The matter of spots on discs on the two formats has been commented on by PHILIPS, Blackburn who have told us that while they do not presently master NTSC discs, they do press them, and have found that the resulting discs do appear more blemish-free than their PAL counterparts. It is in the nature of the format to be more tolerant to these visual disturbances. Encouragingly, after some spottier discs over the last few months, the last three UK discs reviewed have shown some improvement.

**From: S.P. Andrews, Derbyshire**

I am thinking of replacing my TV - the one I use is an old DECCA/TELE-FUNKEN which has a pretty good tube. I am thinking about buying a 22" set with a video input facility (probably second-hand) or one which could be simply modified to achieve the same

purpose. Can you suggest some suitable models? Are LaserVision discs of sufficient quality at the moment to make a video-input set a worthwhile purchase.

Suggesting a suitable model of TV is a larger topic than can be comfortably handled within these pages. But to know where else to go for informed and impartial advice is not an easy task either - manufacturers rarely make any claims for the performance of their products backed up by technical specifications, and no publication we know of ever considers testing TV displays.

However, if your TV is a few years old, does not have a direct video input - but maybe does have a back-panel made of compressed paper and you can recall selecting it more on the quality of its veneer than on its picture performance - then there may be good reason for an upgrade. Modern TV sets have considerably narrowed the performance gap between the picture obtainable via the RF input compared to direct (composite) video. The tuners produce far less signal loss than they used to - but direct is still to be favoured.

As a format LaserVision boasts a 5.00MHz bandwidth which is only just less than the full broadcast signal. Few domestic TVs are able to resolve the full bandwidth signal satisfactorily and as a result many people do not quite appreciate how good a picture can be obtained off a disc sourced from a good master.

We think it's about time PHILIPS bit the bullet and went as far as to put a test-card on a disc, not only to show off the potential (usually under-used) of the disc, but also to enable people to check out their TV with a reliable input source. Such a disc would be a handy sales device for LV/TV dealers too.

For your immediate problem there is no straightforward answer at the moment. The reason for this is that although composite video is better than RF, it is still a step down from the component RGB (Red, Green, Blue - the primary colours of the TV signal) level which offers the ultimate non-degraded signal level. There is reason to believe that future LV players will go as far as to output this RGB level signal in which case anyone interested in obtaining the ultimate in

picture quality would be advised to go for an RGB-capable monitor. A sign of things to come is this PHILIPS Matchline RGB with built-in Teletext monitor - presently one of the few component-type TVs available, but expected to be more common-or-garden as the expectation of the quality and range of home A/V expands. So, in the short-term there might be good reason to 'make do' unless you wish to lash out on one of these systems. In the long-term it makes no sense to economise on your display and the magazine tends to encourage the view that the biggest and best you can afford is more than likely to repay its cost in preference to many other high-value home entertainment components.

**From: Angela Jones, Clwyd**

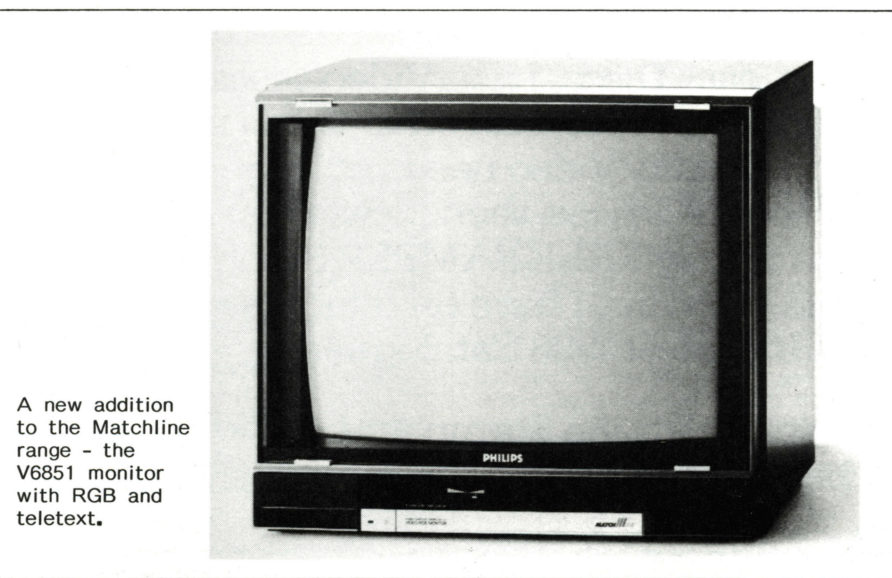
When I last bought some discs I was told that from now on everything that is released on videocassette will also be available on disc. Is this true?

No. A better aim is to get just the worthwhile titles on disc. We're doing quite well for current movies, but very badly for old ones and music titles. It's important for everyone to keep pushing for what they want.

**From: Casimir Ducados, France**

I would like to express my concern about the fate of LaserVision in France where I live. It seems to me that the French public is grossly misinformed about the potential and, above all, the superior quality of the disc. The fallacious argument that one cannot record or erase a disc seems, according to the critics, a major failure compared to video tapes. Well! I disagree completely. Why should I want to erase video discs such as *Apocalypse Now*, *2001*, *Little Big Man*, *Showboat*, *Lady Vanishes* etc? No music-lover in their right mind would be prepared to erase their most beloved music!

This "but it doesn't record" argument sounds a bit quaint to readers of this magazine - as it should to any right-minded person with a hap'orth of savvy who also buys audio records, books and other non-recordable media. No doubt the ready availability of le videodisque en France will bring about an alteration to this unfortunate mind-set in those concerned. Just be patient France.



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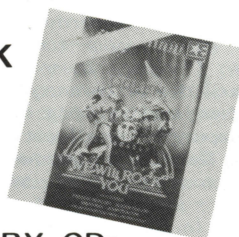
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## CD-INTERACTIVE MEDIA

PHILIPS & SONY have announced proposals for the first practical exploitation of the CD-ROM. Known as CD-I (the 'I' standing for Interactive Media), the format provides a means of handling not only music and other sound recordings but also speech, natural still/animated pictures and graphics, computer programmes and computer data. Suggested early uses of the format run to songs with accompanying text & visuals and talking dictionaries and encyclopaedias.

While the basic encoding method of CD-ROM is established, CD-I ensures a common level of disc interchangeability (as is the case with CD audio) as regards the manner in which the digital information is formatted. Future CD-I capable players will be equally at home connected to an A/V system or functioning as a computer peripheral, and as a result PHILIPS & SONY hope that the CD-I format will be adopted as a standard by all manufacturers.

## LASERDISKEN

From looking at the geographical distribution of the magazine's subscribers, it's fairly obvious that LV owners are not evenly spread about these isles and the various pockets of greater-than-average interest are usually related to the enthusiasm and dedication of a particular local dealer. However, dealer enthusiasm takes on a new dimension with the efforts of Hans Kristian Pedersen to promote LV to an entire country single-handed. In officially laserless Denmark, that is the task Hans has set himself.

The Ed has fond memories of a day trip to Denmark in the middle-fifties (as part of a longer German holiday). To be more specific, it was the restaurant meal we were served up that registered in that young mind (coming from the then ration-book Britain) which was overwhelming in both quality and quantity. The main course was in itself a bit of a gut-buster, but what followed surpassed even that. Back home, the sideboard regularly sported a large glass fruit-bowl that was usually lined with a rather uninviting selection of disappointingly juiceless oranges and wrinkled apples - but then one had no expectations of anything grander. In Denmark such voluminous containers are shamelessly filled to overflowing with fresh strawberries, and thick fresh cream is likely to come in a tall jug, of such a capacity as to require both

a fellow's hands in order to raise it from the table. Even the culinary excesses of contemporary hero Desperate Dan appeared meagre in comparison!

It must therefore be in the Danish nature to appreciate the better things in life, and it is easy to understand how a ready market for the likes of LaserVision might exist. Back in 1981, Hans Kristian Pedersen, then a student and previously an 8mm man with a specific interest in DISNEY material, planned to move into selling LV when PHILIPS launched it in Denmark. Except it didn't happen that way. After a couple of years of waiting for a launch date, PHILIPS made it clear in 1984 that LV was not coming, and PIONEER, who had been making a bit of a discreet show of equipment too, weren't likely to go ahead alone.

Hans continues himself - "This meant a change of plans. My enthusiasm wasn't hurt and I don't give up because of such trifles, so I just carried on with my plan. I learned something

Germany."

"I did alright this first year - which means just good enough to go on. I think the changes in England last Summer were healthy for LV and the system seemed secure. On 1st October, 1985 I opened the first shop in Aalborg and it had a far greater impact. I changed the name to LASERDISKEN and made my own catalogues and album lists."

"Unfortunately, video equipment in Denmark is blessed with heavy taxes so the players are very expensive. [ *ED - But the strawberries and cream are still plentiful?* ] We are used to it though, so we accept that video is a luxury. This way of promoting a new product is rather unusual - but it is also the only possible way. PHILIPS and PIONEER will not touch LV themselves and I don't blame them. Promoting LV in Denmark isn't economically viable in the usual way. Denmark is a very small country with only 5,000,000 people. LV players will not

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about import/export and in Autumn '84 I started MUSIKPOSTEN - LV and CD mail-order. Mail-order because that was inexpensive and I had to be careful and find out if anyone besides myself and my friends were interested. I was convinced I could make it a success but still I didn't want to jeopardise my whole future just because I like the system - so I had to leave a back door open. The way I could see it, LV was not quite the expected success in England, and certainly not in

reach the ordinary TV/Radio shops if there are no discs - and that should be discs with Danish subtitles, or Danish films."

"I believe PHILIPS have promoted the system very badly and traditionally. LaserVision has a future only in the hands of specialists. I have both a large collection of discs (every title available) and the players (one or two connected to a hi-fi system and a TV). So, I can always give a demonstration and show people what LV is,



## TEAC AV-400 SURROUND PROCESSOR

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what it can do, and at the same time show which discs are available. In Germany the players were offered to the TV dealers and then PHILIPS hoped someone would take care of the discs. I consider LASERDISKEN as a film shop rather than a Radio/TV shop. My way, I can get in touch with all the crazy people like myself who actually collect films, appreciate the better quality - and do not mind missing subtitles. We are quite a few, but I am very much aware that what I consider 'quite a few' and 'LaserVision a success' is on a very small scale, and PIONEER and PHILIPS would say 'peanuts'. I believe though that, even if we are only a few, we have the same right to share LaserVision as the people who just happened to be born in England."

Hans has generated quite a bit of press publicity for LV in the course of his efforts and the catalogue he talks of is a really well-produced and well-printed piece of work. He's working on turning out something even more thorough in future that would allow room for reviews and more illustrations. It would be nice to think that by that time LaserVision will be being given a bit more of a push by the manufacturers themselves.

## SECX ON DISC

Good and bad news. Since shortly before Xmas, all the discs coming out of Blackburn have been encoded with seconds timing as well as just minutes. That certainly means titles like *Rambo*, *Beverly Hills Cop*, and discs possibly as far back as *Company Of Wolves* have been done. The reason we can't say for sure is that until the next generation of players arrives there is no way of making the present players reveal these new time codings.

Not so good news is the continued dragging of feet over CX. Even though the CX board is up at Blackburn ready and waiting, PHILIPS are having second thoughts about using it. Putting CX noise reduction on the discs will mean that they will have to put the CX

chip in the next generation of players - a move that is estimated to add £10 to the new machine's price. Presumably they think that by then any programme with good audio will automatically be pressed with PCM sound and the CX will quickly become redundant. But what about now and all the people who have shelled out £500 for the 830 and the LD700? With the present dearth of CAV discs there are far too many buttons on owners' machines gathering dust!

"No news at all" must be the word on the 8"ers, Juniors - call 'em what you will. After a "No, we're not going to launch them" (2 weeks before LDR-7 went to press) to "Yes, we are going to be putting them out as soon as possible" (2 days before LDR-7 went to press) the situation has again changed and it now seems likely that they will be held

back till the launch of the new player. Er.... but won't some of the titles be a little out-of-date by then?

## HDTV ON DISC

While some Japanese companies have been experimenting with putting the proposed 1125 line TV format on to disc by compressing the bandwidth in order to obtain playing times practical for home use, SONY has announced that it has developed a full bandwidth laser disc version of their High Definition Video System (HDVS) capable of reproducing the whole 20MHz video signal and 16-bit PCM audio.

In order to manage this, the HDVS signal is divided into two parts and recorded (and replayed) by using a pair of co-ordinated lasers. The existing LV/CD track pitch of 1.67microns is retained, as is the ability to press the discs within existing manufacturing tolerances. In CLV mode the new HDVS discs (30cm) can sustain 16 minutes of recording time, and in CAV (where all the usual trick play facilities on conventional players are retained) a 10 minute playing time is possible - made up of 18,000 picture frames.

SONY claim "35mm film quality" for the discs, and while the short playing time does cause some limitations of use, the advantages of the higher detailed image will no doubt find many archival/sales/industrial applications. The HDVS disc player is a two-part unit - the player itself a front-loading machine not much bulkier than conventional players - and a somewhat larger box for the digital processing circuitry.

The HDVS disc player was recently demonstrated at the National Association Of Broadcasters Convention in Dallas along with SONY's latest HDVS monitor - a 41" tube model that will sell for around £30,000 when manufacture gets under way in 1987. No price/delivery was given for the disc player but it will probably be fairly pricey too.

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## PHILIPS PROFESSIONAL

PHILIPS recently completed delivery of a £4,000,000 interactive videodisc staff-training system for LLOYDS BANK involving the supply of 1400 players, the largest installation of its kind in the UK so far. The players, VP831s, function under the control of TELETAPE VIDEO's Multi-Media Interactive Control System (MIC for short!). The MIC system revolves around a single PCB add-on for IBM computers and compatibles that incorporates genlock circuitry, image processing and video control functions for the direct keying of text and graphics to the disc image, in PAL or NTSC.

In another PHILIPS' deal in conjunction with MARCOM, the large DIY chain B & Q are also now using VP831 players in 70 of their UK stores for staff-training. Initially it involves existing linear tape programmes being transferred to disc, but plans are afoot to produce a fully interactive, computer-based system.



## BOLDLY GOING

The Star Trek Convention held over the Mayday holiday weekend at a hotel in the Birmingham NEC exhibition complex presented an opportunity for local dealer, RELIABLE VIDEOS, to run a LaserVision stand so as to win the Trekkies over to the advantages of building up their collection of sci-fi movies on disc rather than the lesser home formats. It was also an excuse for the Ed to pop up to the Midlands' city for the day to witness something of the promotion.

And it gave us a chance to visit RELIABLE's shop and talk with its enthusiastic proprietor, Peter Lennon. RELIABLE has built up quite a large mail-order business over the last couple of years - to the extent that disc sales are now a major part of the business. RELIABLE is also a videotape rental shop and must be unusual in this dual role. The tape library is well-stocked and that gives Peter plenty of opportunity to observe differences in the mind of the video buyer compared to the video renter.



While the tape racks were well filled, Peter was somewhat peeved at the time of the visit that his new, custom-built disc rack taking up prime position in the centre of the shop was less brimmingly filled than he would've liked. As no doubt readers have been finding out for themselves, discs - even some of the most recent releases - have been in short supply in recent months. This is bad enough for disc buyers, but worse still for dealers like Peter who have done all the work building up the disc market only to find themselves vulnerable to this erratic supply situation.

At the convention itself Peter ran the stand over the four days, playing a selection of sci-fi material to the passing conventioners. To be honest, most of the time your Ed was there people were in watching the organised film displays. This, courtesy of the auto-repeat on the VLP700, gave Peter and myself some time to repair to the hotel bar for some necessary refreshment. I seem to recall Peter saying that many people had shown great interest in the sleeve

of *Star Trek III* because, unlike the tape release, the disc is in stereo. In spite of the advantages of a better picture there is no doubt that sound is still a major selling point in the format. [ Just out of interest, *Star Trek IV - The Voyage Home* is due for an Xmas '86 cinema showing in the US, so we probably won't see a UK disc release until well into 1987. ]

It's good that dealers like Peter take the trouble to do these sort of LV promotions, especially during this transitional period when there is little in the way of support from the equipment manufacturers. Fortunately, such advertising should be more forthcoming during the next year with the arrival of new hardware. Let's just hope that the new players are not similarly starved of software when it happens.

RELIABLE VIDEOS - 820 Pershore Road, Selly Park, Birmingham B29. Telephone: 021 471 2428.

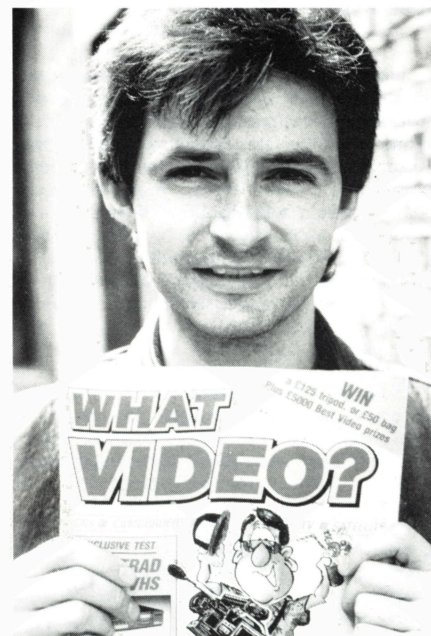
## DOMESDAY UPDATE

The Domesday Project, now being described as "the largest and most ambitious interactive videodisc venture ever undertaken", is scheduled for a December 1986 launch.

The promised two discs are to contain 24,000 Ordnance Survey maps, 50,000 photographs, 6,000 sets of statistical data, hundreds of thousands of pages of text information and 60 minutes of moving film sequences with audio. The discs will function in conjunction with a BBC computer working in tandem with PHILIPS' new interactive disc player with LV-ROM capability. (LV-ROM being a format containing data/software on the actual disc.)

## RAT LEAVES SINKING SHIP?

Erstwhile LDR scribe and longtime enthusiast of LaserVision, Steve Keaton, has departed the editorial offices of the UK's premier laser mag in order to take up a new role as Assistant Editor on WHAT VIDEO. Keaton's new



posting (and new name, viz Steve May - "I didn't want my past indiscretions held against me") takes him onto the only mainstream video magazine published in this country that speaks well (and fairly frequently) of LaserVision. Good luck, Steve.

## PIONEER LD-V3000



PIONEER's Visual Systems Division announce the availability of their LD-V3000 8" LaserDisc Player - a compact, portable player designed exclusively for the smaller LV discs in industrial and demonstration/sales etc applications.

The unit measures 250mm(W) x 132mm(H) x 310mm(D) and weighs 5.3Kg. With the additional 4.5" monitor and carrying case, the whole package weighs in at 12.1Kg. The front-loading player is also ideally suited to fixed site installation where space may be at a premium.

CAV discs can be accessed in four seconds or less - to any one of the discs 25,200 frames. Control via the wired remote provides similar functions to existing consumer players (though the LD-V3000 also has Chapter Skip), but CPE discs can make use of the player's inbuilt 1K memory to enable it to function as a standalone interactive unit. More sophisticated functions are available with computer control via the 8-pin DIN connector.

Initially the player is only available in NTSC format but PAL units may be forthcoming if demand warrants.



# Forthcoming Products in Audio Video

The London Trade Shows have come and gone again and a few of the more interesting A/V products are detailed below. Many of the items on show were pre-production samples and will not be available till later in the year. The recent trend for all-black finishes makes the photography a bit more difficult than we'd like, but a selection of the snaps that came out are included for your perusal.

## PHILIPS

PHILIPS did not participate in the usual Spring gatherings but ran a smaller dealer roadshow instead in order to make sure their new products were seen. That meant a complete absence of LaserVision - not a player in sight. They did have some new TVs to expand their range of FSQ models. Most interesting were the Matchline monitor units which we haven't seen in component form in the UK before. The two monitors, the 51cm V6651 and the 66cm V6851, are both RGB capable

earlier UK CES show. It was only being used for demonstration purposes - the test programme running made mention of LV disc interactivity - but no mention of a UK launch date. (Other manufacturers are talking about MSX2s for later in the year.)

## PIONEER

PIONEER have some new A/V rack systems based on 360mm wide units - the 9900 & 7700 series. Both are remote-controlled combinations, but the 9900 has an optional Master Remote Commander which is a true system remote with an eye-catching LCD function display panel. Two amplifiers are available - both with 5 audio and 4 video inputs - the 2 x 73W A-X909V, and the 2 x 45W A-X707V.

An optional extra is the SP-X707 Surround Sound unit with DOLBY, Theatre, Stadium and Simulated Stereo modes. The unit incorporates 2 x 35W rear-channel amplification and is quoted for Autumn delivery at £239.

They were showing an NTSC version of the SP-D40 40" rear-projection TV that has been getting such a good reception in the US. A PAL model is expected for Spring '87 delivery. The viewing angle is far less critical than previous projection sets and the picture is undeniably bright. When they put the Tina Turner *Private Dancer* 8" on it was hard to notice any loss of detail and brightness from the LDR copy we are used to viewing on the Profeel.

PIONEER had a few disc players running various demos - using a better selection of discs than we have seen previously - and the resulting pictures looked better than some of the off-air transmissions.

## NEC

If you thought NEC's recent AV-300E was a bit of a flash in the pan you'd best prepare yourselves for a further two new DOLBY Surround units planned for later in the year. First off though, the now-available AV-300E is being offered as a standalone unit after all - without the sub-woofer. The 4-channel amplifier/surround unit sells for £289 - and you can avail yourself of the SW-30 sub-woofer for an extra £190 if you wish.

Forthcoming is the A-250E Surround Sound Processor which has DOLBY Surround, Hall Surround, and Matrix modes. There are 4 audio/video and 1 audio-only inputs and a 2 x 25W amplifier. It shares the same 20-function remote as the AV-300E and late Summer/early Autumn delivery is expected.

Later - and more exotic - is the AVD-700E, a top-end R/C, A/V pre-amp/switcher with DOLBY Surround etc and boasting a Digital Delay logo on its front panel that promises improved noise performance over previous BBD (Bucket Brigade Delay) circuitries. There are 5 A/V and 5 audio-only inputs and an extra surround mode called "Creation" that we haven't seen before. A 42-function R/C also



and have built-in teletext and 2 x 15W amplification. There is a separate tuner (V6150) and speakers, as well as an A/V switcher (AV1100) that is essentially the same as the MARANTZ AV251 but with Euroconnector in/outputs instead of phonos and BNCs.

A bit of a nifty novelty to round out the range were the AV1088 infra-red headphones that claim a 12m pickup range and likely to offer certain advantages over the conventional cabled variety for forgetful readers prone to strolling out of the listening room clunking their treasured amp across the floor behind them.

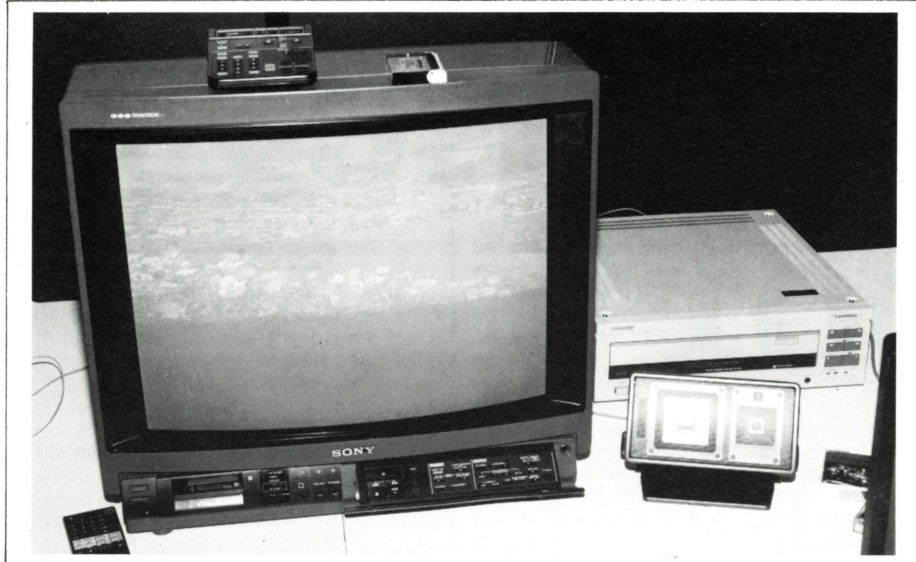
Surprisingly PHILIPS showed a 37" rear-projection TV with a neat little fold-down control panel. Price will be around £2000 when available. Picture quality is reported to be good, but like the Matchline TVs, there was only a rather strained aerial input to provide the pictures all round and it would be unrealistic to pass an opinion on what we saw. (Now, if they'd brought some disc players along with some nice crisp discs.....)

Elsewhere PHILIPS were using some SINCLAIR computers to generate the pictures on their range of computer monitors. No sign of any MSX machines, though we did see an interesting PHILIPS MSX2 (with built-in 3.5" disc-drive & 128K RAM) at the

The LD700 continues to be the company's current LV player in PAL and it is unlikely the LD707 will be launched here (it hasn't even been put on the US market yet). Some supplies of the NTSC version of the LD707 did trickle into the country, but even those stocks are now exhausted and the next NTSC player to arrive may well be a different model. It obviously doesn't make much sense for PIONEER to do anything new in the PAL market till the new format is worked out.







manages the switching between components. There is no built-in amplification so the unit needs to be used in conjunction with separate power amps. No price quoted.

In the 'not-for-sale-we're-just-showing-it-off' dept was a rather swish C-15M319 14" TV/Monitor with no less than 4 RGB inputs to feed its .31mm dot-pitch screen that revealed, in even greater detail, every one of the same faults on the Japanese disc of *The Empire Strikes Back* that we have to put up with. The monitor was sourced from NEC's VP-L800 LV player, which again, is a not-for-sale-in-the-UK item.

Incidentally, from looking at the back page of NEC's equipment catalogue they would appear to have a new address: NEC HOME ELECTRONICS, 35 Oval Road, London NW1 7EA - Telephone: 01-267 7000.

## YAMAHA

On the off-chance a visit to the YAMAHA show was made, but it was mostly a dedicated audio components show this year. Some bumph acquired revealed something of the background to the company's recent move into LV player production. It quoted Takayuki Jibiki, General Manager of the A/V Division - "We're not competing with VCR, as has been done in the past. The VCR has very useful functions such as recording. The laser video disc player has advantages that complement the VCR. Most important, its picture is very clear at 400 lines horizontal resolution and it doesn't deteriorate with repeated use".

YAMAHA players are total in-house products, using their own laser assemblies and LSI chip technology, and while no plans exist for PAL market entry they are a company with the obvious ability to do so should the demand materialise.

## SONY

The biggest crowd at the SONY show when we arrived was around the new Trinitron TVs - FST tube models with high-resolution 'Microblack' screens boasting 2,000 character display potential. Sizes are 21" & 27" - at £499 & £599, or £599 & £649 with teletext. The pre-production samples on demo were NTSC, so of course there had to be an LV player there to provide

a signal - the industrial model SONY LDP 2000 can be seen behind the TV (which is incidentally a further variation with a built-in Video 8 VCR.) SONY's Profeel models remain current - though with the picture quality apparent on these new Trinitrons (due for Autumn sale) one wonders just how long.

Among the topline ES components was SONY's SDP 505ES Digital Surround Processor with DOLBY that was being used for demonstration with no definite plans for UK sale as they're not sure of sufficient demand - it would be fairly expensive if the Japanese price of nearly £400 is anything to go by.

## MARANTZ

MARANTZ have a new DOLBY Surround unit, the RV-351, that will sell at the same £139 price as the continuing RV-353. So, those readers who've been kept waiting now have a choice. The new unit does not work in combination with the AV BUS system, and is the normal 420mm width. Rear

volume balance is incorporated and the unit leaves the tape monitor output free in use.

I suppose I ought to mention MARANTZ's surround sound demo run to show off the RV-351, that like last year's, tended to be more an LV show-piece than its intended function. Last time we looked at everything on a 28" monitor. This year MARANTZ had brought over their version of the 37" MITSUBISHI behemoth to display the output of their new MARANTZ (but-it's-really-a-PIONEER CLD-7) LV/CD player. Ken from MARANTZ graciously posed in front of it in order to give some idea of the scale of the thing (by our reckoning it's about the size of two 27" jobs). You will note the convenient manner in which the set can accommodate quite an array of A/V components - thus obviating any wasteful expenditure on component racks and the like. Remarkably, the TV did not look that overpowering in what was really a modest size room. You're not going to walk by and miss it, but on the other hand, the front to back depth was not as great as might be expected. I'd like one, Ken says he wants one too, having 'grown out' of his smaller 28" job.

Fears of the TV sacrificing picture quality to achieve size would appear unfounded. You get the impression that these big tubes are difficult to make, but the effort looks more than worthwhile. The close-ups on the Tina Turner *Private Dancer Tour* disc (yes, her again) looked really crisp, and the graininess of the video transfer on *Beverly Hills Cop* was as well defined as we remembered it.

Other visitors to the demo were suitably agog. When you see LV demonstrated like this, it brings home the whole point of the thing - the quality - a phrase Ken himself used to explain the success of LaserVision back in Japan.

Now. Either somebody has got to start bringing this sort of stuff out in PAL....or we'll just have to go there. It's as simple as that really.





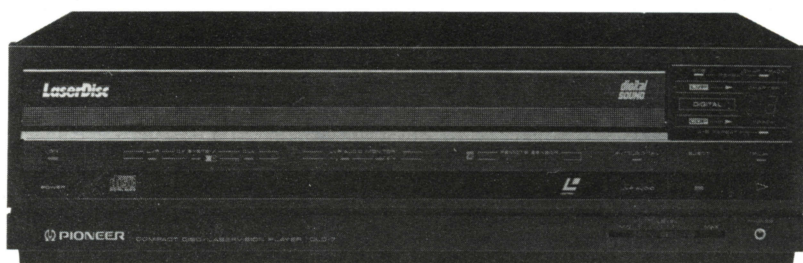
# Japanese Report

From Our Correspondent In Japan  
MARC COMFORT

## NEW PIONEER PLAYERS

More on the CLD-7, PIONEER's new LV/CD player and replacement for the CLD900(0). Measuring 420x120x408 it is virtually identical in size to the old LD700(0) LV only player. Most significant is the reduction in height on the previous combined player, achieved by a sledge mounting for the two separate drive motors - in contrast to the previous rotating mount. One good feature retained from the 900 is the large LED Chapter/Track display, situated at the top right corner of the player. The remote is basically that of the LD7100(707) overwritten with the CD functions, as was the case with the previous CLD player. Video resolution is quoted at 400 lines with a 45dB S/N figure. Price is ¥158,000.

Not content with one new machine, PIONEER have also introduced another player, the LD-X710, that is a novel variation on the combination theme in the manner suggested might be possible in the Digital Sound piece in LDR-3. This LV-only player - apart from being a midi-rack sized 360(W)x119(H)x385(D) - is designed to function in tandem with the PD-X707L CD player, using that machine's D/A circuitry to decode the Digital Sound audio on DS LV discs. Again 360mm wide, it is the CD player that sports all the appropriate "Digital Sound" and "LaserVision Digital Sound System" logos. (There is only a small mention on the LV player itself as being "Digital Sound ready".) The LD-X710 lists at ¥149,800 and the PD-X707L, ¥64,800. [A version of the CD player, the PD-X707 (no 'L'



PIONEER's latest LV/CD combination player - the CLD-7

note), is due for UK release but it does not have the LV Digital Sound facility. ]

Something a bit outside the domestic environment is PIONEER's Autochanger karaoke system - a combination of units based on a 60 disc (20cm) automated vertically-stacked caddy. Measuring 634(W)x975(H)x472(D) and weighing 87Kg, the LC-V12 Autochanger runs to ¥800,000 and the most basic set-up, with the CD-V12 control unit, gives you the essence of a video juke-box system for around £3,500. By the time a video display, amps, mikes, speakers etc are added on you're closer to a total price of ¥1,685,000. Two LC-V12 caddies can be linked together to give instant access to 120 discs.

More useful in the home - and more likely to appear in the UK - is PIONEER's new SP-X707 Surround Sound

Processor (¥55,800), their first unit to bear the DOLBY Surround logo. It measures 360x75x332. Apart from DOLBY Surround it offers Theatre, Stadium and Simulated Stereo modes. Built in amplification runs to 35W per channel.

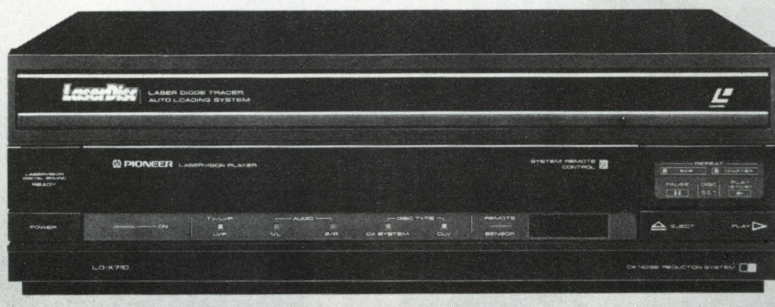
In Japan PIONEER have a range of Bodysonic chairs - 4 variations to be exact - at different prices and with various facilities. They are sold as audio as well as video components (is a chair a component?!). There's also a new 40" rear-projection TV, the TVM-400PJ, that is already available in the US too (SD-P40) where it has been well received on the basis of its improved picture quality over previous projection sets.

## EVEN MORE PLAYERS

Newcomers to the scene, HITACHI, have two players on offer. The LV only - but incorporating Digital Sound circuitry - VIP-20D is an in-house product and lists at ¥129,800. Measuring 435x115x410 it has microphone inputs for karaoke use and this might account for the massive number of buttons on the remote - 39 in all! HITACHI's combination LV/CD player, the ¥158,000 VIP-31C, turns out to be a PIONEER CLD-7 clone with virtually no cosmetic restyling to disguise the fact. Interestingly, at 11.00Kg the combination player actually weighs less than HITACHI's LV only player which runs to 11.9Kg.

NEC are also selling a version of PIONEER's LD8100 Karaoke model. They call it the VP-L800.

SONY have revamped the LDP-515 which has become the LDP-525 with slight front panel restyling. The picture resolution is now being quoted at 400 lines and the price of the new model is down to ¥108,000.

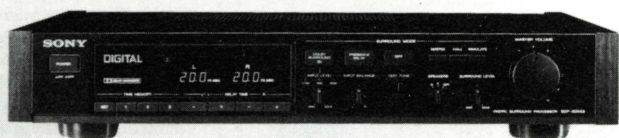


The LD-X710 is a 360mm wide LV player. Should you wish to play Digital Sound LV discs you need to connect it to the D/A circuitry in the PD-X707L CD player.



話題のデジタル・ドルビーサラウンドで、部屋がシアターになる。

SONY's new  
Digital  
DOLBY  
Surround  
Processor



デジタルサラウンドプロセッサー SDP-505 ES ¥98,000 新発売

SONY's SDP-505ES Digital Surround AV unit lists for a hefty ¥98,000 and again features the DOLBY Surround logo on its front panel as well as the Matrix, Hall and Simulated modes. It measures 470x86x350 and weighs 8.3 Kg.

#### SOFTWARE

In Japan, all the stores that sell discs tend to have a sample playing - usually just one of the demo-type discs from such as PIONEER, CBS-SONY etc. Discs are sold shrink-wrapped from browser racks and there are not normally any cheap or reduced price discs available, although you do sometimes get '3 for the price of 2' offers. US import discs are available, but at an extra ¥2,500 over the regular price. (But joy - no sub-titles in the way.) Movies appear on TV very fast here and videos are often released at the same time as the movie release, unless it is an international blockbuster. (A *Chorus Line* was even premiered in Japan in December as part of a \$3,000,000 promotional tie-in with the launch of MATSUSHITA's new VHD disc player.)

about a quarter. Animation and movie special effects are very big and this accounts for a number of films and programmes for films that have come out in CAV.

#### CAV & SFX

The recent Ray Harryhausen CAV effects disc was tied in with the release of four of his films and a write-up in the new release sheet mentioning older Harryhausen titles already in the catalogue. That sheet also gave a plug to the *SFX Museum* series of discs of which there have been four so far - all in CAV and either bi-lingual or subtitled.

*SFX Museum Vol 1 - To The Year 2010* is devoted to the work of Richard Edlund with clips from *Ghostbusters* and *2010*. Vol 2 - *Motion Control*, *Apogee & Dream Quest* covers model work in films such as *Star Wars*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Blue Thunder* etc. Vol 3 - *Computer Graphics In SFX* looks to be just the sort of thing your letter writer in LDR-7 was after as it covers the computer effects employed in the likes of *Tron*, *Dune*, *Starfighter*, *Looker* etc. *SFX Special* is a sort of historical

#### NEW DISCS

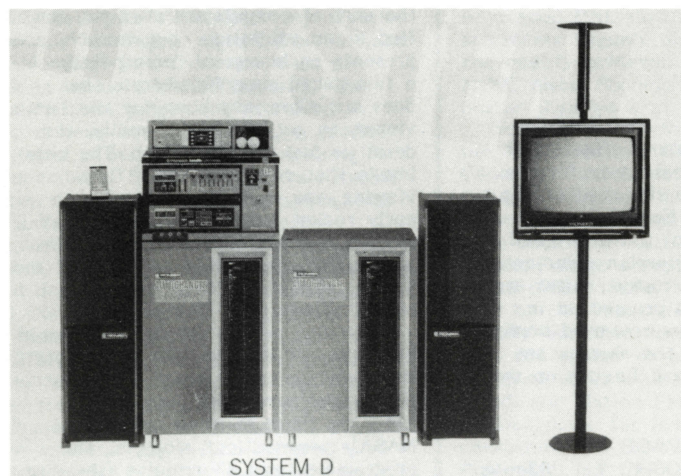
While not a complete list by any means, these are just some of the new discs that have appeared in the last few months. The release sheets are in Japanese and discs from the smaller independent labels are only mentioned by name - without the benefit of some visual guidance that probably means a few interesting ones have been missed! Along with all the domestic product there can be up to 100 titles listed. Discs already out or forthcoming in the US have been omitted.

#### APRIL

Films - *Spider Man/The Dragon's Challenge*, *Bonjour Tristesse*, *Hanover Street*, *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner*, *Mad Max III* (DS), *I The Jury*, *Dogs Of War*, 1984 (only 113mins?), *Maria's Lovers*, *Aces High*, *El Espiritu De La Colmena*, *E La Nave Va*, *Les Ripoux*. Music - *D. Bowie/Ricochet*(60'), *King Sunny Ade/Concert In The Park*(DS), *O. Newton John/Soul Kiss*(CAV), *Paul Mauriat/Classical Elegance*(DS), *Cars/Live*(DS), *Golden Earring*(DS), *Orange Juice/Da Da*(DS), *UK Now Vol 3*, a 51' *Mendelssohn Violin Concerto*(DS), *Hall & Oates/Live At The Apollo*, *Bauhaus/Collection*(80'), *London Rock'n'Roll Show* (Wembley 1972, 90'), *Best Of The Vocal Groups* (80'- *Four Freshmen*, *Sky-larks* etc), and a double-sided 29' *Style Council "Jr"* (The Japanese do call these little discs Juniors). Others - *A Jacky Ickx* documentary (55'), a 50' disc of the 85 *Japan Motor Cycle Grand Prix Trials*, *Car Crashes Part 1* (30'), *Motor Fantasy* (flashy cars in DS & CAV).

#### MAY

Films - *Duel*, *Silent Running*, *Eye Of The Needle*, *Nightmares*, *A Chorus Line*, *Ghostbusters*(DS), *Frankenstein*(1931), *Time After Time*, *Basket Case*, *Osterman Weekend*, *The Escape Artist*, *The Three Worlds Of Gulliver*, *Donald Duck's 50 Crazy Years*, *The Awakening*, *Fire & Ice* (CAV), & *Pauline A La Plage*. Music - *Don't Watch That Vol 4*, *Now That's What I Call Music Vols 4 & 5*, *Garry Moore/Live*(89'), *John Lennon/Live In NYC*(DS), *Ozzy Osbourne/Bark At The Moon*(DS), *Thompson Twins/Single Vision*, *Count Basie Orchestra/Live*. Others - *Aliens*, *Monsters*, *Dragons & Me* - *The Fantasy Film World Of Ray Harryhausen*(46',CAV), *Dog's Fantasy Vols I & II*(DS), *Car Crashes Part II*.



PIONEER's Autochanger karaoke system with two caddies, offering a capacity of 120 Juniors

Horror movies are always uncut and the cinemas have no age restriction on them - only on sex/porno movies. So, discs such as *The Evil Dead*, *Blood Feast*, *Creep Show*, *Zombies-Dawn Of The Dead* etc are regularly released.

As to why Japanese favour the laser format - that is not an easy thing to answer as the Japanese character is so different to that of the West. Number one would be quality. Movies account for about a third of the market, music

perspective from the 1903 *Trip To The Moon* on, including extracts from *The Right Stuff*, *Blade Runner*, *Android* etc. Most of the film clips are shown in widescreen on all but the last disc.

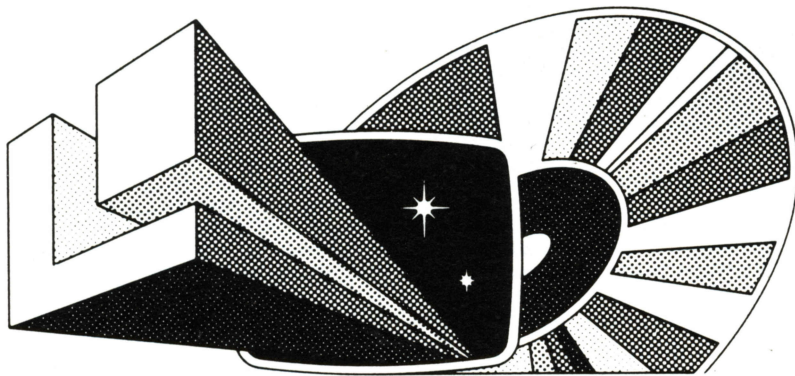
Those widescreen versions of 2001 and 2010 are also in CAV and DS. Originally Digital Sound only appeared on CLV discs but is starting to appear on CAV too. *The Last Starfighter* looks like being a forthcoming CAV DS release.

先端音声も光カラオケも楽しめる。VIP-20D ¥129,800円 新発売

HITACHI's own  
Digital  
Sound LV  
player







# Dutch Update

## A look at the recently released Space Discs

Unlike the previously reviewed US VIDEOVISION (NTSC) space discs, this batch of Dutch discs take no advantage of LaserVision's unique CAV capabilities. They are essentially just a repackaging of (mostly) available promotional films, some of which are showing their age in this fast-moving field of endeavour. Although the five discs seem to comprise a unified package they do tend to duplicate and overlap considerably and none of them enjoys any preparatory introduction - it's just the opening logo and then straight into it. No matter in which order they are viewed it is difficult to get a grip on the general historical development of space exploration and not all aspects are given adequate coverage. Their main appeal is to anyone whose specific interests coincide with the topics covered on the individual discs, and not for someone who doesn't know much and wants a potted history of the last 30 years in space.

All the discs are in CLV and have a dual soundtrack - Dutch on one channel, English on the other (the choice of channels varies from disc to disc). There is noticeable leakage between channels and you are often aware of some faint burbling going on in the background - even if it doesn't detract too much once you are into the intricacies of the contents. Most of the material for the discs seems originally to have been prepared with English commentaries - which means Dutch language speakers often have

to do without the sound effects and music in order to make way for the overlaid dialogue. In the case of the first disc, it is the English speaker who suffers this loss of the original soundtrack (with a Russian commentary) and the appropriate rocket noises etc. The discs have been pressed up in Blackburn and all the reviewed copies looked quite clean. The sleeves are Dutch on one side and English on the reverse.

### 1 - RUSSIANS IN SPACE Video Screen 05 COSMO 1 63mins

Logically, the Russian effort in space should occupy the first disc of the series. The material here has been culled from 35mm film stock supplied by SOVEXPORT. Consequently picture quality is quite good by documentary standards, even if the colour is maybe a little off at times. Some of what you see is obviously staged specially for the benefit of the cameras (the crew training sequences most noticeably), but as we see so little of Russia's space effort, in comparison to NASA's prodigious output, virtually every frame tells you something or other. The Russian space programme looks very primitive and it is often very difficult to tell how old what you are looking at is - it all looks old-fashioned. At 0.05 you get a brief glimpse of a blonde-bouffanted lady radio operator that momentarily suggests the accidental inclusion of an outtake from *Thunderbirds Are Go*. The selection of material is

comprehensive. After viewing various aspects of preparation on the ground we switch to some b & w footage of the original Gagarin manned space flight. The launch-site looks to have changed little in the colour views taken in more recent times. It is situated in a featureless flat scrub area that appears particularly uninviting, but the sheer scale of the Russian rockets and the huge concrete-lined crater for the deflected rocket exhausts is every bit the sci-fi panorama guaranteed to entice crowds of Russian sightseers. However, it is always eerily deserted.

The 1975 Soyuz/Apollo docking in space is shown, as is the off-loading of a large radio telescope and various other space-flight activities. The soft landing on Venus is covered and some stills of pretty reasonable quality of the surface are seen. There is extended coverage of the in-flight activities of the cosmonauts - eating, exercising, waving at the camera etc. - that could possibly have been edited down a little, but as a whole the disc remains interesting and rewatchable.

### 2 - NASA, THE 25th YEAR Video Screen 05 COSMO 2 48 mins

*NASA, The 25th Year* looks to be a promising area of coverage - the showbizzy side of space exploration by comparison. In fact, the disc turns out to be just a straight repackaging of a NASA promotional film with a surfeit of stirring musical accompaniment that sometimes gets a little out-of-hand volume-wise, but is appropriate to the nationalistic tone of the commentary. It is just the sort of compilation that you might find at an exhibition or somesuch, and presents an historical retrospective in a fast-paced superficial style that does not allow any time for the home viewer to get involved - really, the detail is just not sufficient. The only image that registered on a first viewing was in a scene showing an early rocket launch where the small wooden hut at the perimeter of the launch-site, apparently well out of the action, gets blown over as the rocket slowly rises into the sky.

The disc covers all the anticipated highlights of the 1958-63 period, but the significance of what is seen is not put in any particular perspective. Later on there is some mention of NASA's aeronautical projects. The programme lasts 48 minutes (the disc is single-sided) and appears to have been originated on 16mm, showing unremarkable picture quality. A few bits of the programme duplicate some of the footage on the VIDEOVISION *Mars* disc we have, and look of lesser quality than that.

### 3 - JOURNEY TO THE PLANETS Video Screen 05 COSMO 3 59mins

On side one is another NASA documentary, the one to be found on the previously mentioned VIDEOVISION *Mars* disc. This time, though, the PAL disc shows improved clarity and resolution - even if it is still basically a somewhat grainy 16mm production. Most of the space content is simulated in various animations, with occasional still photographs of the planets and their moons. The pace here is far more restrained than previously, and more suited to the domestic viewing environment. The film lasts 24 minutes.



On side two picture quality again takes a step backwards - but then so does the clock. *The Clouds Of Venus* is a NASA film of early '60s vintage whose presentation owes much to late-night TV favourite *The Outer Limits*, and is possibly even funnier. Struggling to raise his voice above the atmospheric whining music, our intrepid reporter is heard recounting the background to the impending Venus mission and is seen participating in various press conferences and interview sequences - all fabricated to look like the real thing - but painfully lacking credibility in the light of the present day. If you don't just fall about when a young Carl Sagan, hair brushed back and incapable of lifting his gaze from an inspection of the polished veneer of his desk, in order to face the camera (he obviously shows no potential as a TV presenter!), appears....well! The informational value of *The Clouds Of Joy* is virtually nil. The camp entertainment value is fair. If your endurance is sufficient, you will notice the film lasts 28 minutes.

A seven minute short *Viking - Mars Landing 1976* follows, and with it a return to better picture quality. As a precursor to the Mars probe, it details the hardware and the intended experiments to detect possible life-forms. The artists' impressions of the Martian surface do not quite match the reality - but the disc lacks the evidence to enable the viewer to make such a comparison.

#### 4 - THE SPACE SHUTTLE PROJECT Video Screen 05 COSMO 4 87mins

The maiden flight of the first Columbia starts this compilation of shuttle flights. It's a NASA film entitled *Space Shuttle - A Remarkable Flying Machine* and lasts for twenty minutes, giving a rundown of the launch/recovery cycle and the operation of the payload doors in space.

*STS-3 Mission* starts off very abruptly and there are two other jumps

in its five minute duration.

The third film on this side, *STS-6*, is as good as the previous one was bad. The astronauts provide the commentary (obviously being given as the film is being replayed at a press conference), and it is pleasantly unforced in its delivery and gives a human side to the programme that is often lacking elsewhere. In space the launch of a satellite is shown, as are the flight-deck routines and some EVA activity - and, on return to Earth, the shuttle landing is informatively talked through from a pilot's eye view. Lasts 14 minutes.

Side two starts off with a 13 minute film of the 5th shuttle mission. This time there is no authentic commentary (and no sound effects). The English commentary that has been added is particularly uninspired in its delivery and the speaker often talks just for the sake of it, duplicating information previously imparted. The mission deals with the launch of another couple of satellites, and the remaining footage shows the astronauts inside the shuttle.

The 9th mission features Spacelab - Europe's contribution to the exploration of space. Even though by now having viewed a considerable amount of blurry film of astronauts floating around in a state of weightlessness, this Spacelab outing proves to be quite informative, and gives a better view of the interior than the dedicated documentary on the fifth disc. The spaciousness of the environment contrasts dramatically with some of the earlier shots of the Russian space missions. Lasts 18 minutes.

*Flight 41c*, where the Solar Max satellite is repaired in space constitutes one of the best segments on the set of discs, with some good clear views of the shuttle in space - payload doors open and the blue Earth glowing in the background. The twenty minutes it lasts seems too short and one could happily have watched more - no commentary would even have been necessary. (As it is, once you know what is going on,

repeated viewing of side two benefits from having the sound turned off.)

#### 5 - EUROPE IN SPACE

Video Screen 05 COSMO 5 71mins

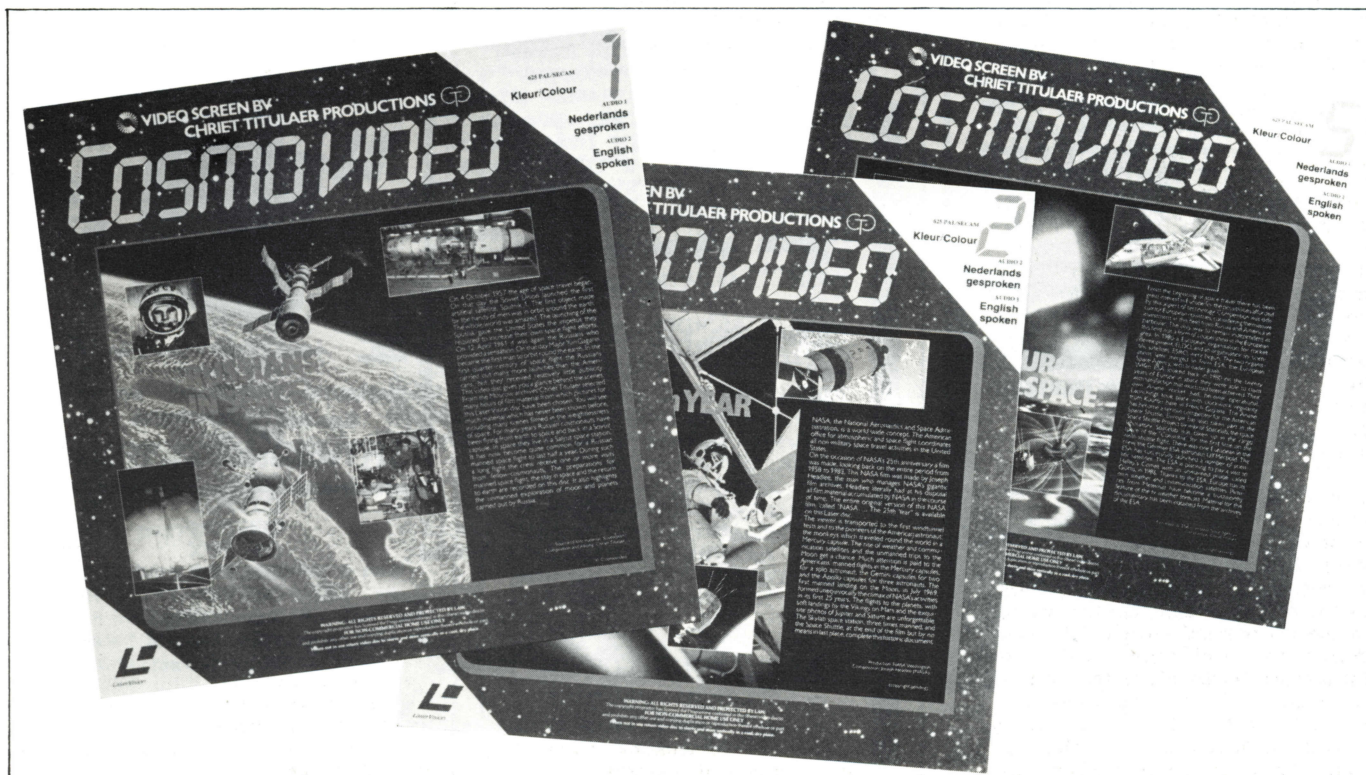
Volume 5 begins with a 13 minute documentary on the European Space Agency - pretty unexciting stuff, being being composed almost entirely of stills carefully montaged into a movie-type presentation. Understandably the programme originated in France, but the English soundtrack retains all the background music, and all the satellites launched up to the time it was made (1984) are featured.

The second short is a proper film on *Meteosat 1* that is quite informative and well illustrated, with examples of the weather information it has photographed sometimes assembled into moving sequences. The picture quality is OK but a bit too lo-fi to do these moments justice. The initial feeling was that this film would have merited CAV, but you realise that there isn't really enough detail in the picture to make the effort worthwhile. Being made in 1980 it is also now looking a little out-of-date.

Side two features *Spacelab* and is another ESA documentary, lasting 24 minutes. The picture quality is quite good but the content is a little lightweight - either telling us about the exciting possibilities of space we all know about, or showing aspects of the shuttle programme that have already been covered elsewhere.

*OTS* is a 1978 film about the first experimental ESA satellite (Orbital Test Satellite) and is reasonably involving, if a little dated.

The discs are priced at fls-69 each and as yet there is no news of their being available through normal channels in the UK. In the meantime, readers interested in obtaining copies should get in touch with the issuing label: VIDEO SCREEN, PO BOX 426, 3430 AK NIEUWEGEIN, THE NETHERLANDS.





## Other Dutch News

The other new additions to the catalogue are all old British b & w movie classics - *Brief Encounter*(1945), *Lady Vanishes*(1938), & *Odd Man Out* (1947). The latter title is only listed as being 74 minutes - it should be 113.

Two of these new titles get to be included on the list of other films unavailable here but issued in Holland with Dutch subtitles.

This new list updates the one in LDR-3. *Blue Hawaii* is also still listed as being available in a subtitled version - VLP1007M, fls-89.

Something missed in the music list last time was a Bolshoi recording of *Giselle* featuring Natalia Bessmertnova on AR-TEL - VLP1025M, fls-69. Listed as in stereo too. The latest catalogue mentions a version of *The Nutcracker*, possibly from the same source, but no details are given beyond its being in stereo too - VLP1117M, fls-69. It may not actually have been released yet. (It is not the ARTS INT version.)

The new catalogue also gives the wild-life disc on AR-TEL *Dierenwereld In Noord-Amerika*(VLP2076E, fls-69) as bi-lingual, Dutch/English, and not just in Dutch as originally listed. The disc consists of two documentaries - a 48 minute one that appears to focus on grizzly bears in Colorado, and a 49 minute film called *Wild Babies* that has something to do with deer.

The first *Playboy* disc (reviewed LDR-5) remains listed. What looks like another forthcoming special interest title is just referred to as *Hermitage*. At a guess, this could be the documentary on the famous Leningrad museum that was in the German catalogue. No mention of language/subtitles, although the programme does feature Natalie Wood and Peter Ustinov.

One of the strangest aspects of the Dutch catalogue has to be the hundred VIDEOMEDIA label cartoon discs. These are all in English with Dutch subtitles, and in CAV. They all run around 22-30 mins and are priced at fls-49 each. There are usually several discs from each cartoon series: *Archie*(3), *Blackstar*(3), *Archie's Fun-house*(5), *Zorro*(5), *Shazam*(3), *Waldo* *Kitty*(3), *Lone Ranger*(5), *Isis*(3), *Hero High*(4), *Space Academy*(3), *Space Sentinels*(3), *Favorite Martians*(3), *Jason Of The Star Command*(4), *Lassie*(4), *Groovie Ghoulies*(5), etc, etc.



VIDEO SCREEN in Holland have in the past offered to supply all Dutch discs for readers needing to obtain titles by post.

## The World At War

The THAMES TV *World At War* series is available on 13 separate discs on the TELEVIZIER label.

They retain the original English language commentary but have Dutch sub-titles, although the sleeves only give the programmes' names in Dutch. The list below gives some idea of the individual contents. All the discs are in CLV and run for about 104 minutes.



VLP	2159E	A New Germany 1933-39/Distant War 1939-40
VLP	2160E	France Falls, May-June 1940/Britain Alone, May 40-Jun 41
VLP	2161E	Barbarossa, Jun-Dec 41/Banzai - Japan Strikes
VLP	2162E	On Our Way-America Enters War/Desert War In North Africa
VLP	2163E	German Defeat At Stalingrad/Wolfpack-The U-Boat War
VLP	2164E	Red Star-Russia's War/Whirlwind-The Blitz on Britain
VLP	2165E	Tough Old Gut-Italy's Defeat/The War in Burma
VLP	2166E	Home Fires-UK Raids Continue/Inside Germany 1940-4
VLP	2167E	D-Day June 1944/The War In Holland
VLP	2168E	Pincers-Paris Liberated/Genocide-Himmler's Aryan Aims
VLP	2169E	Nemesis-Nightraids on Germany/Japan 1941-5
VLP	2170E	The Pacific War/Hiroshima & The Bomb
VLP	2171E	Reckoning-War Ends In Europe/Remember-Counting The Cost

## Dutch

### Film Titles - Listed as in English with Dutch subtitles

Catalogue Number	Title/Running Time*	Label	Price fls-
2037E	THE SAVAGE HUNT (90mins)	Video Screen	69
2039E	REDNECK (84mins)	Spectrum	79
2043E	CALIGULA [147mins]	Video Screen	89
2058E	BOBBY JO & THE OUTLAW (85mins)	Video Screen	79
2060E	VIRUS (105mins)	Video Screen	79
2061E	TITLE SHOT (85mins)	Video Screen	69
2062E	PLANET OF THE DINOSAURS (93mins)	Video Screen	69
2064E	THAT LUCKY TOUCH (89mins)	Video Screen	79
2065E	GAME OF DEATH (95mins)	Spectrum	89
2066E	FIST OF FURY (100mins)	Spectrum	89
2067E	WAY OF THE DRAGON (86mins)	Spectrum	89
2068E	THE BIG BOSS (95mins)	Spectrum	89
2069E	THE GLOVE (90mins)	Video Screen	79
2070E	SHOGUN ASSASSIN (87mins)	Video Screen	79
2072E	TOURIST TRAP (90mins)	Video Screen	79
2073E	A TASTE OF HELL (90mins)	Video Screen	69
2074E	ENTER THE DEVIL (86mins)	Video Screen	69
2075E	ALLIGATOR (92mins)	Video Screen	79
2079E	JULIUS CAESAR (113mins)	Spectrum	79
2081E	WORLD WAR III - I (94mins)	VPV Video	89
2082E	WORLD WAR III - II (97mins)	VPV Video	89
2083E	ALCATRAZ - I (96mins)	VPV Video	89
2084E	ALCATRAZ - II (96mins)	VPV Video	89
2085E	MURDER IN TEXAS - I (94mins)	VPV Video	79
2086E	MURDER IN TEXAS - II (91mins)	VPV Video	79
2087E	THE DAYBREAKERS (109mins)	VPV Video	99
2090E	RIVKIN: BOUNTY HUNTER (95mins)	VPV Video	89
2091E	THE PROMISE OF LOVE (94mins)	VPV Video	79
2096E	DESPERATE VOYAGE (120mins)	VPV Video	89
2101E	HOMBRE (111mins)	CBS/FOX	79
2105E	CARNEY (107mins)	CBS/FOX	79
2149E	KILLERFISH (98mins)	CBS/FOX	79
2150E	THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS	CBS/FOX	79
2151E	ZORBA THE GREEK (136mins)	CBS/FOX	79
2152E	FIREPOWER (105mins)	CBS/FOX	79
2155E	THE TAMARIND SEED (119mins)	CBS/FOX	79
2178E	ODD MAN OUT (74mins?)	Video Garant	69
2179E	THE LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN [108mins]	Video Garant	69
2180E	BRIEF ENCOUNTER (86mins)	Video Garant	69

\* Running times as listed except for those confirmed in square brackets.



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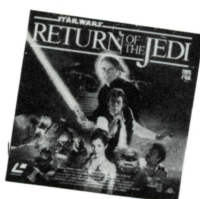
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### BITS & PIECES

||||| SONY have been showing a new LV player (LDP1500P) and MSX2 computer (HGB900) in the UK. The units are intended for point-of-sale and other commercial applications. Price around £2000 |||||| DWIGHT CAVENDISH's SD-270 is a new sort of laser-driven video projector you too can hire - at £700 a day from SAMUELSONS COMMUNICATIONS. That is, providing you have a 3-phase

circuit able to belt out 28kW, and a water supply running at 4 gallons/min to cool it all off when running. Imminent is a version designed specifically for HDTV |||||| MIKE HUNTER VIDEO, Germany advise they are still able to supply discs ("The situation on the laser disc market is so bad we are happy about each customer who orders. We still have a big stock"). However, as hinted at, recent German legislation prohibits the mailing of films rated for over 18s - such titles have to be bought in person from designated retail outlets.

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Address any communications to Sales Manager, Roswitha Jodin |||||| In the US, RCA have made June the last month to press CED discs |||||| Barry Sheene's SUZUKI has been fitted with a PHILIPS CD player. The LDR delivery bicycle hasn't |||||| Did you see?...what was left of 48 Hrs when they showed it on TV recently. It wasn't cut by the TV company apparently and was shown as supplied to them. If want to see the whole film - best get the disc ||||||



# REVIEWS

You will notice some changes in the manner in which the quality of the source material and the resulting disc is assessed in this, and forthcoming review sections. Gone are the letter gradings - and in their place should be a somewhat more specific description of picture and sound quality. Now the magazine (and hopefully the reader-ship!) has ploughed through a number of reviews, some level of common understanding and knowledge should have resulted. It has become increasingly apparent that attempting to grade discs containing feature-film material is becoming more and more difficult, so diverse are the defects to be seen. No sooner has some semblance of a standard been arrived at than some new variation promptly turns up on the next disc. Trying to put all the characteristics into some meaningful harmony with what went before is becoming near impossible.

For fear of labouring the point - the reviews generally take the view that what you see should, as far as possible, fulfil the bandwidth potential of the disc medium. Most of the programmes originated on video make an attempt to do this, but with programmes from the film companies this is rarely the case and, most frustratingly, the defects on these film masters often appear to be just the result of carelessness or in the very cheapness of the transfer. Such inadequacies are masked by the limited potential of home tape formats but are revealed and preserved with pristine clarity on disc.

## TELECINE

The crucial piece of equipment necessary to transfer film to video is the telecine machine - the photograph illustrates one of the most widely-used examples, the RANK CINTEL Mk IIIC Flying-Spot Telecine. This machine is to be found in use in the UK and overseas. Above the control panel you can clearly see the spools of cine film and, at the top right-hand corner, the video monitor. The machine's output is fed to a videotape machine. There is a limited amount of control built in to allow sideways scanning of widescreen films so as to keep the action in the centre of the 4:3 format of the TV picture. An add-on option is the X-Y Zoom Control which allows smaller parts of the film frame to be enlarged and pulled into centre frame. The significance of the flying-spot part of the machine's designation refers to the manner in which the film frame is electronically scanned in order to produce the video image. There also exist both CCD and photoconductive types of telecine, but flying spot is generally reckoned to be the best. The IIIC, at least, is able to give

full broadcast-standard picture quality and its bandwidth specification is comfortably above the 5.00MHz necessary for PAL LV.

Whichever type, some additional considerations have to be taken into account when transferring the soundtrack along with the picture. On a regular film print the soundtrack is carried alongside the picture on an optically-encoded track - a sort of celluloid equivalent to the vinyl groove. Such soundtracks have limited frequency response, even by the present-day standards of domestic audio, and it is additionally unfortunate that they should share the term 'optical' with the superior laser product we all know and love. Do not mistake optically encoded film soundtracks with the optical format of the laser-read disc.

Apart from their limited frequency response their equalisation has often been corrupted to suit the special requirements of the cinema circuit (the Academy Curve) and they can be left uncorrected when transferred to video. And then, there is always the problem of dust and handling damage that causes those low-level 'spitting' noises (like on a dirty vinyl disc) burbling away in the background and can come and go in time with the reel changes.

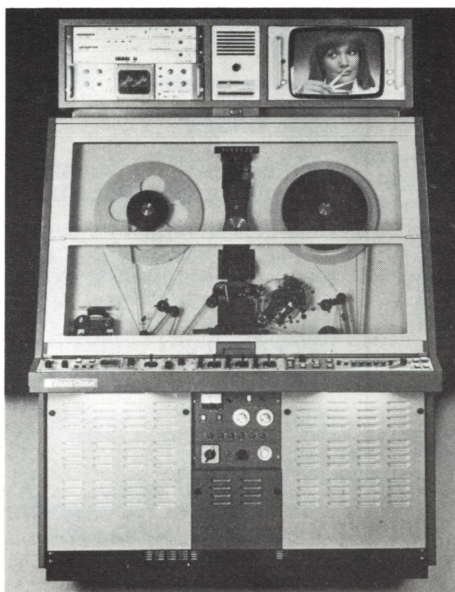
What is better is the use of a separate magnetic track (not to be confused with the magnetic striping of film that was in vogue at one point) that is run on a separate tape machine and synched together with the output of the telecine to produce a combined finished video master. ( Judging by *Return Of The Jedi* they don't always

get the sync spot on!) *Jedi*, *Rambo II*, *Beverly Hills Cop* etc are regrettably still the exception to the rule in their use of these separate magnetic soundtracks, although one assumes that the increasing importance of the home video market will encourage film companies to go for the magnetic option with greater regularity. When it comes to older movies that option is not available and you just have to hope that care is taken in making the best of the existing optical sound.

While the above covers, very briefly, the usual procedure with transferring film to video there are of course other aspects such as the use of film negatives as opposed to prints, conversions from NTSC, and deliberately degraded masters that are crucially important to picture quality and will be dealt with in more detail in future.

## DISC PRESSINGS

While the change to injection moulding has undoubtedly brought about brighter and crisper pressings, spots and blemishes of various types continue to crop up. After some really clean discs around Spring/Summer 1985 they seemed to us to get quite a bit spottier as the year progressed, even to the point of needing to seek replacement copies where the level of spots could be deemed disruptive to viewing. PHILIPS, Blackburn insist there has been a progressive reduction in spots and dropouts over the whole period - as far as their measurements indicate. The reviews and readers' responses are based on a direct viewing experience



[ The RANK Mk IIIC flying-spot telecine machine ]



which may indicate that it might not be down to the number of dropouts alone, but their dispersion and characteristics, let alone the combinations of replay equipment. (Oh dear, does this all perceived versus measured performance mean a new breed of golden-eyes to join the golden-ears brigade?)

Spots on discs don't matter if they do not intrude on one's involvement in the contents (see, we don't actually sit there and just watch for them). Most of the faulty discs encountered recently have suffered from excessive blue spots and speckles. Interestingly every re-pressed disc seen has always had more blue spots than the original - to a degree beyond what one might consider pure coincidence.

When it comes to the comments on the pressings in the reviews, these can only be an approximate guide as to what you are likely to receive. As time goes on, the number of back-catalogue titles likely to have been subjected to more than one press run is bound to increase, making the LDR assessment of the review pressing even less representative. If we find ourselves dealing with a title that started out as a 2P disc and yet we have a later injection-moulded pressing under review - that fact will pointed out. The difference in types of pressings is not an obscure point of academic interest - the greater vividness of the newer pressings can often be immediately apparent from just looking at the screen. (That clever-clogs Fielding reckons he can even tell the early and late 2Ps apart from just looking at the TV!)

As a matter of record, no-one at PHILIPS or PIONEER has ever said to us "This is the standard of reproduction you can reasonably expect from a LaserVision disc" (not from the want of asking them, it should be said). The standards of judgement exercised in the reviews are, by default, a combination of a belief in the advertising (remember - "Perfect Pictures From A Silver Disc"), a few quoted specs, and a sort of accumulated collective experience based on the sort of premise "Well, if that one has a sharp picture and doesn't have any spots, why can't all the other discs be as good?"

Some more definite response from PHILIPS was forthcoming recently when they became aware of the fact that it was the LDR way to view discs on a 27" monitor from a distance of about two metres. This they considered a fairly severe test (the basis of the present broadcast standard works on the assumption that people will normally watch smaller, and from further away), but encouragingly they did not consider it an unreasonable expectation of quality.

#### A NEW FRONTIER?

The same viewing conditions will apply to the selection of NTSC discs to be featured in the review section in future. This leap into the unknown is not so much for the benefit of readers who are suitably equipped (You still don't have issue 5?!) as to highlight aspects of disc & master quality, and the presentation and selection of material that might be relevant in affecting matters here in PAL land. Remember, they have several years experience on us that it would be silly to waste.

Because of the limited space available the choice of discs is likely

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to be very unrepresentative, lurching from the unbelievably obscure to the "why haven't we got it here?" category. It will not be a typical cross-section of titles. The idea is to view these supposedly 'inferior' quality discs through PAL eyes. While it is not really possible to match the clarity of a good PAL disc, there is something vaguely disquieting about the quality achieved on the best NTSC discs. Shouldn't we be doing better than we are?

Some new abbreviations crop up in the NTSC section. CC means Closed Captions - a teletext type of sub-titling (in English) done for the hard of hearing that requires a decoder for it to be displayed. DS is the current common usage designation for Digital Sound (PCM) audio. MP is presently used by this magazine to denote DOLBY Surround Sound, because it does not appear to have a universally accepted abbreviation as yet. (It stands for Motion Picture, DOLBY's original name for it.) American catalogues use the term SP (Surround Processed) but this is a rather vague classification as it embraces all forms of surround processing ie SQ/QS. (Some of the PAL PIONEER discs available in the UK may have some of these other surround processes on them but nobody seems to know for sure.) Don't be confused by the CLV/CAV description - this means one format one side, a different one on the other. Usually it is the last side in CAV.

As far as the disc reviews in general are concerned - they are done by different people and their personal tastes should be taken into account when interpreting their comments. The uncredited reviews are by the editor who gets to give all the discs the once over on the LDR reference system in order to maintain some unity over the various aspects of picture and sound quality. Presently this involves using a PIONEER LD700 for PAL discs and the new LD707 for NTSC - the results being viewed on a 27" SONY Profeel monitor.

#### SMALL ADS COLUMN

The SMALL ADS column is an ideal way for readers to dispose of unwanted discs and communicate with others. At present this is a free service. List details of your entry briefly, and on a separate sheet of paper from any other correspondence. It is not possible to take particulars over the telephone. Next deadline - 31st July.  
**DISCS FOR SALE/EXCHANGE**

##### For sale: £8 - LAST AMERICAN VIRGIN, JUST BEFORE DAWN, STAR WARS, YOUNG DOCTORS IN LOVE. £10 - AIRPLANE II. £12 - TOP SECRET, FOOTLOOSE, STAYING ALIVE, FLASHDANCE, ALL OF ME. £14 - RAMBO. £15 - ASIA IN ASIA, STYX LIVE. £130 - PHILIPS VLP 700. M. Tominey ST ALBANS 58193.

##### For sale: YOUNG DOCTORS IN LOVE, VICE SQUAD, AN EYE FOR AN EYE, JAGUAR LIVES, TURKEY SHOOT, WHEN A STRANGER CALLS, RIDER ON THE RAIN - £7.00. John Stuart Tel: (0424) 425885.

##### For sale: £10 - POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, CANNONBALL RUN, VIDEOHITS, QUEST FOR FIRE, RAISE THE TITANIC, STAR WARS, STAR TREK II. £5 - RACCOONS ON ICE, SPIDERMAN. Trade offered for CAT PEOPLE & BLUES BROS. - R.C. PLANT, 16 Barrows Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham.

##### WANTED: APOCALYPSE NOW, BLUES BROS, BLUE HAWAII. Will buy or trade for German discs. Michael Lohse, Georg-Wopfner-Str 28, 8000 Munchen 45, West Germany. Tel: (089) 323 29 97.

##### For Sale: PHILIPS VLP600 - £75. VLP 700 - £95. Andy Tel: 01-691-8376 (After 6.00pm).

##### For sale: PIONEER LD1100 + 10 Discs - £250. B. Crawford. Tel: 0786-73599 (Stirling)

##### WANTED: BLUES BROS, HENRY V, BUTCH CASSIDY, THE FOG. Will swap for PIONEER SA-410 Amp + MISSION 700 speakers. Tel: Dave, 01-677-0187.

#### READERS' CONTACT

##### Frans A. Witbols Feugen, Caenstr. 622, 7002 GW Doetinchem, Holland is a big video and laser fan, housebound due to heart-troubles, who would like to exchange news and info with UK owners. Interested in collecting film stills & photos of stars.



## BREWSTER'S MILLIONS

CIC-UNIVERSAL LVG 1185 £19.99  
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP  
1985 97mins Rated PG

**Stars:** Richard Pryor, John Candy, Lonette McKee, Stephen Collins, Jerry Orbach, Pat Hingle, Toyah Feldsuh, Hume Cronyn

**Director:** Walter Hill

If someone was to plonk a pile of cash in your lap and give you just 30 days to make a movie, you'd be pretty certain to come out ahead if you were to give the viewer some vicarious opportunity to realise their dreams of unlimited wealth. So, while the TV remains the preserve of the game show, movies such as *Brewster's Millions* provide ample opportunity to indulge one's fantasies - watching Richard Pryor, the unsuspecting heir to a potential \$300,000,000 fortune, being required to blow 10% of it on some indulgent and conspicuous consumption in order to qualify for the jackpot total.

Before this upheaval in Brewster's life comes about he's still hoping, optimist that he is, for his break into big-league baseball. Pitching with the Hackensack Bulls - where the game has to stop every time a train runs down the line that traverses the outfield - doesn't look like getting him there.

Brewster adjusts quickly to this sudden wealth and a chaotic spending spree ensues, though director Walter Hill, here offering up something of more general family appeal than his usual cultish efforts, neglects to put any time-scale to it all and misses creating any feeling of build-up to the 30 day, spend-it-all deadline.



Richard Pryor, the lucky Brewster, plays it fairly straight and doesn't make the movie a vehicle for his own self-projection. (Now and again he manages a nervous, toothy smile that reminds you of Jerry's anxious cartoon moments just before Tom subjects the cornered mouse to some terrible beating or other.) If anything, it is John Candy (Brewster's team-mate, Spike) who gets to play up the grosser aspects of this new-found wealth - and if the film's budget had been grander still, we'd have probably been allowed to have seen more of him doing it. **The Disc:** The disc is presented as a mono release, and appears to be so until the stereo image reveals itself in some sound effects as the film progresses. It is one of those balances where the dialogue is pretty much centrally located and only the sound effects and music make use of the feature. It is MP encoded and might open up with the appropriate equipment. The soundtrack is optical but is fresh-sounding and only

odd moments of dialogue sound a little indistinct. Some mild distortion crept in briefly on side two but otherwise no problems. The picture too is bright and colourful and only rarely shows the odd few grainy frames where some heavy cropping has intruded on an otherwise competent transfer. While the picture may lack an absolute level of resolution it is what could comfortably be described as a 'nice picture', and given the cleanliness of the pressing of the review copy, the package comes over well. One would be happy to own the disc even if the content did not live up to expectation.

## RETURN OF THE JEDI

CBS/FOX 1478-70 £24.99  
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP  
1983 126mins (3 sides) Rated U

**Stars:** Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams, Anthony Daniels

**Director:** Richard Marquand

**Music:** John Williams

Nothing appears to upset laser fans more than gaps in their collections of 'series' films - *Apes*, *Friday 13ths*, *2010* etc, etc. What the sight of "Episode VI" on the run-in does to upset the equilibrium when there is no sign of the absentee episodes even being made does not bear contemplating. For a third (in effect) instalment there is every sign of a no-expenses-spared production. The barrage of novelty almost relegates the details of the plot to secondary importance. The sheer variety of life (and robot) forms is never-ending and one can but guess their many derivations. Jabba the Hutt is a sort of Galactic couch-potato original, but Leia's space-suit disguise early on shows echoes of 50's Frank Hampson, and Jabba's little pet has to be some sort of Muppet reject. Further encounters of the potato kind - mashed this time - spring to mind just listening to one of Jabba's robots.

The first 35 minutes of side one make for a really intense viewing experience, so tightly is everything edited together. Jabba's desert retreat is the stuff of almost medieval fantasy, verging on the bizarre. This action-packed segment concludes with a neat battle scene, fought over a living toothy void the likes of which we have all fought to escape from in our worst nightmares.



By comparison, the attack on the Death Star is more of what went before. Further novelty comes in the shape of "those lovable Ewoks" (as someone must have so described them, I'm sure).

Note: The main feature is preceded by a trailer for *Cocoon* - unfortunately unchaptered.

**The Disc:** Thinking back..... something that does upset laser fans more is this sort of grainy, diffused picture quality that, were it not for the fact that you knew it had been legitimately produced, suggests the disc had been sourced from an illicitly obtained master. Picture quality is very much as with *Empire* and this must be the final blow for *Star Wars* fans who have to reconcile themselves with fact that all three disc masters can now be seen to be flawed. One can sympathise with the desire to avoid the ravages of the counterfeiters - but there must be better ways than this of doing it. Does anybody ever get to tell LUCAS-FILM how bad their masters look by the time they are converted to PAL? They surely can't mean them to look this way. The most damning criticism came from a dealer "How can I sell the players if the discs come out looking like this?"

Those less concerned about picture quality will at least get some satisfaction from the crisp soundtrack, sourced from a magnetic master, and brimming with detail - the sync is a bit out though it must be said.

## NABUCCO

ARTS INT 04 AI 027 £23.99  
CLV-Ch COLOUR STEREO  
1981 130mins (3 sides)

**Featuring:** Renato Bruson, Ghena Dimitrova, Dimitar Petkov, Bruna Baglioni, Ottavio Garaventa

**Conductor:** Maurizio Arena

From the vast stage of the Arena di Verona, Italy, ARTS INTERNATIONAL brings us a performance of *Nabucco*, recorded on 1st August 1981. Whilst it may lack the precision of a studio recording, it nevertheless has that added electricity generated between audience and artiste which gives live performances their extra vitality.



This opera was Verdi's earliest international success, originally staged at La Scala, Milan in March 1842, just 2½ years after his first staged work.

The plot centres around King Nebuchadnezzar (Nabucco) and his two fictitious daughters, Abigaille and Fenena. Both girls are in love with Ismaele, nephew of the King of Jerusalem. Add to this love interest various warring factions and some Old Testament religious thunderbolts and you have the stuff that opera is made of.

The large chorus plays an important part in the opera and has the pleasure of singing the most identifiable piece,



Va, *Pensiero* (Speed Your Journey), so popular with choral groups. The rest of the music will be unfamiliar to most, although some glorious melodies are in evidence - many of which are not unlike Verdi's later, better-known work.

Renato Bruson gives a splendid portrayal of Nabucco and it's easy to hear how his reputation has advanced him from strength to strength over the years. Nabucco's supposed daughter, Abigail, is sung with her usual vocal commitment by Ghena Dimitrova who never turns a hair at the taxing testitura. Another strong member of the cast is Dimiter Petkov as Zaccaria, the high priest - his sonorous bass being a joy to hear. The rest of the cast give creditable performances.

The fight scenes are well choreographed, whilst the rest of the production is fairly static and very often the chorus stands in serried ranks, rather like a Greek chorus, with the principals giving their all, down stage-centre in true traditional Italian fashion. My only reservation concerning the production is the costume and headwear design which would be more at home in a sci-fi film, and seems to hinder rather than help the cast. Other than that, it's a disc I could happily recommend. (There are currently only six of Verdi's operas available on LV and I'm aware of at least another seven of the remaining twenty being available on tape.)

[ KEITH ARNOLD ]

**The Disc:** There are a few instances in the recording where the camera tubes have gone microphonic during some loud passages, causing a few ripples in the picture. Other than that minor disturbance the picture is crisp and detailed, and the well-balanced stereo sound of good range too. The review copy was a German pressing - quite clean in this instance, but common to some others of that origin, had a faint level of low-level spitting on the audio. Another German characteristic is the habit of giving the purchaser two side threes on the second disc! - there is no blank side.

## THE HOWLING

EMBASSY ELV 1615 £11.99  
CLV COLOUR MONO  
1980 87mins Rated X

**Stars:** Dee Wallace, Patrick Macnee, Dennis Dugan, Christopher Stone, Belinda Balaski, Kevin McCarthy, John Carradine, Slim Pickens, Elisabeth Brooks  
**Director:** Joe Dante



Joe Dante, now famous for *Gremlins* and whose previous efforts also include the excellent *Piranha*, directs all his films in a distinct, witty and clever style - *The Howling* being no exception.

There are enough in-jokes and subtleties to keep any film-buff happy.

The film is in a modern-day setting, but with all the references to the old UNIVERSAL werewolf evident - silver bullets and all. Nine of the characters are named after directors of werewolf films - Patrick Macnee as Dr. George Waggoner (*The Wolfman*), John Carradine as Erle Kenton (*House Of Frankenstein*), Slim Pickens as Sam Newfield (*Mad Monster*) etc.

The story: Karen White (Dee Wallace) is a TV news reporter on the trail of mass-murderer, Eddie The Mangler. He's agreed to a meeting with her and has left a trail of ironic Smiley stickers for her to follow. They do meet up but Eddie is killed by the police right in front of her and the continuing haunting memory of it leads her to seek recuperative refuge in Dr. Waggoner's country retreat - The Colony - yet in the supposed tranquility things start to hot up.

*The Howling* is not a film that will insult your intelligence and if you are quick off the mark you'll notice such as the book reference to Little Red Riding Hood and the TV showing clips from UNIVERSAL's *The Wolfman* and the 1935 Ub Iwerks cartoon *The Big Bad Wolf*. Then there's the book on the desk with the title *Howl*, and at one point you get to see Slim Pickens eating from a tin labelled *Wolf*!

Although only a mono film, the soundtrack is both atmospheric and effective. Composer Pino Donaggio did *Piranha* too and also has the likes of *Don't Look Now*, *Carrie*, *Dressed To Kill*, and *Blowout* to his credit. The score also bears the stamp of wit which runs through the film with titles such as *Animal Magnetism*, *Wolf At The Door*, *Wolfing Down Terry*, *Fur From The Madding Crowd* etc. They have only used an optical track in the transfer but it is clear and undistorted. The picture is maybe not as sharp as one would like but watchable nonetheless.

The effects are credited to Rob Bottin (whose work can also be seen in *The Thing*) and the film is reputed to be the first to use his man-to-wolf transformations - in my opinion they're superior to those in *American Werewolf In London*.

Brief appearances by Roger Corman, Forest J. Ackerman, and the man who wrote the screenplay, John Sayles, give the finishing touch to a film that a certain Mr. Spielberg placed among his top five favourites, and could well have had something to do with his choice of director for *Gremlins*.

So, draw the curtains, turn out the lights and enjoy....

[ GRAEME IRESON ]

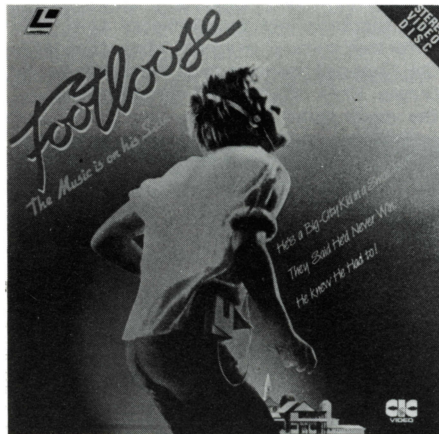
## FOOTLOOSE

CIC LVG 2098 £19.99  
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP  
1984 100mins Rated PG

**Stars:** Kevin Bacon, Lori Singer, Dianne Wiest, John Lithgow  
**Director:** Herbert Ross

*Footloose* is fun. It's basically a teen-movie but with more than average intelligence for the genre behind it. Forced to move from Chicago to live with relatives in the small mid-Western town of Bomont as a result of a family breakup, teenager Ren McCormack (Kevin Bacon) and his mother Ethel (Frances Lee McCain) find themselves in a whole new world. It's a shock -

particularly to dance-fanatic Ren - to discover that a mixture of fundamental religion and personal tragedy has enabled the autocratic town council led by the local minister, the Rev. Shaw Moore - brilliantly played by John Lithgow (he was the only saving grace in *Santa Claus*) - to ban dancing, popular music, "evil" books like *Slaughterhouse 5* and virtually everything else dear to Ren's heart and that he took for granted in the



big city. The 'new kid in town', having started out with every intention of making the best of a bad job and of making a new beginning, finds himself thwarted from the start. To the girls he's an eyeful, to the boys an eyesore - a threat. His relationship with the appropriately named Ariel (Lori Singer) is guaranteed to start things happening - not only is she the Rev. Shaw's daughter, but she's also given her bullying boyfriend, Chuck the elbow in favour of Ren. After a deal of frustration, Ren decides he's swallowed enough and it's time to take a stand.

The film is well put together, has some great one-liners and some good dance sequences. The soundtrack includes several hit singles from the likes of Shalamar, Kenny Loggins, and Deniece Williams. I bought the disc partly on impulse after hearing the music in a shop. I'm glad that I did.

[ ALAN BELL ]

**The Disc:** Common to several of the CIC titles from the Autumn '85 list the underlying picture quality is promising, being sharp and filmy looking, but it shows diminished colour and some unnecessary extra contrast that count against it. The soundtrack is optically sourced and in fairly restrained stereo, but it's there. Some wear to the print caused a bit of soundtrack noise in places.

## A PASSAGE TO INDIA

THORN EMI TLP 90 3235 1 £24.99  
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP  
1984 157mins (3 sides) Rated PG

**Stars:** Peggy Ashcroft, Judy Davis, Alec Guinness, James Fox, Nigel Havers, Victor Banerjee  
**Director:** David Lean  
**Music:** Maurice Jarre

And worth every penny! This is where LV really comes into its own. A disc to savour - at the end of two hours and forty minutes one wants to go straight back to the beginning and watch it all over again. Despite the facile blurb forming an integral part of the (yet again) appalling artwork on the sleeve, here we have an endlessly watchable disc. From the almost period opening



scene of massed and rain-sozzled umbrellas to the jaunty end-title music, Mr Lean has produced, after 12 years in the cinematic wilderness, a film of mastered mystery with a definite literary depth.

Reflecting the discomfort of much of the 'Oh so English' middle-class civil servants thrown into an Empire-dominated culture that they will not (or cannot) understand, the film is at times embarrassing to watch. This is intentional - and beautifully achieved. The romance and mysticism of this 'inferior' culture (formed when that of the Imperial masters was floundering to create fire) infects and invades even the most stolid Britisher.



For those foreigners whose heart is most at home on the 08.15 from Colchester to Liverpool Street the clash of cultures is supreme, if life-alteringly disturbing. If you want landscapes and images of India through loving Panavision eyes, it is here. If you want in-depth character analysis and a summation of the human condition, it is here. If you like ambiguity, mystery and mysticism, it is here. The last opening credit - Directed and Edited by David Lean - is justifiably proud. This is the stuff of British cinema.

[ ALAN BELL ]

**The Disc:** Have no fear of the prospect of the usual (can we say that already?) THORN EMI zoom-in close-ups. The wide screen frame is respectfully cropped only at the edges. While not biting sharp it is reasonably defined though an element of video noise hampers that "just like watching a film" feeling. However, it's certainly good enough (it looks a little pale - that can be corrected) and the sound seemingly much too good for an optical track - there is only the slightest lack of sparkle to suggest it may be so. The stereo is excellent.

## LIANNA

EMBASSY ELV 1359 £13.99  
CLV COLOUR MONO  
1983 106mins

**Stars:** Linda Griffiths, Jane Halloran  
**Written & Directed by:** John Sayles

*Lianna* is a little gem of a film, one that I would probably have missed if it hadn't got out on disc. As much as anything, it's a film about relationships: role-playing, honesty, deceit, the loneliness and resourcefulness of the individual. Lianna and Dick are married - they're in their middle-thirties and have two young children. Dick is a clever and a good teacher at the local university where he's a film lecturer. He's frustrated by the poor quality of his students and by his realisation

that the quality and perception of his work are not necessarily the prime attributes required when it comes to him being considered for promotion to department head. Bringing the frustration home he irascibly and half-heartedly attempts to stifle his wife's existence. Lianna isn't his intellectual equal, but she's intelligent and sensitive in her own way.

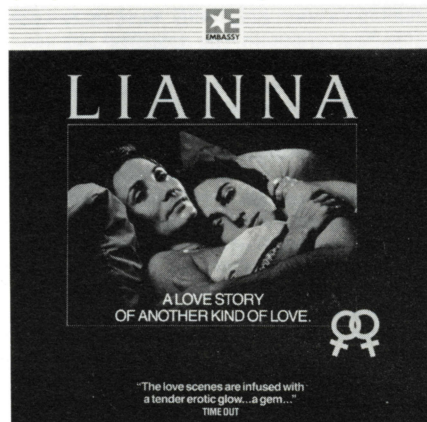
"Just because you can argue better doesn't mean you're right" she tells him. She wants to do more than just keep house and mind the kids. She's attending night classes in child psychology - something that Dick isn't keen on - and is offered some research work by the class-teacher, Ruth, for her forthcoming book. When Lianna visits to discuss the work she realises that she is physically attracted to Ruth. That Ruth and herself are gay.

She admits her affair to Dick and he is patronising rather than angry - "Was it the man of your dreams?"

"It wasn't a man".

He explodes - a whole new double-standard is raised - at least his infidelity has been heterosexual. His wife sleeping with another woman is a double blow to his ego. He throws her out.

The lover is sympathetic - "But I wasn't really ready for this" and can't take her in. Small-town gossip would threaten her job. Lianna's closest female friend is speechless and male friends, ignorant of her homosexuality, become 'divorce vultures'. Her son calls her a dyke. She rents an apartment - "I don't want no men up here" the spinsterish landlady proscribes with unwitting humour. Lianna starts to come to terms with her newly discovered self, her changed life, and the process of rebuilding.



In the light of his previous movies this is a surprising film from John Sayles. Maybe this is the one he always wanted to make. The script is witty, sensitive and incisively intelligent at times. The acting is good, from the principals and supporting cast. The love scenes are unsensational and the camera never intrusive - the photography straightforward. A good, solid honest piece of film-making. [ ALAN BELL ]

**The Disc:** If the subject matter doesn't suggest big-time Hollywood budgets you'd probably understand the apparent 16mm-blown-up-to-35mm origination. It's a bit documentary-looking but adequately defined, if lacking the sparkle and tonality of the usual big feature. To its detriment, there is a modest level of spots on the film - the disc looks relatively blemish free. The sound, for a dialogue-type film, is better than you might expect and of more than sufficient clarity.

## PRIVATE LESSONS

CIC LVG 1037 (Deleted) £11.99  
CLV COLOUR MONO  
1982 83mins

**Stars:** Sylvia Kristel, Eric Brown, Howard Hesseman

**Director:** Alan Myerson

Unfortunately they didn't keep this movie private! The fact it is now one of the increasing number of 'unobtainable' discs may have increased its kudos for some collectors, but don't fret and don't pay over the odds - it isn't worth it.



It's an insubstantial teen sex comedy that cannot make up its mind as to its potential audience: adolescent, adult, nudge nudge PG... The thin plot revolves around the unattractive, rich adolescent Philly Fillmore - Eric Brown plays this well enough to bring out the full-blooded embarrassment that it is - and his seduction by the housemaid, Miss Mallow, played by the sublimely inept Sylvia Kristel. The situation, given the characters as depicted, is totally unbelievable and unentertaining. Almost as an afterthought, the motivation for Miss Mallow's behaviour is revealed about two-thirds of the way into the film.

She is an illegally working alien being blackmailed by the chauffeur, Lester (Howard Hesseman) into assisting him to blackmail Philly into handing over \$10,000 of his father's money. "Is all this effort and intrigue worth \$10,000?" one hears oneself asking as the film moves rapidly to a close. Having frightened the boxer-shorts off her young lover by feigning death at the moment of orgasm - Miss Mallow relents; guilt and remorse overwhelming her fear of the U.S. Immigration Office. With the help of tennis instructor Jack Travis (Ed Begley Jr) masquerading as a tough cop - the only good performance in the entire film - they turn the tables on Lester.... Father returns from business trip, Lester remains as chauffeur, Miss Mallow departs (long-shot, muted sadness), Philly returns to school and asks his teacher out on a date. Credits roll, so do eyes. A worthy deletion. [ ALAN BELL ]

**The Disc:** So, you still want to know! Well, in spite of being a little softly defined and a bit gaudily coloured it's quite a watchable picture, if a little on the lo-fi side. The optical soundtrack is clear and undistorted and even the pressing is reasonably clean. If you do have the disc and are wondering why certain scenes from the film are listed on the sleeve - it was the habit of MCA, the originating US label, even to chapter non-musical discs at one time. Came the UK release and CIC didn't bother.



## THE UNDEFEATED

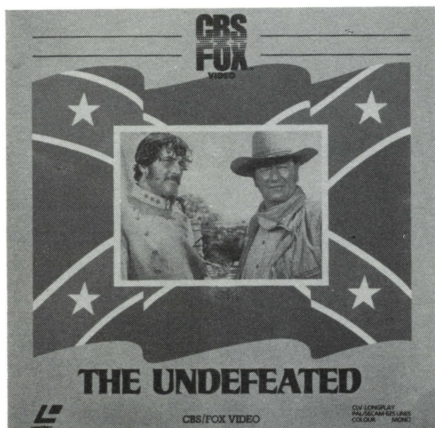
CBS/FOX 1056-70 £13.99  
CLV COLOUR MONO  
1969 113mins

**Starring:** John Wayne, Rock Hudson, Tony Aguilar, Roman Gabriel, Marian McCargo, Lee Merriwether, Merlin Olsen, Melissa Newman, Bruce Cabot, Ben Johnson

**Director:** Andrew V. McLaglen

The title offers no obvious clue as to the subject matter of the film, but when you see the name of John Wayne you think "Ah, a Western!". And so it is.

Amidst a sea of suspect Southern accents, Rock Hudson makes a further dubious contribution, but nonetheless spiritedly conveys the anger of the home-from-the-wars landowner unwilling to submit to Yankee oppression. With the big house set to flames, the Colonel musters his remaining followers to seek refuge 2000 miles away in Mexico where there is hope for the struggle to continue. John Wayne's role is that of the ex-Yankee soldier seeking a return to civilian life - catching wild horses to sell to the Army. The former adversaries unexpectedly cross paths and find that they each have something to gain by settling their former hostilities.



In many ways, *The Undeclared* is a movie made a decade or so past its time, managing to convey a certain stylish charm that is well able to engage the casual viewer for an hour or two. This may not be the West as it really was - but then had John Wayne been there at the time, it probably would have been.

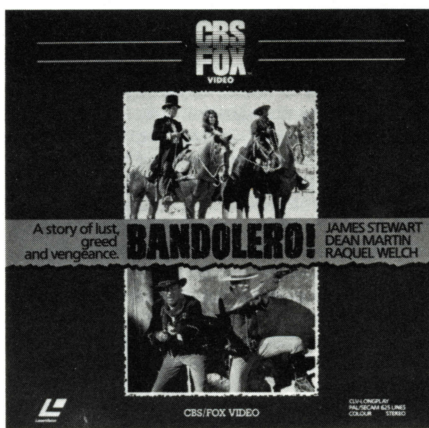
Some mention should be made of the music - composed and conducted by Hugo Montenegro - that verges on being a little too modern in its arrangement on a first hearing but soon reveals itself to be refreshingly complementary. **Disc Quality:** For an older transfer from a noticeably widescreen film the scanning is passable but a green cast spoils what's left. It can be alleviated somewhat by a reduction in the colour intensity on your TV but is too strong to be removed completely. The optical soundtrack is listenable but a bit hissy and prone to some spitting where parts of the film print have become dirty. In terms of presentation the disc is wanting.

## BANDOLERO

CBS/FOX 1203-70 £13.99  
CLV COLOUR STEREO  
1968 102mins

**Starring:** James Stewart, Dean Martin, Raquel Welch, George Kennedy, Andrew

*Prine, Will Geer, Clint Ritchie*  
**Director:** Andrew McLaglen



The '60s were changing times for the Western. *Bandolero!* exhibits a plot of little consequence and relies rather too heavily on its line-up of stars to create appeal. Luckily, there's James Stewart, who might be considered a bit too old to be playing parts like this, but manages the role with some dignity - looking as much at home in his crumpled denims as a man half his age; and Dean Martin, who has reputation for cruising uncommittedly through his more recent work, but engages the viewer sufficiently to suggest the semblance of a brotherly bond with Stewart.

Supposedly the two brothers have drifted apart in recent years and Stewart, the goodie, saves Martin's neck at the beginning of the movie by impersonating the hangman come to dispatch him and his gang of would-be bank robbers to the next world. Their fleeing to safety in Mexico occupies the major part of the screen time - but it's all of little real consequence for any other than real fans. Raquel Welch, the other main star on the credits, contributes little to the proceedings - beyond demonstrating a rather poor Spanish accent and the ability to maintain an immaculately coiffured hairdo through several days hard riding in the baking desert.

**Disc quality:** The wishy-washy image quality is probably due both to being sourced from an NTSC conversion and the original transfer's heavy cropping of the widescreen frame, often resulting in the picture being poorly defined. Having read two write-ups on the film that made reference to its "bloodiness", one can only surmise that some of this extreme cropping has been used to shift the more lurid details past the edge of the screen. You see a few knives being wielded and hear the right sound-effects, but the camera appears to be wandering off to take a look at some other aspect of the scenery. Consider this well below standard. The sound is optically sourced and would have been more than satisfactory were it not for a persistent low frequency hum that distracts at various times. Surprisingly, it is in very distinct stereo (as the sleeve correctly states), but the positioning is the wrong way round. Readers fortunate to have a reverse stereo position on their amps can therefore derive some smug enjoyment from visualising the rest of us resorting to less refined remedial measures in scrabbling around in the cable chaos behind our players. To add insult to injury, the pressing of the review copy was more than a little spotty and this did show up a bit on the night scenes.

## 100 RIFLES

CBS/FOX 1060-70 £13.99  
CLV COLOUR MONO  
1969 105mins

**Starring:** Jim Brown, Raquel Welch, Burt Reynolds, Fernando Lamas, Dan O'Herlihy, Hans Gudegast

**Director:** Tom Gries

As well as saving on a return bus fare by keeping Raquel in Mexico, someone must have also figured out that a bad Spanish accent could be easily mistaken for a passable Indian one, as long as the wind was blowing in the right direction. She plays the leader of a group of Yaqui Indians fighting off some oppressive Mexican government troops trying to defend the establishment of the railway at the turn of the century.

The black former US sports star, Jim Brown, provides the romantic involvement for Raquel and one easily forgets that such a piece of casting probably gave the film a bit of extra notoriety at the time. But while these love scenes are predictably tame, Raquel is untypically revealing in a shower scene under a railway water tower (well, as revealing as you can be with your shirt on) when acting as a decoy for the train



ambush. The train registers as one of the film's stronger features, and there is concern over any damage it may have incurred when it careers off the tracks and demolishes half a street in the finale. More so than any concern over the fate of the rest of the characters. **Disc quality:** While crisply defined, the transfer is contrasty to the point of eyestrain, and the colour image is also correspondingly degraded. Most of the action takes place in strong sunlight and featureless black shadows constantly occupy the screen. The excess contrast is beyond what you could pull back by the use of your TV controls - the information is just not there in the transfer to be recovered. The optical sound is bright and listenable though it does go into mild overload during volume peaks. The pressing of the review copy was very clean.

## THE CULPEPPER CATTLE COMPANY

CBS/FOX 1189-70 £13.99  
CLV COLOUR MONO  
1972 88mins

**Starring:** Gary Grimes, Billy 'Green' Bush, Luke Askew, Bo Hopkins, Geoffrey Lewis, John McLiam, Raymond Guth, Matt Clark, Wayne Sutherland, Anthony James

**Director:** Dick Richards

In 1972 *The Culpepper Cattle Company* showed a different view of the West. There are no big stars here in the



accepted sense, but it is a memorable cast nonetheless. No less outstanding is the refreshing realism conveyed in this dedicated production that shows life on the trail seen through the eyes of the eager teenage cowboy whose romantically conceived notions are rapidly dispelled by harsh everyday practicality.

As much as the film merits further comment and recommendation the reverse is true of the appalling quality of the transfer that only goes to make this an avoidable purchase. Having seen



the film in the cinema in 1973 (by chance as it happens - as a support feature) I can only despair at what has happened to the evocative photography and subtle lighting that made such an impression then and had lingered in the further recesses of the memory till brought up sharp on viewing this disc. The transfer isn't even mildly sharp - fuzzy would be more apt. Being too embarrassed to sell this on to someone else, I'll gladly put it up for a competition prize for anyone who can guess the name of the main feature those thirteen years ago. [CLUE: It was a Russ Meyer production, with *Munster* connections.] The 'lucky' winner can at least get some fun out of the back sleeve still that includes a couple of modern vehicles creeping in to the edge of what is supposed to be an authentic 1860s scene.

## RED SUN

SPECTRUM 791 515 1 £11.99  
CLV COLOUR MONO  
1971 109mins

**Starring:** Charles Bronson, Ursula Andress, Toshiro Mifune, Alain Delon, Capucine  
**Director:** Terence Young

By now, you may have figured out that we have been wandering off on a bit of a Western feature. This last disc takes us on to the Euro/Spaghetti era - taken a stage further



in this instance by hanging the plot around the retrieval of a Samurai sword, a gift to the US President, stolen en route and the reason that Charles Bronson, the double-crossed bandit, and Toshiro Mifune, the Samurai warrior commanded to recover it, are drawn together in an unlikely alliance. The relationship between the two men is what sets the film apart and, once the train robbery is out the way, its development occupies most of side one. The Samurai comes in for a certain level of ridicule ("a man dressed in women's clothes") but, in practice, he proves more than a match for the robber's tricks.

Bronson's casual style conceals the fact that he's a far better actor than often given credit, and this contrasts well with that of the Japanese star who displays a range of facial expressions sufficient to enable you to follow the plot even if you should have to turn the sound down in order to answer the phone. Of course, when it comes to the action, both men show their stuff.

In spite of a few weak interludes, the film's frivolous mood is not achieved at the expense of some underlying substance. It helps that there are few occasions where non-English speaking actors are used and so the production does not suffer the usual dubbing handicap. The film closes with a simple visual device that amply demonstrates the ability of the photographic image to express any number of spoken words.

**Disc Quality:** Of the five titles, this is the only one that exhibits a level of resolution sufficient to justify pressing it on to a disc - being a crisp PAL transfer from what appears to be a cinema contrast print. It may be a touch contrasty for video use but there is at least plenty of usable detail. To its detriment, the print does show a level of dirt spots on the picture that suggest it has seen the inside of a few Gaumonts too many. (The marks are on the print - the pressing of the disc is quite clean.) You tend to notice a bit of hiss in the optical soundtrack early on, but its significance diminishes as the movie progresses.

## LA FILLE MAL GARDEE

ARTS INT 04 AI 11 £19.99  
CLV-Ch COLOUR STEREO  
1981 97mins

**Featuring:** Lesley Collier, Michael Coleman

**Conductor:** John Lanchberry

**Music:** Ferdinand Herold, arranged by John Lanchberry

**Choreography:** Frederick Ashton

From a performance by the Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, on 7th January 1981

Originally in two acts with two scenes in Act 1, this production now has three acts with two scenes in Act 1 - now made Acts 1 & 2. The original Act 2 now becomes Act 3.

*La Fille Mal Gardee* was first produced by Jean Dauberval in Bordeaux in 1789. It was a complete break with the formal ballet conventions of the time and was based on natural rustic scenes instead. Herold wrote the music in 1828 so the music for the Dauberval production was obviously not his. In fact, the ballet has been given with various music and choreographies all over Europe, particularly in Russia. John Lanchberry worked with Frederick

Ashton to construct the ballet using an original score of Herold's which had been discovered by the ballet historian, Ivor Guest.

The ballet opens in the yard of a prosperous French farm owned by Widow Simone. Lise, her only daughter, is in love with Colas, a young farmer, but Simone wishes her to marry Alain, the simple son of Thomas, a wealthy vineyard owner. Colas and Lise, therefore, have to meet secretly but Simone is deeply suspicious and eventually, for security, locks Lise in her bedroom, not knowing that Colas has already hidden himself there. A marriage contract is signed between Simone and Thomas, and as they drink to celebrate the deal, simple Alain is given the bedroom key in order to claim his bride. He unlocks the door to reveal Colas and Lise locked in the bedroom together. Pandemonium breaks out. The happy pair beg Simone's forgiveness and she eventually consents amid general rejoicing.



Costumes are based on rustic French 18th century dress and, along with the sets and designs (also designed by Osbert Lancaster) capture the warmth of rural life well. The ballet is a combination of classical and comedy dancing which gives a pantomime feel to the whole show. Widow Simone (Brian Shaw) is the panto dame, the ever-watchful chaperone. The usual panto costume with outsize bonnet, voluminous dress and shawl, baggy bloomers and high-heel boots is all there. Brian Shaw plays the part to the full but with occasional stumbles. The famous clog dance does not quite come off for this reason. Lesley Collier, as Lise, shows us that she can act as well as dance. She projects the warmth and frustration of the character and dances with good timing, speed and control. Michael Coleman (Colas) does not seem quite as vigorous and determined as perhaps a young farmer should be. He dances competently though, but seems to lack the necessary presence and vigour that a hot-blooded lad should have.

Leslie Edwards as Thomas plays the pompous, wealthy old buffer of a vineyard owner labouring under the dual load of having great wealth and a dolt of a son. His contemptuous impatience with him is more than justified. Alain (Gary Grant), the reluctant bridegroom, appears only to want to caper about with his red umbrella. This is a difficult part to dance as buffoonery is not enough. Alain is a rather pathetic figure and Gary Grant manages to display both the comic and pathetic sides of the character.

There are a number of dances in the ballet which have been inspired by



English folk dancing. The maypole dance, stick dance and general dances for the corps de ballet show this influence. The general standard of dancing by the Company is high and the sets support the action well.

The ballet was directed for TV and video by John Vernon and is quite successful, with only the occasional shot changes missing the action. The production is generally well done; however, one gets the impression that certain members of the cast are either tired or down-pacing themselves. The few shots of the audience show a number of children, so this may have been a matinee performance with an evening performance to follow. Other viewers may not get this impression but it was considered worth mentioning.

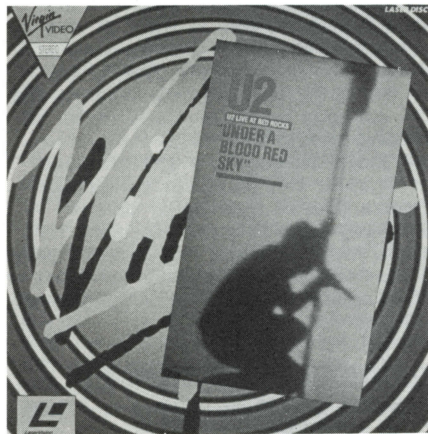
The well-lit stage results in a crisp and detailed image on the disc. Picture quality is commendable. The sound is realistic and clear. Considering this, the ballet can be recommended and it is certainly one of the easiest plots to follow and is very colourful with catchy tunes. It would be a good introduction to ballet.

[ TONY WELLS ]

## U2 - LIVE AT RED ROCKS

VIRGIN VVD 045 £14.99  
CLV COLOUR STEREO  
1983 55mins

*Side One: Surrender/Seconds/Sunday, Bloody Sunday/October/New Year's Day/I Threw A Brick/A Day Without Me/Gloria/Party Girl/11 O'clock Tick Tock/I Will Follow/40*



That silhouetted figure set against what appears to be an orange sunset - and the very place name, Red Rocks, Colorado - conjure up images of an arid hostile desert that, in reality, turns out to be a cold, rain-swept open-air amphitheatre. U2 must have felt at home.

The camera work is all hand-held stuff and fairly pacey. You imagine the weather conditions gave the crew a hard time - there are lots of highlight trails burnt into the camera tubes. The cold weather vaporises every breath as it spurts into the night air - vocalist Bono emits huge white clouds with every energetic movement sufficient to make you think he's concealing a smoke machine about his person.

The sound comes over well - being a good compromise between fidelity and an authentic live sound. After 30 minutes the group takes a bow and departs the stage - the next 25 minutes is an encore. The listed run time is 61 minutes, so a song has presumably gone missing in order to fit the programme on to one side of the disc.

Given the documentary style of the recording, the picture quality is quite acceptable - the origination on NTSC is good, as is the conversion - and the sound is hi-fi, yet realistic. The review copy of the disc suffered from a distracting level of fine spots that are hard to accept given the period of clean pressings encountered in the mid-1985 period.

## KEVIN ROWLAND & DEXYS MIDNIGHT RUNNERS - THE BRIDGE

POLYGRAM 790 586 1 £9.99  
CLV-Ch COLOUR STEREO  
1983 52mins

*Side One: Old/All In All/Let's Make This Precious/Until I Believe In My Soul/Jackie Wilson Said/Respect/Come on Eileen/Kevin Rowland's Band/The Celtic Soul Brothers*

*Filmed at the Shaftesbury Theatre on 10th October 1982*



It took some encouragement to persevere with this. The scruff-bag image the group portrays presages a poorly handled stage performance of indifferent musical ability. The grainy 16mm production values virtually seal its fate as soon as the disc starts to play. The sound is clear but not terribly dynamic and lacks harmony with the visual image. The audience response sounds artificial.

But persistence reveals a level of musical integrity and commitment by the 11-piece group that conflicts with what the eye believes to be the very incarnation of the Bash Street Kids. Even so, while they really do play OK and the disc looks about as good as the source material will allow, it might still not be a title to recommend to the casual buyer looking for a music disc - even in these days of scarcity.

## SILKWOOD

RANK VIDEO D0124 £13.99  
CLV COLOUR MONO  
1983 128mins (3 sides) Rated 15

*Starring: Meryl Streep, Kurt Russell, Cher*

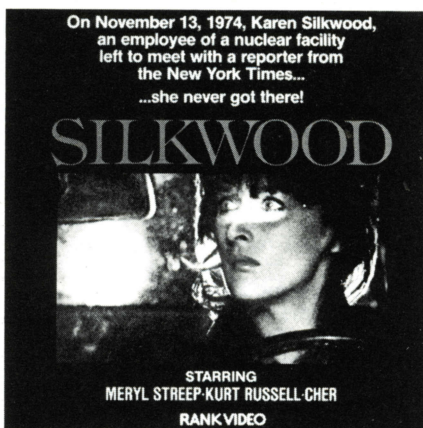
*Director: Mike Nichols*

Karen Silkwood (Meryl Streep) works as a technician on the production line of a nuclear fuel-rod manufacturer, Kerr McGhee, in the wilds of Oklahoma. She and her fellow employees are grateful for the jobs that the company has brought to the area. They prefer to enjoy their salaries rather than dwell on the possibility of plutonium contamination. The company likes things this way - production levels and profit being the prime corporate concern. When

an immediate colleague receives an accidental dose of radiation Karen's doubts are first raised. Is the company really concerned about fulfilling its statutory obligations as regards to the protection of its staff? The crunch comes when she is transferred to the metallurgy department, where the completed fuel-rods are inspected prior to shipment to the power-stations, and discovers that the X-rays are being retouched to disguise evidence of faults in their manufacture. The implications are awesome and it galvanises her into action.

Having managed to win a plant vote to keep it unionised, Karen flies to Washington to meet with the national executive and is exhorted to produce documentation to back her allegations - something that the New York Times could use. Having obtained it she sets off to meet the Times reporter. Her car goes off the road and she is killed. No documents are found in the wreck.

In reality there seems to be no hard evidence to prove Karen Silkwood was murdered in a cover-up - either by the company or her fellow-workers worried about lay-offs. Or by the collusion of both parties. The film is motivated by the "no smoke without fire" maxim, but of necessity must deal with the smoke and only intimate at the speculative sources of the fire. Given the low-key and ultimately anti-climactic nature of the story, the film builds up a convincing picture of Karen and her life. Kurt Russell and Cher give good performances - as boyfriend Drew and house-mate and friend Dolly.



The supporting roles are strongly played and the whole tightly directed by Mike (Graduate, Carnal Knowledge) Nichols. On first viewing I wondered if the disc would bear repeating, second time round I am sure that it does. Given the present debate over the antics of BNFL at Sellafield/Windscale - and maybe elsewhere by the time you get to read this - it also has strong topical relevance. At the price I think it is good value (they actually fill the inner part of the double sleeve with a painting of the car crash), but having said that, it is a very low-key film based on thin material - a feature particularly apparent in the closing sequence - and may not therefore appeal to everyone. [ ALAN BELL ]

*Disc Quality:* The transfer is in the usual RANK style though, to its detriment, the contrast has been allowed to get a little out of hand. The optical soundtrack is adequate but has the odd moment where the dialogue sounds strangely clipped.



## THE HIGHEST HONOUR

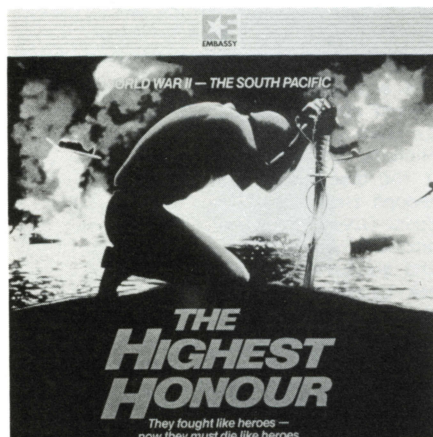
EMBASSY ELV 6104 £13.99  
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP  
1983 105mins

**Starring:** John Howard, Stuart Wilson,  
Michael Aitkens, Atsuo Nakamura  
**Director:** Peter Maxwell

There is a lot to be said for watching this in b&w as, even though it is a recent Australian production, it manifests many of the characteristics of those monochrome '50s British pix that portrayed heroic escapades of WWII unclouded by any of the self-doubt expressed in war movies of more recent origin. You knew where you were in those days.

*The Highest Honour* deals with two missions by Z Special Force of the Australian Army - a mixed service and nationality commando unit whose job it was to carry out undercover missions in enemy territory. In the first, Operation Jaywick, a small group sets off from the Australian mainland in a captured Malay fishing smack on an 11,000 mile round to occupied Singapore to sabotage as much of the Japanese fleet as is possible. This mission, like the other based on a true story, is a reasonable success, but it is Operation Rimau that occupies the majority of the screen time - and here things don't quite work out as originally planned.

Z Special Force have returned to Singapore to eliminate more Japanese shipping - this time with the aid of the then-secret SBs (one-man subs), but are discovered before they have even begun and are forced to abort the mission and make a run for it. They're finally captured and submitted to the pressures of the Japanese interrogators, and it is the questions of loyalty and comradeship raised that are the main theme of the film rather than it being an overall action-piece. Anyone expecting to see generous dollops of military hardware and the accompanying battle sequences is likely to be disappointed. On the other hand, there is something missing on the personal drama level that similarly fails to lift the production to the required level of intensity sufficient to compensate. It may be that the time for such filmic endeavours has passed.



**Disc quality:** It's a fairly crisp PAL transfer with somewhat diminished colour giving a rather washed-out dirty appearance along with a slightly greenish cast to the picture. Some of the darker scenes show a bit of noise. The sound is from an optical track that is marginally hissy and has varying amounts of spitting throughout, but is listenable and has no distortion. The stereo is

apparent but not particularly impressive (there seems to be a distinct bias towards the left channel - some correction with the balance control improves matters). Pressing quality was acceptable on the review copy, but a little spotty in the darker scenes.

## THE LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

VIDEO GARANT VLP2179E (Holland)  
CLV B & W MONO fls-69  
1960 108mins (Dutch subtitled)

**Starring:** Jack Hawkins, Nigel Patrick,  
Roger Livesy, Richard Attenborough  
**Director:** Basil Dearden

If you do want a disc with the authentic '50s feel - and that has the ultimate seal of approval, given the presence of Jack Hawkins, you have to go to Holland for *The League of Gentlemen*. Alternatively you could just send off for a copy. The b&w is for real here and the excellent contemporary cast give this comedy/thriller an enduring appeal. Hawkins has an 'easy' role as the disgruntled retired Army Colonel who recruits a bunch of variously cashiered and retired fellow officers in order to carry out a million pound



bank raid (and a million pounds was, well... a million pounds in those days!) None of them are *real* criminals, of course, but the Colonel figures that such a collection of professionals, with a bit of a grudge against the system, might just have the right motivation and skill to pull off the unimaginable.

The climactic raid no longer has the impact it did at the time, and one notices flaws in its execution. The pace of the film occurs in the early stages, where the motley crew is being assembled, and sustains well up to the point of the weapons raid on the Army camp - a still effectively gripping interlude that manages to combine some hilariously funny swipes at Army cooking during the bogus camp inspection (David Lodge and Norman Rossington cropping up here, as well as a wonderfully nerdy recruit, played by Brian Murray, who blabbers on about "muckin' the food about, like"). Great!

While Oliver Reed appears briefly, fortunately so, as a grossly over-the-top effeminate dancer (being both younger and considerably thinner than we now know him), the then reasonably taboo subject of homosexuality is tentatively dealt with in the part played by Kieron Moore - as Captain Stevens. He's the gym proprietor with gambling debts, and you know there's something 'not quite right' about him because he wears a *white* roll-neck pullover. And indeed, the round the table meeting of the would-be criminals reveals the

reason he fell from Her Majesty's Service. When the group of men go off to stay in the Colonel's house in preparation for the heist, Richard Attenborough (as Lexy, the shady backstreet radio repair man with a sideline in 'fixing' one-arm bandits) has to share a room with the disgraced Captain. As they enter, Stevens casually comments "Like being back at school, eh?". Lexy, reading more into it than intended, promptly darts back "I certainly hope *not*!" Attenborough also has another great moment at the end of the initial group meeting where the true upper-crust Major, Nigel Patrick, elegantly swipes an entire tumbler-full of cigarettes in order to refill his case. As the camera slowly pans him out of shot you see Lexy's look of stunned disbelief at the man's sheer unexpected effrontery. Had he got to the glass first he'd at least have left a couple behind!

It is moments such as this that make the film so appealing. Even looking past the intended focus of the action and inspecting background details reveals something new of interest on subsequent viewings - and you can attribute this as much to the excellent quality of the print as to the resolution afforded by the LV disc given something to work with. It is this perception of detail that makes the crucial difference between the disc and lesser carrier mediums. The print really is in good condition and offers up a nice bright image without sacrificing detail at either end of the grey scale. Bar a modest level of hum earlier on, the sound is about as good as one would expect from an optical track of this vintage. The Dutch sub-titles are just white text superimposed directly on to the screen and are bearable, but the UK collector would obviously rather do without such blemishes to the picture. We should be getting a steady supply of films of this period of the British cinema (and of this quality level) without having to scour the globe for them. Final comment - the sleeve states a run time of 116 minutes. There are no obvious cuts but the disc actually runs 108 minutes.

## THE OTHER SIDE OF MIDNIGHT

CBS/FOX 1135-70 £15.99  
CLV COLOUR MONO  
1977 159mins (3 sides)

**Starring:** Marie-France Pisier, John Beck, Susan Sarandon, Raf Vallone  
**Director:** Charles Jarrott

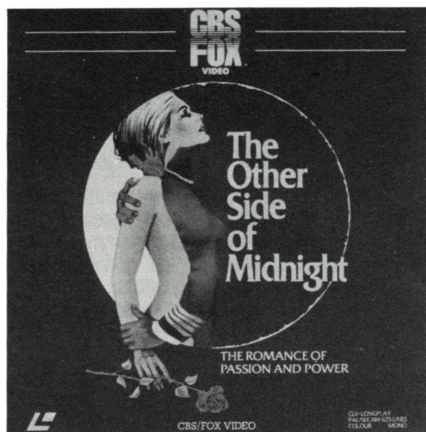
This is one of those rambling Harold Robbins type sagas (although it's actually from a Sidney Sheldon novel) of wealth, power and sex that proffers a rather glossy image of reality - and is similarly glossily transferred to the screen - in a style rather reminiscent of some of those made-for-TV epics. In earlier times it might very well have been described as a matinee movie - designed to entice a female audience into the local cinema during the middle of the week.

Set in the period before and after the Second World War, the opening scenes introduce the teenage Noelle taking up her first job in Paris where she soon wises up to the ways of the world and learns what a girl has to do to get ahead. And Noelle *does* get on - in the movies and in the high-living world of a Greek shipping magnate who, like her, shares a ruthlessness common



to all the characters depicted in the ensuing melodrama that develops as a carefully interwoven story with the action taking place on both sides of the Atlantic. Apparently unrelated aspects of the plot are drawn together to achieve an unexpected and somewhat far-fetched conclusion - but such is the stuff these things are made of.

Marie-France Pisier has to manage an age span that doesn't quite make it in Noelle's earlier incarnations - both



in terms of make-up and worldliness (the former may be down to the clarity of the disc). John Beck (the Canadian Airforce pilot, the focus of Noelle's long-running obsession) looks every bit the type to have a way with the girls, but to these male eyes, doesn't look the sort to be trusted any further than you could throw him. And, if you were to find out that they got Michel Legrand to do the film music, you'd have a pretty complete idea of what to expect here.

**Disc Quality:** Picture quality is a cut above the usual from CBS/FOX with good definition and good tonal reproduction, although some of the interior scenes do not quite maintain the same standard. The optically sourced audio is slightly dulled - possibly to disguise some faint spitting - but is acceptable for the type of film. The movie is spread evenly over three sides - would that all three-siders suited the format so conveniently. The sting in the tail is that the second disc on the review copy was marginally spottier in comparison with the relatively clean appearance of sides one and two.

## **SILOUXIE & THE BANSHEES** **- NOCTURNE**

SPECTRUM 040 191 1 £ 9.99  
CAV-Ch COLOUR STEREO  
1983 59mins

*Side One:* Israel/Cascade/Melt./Pulled To Bits/Nightshift/Sin In my Heart  
*Side Two:* Painted Bird/Switch/Eve White - Eve Black/Voodoo Dolly/Spellbound/Helter Skelter

Apart from the opening views of the audience, to the accompaniment of a recording of Stravinsky's *Rites Of Spring*, this is a fairly straightforward presentation. The exotic sleeve artwork might have you anticipating some over-the-top video effects during the concert footage but there is nothing too adventurous here beyond the odd bit of slow motion and some between-song still images. The Royal Albert Hall hardly lends itself to dynamic camera work either. Usually one gets no indication that the show is going on in any other than the more typical club/theatre

environment - the Hall perimeters being lost to view in the general gloom.

What you see was recorded over two days' performances (Sept 30 - Oct 1, 1983). This helps explain the sudden costume changes in the disc presentation that appears at first to be just a recording of a single show.

Siouxie & The Banshees do not easily fall into the category of wide general taste and the appeal of the disc is unlikely to stretch to anyone not already in the possession of a couple of their 45s.

**Disc Quality:** For the most part the picture looks OK, but shows that slight loss of definition and affected movement that we have come to expect in video material processed so as to give a 'perfect' CAV still frame. There is some intermittent 'grid'



patterning in the darker scenes and some stripiness due to camera microphony, but these aspects are only mildly distracting. The hi-fi sound is in itself good but at times seems a little remote from the visual image.

## **BREATHLESS**

RANK VIDEO D0200 £11.99  
CLV COLOUR MONO  
1983 96mins Rated 18

*Stars:* Richard Gere, Valerie Kaprisky  
*Director:* Jim McBride

On side one, most of the time Richard Gere manages to keep his clothes on, he spends impersonating Bruce Springsteen and Jerry Lee Lewis. (The latter could reasonably be credited with having recorded the theme song.) It's acting from the hips. The character, Jesse Lujack, has trouble keeping mind and body in sync. One such unco-ordinated moment has him shooting a cop over a traffic violation. Things start going faster and faster, but Jesse is really going nowhere. You wonder what Monica sees



in him when she's a promising architectural student with everything going right for her. But Jesse offers an excitement rarely found in concrete and bricks. A goodly portion of side one is left over to their naked passion. They seem to like each other - in an on/off sort of way.

Any re-make is bound to invite comparison. Without being aware of the Godard original, no such comment will appear here. In isolation, the film does not invite viewer involvement - every time Jesse does something right he immediately blows it and it is difficult to develop a sympathy with the character. In spite of this, by the time it comes to the L.A. back-street chase sequence, you still find yourself taking his side - so director Jim McBride must have been doing something right. The ending is predictable and yet room is left to imagine alternatives long after the credits have passed from view. Some mention should be made of the selection of records on the soundtrack, many of which would appear to be a bit out-of-keeping with the period depicted but are strangely effective and suggest the movie might be interpreted on more than one level.

The actual run time is menacingly short of the stated 105 minutes on the sleeve. The 4% PAL video transfer loss still does not correct matters and one is naturally inclined to think, on the basis of the already present 18 rating, that something has gone missing.

**Disc Quality:** Another crisp and typically RANK transfer though with a bit of variation between the light and dark scenes. This may be more noticeable as a result of the rather washed-out colour that one does adjust to, but it is hard to believe this is how the film was meant to look. Optical sound - OK, if a little hissy. Some mention should be made of the pressing which was, bar one problem, clear on both copies reviewed. The reason for looking at two was the presence of some white and/or speckly bands noticed at the beginning of side one on the first disc. The replacement didn't have them there, but they showed up on the **other** side of that disc and could therefore be a characteristic of the batch. We had this trouble with *The Sign Of Four* and have noticed the effect on other discs from last year. Such are the variabilities of the disc pressing process that the cause of these bands - often moving as well - varies, depending on which part of the disc they turn up - beginning, middle, or end. Whichever the cause, discs would undoubtedly benefit from their absence.

[ Continued from page 3 ]

position of having possibly the oldest product still on sale in the A/V market - hardly an image worth promoting. The details of the new player are no longer solely in PHILIPS' hands and discussions are going on with Japanese manufacturers. A February deadline has passed and July is now the date to get everything sorted out. That'll still probably mean a mid-'87 launch if all goes well. Quite how the player market will be sustained in the meantime is bound to cause some speculation and these and other matters will no doubt give us something to report on next time.



## GHOSTBUSTERS

RCA COLUMBIA 30413 (USA) \$29.98  
CLV COLOUR STEREO MP CX CC  
1984 105mins Rated PG

Even making allowances for the NTSC format the picture quality here is not terribly impressive. Given the understandable problems of trying to scan a widescreen frame when there are often the three main cast members spread evenly across the width (there is usually one character squeezed off the edge), this still looks a bit like a 'controlled' master designed to give only just good enough picture quality.

The pressing too looks unspectacular and a high level of dropout was in evidence. The sound also had some rough edges on what seemed to be basically a good magnetic track. This could have been a result of the poor pressing too.

The \$49.95 CAV version of the title may offer some improvement in picture quality, but probably not that much.

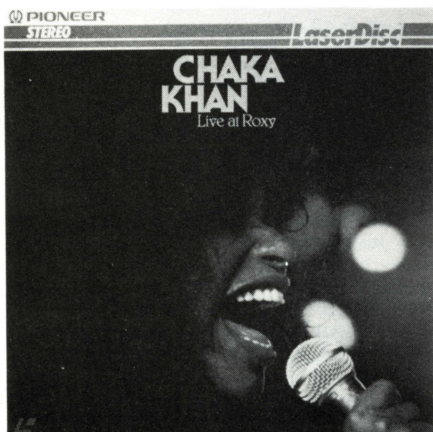


## CHAKA KHAN - LIVE AT ROXY

PIONEER MP039-22MP (Japan) ¥5800  
CAV-Ch COLOUR STEREO CX  
1981 49mins

**Side 1:** We Can Work It Out/I Know You, I Live You/Sweet Thing-Tell Me Something Good/Any Old Sunday/What Cha' Gonna Do For Me  
**Side 2:** Clouds-Love Has Fallen On Me-Naughty/Dancin' In The Streets/I'm Every Woman

This disc was acquired by mistake thinking it to be the recent Digital Sound disc from the same artiste. It has turned out to be a welcome error. The picture is outstandingly sharp - certainly superior to any PIONEER PAL disc we've seen and able to hold its own with many PAL video-originated programmes. The sound is of excellent



quality.

It would seem that PIONEER's separate software division - THE LASERDISC CORPORATION - actively participated in the production of programmes in order to show off the potential of the disc medium in the early days. Even now this is still specimen quality and would be recommended to anyone to show just how good NTSC LV can be. Chaka Khan's music is reasonably accessible, even to a non-fan, providing you're amenable to things with a jazzy/soul flavour. It's an authentic sounding live recording enhanced by the contribution of a good-sized backing group.

Common to most Japanese CAV titles originated on video rather than film, the disc does not give a 'perfect' still frame and it is certainly the lack of this extra correlation process that accounts for the impressive definition. Interestingly, between songs where presumably some editing has occurred, the disc does produce perfect stills and it is possible to notice the sudden drop in sharpness and the onset of the stilted movement effect we usually get. As soon as the song proper commences the picture springs back into perfect sharpness until the next between-song edit.

Although this disc has probably been repressed since its original release, the review copy was impressively free of any spots or blemishes. Recommended.

## OLIVER TWIST

THE DISC LVB-1006 (Japan) ¥6800  
CLV B&W MONO  
1948 112mins

David Lean's 1948 RANK film is available - in Japan of all places. That unfortunately means you have to tolerate sub-titles. While not that distracting after a period of adjustment, they do work against its desirability as the collectable it should surely be.



It's a fairly good print - possibly a little contrasty - but then some may consider that adds a little to the dramatic appeal. The definition is good and the picture quality holds up well on 525 lines. The sound quality is what one might expect of a film of this vintage and is reasonably free of intrusive pops and clicks. The pressing had a few blue speckles, but a little reduction in the colour on the TV eliminates these without any adverse effect on the monochrome original.

## AUTUMN SONATA

MAGNETIC VIDEO 9021-80 (USA) \$29.98  
CLV COLOUR MONO  
1978 92mins Rated PG



Older US discs can be dramatically unreliable. While the picture quality of this release is basically sound (although it does look a bit gloomy in the darker scenes) the pressing is poor. American collectors suggest it's unlikely you are going to find a copy of this title that does not have either some sound distortion (a sort of harsh breakthrough in the treble) or a good dose of colour speckling somewhere along the line.

Now deleted, you may come across a cheap copy in a sale. Even the low price might still not be valid enough reason for chancing your luck. (This version of the film is dubbed into English. The recent Japanese re-release will probably be of more dependable quality but its titling, *Hostsonateu*, indicates the likelihood of it being in Swedish with Japanese sub-titles.)

## KOOL &amp; THE GANG - TONIGHT!

PIONEER PA-85-107 (USA) \$24.95  
CLV-Ch COLOUR STEREO CX DS  
1984 84mins

**Side 1:** Celebration/Ladies Night/Hollywood Swinging/Tonight/You Can Do It/No Show-Too Hot-Jones Vs. Jones/In The Heart/Take My Heart

**Side 2:** Summer Madness/Joanna/Get Down On It/Let's Go Dancing/Celebration

The third Kool & The Gang title to appear on disc - the previous two are only available in Japan. It's easy to see why the group are so frequently committed to laser if this is typical of their output. The energy they expend in these 84 minutes is quite remarkable,



as is a level of enthusiasm normally considered incompatible with such seasoned professionalism. The singing, dancing and playing are often executed simultaneously and the disc is worth at least a dozen plays in the hope that you are going to catch someone miss a cue. They never do. The venue, a huge



open stage in a big entertainment complex is utilised to the last millimetre.

The camerawork makes good use of a flying platform and the production is devoid of any gimmicky effects - it doesn't need them. Half the fun of the disc comes from observing the audience. Their ages span a wide range and few of them give the impression of being real fans - they've all obviously spent the day at the place and have just stayed on for the evening's entertainment. You can be sure that a good number of them went out the very next day and bought their very first Kool & The Gang record.

Both analogue and digital soundtracks are excellent - the digital is noticeably clearer - and the picture of good quality, if lacking the bite we'd expect to see on a PAL disc. The pressing (Japanese, as are all DS discs so far) was very clean.

### THIS ISLAND EARTH

MCA 40327 (USA) \$29.98  
CLV/CAV COLOUR MONO CX  
1955 88mins (+64 stills)

MCA, whose deep involvement in the early days of US LaserVision (MCA-DISCOVISION) has obviously left them with an understanding of not only the unique advantages of the medium but also the quirky expectations of the disc buyer, have recently been undertaking a series of re-issues under the Encore Edition banner - each one usually offering up some element of novelty in their preparation. *This Island Earth*, being a mere 86 minutes, has become a CLV/CAV extravaganza.



Admittedly the resolution of the disc isn't stunning - the print looks a little over-duped and contrasty and there is a bit of a red shift on the picture - but the presentation looks more than respectful and a second viewing enhanced one's opinion of the disc. (It also revealed a continuity flaw on side one between 9:22 and 9:27 where Cal Meacham's sidekick magically acquires a pair of specs in the middle of a scene.) The sound is much better than you would expect it to be - it sounds good at a decent volume level, although it's obviously not hi-fi. Unusually for a mono disc, it is encoded with CX noise-reduction.

At the end of the show (37942) the disc goes into Auto-Stop. Pressing Play sets the movie trailer going. At the end of that (41260) another Stop marks the start of a 64 picture still-frame file. What with some interociters and a bunch of funny-looking geeks from Metaluna there's little more one could ask for in a disc. And to think there's more where this came from!

## RECENT USA DISC RELEASES

### FEBRUARY

**FILMS:** *Beauty & The Beast*, *Coca Cola Kid*, *Compromising Positions*, *Mask*, *D.A.R.Y.L.*, *Prizzi's Honour*(DS), *They Got Me Covered*, *Hurricane*, *Tender Mercies*, *This Island Earth*(CLV/CAV), *The Sword In The Stone*, *All Of Me*, *Return To Oz*, *Silly Symphonies Vol 13*, *Silly Symphonies Vol 14*, *Fright Night*, *The Bride*, *Ghostbusters*(CAV), *National Lampoon's European Vacation*, *Return Of The Jedi*(DS).

**MUSIC:** *Kiss/Animalize Live*(DS), *Judy Garland/Judy's Favourites*, *Madonna/Live Virgin Tour*(DS), *Maria Callas/Concerts 1959 & 1962*, *Metropolitan Opera/Tosca*(DS), *Various/One Night With Blue Note Vol 2*(DS), *Tears For Fears/Scenes From Big Chair*(DS).  
**OTHER:** *Raquel Welch/Total Beauty & Fitness*, *Sesame Street/Follow That Bird*.

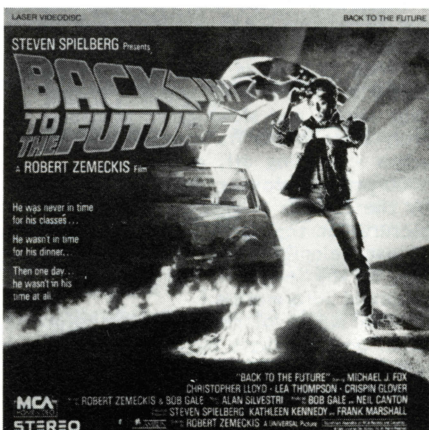
### MARCH

**FILMS:** *Commando*, *Those Magnificent Men In Their Flying Machines*, *Mon Oncle*, *Sanjuro*(Subs), *Yojimbo*(Subs), *C.H.U.D.*, *Someone Behind The Door*, *The Mummy*(CLV/CAV), *Weird Science*(DS), *Dr Jeckyl & Mr Hyde*(1941), *Choose Me*, *Rose Marie*, *The Thin Man*, *Year Of The Dragon*, *Summer Rental*, *Real Genius*, *Silverado*, *Last House On The Left*, *Re-Animator*, *Ordeal By Innocence*.  
**MUSIC:** *Chakha Khan*(JR), *Coney Hatch*(JR), *Frank Sinatra/Portrait Of An Album*, *Various/Motown 25 Years*, *Pete Townsend/White City*.

### APRIL

**FILMS:** *Cocoon*, *Hobson's Choice*(1954), *Kiss Of The Spider Woman*, *The Body-snatchers*(1945), *Cat People*(Orig), *Curse Of The Cat People*(1944), *Mighty Joe Young*, *The Seventh Victim*(1943), *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein*(CLV/CAV), *Glen Miller Story*, *Miami Vice*(DS), *Silver Bullet*, *Teen Wolf*, *Witness*, *My Science Project*, *Once Bitten*, *American Flyers*, *The Goonies*, *Krush Groove*(DS).  
**MUSIC:** *Huey Lewis/Heart Of R & R*(DS), *John Lennon/Live In NYC*(DS), *Metropolitan Opera/Tannhauser*(DS), *Bon Jovi/Breakout*(JR).  
**OTHER:** *National Geographic Vol 1/The Sharks*, *Vol 2/Land Of The Tiger*, *Vol 3/Iceland River Challenge*.

These release details are from PIONEER's own monthly 'New Release' sheets which have been a little unpredictable in recent months, no doubt the result of PIONEER's recent move to the West Coast and the reorganisation of its software division as the LASERDISC CORPORATION OF AMERICA and the launch of a new SIGNATURE label for



the exploitation of DS music titles.

As with UK release news, you cannot guarantee that all the discs have actually appeared. May 29th was the scheduled date for *Back To The Future*. No news of a UK release - Autumn maybe?

## ...Back in PAL territory

### FEEDBACK

Comments received about some recently reviewed or released discs -

**THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK** - Steve Fielding suggests that the 'missing' 3D image of the defunct commander is not quite as it seems. The section of the film is complete, but the ill-fated commander unfortunately chose to expire at the edge of the frame and was consequently chopped out when the wide-screen film image was reduced to TV proportions.

**WATERSHIP DOWN** - Confirmation that the the title sequences did start out sharp comes from Philip Campbell - he should know as his company worked on them originally. Peter Moverley thought the level of hiss on the audio was a bit too high to justify the level of praise conferred upon it in the review.

**VIDEO REWIND** - Andre Corteil advises that a couple of small cuts have been made in order to fit it one disc side.

**FIRESTARTER** - This was made as a DOLBY Stereo MP Surround film.

**AIRPLANE 2** - We had a look at the NTSC disc to see whether it suffered the same excessive contrast of the PAL one - it didn't - although the PAL disc still has the edge for sharpness. Something interesting for trivia buffs - in case you were wondering why the end captions of the PAL disc suddenly stop turning and a still credit has obviously been edited in, this is because you don't get to see Jack Jones singing a snatch of *The Love Boat* when Ted Striker jumps down off the wall during the hospital escape. Sometimes songs are edited out of home video versions of films when the copyright holders stick out for too much money on the repeat fee. And yet more - the artwork for the UK release has a completely redrawn picture on the cover, though done in the same style.



[ Compare this UK sleeve with the US one used in LDR-5, p31. ]

**ROMEO & JULIET** - Tony Wells will get one of the legs of his tights knotted for not knowing that Ashton's version of the ballet was revived last year by the London Festival Ballet. Thanks to Peter Read for pointing this out.



# DISC BASICS

## How CAV and CLV discs differ

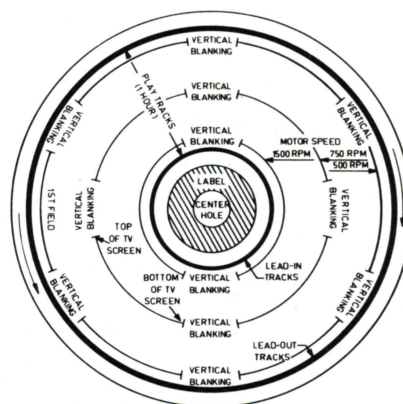
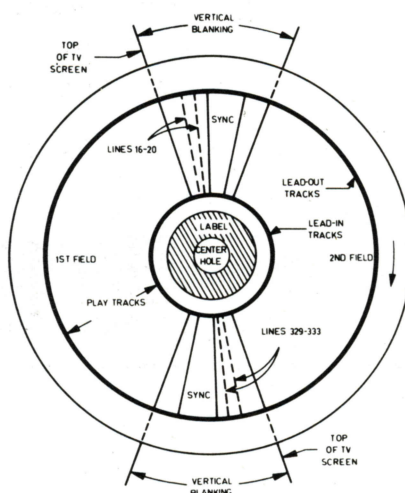
If someone was to hand you a disc without telling you it was CAV or CLV it wouldn't take more than a casual glance at the surface to ascertain the format. Those two characteristic blank wedges are the giveaway, and what they represent is closely related to the make-up of the picture you see on your TV screen.

That picture is made up of 625 horizontal lines (in PAL) which have to be traced across the screen in two passes in order to make up a single, interlaced picture frame - and this happens 50 times each second - resulting in the 25 different pictures that, in real time, we perceive as continuous movement. This tracing of the screen commences at the top left-hand corner on line 1 and works its way down to the bottom on each odd-numbered line, thereby making up the first field. The process is then repeated, filling in the even lines, to make the second field - the combination (interlacing) of these fields resulting in a single picture frame. Thus, in a minute, 1500 of these frames will be formed on the screen.

One can therefore visualise these CAV wedges as the dividing lines between these two fields which, when the disc is played at its usual speed of 1500 rpm, will produce a single picture frame per revolution. In normal play the laser objective tracks the disc (from the centre outwards) along its spiral of recorded information, but should you put the machine into the still mode, the objective completes one rotation and jumps back in order to recommence playing the same frame again - and will repeat this jumping back motion for as long as the still frame mode is engaged, all the while tracking the same frame. The reason you do not see any disturbance to the picture is because the jump occurs in these CAV wedges - the blanking interval - and the information carried in these portions of the signal does not appear in the visible TV picture.

On closer inspection you will notice that there are even more radial subdivisions than these two main wedges (which in themselves are made up of similar subdivisions) and each of the 625 lines of the picture are represented in the disc patterning. But, as was seen from the operation of the still-frame mode, not all the lines are used to make up the visible picture (hence 'blanking') and are used to carry control codes, test signals, text information etc. Lines 6 - 21 and 319 - 334 are allocated to these uses (although not all of them yet have a function).

**Below: CAV DISC** - One rotation produces a complete TV frame from the two fields. 25 such frames make up one second of screen time.



**Above: CLV Disc** - The vertical blanking period between the two fields is no longer in harmony on each revolution. The outer tracks of the CLV disc can carry 3 picture frames instead of just one.

The significance of the term CAV (Constant Angular Velocity) now makes more sense than might have first been apparent. The rotational speed of the disc remains constant throughout play as each revolution always contains the one picture frame. The penalty this incurs is that the outer part of the disc spiral still only carries that single frame - even though each circumference is three times as long as the innermost revolutions.

If, however, the same packing density present at the start of the disc is retained throughout, you can put this wasted capacity to use and considerably longer playing times than the 37 minute CAV maximum can be achieved.

With CLV discs, the player's spindle motor is governed by the disc's own sync pulses and slows down progressively as it works its way out to the edges - starting off, as before, at 1500rpm but slowing down to c.570rpm by the time it is reading the three pictures at the edge. [CLV, Constant Linear Velocity - the speed being tied to the length of the sectors of recorded information.]

The means of recording the information on CLV discs is, in principle, similar to that of CAV discs. The homogeneous appearance of the CLV disc surface is due to all the picture frames being thrown out of their

previous symmetry. In practice, if you were to try and put a CLV disc into still mode (and the player would allow you to do it - which it won't), the objective would jump back as before when it reached the blanking period, but would find that the blanking period at the start of the frame was still a little way up the road yet (each rotation means a slightly greater circumference) and be momentarily cast adrift, causing disturbance to the stability of the picture. And the further out towards the edge of the disc, the greater the disturbance.

NTSC video is tied to a 60Hz mains frequency as well as being a 525 line system. In this case there are 30 pictures per second and the rotational speed of an NTSC CAV disc is 1800 rpm as a result. Those extra five revolutions per second take a toll on the playing time, and NTSC CAV discs accordingly only run for 30 minutes. This can seem confusing when they in fact carry a similar number of frames (30 x 1800 = 54,000). CLV discs run for the same 60 minutes as their PAL counterparts. There are obviously fewer line subdivisions on an NTSC disc (525), and the codes inserted in the blanking periods occur at different points (Lines 10 - 21 & 272 - 284).



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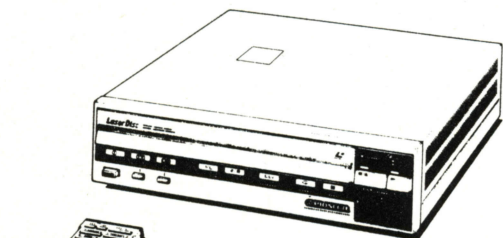


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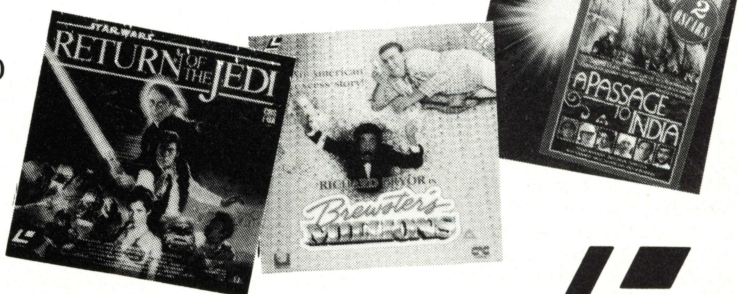
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# The Laser Calendar

## New releases, now available

- ARTS INT** - CARMEN (Glyndebourne, 1985 BBC TV prod, Stereo, 160 mins. With Maria Ewing, Barry McCauley) £23.99  
- THE NUTCRACKER (Royal Ballet, 30/1/85, BBC TV prod, Stereo, 100 mins. With Lesley Collier, Anthony Dowell) £19.99
- CBS/FOX** - RETURN OF THE JEDI (S)
- CIC** - BREWSTER'S MILLIONS (S), MASK
- THORN-EMI** - A PASSAGE TO INDIA (S)
- VESTRON** - CARE BEARS-THE MOVIE

## New releases, due June onwards

- CBS/FOX** - COCOON [S], A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET
- CIC** - BEST DEFENCE, FLETCH [S], WITNESS [S]
- THORN-EMI** - CAT'S EYE [S]
- WARNER** - BLADE RUNNER [S], CITY HEAT [S], GOONIES [S], GREMLINS [S], GREYSTOKE [S], MAD MAX , MAD MAX II [?], MAD MAX III [S], NEVER ENDING STORY [S], NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN [S], OCTOPUSSY [S], PALE RIDER [S], POLICE ACADEMY, POLICE ACADEMY II, PURPLE RAIN [S], ROCKY [S], ROCKY II [S], ROCKY III [S], SUDDEN IMPACT, TIGHTROPE, A VIEW TO A KILL [S], WAR GAMES [S]

## Previously announced, now cancelled

- WARNER** - CASABLANCA, WEST SIDE STORY
- PIONEER** - DOLLY PARTON, POLICE/SYNCHRONICITY, HALL & OATES

\* Discs marked [S] are likely Stereo, but unconfirmed.

\* Discs marked (S) are Stereo.



## BACK-NUMBERS

- Issue 1 - Some LaserVision history & the first disc reviews.
- Issue 4 - Reviews of VLP830 & LD700. Surround Sound. How LV is sold in the US. German & Dutch disc lists.
- Issue 5 - Complete guide to NTSC LaserVision. Player Survey. Summary of all previous disc reviews. Includes the Autumn '85 Philips Album List.
- Issue 6 - Looking at Future LV developments. Japanese Report. 49 disc reviews, including PAL imports.
- Issue 7 - Reviews of Pioneer CLD900, LD707, & PX-7 Computer. The American Space discs.
- Issues 1 & 4 are £1 each - 5,6 & 7 are £1.25 each. Subscribers are entitled to a discount and can buy 1 & 4 @ 90p each, and 5,6 & 7 @ £1.00 each. (These rates only apply overseas for sea mail delivery. Air rates by quotation.)
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