LASER DISC REVIEW

JUNE 1987

ISSUE 12 £1.50

CD Video - 12 page Launch Report

CD Video Clip Details

What is CD-I ?

Dolby Sound Mixing

NEWS & REVIEWS

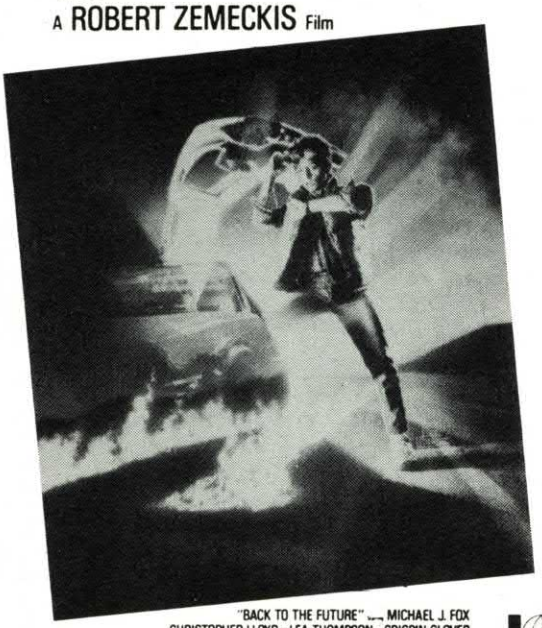
BEWARE !

This Video Recordings Act bites - We reveal what's missing from Indiana Jones & Commando

STEVEN SPIELBERG Presents

BACK TO THE FUTURE

A ROBERT ZEMECKIS Film



"BACK TO THE FUTURE" MICHAEL J. FOX
CHRISTOPHER LLOYD · LEA THOMPSON · CRISPIN GLOVER
ROBERT ZEMECKIS & BOB GALE ALAN SILVESTRI BOB GALE NEIL CANTON
STEVEN SPIELBERG KATHLEEN KENNEDY FRANK MARSHALL
ROBERT ZEMECKIS A UNIVERSAL Picture

UNIVERSAL

CAMBRIDGE VIDEO

LaserVision

COMPACT disc DIGITAL AUDIO

8 SEYMOUR STREET
CAMBRIDGE
CB1 3DQ

Telephone (0223) 213042

For all your LaserVision and CD requirements

+ ALL NEW TITLES AVAILABLE ON RELEASE DATE
+ EXTENSIVE BACK CATALOGUE SERVICE (Titles from only £4.00)
+ PLAYERS AT COMPETITIVE PRICES
+ MAIL ORDER FOR UK AND REST OF WORLD
+ TELEPHONE ORDERING SERVICE
+ ACCESS, VISA & AMEX

SEND OR TELEPHONE NOW FOR LISTS

1 copy each of Apocalypse Now & Blues Bros - open to offers!

THAMES VALLEY LASER

HUNTERCOMBE
BANBURY ROAD
BICESTER
OXON OX6 7NL.
TEL: (0869) 242078

LaserVision

MAIL ORDER SPECIALIST

1000 DISCS Always In Stock

SEND 50p FOR LIST OF TITLES AVAILABLE

★ FACT SHEET COVERING SURROUND SOUND DISCS MAGNETIC SOUNDTRACKS ON DISC AND FILM STOCK GENERATIONS ETC. SENT WITH EACH LIST

★ QUANTITY DISCOUNTS AND SPECIAL OFFER REDUCTIONS ON CERTAIN TITLES

★ REDUCED PRICE DISCS IN STOCK

LASER DISC REVIEW

JUNE 1987

ISSUE 12

EDITOR & PUBLISHER ... Philip Parr
DESIGN & LAYOUT . Gillian Tilbrook

CONTRIBUTORS ..... Peter Moverley, Tony Parkin, Paul Ronchetti, Paul Newton, Craig Hyland

SUBSCRIPTION RATES -

Single copies of LDR are £1-50 sent anywhere in the world. For those outside Europe who prefer Air Mail delivery the cost is £2-50.

Reduced rate 4-issue subscriptions are £5-00 worldwide. The Air Mail rate for those outside Europe is £8-00.

ISSN 0267 - 9671

LASER DISC REVIEW
PO BOX 526
LONDON, UK
SW10 9AB

Tel: 01-351 4535

LASER DISC REVIEW is published quarterly and is copyrighted, and may not be copied or the contents reproduced without consent.

© 1987

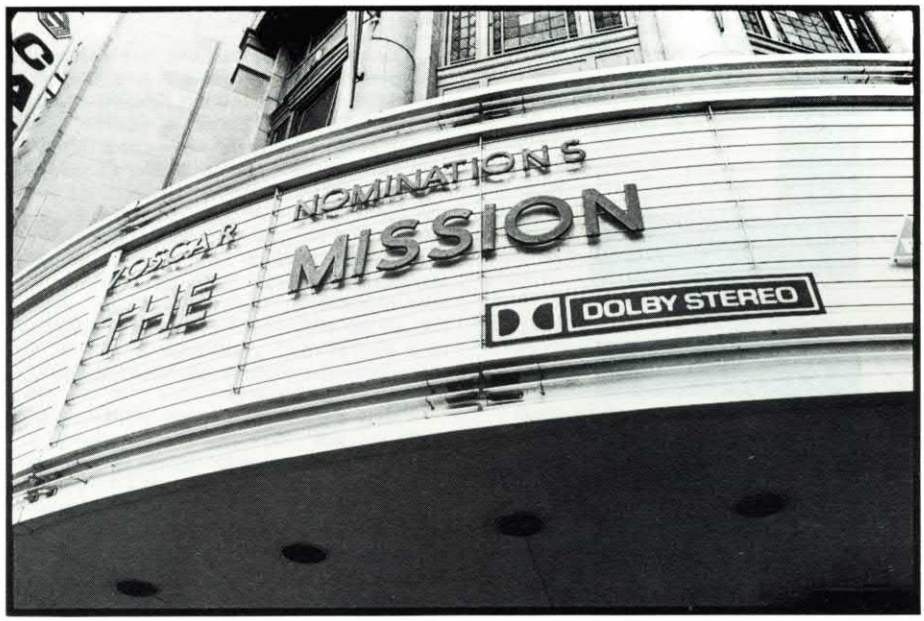
Your subscription has expired if there is a cross in this box. ☐

Payments may be in cash or by cheque, PO, Banker's Draft, IMO or by GIRO to a/c 55 521 2009. Make all payments out to "Laser Disc Review". Payment must be in £ Sterling with the exception of US remittances which can be in US $ bills at the appropriate current exchange rate. US $ cheque payments must include an extra $2.00 over the conversion to cover the additional clearance charges.

Please state whether you are ordering a new subscription or renewing an existing one. State the first issue you wish to receive if a new subscription.

LASER DISC REVIEW welcomes correspondence but if you require a reply please include an SAE. Allowance should be made for the length of time taken to reply - the production of the magazine always being the first priority.

Printed in the United Kingdom by:
Kingprint Ltd., Orchard Road, RICHMOND, Surrey TW9 4PD.



Our Mission - To Dolby Go.....

This wasn't what it said outside the cinema when we went to see *Star Trek IV* - but it probably should have. Anyway the photo will do nicely to tie together this issue's features, which includes the article held over from last time on DOLBY Surround.

Our long voyage home came after a trip to Amsterdam to witness PHILIPS announcement of CD Video to the world at large. All we have to do now is to fill in time till the players show up.

A month or two mulling over the implications of the Clip disc leads one to a generally favourable response. Though setting out to produce a 'single' format for CD, the 20-25 minute Clip is, in fact, closer to the running time of vinyl LPs - before pop music got a bit too intellectual (and boring). Without meaning to, the Clip disc could end up defining future pop music rather than just carrying it. More than anything, such music should be exciting, and that's a lot to expect anyone to sustain for 70 + minutes. Twenty minutes or so is all anybody with anything genuinely relevant to say needs to say it.

It will be interesting to see how CD-V is sold in the shops. Will the discs go in with the CDs, or in with the videos? It won't be much of a problem for traditional record outlets who have no video product in their shelves, but for the chain stores and large outlets it could prove a bit of a headache. Some of these establishments have video on one floor and audio on another. Maybe we'll start seeing special CD-Video sections in such outlets.

On a more parochial level, for reasons which are more than complicated to explain, the retail availability of the next few issues of the magazine might be erratic (if not downright limited). For this reason we can only but repeat the advice to take out a subscription to ensure you receive each edition as it comes out. We are going to maintain our free back issue offer to anyone taking out a new sub (or renewing an existing one) through issues 12 & 13 - so as to give everyone a chance at it. (The list to choose from is on page 9. The offer applies to overseas readers too, but these freebies are only sent out via ordinary mail, even if you have an airmail sub.)

The next issue will contain as much news of the Chicago CD-V launch as we can obtain, plus news of forthcoming UK audio-video products due to be available later in the year.

CONTENTS

LETTERS 4
WHAT'S HAPPENING
EV titles on disc, Dragons Lair on disc 6, 8, 9
IT'S AN AMSTERDAMAWADAY
CD Video launch report 10
CD Videoclip format details 16
The UNITEL Catalogue 19
CD-I & the optical disc family 20
DOLBY SURROUND MIXING 22
VIDEO RECORDINGS ACT UPDATE
What's missing from Indiana Jones & Commando 24
SMALL ADS 26
USA REPORT 27
DISC REVIEWS
Current Releases 29
Back Catalogue 33
THE LASER CALENDAR
New Releases and New Deletions ..... Back Page

LETTERS

From: Philip Mee, Derby

The magazine gives the impression that a digital soundtrack for LV is a 'must'. This leaves me somewhat amused because, as you well know, given a quality input the existing system is very good. One or two reviews have asked if the excessive amount of hiss found on some titles is a shortcoming of the medium. The answer just has to be no. I'm willing to believe that a few crackles here and there can be attributed to really bad pressings or over-modulation, but hiss - never! No, I'm afraid that old film stock transferred to a digital disc soundtrack will reproduce hiss equally as faithfully as its analogue counterpart.

Fairly recently I bought a PIONEER SD26 monitor TV. The choice was a difficult one to make. Whilst I wanted the maximum possible screen size I settled for one inch less than available because of the SD26's conventional black-matrixed 66cm CRT. Why? Because, in gaining the extra inch, 27" FSTs also seem to have gained a larger phosphor pitch - subjectively at least. Hence, in real terms, there is a loss of horizontal resolution.

Direct video input now allows me to view the spots and streaks present on most discs with amazing clarity - as you pointed out in a past edition. Many of the discs which I remembered as being of above average quality have now been relegated to the poor category and fall more into line with the magazine's review results. Switching between the modulated and direct inputs shows just how good the modulator used in the PHILIPS VP600/700 series is. As you would expect, the background noise increases a little using the RF output. Otherwise results are very similar.

What I now need is an LD700 to go with the SD26, right? Wrong! I bought one of these last year and was very disappointed with it - the break-up of colours, particularly saturated reds/oranges and plain blue skies was the main problem. I can only assume that mine was a bad sample. Hence it was returned for a refund.

A glance through the Winter '84 catalogue shows that 64 of the 65 titles listed ended up on disc. The one which did not was *The Key*. Having recently seen this title on videotape I can confirm that, alongside the likes of *The Sound Of Music* or *Wuthering Heights*, it is no classic. When compared with such as *Emmanuelle* etc, however, it is! The fact that it didn't appear has me wondering the reason. My money is on PHILIPS rejecting it because of the content. I would not be surprised to find that there is a set of empty sleeves ready for this title somewhere.

Whilst the full cinema version of films released on disc is the thing to aim for, perhaps alternative footage is preferable to cuts. This idea was used when *The Wicked Lady* was shown on TV. Gone was all the nudity but the scenes themselves weren't cut - just re-shot using clothes.

Apropos 'Discussions' in LDR-10. Because each side of a disc is always filled with information regardless of actual programme length it does not make sense to produce sides of less than 36 minutes in CLV. As well as being more useful in CAV they will also take less time to master. Incidentally, I rather like the end of side identifications on discs as they are done at present.

Finally, a warning on some titles to avoid if you don't want to see how bad a film can look on disc. *A Wedding*, *Blow Out* and *When A Stranger Calls* are all worth passing by.

From: T.E. Robinson, West Yorkshire

I now have an NTSC PIONEER CLD900 and the quality has taken me by surprise, especially *Indiana Jones* in CAV digital sound. It is fantastic and puts some PAL discs to shame. I already have 16 NTSC discs in my collection and, so far, what I have received has been very clean and the sound superb.

There is one thing that still bothers me and that is the dreaded laser rot. You still read in American publications of discs becoming snowstorms. Could you tell me if you have had this problem? And why won't PHILIPS and the US companies tell us what it is and why it's still with us? I recently scanned through my PAL disc collection (in total 189 discs) and, to my dismay, found quite a few had developed some or quite a lot of dropout. The picture hadn't changed - no snow etc - just dropout. Is this laser rot, the beginning of it, or another problem altogether we've got to contend with?

The worst disc of the lot is *Brainstorm*. This was a great disc when I first bought it around a year and a half ago. The dropout rate is now what you would describe as "very high". I wrote about the disc becoming unwatchable in some correspondence with PHILIPS and they never even mentioned it in their reply. Are they trying to cover up?

I'm still a big fan of LaserVision but I would not like my fairly large collection just to disappear eventually. I'm not bothered so much about the financial aspect of it but I just want to enjoy my discs for many years to come. What's the use though if PHILIPS and the US pressers don't come clean on this major problem?

Incidentally, here is a list of discs that have suffered an increase in dropout. Some I have had for four years and were perfect when first bought - *The Sea Wolves*, *Chariots Of Fire*, *Quest For Fire*, *Starting Over*, *Star Trek*, *An American Werewolf In London*, *Brainstorm*, *Airplane*, *Poltergeist* (3rd copy!), *Lords Of Discipline*, *Soldier Blue*, *The Fog*.

● **The current output of PIONEER's US plant is more dependable than it was a couple of years back when a considerable quantity of discs went into distribution before manufacturing defects were discovered. However, duff discs/batches of discs still do crop up (as they appear to do with most of the world's pressing plants). As far as we know, the US dealers who have been mentioned within these pages will replace rot discs outside the normal warranty period, but if it helps reassure you, it might pay to deal with STARSHIP INDUSTRIES who offer an explicit "no time limit" warranty on the discs they sell.**

The Editor's personal experience of US discs is of having received some rot discs (ie. already 'gone' before shipping), but only very recently have a couple of titles been put aside under suspicion of an impending breakout. The LDR 'rot box' (as it is affectionately known) contains mostly early German pressings and some UK Blackburn ones that have gone (or are also under suspicion). PHILIPS have advised us that they will replace their discs that succumb to rot when it is not possible to effect replacement via your dealer. The dealer should always be your first avenue of enquiry, but there are

obviously instances where this is not possible . You should then send your rotted titles back to: SDC/KONNEKT, 69 Flempton Road, London E10 7NH
It would help to indicate (on a separate note, with each disc) the side, or side and time point, that the deterioration is most apparent. (Discs do not always rot all over so this saves time when they come to be checked.)

Because the ever-increasing mass of spots and flecks you see on the screen is a result of the deterioration of the reflective/adhesive layers, it is difficult to be precise about the characteristics. The problem is one of interaction and it can manifest itself in different ways. Usually the decisive indication of the breakout of rot is that the flecks and spots are of a rhythmic/swirling nature and not like the sporadic flecking/speckling of an indifferently pressed disc.

Your mention of *Starting Over* having a lot of dropout sounds similar to the LDR copy which is not a particularly good pressing but appears stable - at least in the year or two we've had it. A reader with an extensive knowledge of the UK catalogue has previously commented that he has made several attempts to acquire a clean copy of *Starting Over*, but in his words "they are all spotty". It may be just a poor run altogether. It is easy to overreact to an encounter with a few rot discs and begin seeing defects in your whole collection. They were always there, but one gets caught up in the programme contents on a first view and doesn't notice.

It would have obviously helped all along if PHILIPS and the other manufacturers had been more open about laser rot. Their secrecy is bound to prove counter-productive in the long term for the doubt it creates in the whole range of optical disc media.

From: David Kwok, Cambridgeshire

Some observations on LV sleeve artwork - I was most disappointed to see the EMBASSY sleeves that recently appeared on their new discs. It would seem that everybody has read 'Discussions' (LDR-10) except the programme suppliers themselves. EMBASSY could have given us a plain white sleeve and let readers stick on the back page advert in LDR-10 for the *Prizzi's Honour* release. Sort of a DIY exercise. It would have made for a better result.

I'm now suffering from a stiff neck looking at those CANNON, CBS/FOX, EMBASSY and PMI sleeves. They all set the artwork at a funny angle. There is nothing wrong with setting the centre-piece at right-angles, for Pete's sake.

I think most readers are pleased with the sleeves on WARNER titles and yet they are exactly the same as their cassette counterparts. All that the other video companies need to do is a similar thing; set the centre-piece in the middle of the LV sleeve - at right-angles - and then blend the background colour the same as the colour of the company logo. In WARNER's case their colour is black, so by the same token, CANNON can issue a uniform blue and so on.

I noticed that CBS/FOX had foresaken their grey background colour for proper artwork on *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Places In the Heart* and *Return Of The Jedi*. If they can do it for those three titles, why don't they do it for the whole lot?

On most occasions, especially for music-related titles, the sleeves for the original soundtrack LP's are usually good enough for the job. *Give My Regards To Broad Street* is a good case in point since you could just stick a label on to the original vinyl LP sleeve saying "Laser Videodisc". A good example of matching soundtrack and LV artwork is *Silver Dream Racer* whereby both are identical but for the blurb.

Chapters - As regards musicals with talking bits, if the next generation of LV machines is to include seconds I assume that a decimal point would have to be introduced on the controls. What if we number the songs as normal but call the bits in the middle 1.1 (after Chapter 1) and 2.1 (after Chapter 2) etc, etc? Those talking bits would still be proper chapters, and any song-only programming would be presented as such without the need for dummy chapters.

● Setting the centre-piece askew is supposed to be artistic, though when used as a 'creative device' within the pages of LDR it is usually to get over problems with having a picture bigger than the space left for it (oops!) - or to compensate for the diminished ability to judge a true horizontal when the paste-ups are done after a heavy lunch-time session at the local hostelry (ugh!).

Best make the most of the WARNER sleeves. The enthusiastic way the company is talking about CD-V they'll be first in with the new plastic 'jewel-box' packaging - an enlarged version of that presently used on CDs.

Jedi and *Empire* came out with 'proper' sleeves because LUCASFILM, the originating company, are sufficiently concerned to ensure they retain some level of control over the packaging. We are frightened to ask why *Places In The Heart* 'escaped' in the condition it did lest the grey plague devours that title too. We did ask CBS/FOX why we could not have the ready-made artwork from the US sleeves (such as the *Commando* sample shown elsewhere) on the UK discs, and were advised that it cost them more to use existing artwork from the US division than to knock up a design locally. Something to do with the organisation's internal accounting practices it appears. (That's right, blame the accountants.)

The seconds feature on CLV discs does not 'use' the decimal point. This is automatically inserted after you've keyed in the second digit. ie. to search time 34.29 you key in 3 - 4 - 2 - 9 only. (This is on NTSC discs. Some PAL discs run past the sixty minute point so we could see four or five digit numbers on our new players.)

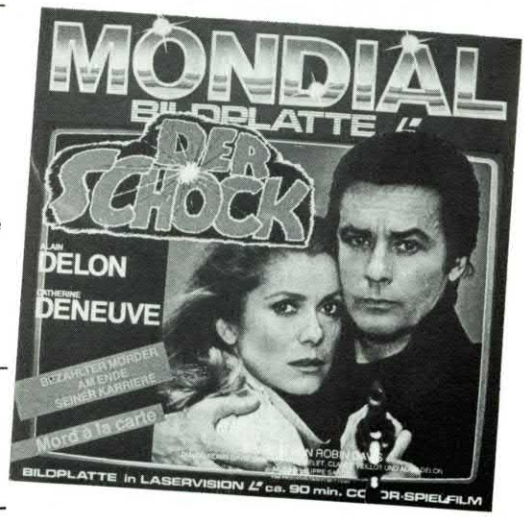
What you describe is something akin to the Index function you have on CDs, and we are not aware of this feature being programmable (though it can be searched) or even being available on the LV format. However, depending on how the hardware could be educated to handle an index type function on LV, basically it could at least work as a trigger-marker to tell the player to disengage and jump to the next chapter proper.

From: Christophe Bruiant, France

Seeing at what speed new players are launched in the UK I finally bought an LD700 in July. What a delight compared with the images from a VCR! I'm pleased to read in LDR that a lot of good films are to be released. I didn't answer your survey last year, so I'll give you the titles I wish to be released - *Tootsie*, *2010*, *Ghostbusters*, *Amadeus*, *Pretty In Pink*, *Rich & Famous*, *Desperately Seeking Susan*, *Star Trek* TV series and a lot (with a capital L) of music videos. And what about releasing French movies? After all, they are no so bad.

● Many of the titles you wish for cropped up with some degree of repetition in the last LDR survey. Some of them remain unreleased while certain labels avoid the PAL videodisc format. *Amadeus* is a title that is often asked for and we are told that it is due to the specific wish of the producers of the movie it doesn't appear on disc here.

And, talking of French movies, when the disc comes to France finally (presumably next year), maybe France will put its own movies out - preferably with some teletext subtitles for us lazy Britishers (who show no great inclination to learn foreign languages). Besides, if you are talking about anything vaguely post-war, the general opinion of our authorities is that modern French films are pretty smutty and would benefit from some cleaning up before we are allowed to view them. In that condition you probably wouldn't want to watch them either, so it's for the best that the French put their own movies out on disc. We can then buy them from you!



[Top of page: *Places In The Heart* - a refugee from the grey plague. Right: French films do exist in the PAL format - providing you don't mind them dubbed into German.]

EV Titles On Disc

Titles from ENTERTAINMENT IN VIDEO are due for videodisc release via a leasing arrangement with THE LASER CENTRE, Edinburgh. After some months of negotiation five titles have been selected for release over the coming months - *House, Teenwolf, Day Of The Dead, Soul Man & Wanted Dead Or Alive.* An effort will be made to issue short-running sides in CAV where possible and it is planned for the discs to carry trailers too. Prices will conform to the current £19.99 pricing structure and the discs will be available direct from THE LASER CENTRE as well as usual retail outlets.

THE LASER CENTRE's proprietor David Henry spoke enthusiastically of the prospect of some new additions to the UK catalogue in this interim period before the CD Video launch. Horror movie *House, Teenwolf* (with Michael J. Fox) and *Day Of The Dead* will be the first releases. The latter title David described as "a zombie film - and we haven't had any zombie films on disc up till now".

Further Info: THE LASER CENTRE, 16 Lochrin Buildings, Edinburgh EH3 9NB Tel: (031) 229 5960.

RCA DVI

That stands for Digital Video Interactive and is the name of RCA's proposed videodisc format based on the standard CD-sized 12 cm disc. While their previous marketing endeavours might indicate otherwise, RCA have long been dabbling in optical disc technology and this latest development promises an hour of digitally recorded, full-motion video by using signal compression techniques and recording only the difference information of successive picture frames. The use of memory devices and the associated circuitry pushes the hardware price above current CD & LV players, though, and picture quality is not to the same broadcast standard either. But the DVI disc could find a niche in the market as an alternative to CD-I (see pages 20-21). In this application the video output from a DVI disc can be varied to give horizontal resolution between 256 to 768 lines and up to 512 vertically. Between 8 and 24 bits can be assigned to each pixel. RCA premiered DVI during a recent CD-ROM conference in Seattle, USA.

Journey Into The Lair

A PAL version of the *Dragons Lair* arcade game is to become available soon with support software written for the ATARI ST range of computers and which will function with any videodisc player having a suitable interface port. At present this limits the potential to the PIONEER LD700 and some of the more expensive professional LV Players, but new consumer players next year should be suited to the application

According to information from MICRODEAL (who are producing the product) the videodisc interacts with the computer, inputting the next move from a library shown on the screen. Unlike the arcade version, you can choose different levels of play and decide the number of lives wanted balanced against the player's courage.

Called *Journey Into The Lair* the game was written using VIVA, an interactive videodisc authoring system, which will also be available independently from MICRODEAL in the near future. VIVA allows the user to make any CAV disc interactive, changing from the disc player screen to the ATARI ST's output in an instant. *Journey Into The Lair* will come as a package to include the PAL videodisc, the ATARI ST software disc and an instruction manual. The price is £99.95. An optional ST-to-disc player connecting cable will also be available at £19.95.

Further info: MICRODEAL, PO Box 68, St Austell, Cornwall PL25 4YB. Tel: (0726) 68020.

Tape Wars

When extolling the virtues of CD-V at the Amsterdam press briefing one of the speakers, commenting on the achievable picture quality of the system, stated it to be "better than Super-VHS". And indeed it is. But the impending arrival of that vastly improved tape format is now to be followed by yet another VCR tape upgrade in the shape of ED-Beta. The ED stands for Extended Definition, and at a claimed 500 line horizontal resolution the format promises to bring LV-quality recording capability into the home.

At the touted 430 line resolution Super-VHS would have been sufficient to break the stranglehold of dire picture quality that has dogged home video these last ten years. But the extra boost of ED-Beta promises to double-underline it. No longer will the LV disc be out on its own making the push for higher picture quality. With recorders of either format it will be more than obvious that the general standard of pre-recorded software currently being dished up by many of the film companies is just not up to the job. In short, off-air recordings from BBC transmissions of feature films will outclass the same titles bought from the video companies themselves. Some may see the new tape formats as a threat to the videodisc, but in practice it is not likely to significantly affect the laser medium - if it responds to the challenge.

Super-VHS and ED-Beta both rely on new tape formulations and splitting the chrominance (colour) and luminance (brightness) signals to achieve their goals. That means a new TV. ED-Beta played on a conventional TV will only yield 330 lines of resolution. That 500 line figure only comes into effect when the signal is fed to a suitable monitor. These do not presently exist in the consumer market - beyond some computer monitor brands (such as COMMODORE's). As and when the new tape formats appear in PAL the appropriate TV equipment will come with them. Though Super-VHS and ED-Beta VCRs will only attract a modest price premium the cost of the tape will be higher, and the biggest outlay will be for a new monitor. If the formats are up to the promised standard it will be a price worth paying. Most consumer grade TVs are not as good as they should be anyway.

And we haven't even mentioned "the dreaded DAT". This audio-only (but a Far-Eastern manufacturer is already promising a low-fi-video camcorder) is the planned replacement for the Compact Cassette. It offers CD quality audio recording and is eminently suited to doing perfect dubs off CDs themselves. DAT has negligible wow and flutter but is giving Western record companies the jitters. If anything, the

[continued on page 8]

NEW PRODUCTS

Luxman F-105

The LUXMAN F-105 A/V Surround and Remote Control Centre combines a DOLBY Surround Processor with 2 x 25 watt rear channel amplification, as well as facilities for connecting 8 audio, video and audio/video components. System control is via a supplied infra red remote. Additionally, Remote Sensors (RC-101), Extension Cables (RC-100) and a Splitter (RC-102) allow expansion of the remote/replay facilities to more than one room in the house. The F-105 measures 438(w) x 88(h) x 300(d), weighs 6.0kg and lists for £398-00.

A stripped down U-100 Remote Control Centre offering the remote and switching facilities of the F-105 but without the surround/amplification is also available at a price of £242.00.

Info: HW INTERNATIONAL, 3-5 Eden Grove, London N7 8EQ. Tel: 01-607 2717.

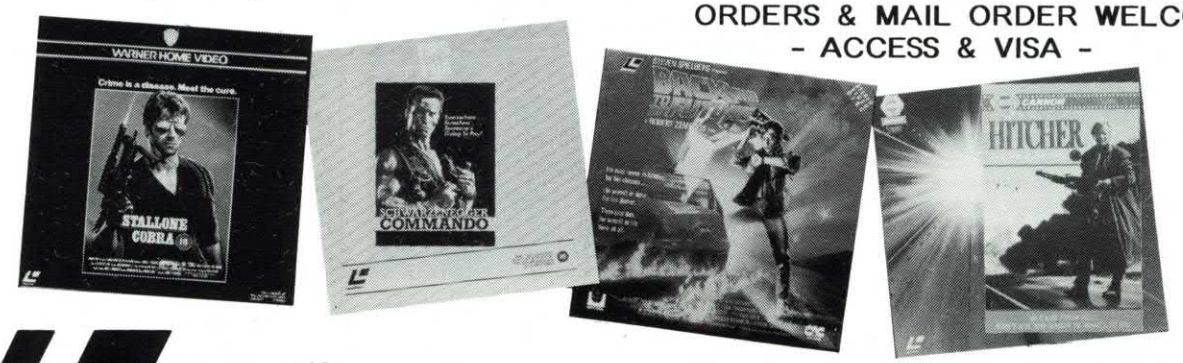
LASER SOUND & VISION Ltd.

72 TERMINUS ROAD, EASTBOURNE, EAST SUSSEX (0323) 640911

COME & VISIT OUR NEW SHOP

- WE ENDEAVOUR TO STOCK ALL AVAILABLE LASERVISION DISCS AS WELL AS SOME IMPORTS
- 1000s OF COMPACT DISCS ALSO KEPT IN STOCK
- WE STILL HAVE PIONEER LD700 & PHILIPS PLAYERS IN STOCK

SAME DAY DISPATCH - WE ALSO MAIL OVERSEAS - TELEPHONE ORDERS & MAIL ORDER WELCOME - ACCESS & VISA -



LaserVision PIONEER The future of sound and vision. TRIO COMPACT disc DIGITAL AUDIO Canon marantz

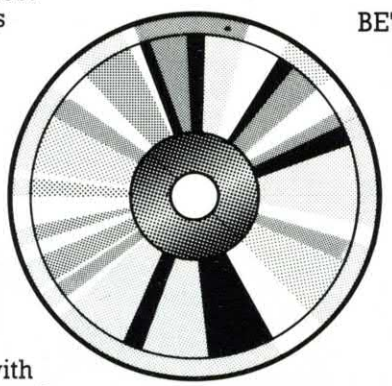
---

The Original Audio and Video Discount Sounds

20 Chadwell, Hertford Road, Ware, Herts. SG12 9JY **Telephone: Ware (0920) 61339**

If it's a professional Mail Order Service you are looking for and one that doesn't treat you like a number, but also caters for all of your needs in requiring all the very latest CD Video's · Compact Discs · Films on Video · LaserVideo Discs · Music on Video and all of your other Audio and Video needs, then look no further, as I can do all that and much much more, like Big Discounts all the year round, Export Orders delivered anywhere in the World, plus an added bonus of an elite **Personal Mail Order Service** that is second to none.

So why don't you get in contact with Andrew, who will only be too pleased to help you out. So don't delay, just send a 62p stamp and I think you will be pleasantly surprised by what arrives through your letter box!



In the meantime, look what's on offer for you:

Albums and Tape Cassettes.....From £1.45

BETAMAX Blank Video Tapes.....From £2.90

Compact Discs.....From £3.15

Films on Video.....From £4.65

LaserVideo Discs ....From £3.95

Music on Video.....From £4.65

V2000 Blank Video Tapes.....From £4.80

VHS Blank Video Tapes.....From £3.85

VIDEO 8mm Blank Video Tapes.....From £7.75

[continued from page 6]

sudden enthusiasm for CD-V could well be something of a pre-emptive strike by the software companies to establish a format that DAT cannot threaten in the forseeable future. Of course, DAT is no real threat to either CD or vinyl, because the record companies ultimately hold the trump card when it comes to resisting the ravages of illicit copying. Forget about anti-copy devices. The remedy is to reduce prices of CD software to realistic levels.

We live in interesting times.

German LV Discs

Even though we have been running repeated warnings for readers wishing to acquire German LV discs not to deal with AV REPORT (who have proved less than reliable in fulfilling paid-for orders) we have not been able to offer an alternative source of supply. However, PHILIPS GmbH, Germany have been circulating their LV owners with the name and address of a new supplier who may also be able to cater to the needs of those overseas. That address is: CD Video International,
Attn: Gunter Pitz,
Alsterkamp 17,
2000 Hamburg 13,
West Germany

On behalf of LDR, subscriber Rolf Kindermann has contacted Herr Pitz and ascertained that overseas disc supplies may indeed be possible. This was not their original plan and some further investigation may be required to ensure its feasibility, but readers intent on acquiring any German discs might be advised to get in touch with CD VIDEO INTERNATIONAL. Best enclose an International Reply Coupon (available from the Post Office) to cover return postage costs.

New Release News

Most significant news this issue is the dramatic list of deletions brought about by a variety of causes. (See back page for a full list.) Some titles have gone out of stock and will not be re-pressed in the short term. In some instances there is no contractual arrangement to allow re-pressing. Quite a few titles have been seen off as a result of the implementation of the Video Recordings Act, and who knows when (or even if) some of these discs will re-appear. *Aliens* & *Raiders* are temporary deletions but are marked up this way rather than 'temporarily out of stock' as the re-presses will be at the now-standard £19.99 price.

Several ARTS INTERNATIONAL titles have been going out of stock of late too. The ARTS INT batch of 40 titles was a special disc deal worked out between PHILIPS in The Netherlands (as opposed to the UK company), and the final say so on their availability remains with them. Logically, if these titles are still contractually available, it would make sense to hold off for digital sound rather than continue to re-press in the present format. If we can find out any more exact news we'll let you know.

As to the new releases, the appearance of *Friday 13th* in the list shows a welcome move to correcting gaps in the back catalogue. Some readers might be wishing for a more decisive move even further back than that, but this at least is a start. It's a move away from only going for current film releases anyway. Previous failed efforts (*West Side Story* & *Casablanca*) stick in the memory, but maybe WARNER's outspoken support for CD Video might indicate some activity of their own in promoting true back catalogue classics in time. Although LIGHTNING have been showing willing these last few months to try a few older titles, these things are never as easy as one would hope. An early possibility was the long overdue *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, but this release is presently being hampered by contractual difficulties and there are major doubts as to whether the title will eventually appear. (It has not yet made it on to disc in either the US or Japan.)

The Wall was another title planned for release, but this would appear to have fallen foul of CANNON's recent takeover by WARNER. CANNON's financial difficulties have been well documented in the press, and this latest move will toss their catalogue into further chaos still. As it is, many of CANNON's titles have already been pre-sold some time into the future. The changes at CANNON are given as the reason for the non-appearance of *Pirates*, and to a lesser extent, *Mona Lisa* which was being negotiated for at the time of the takeover. Just to show how tedious these attempts to get titles out can be, a request to LIGHTNING to consider the Zeffirelli *Otello* (recently out on tape) went quickly nowhere, as though a CANNON film, the video rights had been sold to RANK. (The position with RANK titles is still uncertain.)

Friday 13th apart, the future release plans do look to remain mostly with the current film releases on video till CD-V begins to make its impression in the marketplace. LIGHTNING feel the market might be 'technology sensitive' with music titles and people might hold off buying them in the hope that they will become available in digital next year. This may be a bit of an over-reaction with topical titles from major artistes where the impulse to buy now is strong, but it may apply to more marginal music titles. LIGHTNING do seem pleased with the sales action on the recent CAV and mixed CLV/CAV discs. *Aliens* looks almost certain to be a side three CAV job. *Enemy Mine*, *Shanghai Surprise* & *European Vacation* have all been marked up as possible side two CAVs, but their appearance as such is by no means certain at this stage. Of course, the obvious WARNER title to do in CLV/CAV was *Nightmare On Elm Street 2*, but it looks as if the message got through too late on that one. Shame.

Enemy Mine with a second side in CAV prompts a few queries. The US disc is listed at 107 minutes, and even with the 4% PAL speed-up, there is no way this title would come down to the necessary running time. Apparently the UK version

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

of the film was re-edited for the cinema circuit and CBS/FOX assure us that the UK disc will be the same as that. We'll try and organise a comparison review to see which version is best.

Oh yes, and we're still banging away at trying to get chapters on film discs. One day, one day.....

LASER DISC REVIEW
PO BOX 526
LONDON
SW10 9AB

Subscriptions

A one year, four issue subscription to LASER DISC REVIEW (to be sent anywhere in the world) costs just £5-00 - saving £1-00 over the single issue price. For readers outside Europe requiring speedier airmail delivery the rate is £8-00.

Back Numbers

The following back issues are still available at a cost of £1-25 each (only £1-25 each for subscribers). The airmail rate is £2-00 per copy.

Issue 4 - Reviews of VP830 & LD700. Surround Sound. How LaserVision is sold in the USA. Some German & Dutch LV disc lists.
Issue 5 - Guide to NTSC LaserVision. Player Survey. Summary of all previous disc reviews. Includes Autumn '85 PHILIPS LV list.
Issue 6 - Looking at future LV developments. Japan Report. 49 disc reviews, including some PAL imports and porno discs.
Issue 7 - Reviews of PIONEER CLD900, LD707 & PX-7 Computer. Looking at the American space discs.
Issue 8 - Forthcoming A/V products for '86. Japan Report. Dutch space discs. Dutch catalogue update.
Issue 9 - Towards a combination LV/CD player. Video Recordings Act. Dolby Surround & MARANTZ RV353 review. Includes list of Dolby encoded discs.
Issue 10 - HDTV on disc at IBC. Review of NEC AV-300E Surround Amplifier. 5000 more discs in NTSC. Presentation & packaging of LV discs.
Issue 11 - YAMAHA CLV-1 LV/CD player. SONY LDP-730 LV player with digital still frame. PHILIPS 400 series specs. CD Video stirrings. Document & Data storage on optical disc. LV Catalogue corrections and update.

Bits & Pieces

Sooner than we thought dept. Further enquiries on TOSHIBA's MUSE-standard **HDTV disc player** elicited little in the way of useful information, because according to TOSHIBA, Japan - "they will not be available for about 2 - 3 years". ### Early **WORMs** - The top models of IBM's new range of micros are designed to accommodate 200-Mbyte recordable discs as one of their peripheral devices. ### **PHILIPS 1986 Annual Report** hints at several imminent developments from the company. In the research field a joint project with SIEMENS to produce a 1-megabit static memory chip is seen as a stepping stone to even greater density circuits for future products. A single chip CD player circuit is one potential exploitation forseen. R-DAT is being developed "for professional applications" - which probably means for broadcast/ journalistic use. A new manufacturing plant for LCD screens recently came into service in Heerlen (The Netherlands). Also in the TV field - "The 1990s will witness the advent of high definition TV". ### London dealer STEREO REGENT STREET (01-491 7922) is anticipating obtaining supplies of the NTSC PIONEER **LD 838D** around May/June. Price is expected to be "c. £500". This player is the latest LV-only unit to appear in the U.S. It can play discs with digital sound and offers picture specs on a par with the CLD909. ### US correspondent, Craig Hyland, reports on two new movies as follows - "Have just seen work prints of ***The Untouchables*** (Brian de Palma's latest with Robert De Niro, Sean Connery & Kevin Costner) and ***Beverly Hills Cop II***. Both are in scope. ***Untouchables*** runs just under 120 minutes; ***Cop*** about 90. ***Untouchables*** is beautiful; great cinematography and art direction. It's a must-see. ***Cop II*** is good; the photography is very un-scope-like, as if they were more interested in making sure it fits on the TV screen." ### The next LDR will feature many of the new products announced at the manufacturers' Spring trade shows. PHILIPS have already had their's and the new **Matchline 3** TVs showed up. They also had some new hi-fi separates, some of which have been around in the Dutch catalogue before. More atuned to the needs of LDR's readers, they were showing some mock-ups of a new A/V range promised for 1988 delivery. The most important units were the **FA777 Audio/Video Amp** and the **AV775 Surround Sound Controller** (with DOLBY). Both quite smart pieces of design work compared with some of the company's other rather spartan European-manufactured products. This range all come in 360mm width and so would indicate the likely appearance of a similarly widthed CD Video player to go with them. Beyond a verbal mention there was no showing of CD-V products. More details next issue. ### We also paid a visit to the **Audio Visual '87** show held at the end of April. This is mostly a business application event. Unlike a few years ago, when it was mainly slide projectors and the like, this year's show was littered with computer-aided A/V and graphics production devices, and dozens of LaserVision players for point of sale and interactive training. PHILIPS 410s and 415s were plentiful. On the MAR-COM stand was an interactive training LV/computer/touch-screen work-station using **SONY's VIEW** system in combination with their top of the range LDP-2000P player. Somewhere around £14,000 was the price given for this little bunch of goodies, but BARCLAYS BANK must consider it a snip as they've bought loads of them. They make their own programmes and SONY press the discs for them over in Japan. SONY's hardware is pretty sophisticated and can offer such options as still-frame audio (SFA), whereby up to 28 seconds of dialogue can be played while a disc still-picture is shown. Elsewhere TELETAPE had a new **SONY Profeel Pro** monitor on show. We don't yet have the specs (written in English that is!) but were told the display is a finer pitch tube than previously and there are multiple signal input facilities. More details next time, but if it helps dull the enthusiasm a bit, the price for the 27" model was being quoted at £1,300+. ### Also with a stand at the show were AMARK, the Cheltenham based distributors of **THOMPSON front-projection TVs.** AMARK are really into laser videodisc and are the company reponsible for the custom-pressed LaserVision disc compilations of pop music videos used in clubs and discos. They've done about 14 so far, but because of the special royalty payments required for public showing, these discs cost over £60 each. This may be a bit pricey for home use, but if you're still interested, get in touch with AMARK on (0242) 577910.

The best competition imaginable run by PHILIPS Silver Disc Club these last few years offered as a prize a trip round the LV pressing plant at Blackburn. The winners made their visit in March. There's supposed to have been a photo taken but we're still waiting for it to be forwarded on to us. Next time maybe...

Lee Harling
TV & Video Specialist
FORMERLY SQUARE DEAL TV, NORTH WEST LANCASHIRE'S MAIN STOCKIST OF LASER DISCS HAS MOVED TO BACK LORD STREET (Near BLACKPOOL Nth Stn)

SALES — RENTALS — REPAIRS VISA
OPEN 10.00 - 7.00 MONDAY - SATURDAY
MAIL ORDER SERVICE AVAILABLE
LASERVISION CENTRE
28/30 Back Lord Street
Blackpool
FY1 2BG
☎(0253) 294893

It's an

AMSTERDAMAWAYDAY

Philips make the official announcement of CD Video at international press meeting

Well, you figure it out! Even the man in the British Rail booking office at Victoria was hesitant as to quite what it was called, such is the diversity of the organisation's muddled ticket rate options. But anyway, the idea is that for a modest £34 they'll train and ferry you across the Channel (and back again) to exotic Amsterdam for a twelve hour shopping spree. Or for whatever other activity in which you may wish to indulge. The trip turned out a bit premature for the Dutch bulb fields either side of the railway tracks to be awash with colour, but premature could hardly be the word to describe PHILIPS' long-overdue public announcement of their continuing commitment to consumer videodiscs after several years of behind-the-scenes dithering.

For a few days in that March week (this particular one being the 18th) the Dutch multi-national was flying in journalists of Europe's consumer hi-fi/video press to view their 'new' invention - CD Video - the whole new family of optical discs that embraces the existing LaserVision 20 & 30cm formats (but with the substitution of digital audio in place the current analogue) and the genuinely new CD Video Clip disc (same 12cm size as the current CD Audio disc but with a mixture of audio and video content). What makes this family of discs a new growth market for PHILIPS is the arrival of the CD-Video player - a combination LV/CD player (with modifications to cope with the higher rotational speed of the new Clip format). And, with special relevance to a PAL market so far starved of such technology, from several Japanese manufacturers too.

What follows is a fairly detailed report of the press conference, the points raised in the subsequent question

and answer session, technical details of the new format, and comments on the new PHILIPS player (which contrary to reports you may read elsewhere was not demonstrated that day). Some of this may repeat what has been previously outlined here, but as we've been going on about all this for over a year now some sort of general updating would not go amiss. Additionally, recounting it 'as it happened', so to speak, means that the thinking of PHILIPS and the various software companies committed to the new format comes through in as untainted a manner as possible. This way, readers can decide for themselves whether they've finally got it right this time.

The press conference presented spoken contributions from PHILIPS (as hardware manufacturers), POLYGRAM (as software suppliers - POLYGRAM includes the PHILIPS, DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON, & DECCA labels), and WARNER HOME VIDEO (again software, mostly from the movie aspect). In what was once a church (built pre-disc, sometime back in the 13th century) a mini-auditorium had been created of some lavishness that was dominated from behind the speakers' podium by a huge CD Video emblem from back of which the glowing orange light provided the only illumination in the darkened room. The idea was that the large number of Matchline monitors dotted about could be viewed to best effect when showing excerpts from both CD Video discs and a promotional video featuring a Humphrey Bogart look-alike extolling the virtues of the new technology.

Just Veeneklaas of PHILIPS briefly introduced the proceedings with some prominent flag-waving on behalf of the host company -

"We are here today to give you facts and information about a new family member in our CD family. Compact Disc, which we proudly launched as a PHILIPS invention some three or four years ago, we see today as a sales marketing success. Today will give you an insight in the forthcoming launch of CD Video - when we are, once more, the innovators in charge of our own destiny, bringing the new consumer innovations to the market. And, where we feel once more confident that we will play a leading role in the sales success of that innovation".

It was then over to Frits Schuitema of PHILIPS Hi-Fi/CD Group Consumer Electronics, Eindhoven to outline the progress so far -

"The development of CD Video is inexorably linked to the development of CD. Why has CD been such a tremendous success? Is it simply because of the perfect quality of the sound, which is of course a major consumer benefit? Of course it gives superb sound reproduction, easy accessibility, ease of operation - CD is a beautiful product. CD is, and was in the very beginning a world standard which was followed by both hardware and software manufacturers. And both artistes and the retail trade contributed to its success. The number of titles at present is around 10,000. CD hardware sales in Europe in 1983 were approximately 170,000 units. The forecast for 1987 is 5,000,000 units. In the US we forecast 16,000,000 unit sales in 1987."

"From the moment PHILIPS began to explore the CD concept we realised there had to be co-operation between the hardware and software industry if the operation was to be a success. I can assure you that CD Video will follow precisely the same line of thinking. During the past year we have had extensive discussions with major international companies in the hardware industry - and of course, the software industry. In November 1986 and January 1987 we visited the United States and presented our system to the major software companies. We also discussed the product with all the major companies in the Far East, and in Europe, and we can tell you that from the majority of these companies we drew full support for the system - MATSUSHITA (TECHNICS/ PANASONIC), SONY, PIONEER, HITACHI, YAMAHA, TOSHIBA, MARANTZ, NIPPON-COLUMBIA/DENON, MITSUBISHI, SANYO. There is a whole list of Far Eastern companies who are all developing products for CD Video."

"So what is CD Video? CD Video is a new playback system which combines perfect CD digital sound with the best possible video there is today on optical disc, with a maximum playing time of two hours. CD Video covers the whole spectrum of recorded software - music, music video, feature films and any other programmes the software companies may make available on disc. CD Video is, in short, a logical development of CD, giving you a perfectly integrated audio visual system of which CD is the major part".

The talking stopped here for a demonstration of the hardware. To the accompaniment of some stirring organ chords a player rose from out of nowhere (having been hidden by a secret trap-door somewhere in the structure around the podium). Though bearing PHILIPS and CD Video logos the machine was in fact a YAMAHA CLV-1. (Talk about us being in touch! Any other mag would be boasting about reviewing it exclusively next issue. New readers please refer to our **last** edition.) Someone stepped forward and placed a CD Clip single into the loading tray and the audience was treated to Kool & The Gang performing *Victory*.

This was an NTSC disc (as was most everything we saw that day) and the aforementioned Matchline TVs are of necessity NTSC capable to cope with such signals. PHILIPS new Matchline 3 series is PAL/NTSC capable - a long-overdue facility for a monitor in this price league and an encouraging development (in more ways than one) from this manufacturer. After the music Schuitema made some size comparisons between the combi player and a couple of current PHILIPS CD players sitting alongside. (They were effectively the same size.) Then came some comments about the range of hardware possibilities to follow on from the initial combi machine (able to play all the proposed CD-V disc formats). There will be dedicated 12cm-only CD Video players, and portable ones too with screens - either Walkman style or boom-box/ghetto-blaster variants. These could appear the latter part 1988 onwards. Backwards compatibility between 12cm discs is assured, and though the video portion of the Clip discs will only function on the new players, the audio will still work on all previously manufactured hardware. Combi player hardware launches are planned for the June Chicago Consumer Electronics Show, the August Berlin Funkausstellung and the Tokyo Audio Fair in the Autumn. Price estimates of around fls-1500 were given, the upper fls-2000 limit previously quoted having been omitted this time round. An on-the-spot conversion of £500 was suggested.

SOFTWARE

Next followed some words from Jan Timmer, President of POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL, putting the software side of the CD Video launch strategy. However, as a preliminary, the previously mentioned Humphrey Bogart promo film (that was shot for the recent National Association Of Recording Merchandisers, NARM, convention in Miami, Florida some weeks previously) was shown. The film made significant mention of the MAGNAVOX brand name which is better

known in the US (along with other PHILIPS subsidiary SYLVANIA) than PHILIPS' own. It was MAGNAVOX's name that was on the original disc players in the late '70s (that bore the tag 'Magnavision' until all the companies then involved settled on the same LaserVision generic around '80-81.

Timmer claimed an enthusiastic reception at the NARM meet from the 1700 trade attendees. He read out some supportive quotes from the UK record divisions of RCA, VIRGIN and CHRYSALIS suggesting that CD Video was just the thing to take the present audio format into the next stage of evolution. According to a press release supplied, support for the Clip format will be forthcoming from A & M, CAPITOL/EMI/ MANHATTAN/ANGEL, CHRYSALIS, ISLAND, MCA, RCA/ARIOLA, VIRGIN, and WARNER. A New Business Division has been formed within the POLYGRAM organisation (headed by Michael Kuhn) to bear overall responsibility for the launch of CD Video as well as future rights acquisitions. For the US launch a similar group has been established under the leadership of Guenter Hensler with the working name of POLYGRAM CD VIDEO. Executive Vice President of the US division is Emiel Petrone, with responsibility for overall market development, including the the creation of co-operative systems-marketing between record companies, motion picture studios and consumer electronics manufacturers. Timmer continued -

"We feel extremely happy with the support from our colleagues in the software industry, for alone we cannot do it. In a way, this is a repetition of what happened with CD Audio. The CD Video media needs additional support. It needs support from the home video industry. We have talked extensively with them."

Some words of thanks to WARNER HOME VIDEO followed (a contingent of whom were present) before introducing Warren N. Lieberfarb of WHV (USA) who spoke of the company's support for CD

Video from the perspective of the movie industry. Lieberfarb jumped right in at the deep end with his opening statement -

"Addressing a group of journalists from the United Kingdom about why consumers will ultimately buy movies on optical disc rather than rent movies on videotape is a formidable challenge. England is the market in the world that first developed the home video business, such as that today 54% of UK households have VCRs; probably the largest penetration in the world - followed by Australia, the United States and Japan. About 30% of those VCR homes rent movies regularly. Video rental outlets have become as commmon as pubs. Social patterns have changed as a result. But fundamentally, the whole video business has dramatically changed the motion picture industry."

"I would say that, on an industry-wide basis, 30% of the profits of a motion picture come from the home video market. In the UK, video revenues are greater than cinema box-office revenues. A revolution has occurred in the way motion pictures are financed, produced, distributed and marketed on a world-wide basis. That change has altered the mentality and outlook of the people who decide what movies are going to be made, and how they are going to be financed and distributed. Changing one's mind-set from thinking of your primary market as the cinema and broadcast television to one in which only video distribution - ie. a movie on a physical carrier that gets delivered to a house - occurs has profoundly changed the way motion picture companies think about the future."

"It was beyond the imagination of most Hollywood executives to conceive that the American public would go back and forth to a rental shop and hire a video. In a country where there are 84,000,000 television households - where 32,000,000 of them subscribe to pay cable TV by which they receive 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, commercial-free, uncut feature films - to imagine that that market would ultimately have 36,000,000 households owning VCRs and renting movies was an eclipse of thinking that most Hollywood studios could not begin to fathom in 1980. Candidly, we probably went into the home video business in the US originally as an anti-piracy measure. Probably following the pornographers. Today home video is a dominant source of revenue, and as we try and look into the future of this business, we conceptualise a future where people will own and not rent movies. How we get to that point requires several evolutionary steps. One of these is CD-V."

"Because of the many consumer benefits; superior sound and picture; durability, backward compatibility; forward upgradability; affordable cost; quite importantly - future computer capability; and, because of the CD's manufacturing process, the probability of reducing the amount of video piracy. The advantages don't stop there. The home video business can realise important benefits as it promotes CD Video, to help the consumer embrace the idea of collecting - ie. building libraries of feature films - an idea that is uniquely suited to CD Video as distinguished from videotape. In essence, CD Video can be the technology that fulfils the promise of the sale market for feature films by evolving movie renters into movie buyers".

" We conceptualise a future where people will own and not rent movies "

The oft-heard criticism that the technology is 'too soon' for the market was rebutted in Lieberfarb's next observation that it is often the case that it is technology itself that brings about change. He cited examples from the history of the entertainment business where the way the industry has developed over the last 100 years has often been a result of exploiting technology as much as the then-new technology fulfilling a pre-defined need.

He went on to list a whole bunch of benefits afforded by the disc medium; new home video releases being priced for immediate sell-through to the consumer ("provided they are not rented"); the to-follow move into entertainment/ education with CD-I - a unique property of the disc format; the immediate access aspect of the disc - allowing favourite scenes to be replayed; easy storage in the 'jewel-box' (plus the display advantages of such packaging for retailers; and the hardware itself being the catalyst to the whole home audio-visual entertainment concept. The collectibility aspect was repeatedly underlined with comments such as "the videodisc is virtually indestructible" and "one's children will be able to watch that same movie". Some marketing tests recently carried out in the US were cited. In these newcomers to the disc format were found to express a far higher interest level in the use of the product than was encountered in the early days of exposure to the VCR.

"The introduction of CD-V, with its inherent advantages to the movie owner, will make collecting eminently more desirable. But these advantages alone will not transform the huge numbers of movie renters into movie purchasers. Renters will become purchasers as the movie industry makes movies collectible. Meeting this challenge, and thereby opening the door to a limitless market, will require industry-wide co-operation not yet seen; beginning in the formation of joint hardware/software groups - ie. movie, record, consumer electronics firms - working together, country by country."

After suggesting some packaging concepts such as series/collections of movies based on artistes, directors, genres etc and underlining the importance of packaging/labelling, Lieberfarb again made some comments about cost.

"People will buy if we price the discs affordably. Already I say that disc - longterm - will become more economical than videotape."

Warren Leiberfarb closed with some observations on the commitment of PHILIPS/POLYGRAM to the optical disc. And again, in refutation of the suggestion that (from the point of view of movies) the disc had arrived to soon he stated -

"Its time has come".

SELLING EMOTIONS

Jan Timmer returned to the stand and repeated the software message with conviction and understanding -

"You hear a lot about the importance of the market being software-driven. I think the real importance of the term is often not understood. When you hear the views of Warren, when you listen to the views expressed by some of my colleagues in the industry, I think that notion of software-driven becomes clearer. It really makes the difference between success and failure. If you think back about major fiascos in the introduction of new technology - and you all know the examples - and you look back at CD's success, then being software-driven really makes the difference. It means success rather than failure. And the software people really have to place themselves in the driving seat because, at the end of the day, what we are selling are emotions, things people get excited about and that they love to hear and have. This is what happened with CD. And we are very determined for it to happen with CD Video. The machines are very important, the discs are very important - but what's on them is the decisive factor."

"I'd like to pose two questions. Why CD Video? And why now? In respect of the music industry, it needs carriers to

[CD Video in 12cm audio + video and 20cm video configurations.]

[PHILIPS' Frits Schuitema displays the multi-national's latest optical novelty to the assembled crowd of journalists.]

secure its existence. It relied for 25-30 years on the good old LP. The good old LP became old-fashioned, but it had one advantage - it stayed around for a very long time. And that's crucial. Because, in a world of rapid change, where people can read and hear about new inventions almost weekly, there is great danger of confusing the public. Sometimes I have a feeling we confuse ourselves, and we do not provide that element of stability that is needed to be successful in a home-entertainment, software industry. You need stability. You cannot apply the economic life-cycle theories of the consumer electronics industry; its ever-shorter life-cycles - sometimes below one year. It truly has become a fashion industry. You cannot apply these theories to a software-based system because you also make the software into a throwaway item. And that goes against the very existence our industry. It goes also, we believe, against the very wishes of the consumer who likes to invest for the future, who likes to build a collection of which to be proud and not run the risk of friends saying "it's already out-of-date and you've bought the wrong thing". The LP had it. We intend to give that same longevity and staying power to Compact Disc - far into the next century."

"You may ask what this has to do with CD Video. There is a relationship. The more attractive you make an entertainment carrier, in this case based on the optical disc system, the more people like it and the longer the system is going to exist. And, I repeat, that is of vital importance. Offering this option of CD Video increases the attractiveness of the disc. This year 250,000,000 CD Audio discs will be sold world-wide."

"From the perspective of music video, many discussions and seminars have gone on and yet we did not succeed in turning music video into a business. We feel very strongly it was because we did not have the right carrier. Music video on videocassette is not really the way to do it. The 5" video single has the additional attraction of making the medium of Compact Disc more attractive to the most important group of record buyers in the world - the young people. For them music is for watching as well as listening. We think the video single will be the bridge to the larger sizes of music video."

" We tried music video on videocassette and that isn't really the way to do it "

Next came more disc demonstrations - Bon Jovi, Madonna (the Madonna was certainly analogue sound!), Cameo, a clip from *Return Of The Jedi*. These were interspersed with comments about the new packaging, which is seen to be a big plus point of the CD Video concept. A sample 30cm package was waved from the podium while Timmer was speaking. This was a dummy, using some modified sleeve artwork of the PAL version of *A Passage To India*. (Presumably because the blown-up 'cassette' format shape of the THORN/CANNON sleeves lends itself most easily to the new proportions of the plastic box insert. This is designed to leave part of the actual disc visible to the prospective purchaser.)

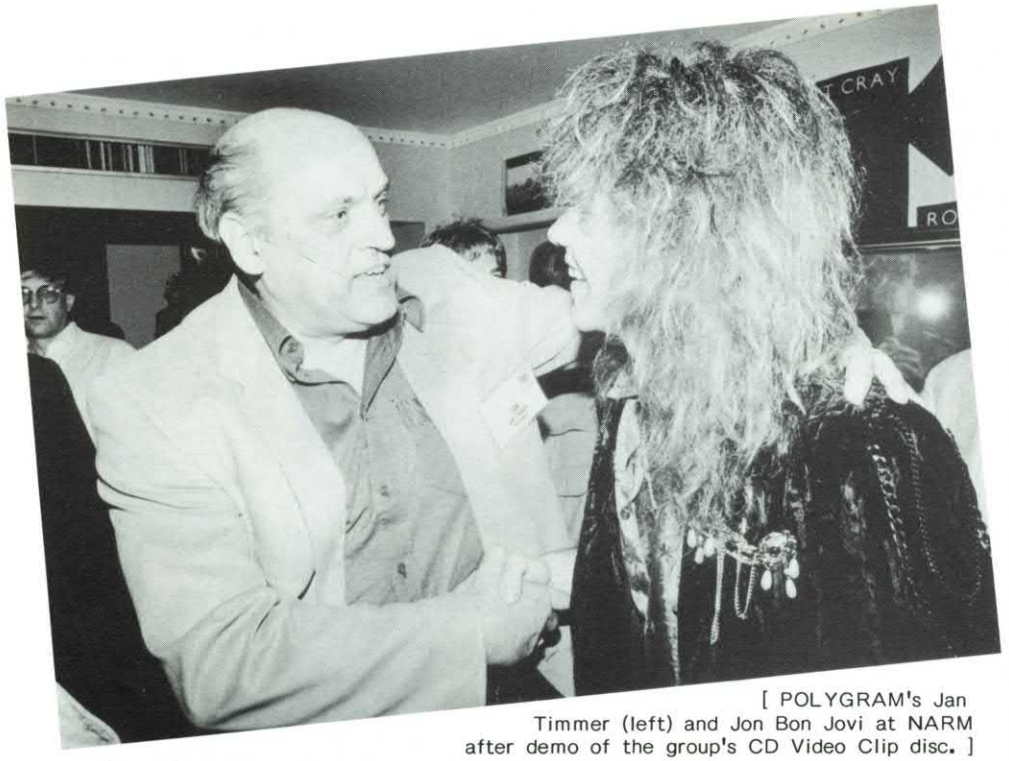
Timmer announced the acquisition by POLYGRAM of the rights to the UNITEL video catalogue - 150 or so titles of full-length ('long-form' in trade parlance) classical material that will be issued on the PHILIPS, DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON and DECCA labels - as appropriate. Plans were stated as being "well advanced" to achieve a 40 - 50 title release package in time for the launch. A *Swan Lake/Nuryev* was mentioned and an excerpt of a *Vienna Philharmonic/Karl Bohm* disc was played.

A mention was made too of moves to change TV standards. Regardless of the problems of achieving a world-wide agreement on such matters, Timmer suggested that we will still be seeing improvements in this area and the concept of "Super-Television" (as he described it) will be inextricably linked to CD Video. (The home A/V thing again.) An excerpt from *Beethoven's 7th/ Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam - c. Carlos Kleiber* concluded the address.

QUESTION TIME

There followed a period with questions being invited. These are a selection of them. (Most people present would understandably not be that up-to-date on many of the developments with the video side of disc and their questions tended to raise points already well understood by readers of this magazine.)

The 3" CD Single - A question on the configuration of the CD Video Clip disc led on to some mention of the proposed 75mm (3") audio-only CD. Jan Timmer fielded this one, indicating that discussions on the format were at a very



[POLYGRAM's Jan Timmer (left) and Jon Bon Jovi at NARM after demo of the group's CD Video Clip disc.]

early stage. Problems with modifying the hardware to accommodate the smaller disc (in preference to using an adaptor, which they see as second-best), and co-ordinating all the manufacturers (there are 160 hardware licencees) will likely mean this format will be some time off (ie. after the CD Video launch).

Prices - A question on the price of the Clip disc was 'deferred' in answer. Prices will be fixed by the time of the Berlin launch. (Although this was not part of the session, the predominant influence will probably be that of pitching the price between the full-length audio CD and the more-recent short playing time 'singles'. Manufacturing considerations aside, a UK price of £4.99 seems a good target price initially. Though this will be a bit pricey for the intended youth market, the combi player will itself not really capitalise on this market either. In the year or two the market (ie the hardware) develops, the overall downward trend in the price of 12cm CD discs generally will allow for adjustments to the pricing structure to accommodate the new format at a 'saleable' price point. There were repeated questions about software prices - specifically as regards the Clip disc - but it is obvious that the market will ultimately decide its 'true' value.)

Gold Discs - The CD Clip will be a gold coloured disc. Not gold coloured in the manner we refer to LV discs, but a bright gold doping of the plastic itself. This prompted a question from one more alert journalist who was defeated by the logic of the colour scheme ie. all CD discs are silver in colour except for the video ones which are gold, unless they are bigger in which case they are silver. Hmm. Have the marketing dept really thought this one through.....

New Audio Formats - A two-part question from the LDR representative asked whether the new hardware allowed for the dual-mono facility of LV to be transferred to 12cm CD Audio, thereby enabling mono re-issues of up to 2½ hours; also whether we will see audio only discs in the 20 & 30cm sizes, with considerably extended playing times as a result. The first part of the question was dealt with thus - "It is outside the CD standard". On the issue of larger audio discs the reply was "Technically it would be possible if you would want it, but it would be outside the specification".

" We expect the launch in the UK to be the very end of 1987, early 1988 "

Picture Quality - A comment about the suspect quality of some of the excerpts shown (this was not from the LDR man!) prompted the reply that the discs played were a mixture of items of existing, commercially available material and compromised to a degree by the practicalities of running a demo from a variety of sources. Two quotes - "CD Video is the best quality system, better than Super-VHS" and "It is a challenge to the software makers to produce the programmes of a quality comparable with the system".

Pressing Capacity - A question on disc production capacity drew this reply - "We will produce CD Video discs in Blackburn as well as Hannover. The 5" discs can be produced in any CD factory. You don't need more complicated equipment. In general, this year the capacity will be sufficient to produce the needed software; the requirement in '87 will not be very large. The real acceleration will be in 1988, and with what we know about factories under construction we don't think there is going to be any problem".

Video Piracy - Warren Lieberfarb handled this one as the question was targeted at the abuse of film product - "Macrovision [whose copy inhibitor signal is now used on some mass duplicated videocassettes] is working with 3M and MCA testing the effectiveness of Macrovision on discs. The outcome of these tests is incomplete. Other than that, if the packaging, liner notes and still photographs are of a quality that makes people want to buy the original version, hopefully the amount of copying will be reduced. People will want it in this form [raises disc box] because of the information that is on the package and the perceived value of having this original version".

Launch Dates - "We expect the launch in the UK to be the very end of 1987, early 1988".

Launch Software - "POLYGRAM anticipate having around 250 of the 5" CD Video discs available in time for the launch. We are putting machinery into progress to shorten the throughput times tremendously because the golden disc has largely to follow the hit list, of course. We have to be quick. Other than the POLYGRAM classical music titles already mentioned there is already a lot of additional 8" and 12" material currently available".

Future LV-only Players - "There are still professional applications for LaserVision players, but for consumer applications we will not be surprised if it [LV] does not become incorporated in the CD Video system".

Penetration - "We expect CD Video will reach between 15-20% of the total CD market within two years. The current penetration of CD hardware in Europe is at present around 6%. We expect, in the major European countries, this to be 20% within a few years. For England specifically, the total CD market will grow to over 3,000,000 in the next 3-4 years. Last year it was 700,000+ sales to dealers, 500,000+ on to the consumer. This year we'll reach over 1,000,000 (1987), next year (1988) 1,800,000 - 2,000,000. Within a year or two of that 3,000,000. And that means 20% of that will be CD Video." (600,000 players in 1990?) [Cumulative sales, note.]

Hardware Manufacture - "We are installing two factories. We are installing a factory in Hasselt, Belgium and we are installing a factory in the Tokyo area. From the Tokyo one we want to supply the NTSC market. This year the number produced will be limited, but the factory [Hasselt] will produce more than 200,000 pieces at least." (Tokyo figures not given.)

At this point a halt was made to the proceedings in order that the contingent of UK journalists could be put back on their plane home. Undoubtedly there were many questions still wanting to be asked. Those of us with time to kill waiting for trains and boats lingered on. One of the first points to be pursued was quite how the changeover from the existing LV format was to be effected, especially as regards the fate of CX - buttons for which reside on people's VP 830s & LD700/1100s, as does the appropriate encoding board 'gathering dust' in the PDO, Blackburn pressing plant.

Doubts about the possible future use of CX would seem to have been resolved. It became pretty apparent at the press meet that the preferred intention was to make an immediate change to issuing 20 & 30cm discs with digital audio, as soon as the new players become available in quantity. In other words, pack up the analogue disc pressing line one Friday night and start afresh the following Monday mastering discs up only in the new format. That would mean immediate software problems for those clinging on to their current models of LV player ie. there would be no new discs to buy from that moment on, and future purchases would be limited to discs from the existing catalogue.

This, then, gets round the problem of putting the CX circuitry in the new player too. Inspite of the fact there is undoubtedly some substance to PHILIPS/PDO's argument that it is often the audio quality of the submitted masters that is usually to blame, the analogue side of PAL LV would certainly improve with CX on the discs. (For those new to this continuing debate - CX is a noise reduction system similar in nature to DOLBY/DBX. It claims to improve signal to noise figures - less background hiss & noise - by 10-14db and also add some dynamic enhancement.) By moving straight to digital there would be no need to bother with CX, and that would mean a useful saving in the selling cost of the new player. Putting the CX circuit in the player was reckoned by one PHILIPS marketing man to add around £10 to the final price.

Digital sound would be better than CX'd analogue, so beyond the problem of software compatibility with existing players there is little to fault in their basic argument. There are only slightly over twenty PAL PIONEER titles that used CX so there is not even a major reservoir of existing software to be considered. Such CX discs should play back reasonably well on any player, even if it doesn't have the CX circuit in it. PHILIPS will be putting CX on their NTSC players because of the totally different nature of the US/Japanese disc standard and catalogue. NTSC LV discs can carry both analogue (usually CX encoded) and digital tracks, and there are thousands of existing CX'd titles already available. They couldn't even attempt to sell a player in those territories without CX. Because CX never got established in PAL it can be conveniently bypassed.

Strangely, the new PHILIPS professional players have CX circuitry built in, and both PIONEER and SONY do the same on their industrial and professional models. As yet there is no mention of using digital audio in this sector of the business. (Although the coding of the BBC Domesday discs is effectively the same - they are essentially the first PAL digital audio discs, except that computer data has been put on the audio tracks and not music or dialogue.) CX doesn't seem to be used that much at all in practice. According to someone in PHILIPS Interactive Media Systems Division (that's PHILIPS' classy new name for their professional LaserVision department) - "We never use it".

That just leaves one problem - purely a marketing one - and that lies with incorporating feature film material into the overall CD name group of products. Existing LV owners will understand this, but will newcomers to the CD-V format? If a buyer purchases a 1987-recorded audio CD they have an expectation of something approximating to state-of-the-art sound quality. There is sufficient understanding in the market place to appreciate that a 1965-recorded CD will probably sound different - hissier, less dynamic etc. Taking it a stage further, a real vintage re-issue from the era of the 78 will still be deemed acceptable even though, soundwise, it is well below the potential of the CD Audio format.

[The four mats? The two 12cm CD discs and 20 & 30cm LVs make up the proposed range of CD-V formats.]

CD VIDEO

However, how do you explain to a new CD-V owner, venturing into film purchases on disc for the first time that, while films of the like of *Indiana Jones & The Temple Of Doom* may sound 'of its time', any one of a large number of its contemporaries will only have optical-stripe sourced sound with limited dynamic range (not much above 12-14,000Hz) and the associated exterraneous background noises (spitting etc.). Will we not end up in the same situation that accompanied the launch of LV where the format promised near broadcast quality video, but the software companies could not deliver the goods to support it? The advantage of keeping analogue sound going is that any substandard film soundtrack could be issued that way and only proper magnetic sound transfers kept for digital audio disc releases. With old films people would understand low-fi sound quality, but putting brand new movies out with inferior audio cannot be good for the image of the new format. Losing analogue sound means losing the option to 'vet' the software in this manner.

THE REAL NEW PHILIPS PLAYER

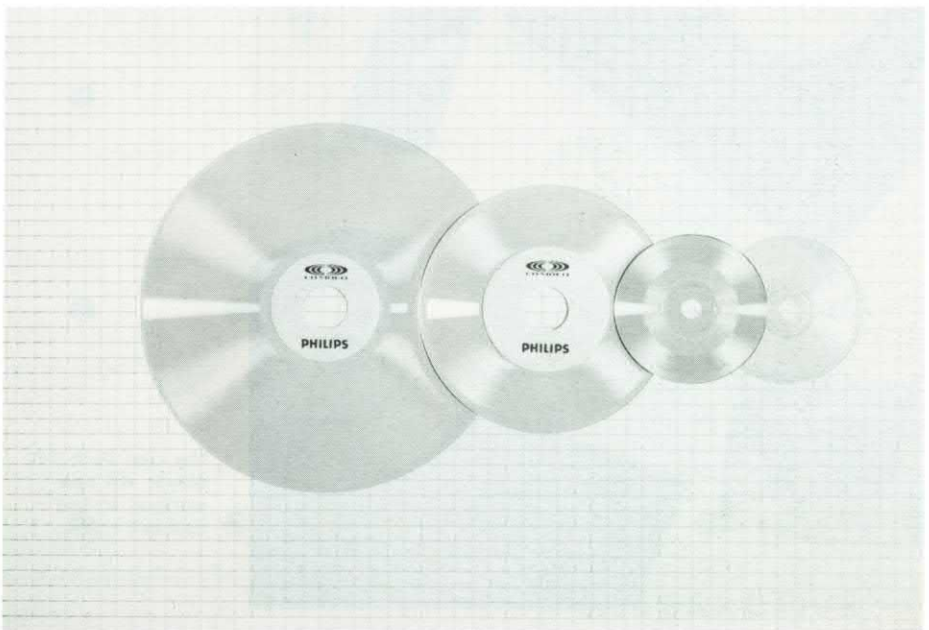
Staying behind after class is dismissed also means you have an opportunity to see the real PHILIPS combi player (or at least a pre-production sample). This was secreted elsewhere in the building and not on general display. The machine looked slightly less like a YAMAHA player than the one that popped out of the hidden compartment an hour or two earlier! PHILIPS aren't really being that secretive about their own new machine though. Photos showing part of it (reproduced here) were given away that day, and some further illustrations appeared in a colour booklet promoting CD Video generally.

The specimen playing in the upstairs room was in the now-standard black finish and of a trim, clean-lined appearance. PHILIPS will be offering different sizes of player to suit local market/product ranges. The European market will probably have a 420mm width machine, and a 360mm width one is also planned for elsewhere. On the audio side the players will incorporate the latest 16-bit, 4 times oversampling of the present PHILIPS CD Audio players. The combi player should accordingly be a state-of-the-art performer. This news will abate the fears of those who may have been wary of sacrificing the performance advantages of their present CD Audio machine.

They are the sort of tricky customers who might have wondered how PHILIPS were going to translate their pivoting laser mechanism and single-beam tracking to the new machine. In respect of the first question the answer is they won't be. To do so would involve such a physically large arm as to make the idea a non-starter. According to the PHILIPS spokesman the most important aspect of their CD players' generally superior performance is the single-beam laser, and this will be retained but will track on the conventional straight rail - as is usual for videodisc players.

CD VIDEO

Somewhat contrary to the concept of a high quality video format, the new PHILIPS player will have an antenna output to allow (misguided) connection via TV RF inputs. (Imagine! Would anyone in their right mind connect a CD player to their TV? Direct inputs **only** please.) Worse still, if you read the appropriate part of the PHILIPS release it actually says "The television antenna cable will loop through the CD Video player to the television set, while cables will also



be provided for direct connection to any audio or hi-fi system. The player will also have a Euroconnector output, providing a CVBS (composite) video signal to ensure high quality video playback". Translated, that means the player will come with an antenna lead and audio phono leads, but if you want a direct video output you'll have to buy a Euroconnector lead yourself.

In an adjacent paragraph to the above it says that "PHILIPS CD Video players will also have direct digital input/output connection for future optical disc applications". It doesn't look as though the new combi player will incorporate the RGB converter of the latest professional drives. (This was the reply to a specific question, after seeing the rear panel terminals on the player.) This may be something to be added in a later generation, as indeed may be the possibility of a multi-standard player that would function when connected to a multi-standard TV.

This latter comment was again in response to a question by yours truly. Multi-standard isn't a priority intention in the short term but it was significant that this was the first occasion where the Ed has raised the matter and not been met by either vacant incomprehension or every imaginable excuse not to pursue the possibility. Of course, as the initial launch of CD Video will be in the US this actual pre-production model was an NTSC player.

While bits of *Rocky IV* and a Clip disc were playing the conversation spanned many topics, with the Ed droning on and expounding his usual theories on the mighty disc. By this time the caretaker was hovering conspicuously in the background and jangling his keys sufficient to disrupt even the most determined of talkers. So, clutching the commemorative CD Video freebie dished out to one and all, we trekked out of the building. The man from PHILIPS bade farewell and made his getaway by darting up a side alley, leaving the Ed to continue his short walk back to the station in time for the train home and the thrill of the duty-free.

[The real PHILIPS player we saw working in the upstairs room.]

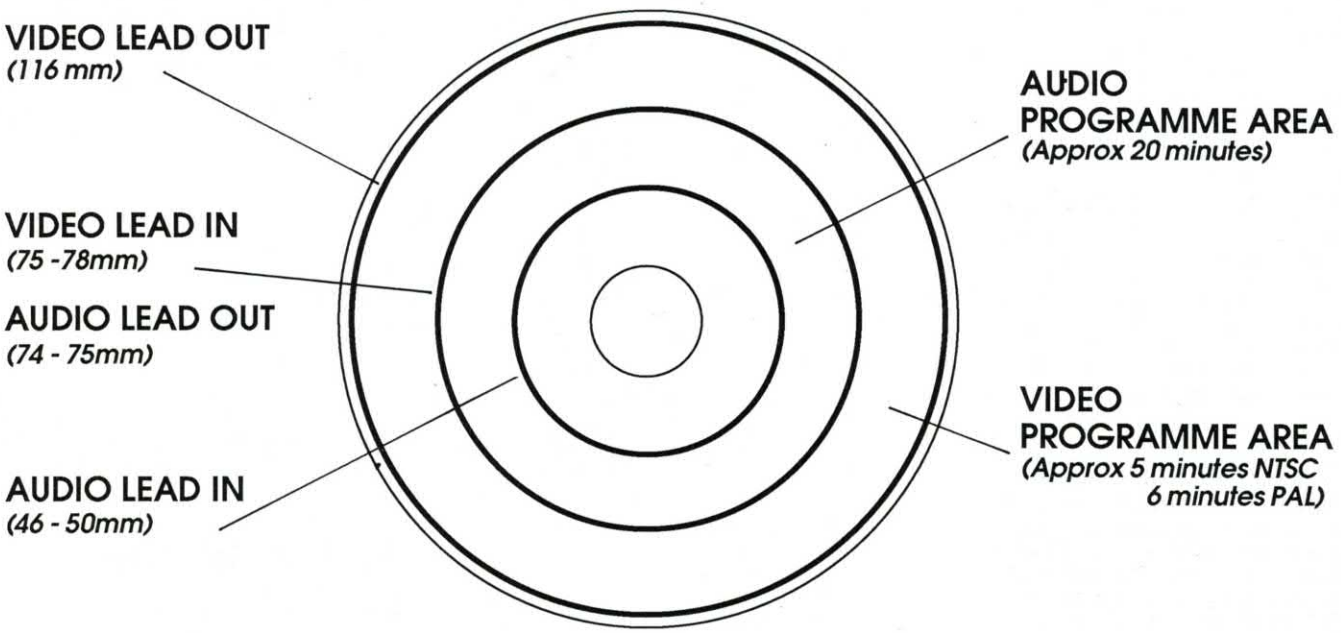
Details of the CD Video Clip format

The main diagram here shows the approximate layout of the CD Clip disc. The audio playing time is roughly 20 minutes, and the combined audio/video part of the disc runs for 5 mins (approx) in NTSC, 6 minutes (approx) in PAL. The manner in which the programme material is put on the disc is down to the programme owner ie. whether to have 25/26 minutes of unduplicated content or to repeat the audio portion of the video segment on the audio-only part of the disc. Because of the higher rotational speed of the clip disc (up to 2700 rpm in NTSC!) and the signal encoding method it will not be possible for an existing CD Audio player to play even the audio part of the video track. The whole of that outer area of the disc will be effectively 'lost' on these machines. Therefore disc producers may decide to include the audio from the video track again in the main 20 minute audio section. Smart record companies may choose the best value for money compromise and duplicate the song from the video track, but use an alternate take or mix to create maximum consumer appeal.

When a CD Clip disc is put into a CD-V player, the coding on the disc tells the player to go to the video portion of the disc first. After playing this the laser is then instructed to return to the beginning of the disc and start playing the audio part it has previously skipped past. This is without any external instructions being received to the contrary. Using the player controls it will be possible to override this automatic track selection process and play the disc in any manner the user requires.

The playing times given are obviously

CD Video Single (12cm)



[not to scale]

for CLV - the way all CD Audio discs are configured. According to a PHILIPS document provided at the Amsterdam announcement "The CD Video standard also provides for discs with CAV video tracks". It may therefore be possible to have Clip discs in Active Play, in which case playing times (of the video portion) will be approximately half those already given.

LOGO CHANGES

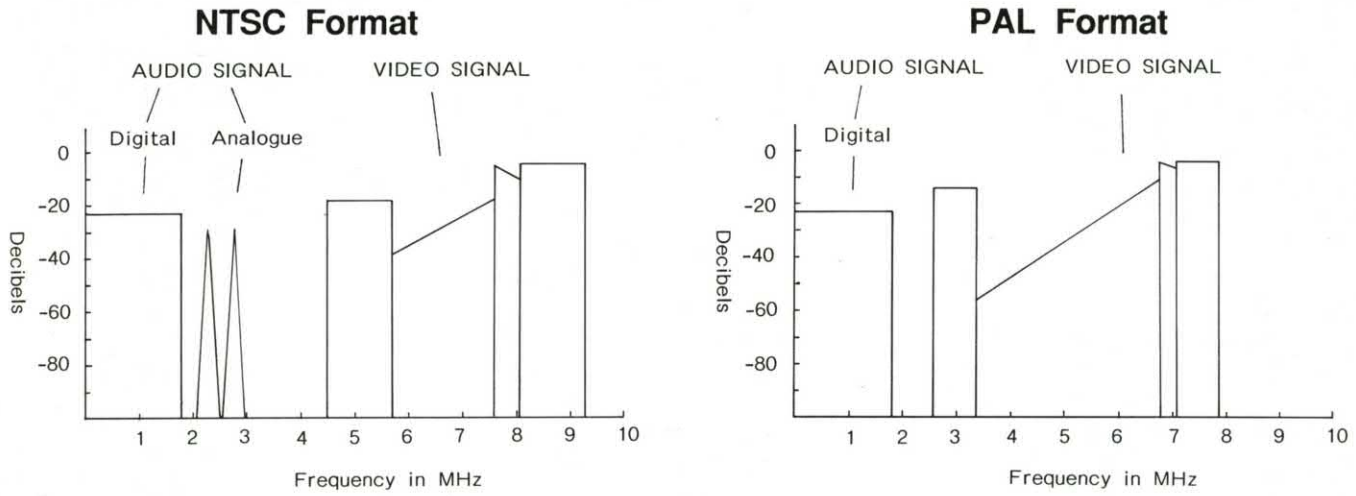
Make the most of the CD Video logo we've been liberally using to illustrate this article. It won't be around much longer. CBS Records have come to the conclusion that it looks a a bit too much like their one. To avoid any confusion the decision has been taken to modify/redesign the newcomer and the revised CD Video logo should appear soon.

CD Video Clip

CDV SINGLE PARAMETERS	AUDIO PART	VIDEO PART (NTSC)	VIDEO PART (PAL)
PLAYING TIMES (minutes)	about 20	about 5	about 6
SCANNING VELOCITY (metres/sec)	1.2-1.4	11-12	9.2-10.2
ROTATIONAL SPEED (rpm)	500-200	2700-1815	2250-1512
TRACK PITCH (microns)	1.6	1.7	1.7
NUMBER OF AUDIO CHANNELS	2 or 4 *	2	2

* This is as per the current CD Audio specification

Where the digital audio fits on the disc



The diagrams illustrating the frequency spectra of NTSC & PAL videodiscs show the location of the audio and video signals. With NTSC discs there was originally a chroma sideband located between 1-2MHz that was considered dispensable (without undue sacrifice of picture quality) in order to accommodate the digital audio signal. The original analogue audio signals at 2.30MHz & 2.81MHz were left intact in the change, and as a result, NTSC discs can still carry both analogue and digital audio. With PAL the existing analogue signals are placed at 0.68MHz & 1.07MHz ie. right in the middle of the area where the digital signal has to go.

Random topics raised by the announcement

Aftermath

Digital LV Discs & CAA

No precise specification has been forthcoming on how the change to digital audio will be effected, but putting PCM audio in place of the analogue track is not likely, in itself, to significantly alter the density of information achievable on a disc side. A sixty minute digital LV side will be the nominal maximum, as is the case now with analogue.

Most every PAL CD Video disc will initially be pressed at PDO, Blackburn - both the present LV size discs and the new Clip discs. Blackburn will become the main videodisc plant in the PDO group. Discs will be pressed there for both the European and American (NTSC) markets. Mastering for all the new digital formats is still being done back in Eindhoven, but full in-house mastering at Blackburn should become available in the Summer (August); for both PAL and NTSC formats.

Because this involves the installation of new disc mastering equipment it was an obvious temptation to ask whether we will see a change to CAA mastering on CLV discs, as has been the practice these last few years in NTSC countries. CAA helps increase the packing density of the disc. It could lead to longer playing times for PAL discs too. Some explanation might be in order.

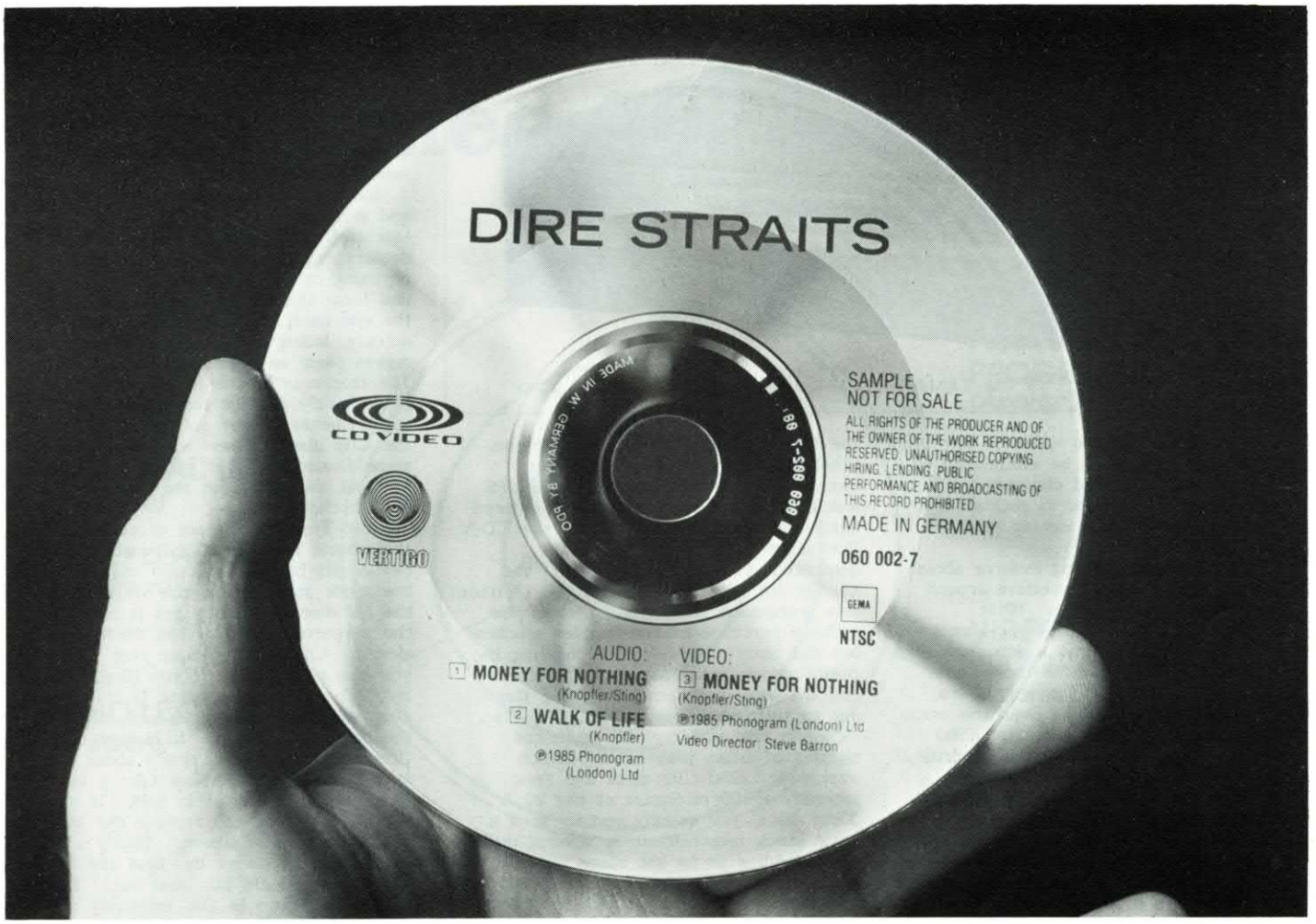
The track pitch (pitch being the spacing of the spiral of pits) of current LV discs is quoted as being between 1.4-2.00 microns. The smaller the figure the closer the track spacing. In practice it is usually only NTSC discs that are pressed in the higher 1.4/1.5 density range - because there are more pictures on an NTSC CLV disc. Here, achieving 60 minutes of playing time involves squeezing 108,000 individual frames onto a side (ie. 30 frames per second x 60 seconds x 60 minutes = 108,000).

When you start cramming this much on the quality suffers, particularly in respect of encountering problems with crosstalk - the laser starts to pick up the synch pulse from the adjacent track and the result is a dark wriggly line moving vertically across the screen. Some years back a remedy to this problem was evolved whereby the synch pulses are shifted slightly out of step. This is done by adding and deleting odd picture lines in successive frames. They call it Constant Angular Acceleration and this method of encoding eliminates many of the worst crosstalk effects. It is not

a total remedy and it is still possible to encounter some crosstalk on CAA discs. Now, though, it tends to manifest itself as a horizontal wriggle when it occurs! Incidentally, no mention of this change to CAA has ever been made on the discs themselves; they are still called CLV. CAA discs can be easily identified by the appearance of the recorded signal, which is much more ragged than true CLV encoding - the track pattern almost has a saw-tooth profile in comparison. You don't have to search out an NTSC disc to observe this. The later PIONEER PAL discs also used CAA mastering.

If CAA can increase the packing density on NTSC discs, then it could be the solution to longer playing times on PAL ones too. Presently a 60 minute PAL disc only contains 90,000 frames (25fps x 60 x 60) but the limiting factor to longer playing times is really the aged hardware presently in use. These early players have difficulty tracking long playing discs, especially if they are the slightest bit dished or warped. If we could clear out these older players and achieve a fairly speedy changeover to the new combi units (with their substantially more flexible tracking mechanisms) there would be little reason to resist a move to longer playing discs. It may be over-ambitious to expect the same 108,000 frame density of NTSC (which, as the more mentally agile will have already calculated, works out to 72 minutes), but certainly somewhere between the present limit and that figure looks achievable.

There are already 'rogue' discs that exceed the present theoretical packing density - the German mastered and pressed *Splashin At The Palace* is one example. It is recorded at such a tight pitch spacing that it could have run for 64-65 minutes had the signal been continued out to the very edges of the disc. The availability of some new mastering equipment and a move to CAA could make discs such as this less of a freak occurrence.



The UNITEL Catalogue

The UNITEL catalogue that POLYGRAM has acquired the rights to for CD Video consists of about 150 titles - opera, ballet and classical music - mostly recorded over the last 10-15 years. Many of the performances were specially recorded for the camera (often on 35mm film) and give the viewer better than a member-of-the-audience perspective of the action. The majority of the titles would have been originally recorded with analogue sound. You want to know some titles? Well, we had to make almost a federal case to get hold of a list (which we'll print in full next ish) and this was eventually forthcoming only on the understanding that no more than five or six titles would be revealed before the Chicago launch. (POLYGRAM has world rights to the titles so most everything that appears in NTSC should make it to PAL, and vice versa.)

Out of the fifty or so titles there are only a couple of ballets in the initial release batch. Most of the balance is evenly divided between opera and orchestral recordings. Of most popular appeal will be the *Bernstein Conducts West Side Story* documentary with Kiri Te Kanawa and Jose Carreras (88'). For the more committed opera buff there is a Bayreuth Festival Orchestra/Pierre Boulez *Ring Cycle* recording which will be available in parts. Even still one of the discs runs to over 4 hours (Gotterdammerung is 255') and so some of the packaging will be pretty chunky. 255 minutes will mean at least 3 discs. POLYGRAM is committed to the plastic jewel box concept, and as there is no immediate plan to come up with a multi-disc box for the 30cm size, such discs will probably come individually boxed and inserted in a larger cardboard slip case (and on the back of a PICKFORD's lorry, eh?!). We didn't get to see a finished opera disc close-up, but assurances were given that some of the economies attempted with the libretti in the ARTS INTERNATIONAL releases will not be repeated. There are several Zefirelli directed opera productions in the list that are brief enough not to be unduly beset by packaging problems. Placido Domingo is in two of these - *Pagliacci* (71', with Teresa Stratas & Juan Pons) and *Cavalleria Rusticana* (68', with Elena Obraztsova & Renato Bruson). Both are with Georges Pretre and the Orchestra of La Scala, Milan.

Fifteen hours of The Ring Cycle should make for a healthy sized box set

For orchestral fans there is a 111' Nicolaus Harmoncourt/Concentus Musicus, Vienna *Brandenburg Concertos* disc and several Bernstein and Solti led works, the latter mostly with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Apart from the UNITEL catalogue POLYGRAM will be assembling quite a catalogue of pop music titles, but little if anything in the way of feature film material. POLYGRAM's repertoire of films is pretty weak (though they have recently been getting back into film production in a modest way) and titles such as *An American Werewolf In London* tend to be the exception rather than the rule. POLYGRAM has held rights to quite a few vintage titles (Chaplin films, *Thief Of Baghdad, Phantom Of The Opera* etc) but whether there are any plans to put any of these on disc is not known.

[The real thing. Two tracks of audio & one of video on this clip disc.]

Trading Players

For more than a year there has been speculation in The Netherlands that PHILIPS would be doing a trade-in deal with the old players to enable owners to make a change to the new digital sound combi machines more easily. It looks like the deal will apply in the UK too and PHILIPS are going to offer some sort of trade-in deal or purchase incentive. As much as anything, this is motivated by their desire to show some sort of appreciation of the support the original purchasers have given the format these last few years, when the software situation has not been as good as it should have.

Quite what form that trade-in deal will take is not clear. It could be a discount on the player itself, or a software incentive arrangement (ie. some free discs). The Editor has spoken up in favour of the former, mainly for the reason that (regardless of the relative merits of the options) seasoned disc buyers know only too well that the titles you want are never available **when**

[The YAMAHA CLV-1 - the shape of things to come?]

you want them, and the value of any such arrangement could well be diminished by having to accept second choices. Something off the player is real money. It makes sense to start saving now. (Second hint.)

PHILIPS are still being evasive about machine availability. Sometime around Xmas is still on the cards. What confuses the issue is the player launch of CD Video in Germany, which depending on the take-up will decide the number of players available (and the software to feed them) elsewhere. Even the price is not firm. There is a notional £500 figure being put about, but the eventual price will probably be a last minute decision. The reason we were given is the rate of exchange (it didn't seem polite to ask guilders or Belgian francs) and so the price could be anywhere from £499 (which is coming to be considered top wack) down to even £399. This last price will seem a snip for committed disc fans, but might be necessary to interest the uneducated (in the ways of disc) mass market. We mention these figures completely irresponsibly (because they are little more than gossip), but this how most of the mainstream magazines conduct their affairs and there seems little reason why we should not indulge ourselves for once too.

News of any trade-in will obviously be communicated through PHILIPS' Silver Disc Club newsletter and we'll, of course, pass the news on to those not in receipt of this publication.

PIONEER player owners might be feeling a little left out of all this by now. We got in touch with them and there is every possibility that PIONEER will also be offering some trade-in incentive to owners of their machines. Again we'll pass further news on as it materialises. By implication, a PIONEER trade-in leaves little doubt the company will have a new player to offer soon. (Soonest?) This is quite a different stance from their rather vague plans reported on last issue. PIONEER also tell us they won't be getting involved in releasing discs this time round. Like PHILIPS, it'll be a hardware only operation in future.

Hard & Soft Tasks

This divide between hardware and software puts the whole pressure of CD-V on to the disc manufacturers. Many equipment suppliers will undoubtedly take the easy option and just go for a bumped-up CD Audio player, with the added facility to play the video version of the 12cm disc. This allows them to cash in on the new wave of technology without the bother of a multi-format machine. (Though there is always the badge engineered option.) Logically, PHILIPS would have incorporated some staggered hardware launch timetable into the CD-V license arrangement to keep the dedicated Clip-only players off the market for the first few months. Without this precaution people might otherwise make a purchase of the simpler machine (on the basis of lower cost), leaving the combi player manufacturers overstocked and the disc manufacturers going flat out to fulfil demands for the Clip disc.

When you consider the ambitious number of titles planned for launch availability (250 Clip discs and most probably a 100 minimum of the 20 & 30cm discs) you quickly end up with a basic stock requirement of several million discs needing to be sat there ready for sale on day one. Unlike the regional launches for LaserVision (due to limited software availability) and the subdued sales impact of CD (which was mostly a specialist hi-fi enthusiast market initially) CD Video is going out on to a developed and reasonably aware mass market. Getting the number of discs right will be a major factor in the overall success of the operation, and in the speed it is introduced from one territory to the next. With music as the main sales pitch there are no longer any language barriers to delay a Europe-wide CD-V introduction. The availability of discs is what will prevent it cutting a swath across the continent after the German launch.

Because combi players have been around some three years now, one can reasonably expect the technology to be pretty well worked out. More than worrying about technical details the hardware manufacturers biggest task will be in getting consumers to re-organise their living rooms to validate the purchase of a player. Hi-Fi VCR's have not been a huge marketing success. While readers of this magazine would probably not consider buying a new VCR without Hi-Fi sound, many consumers would because they don't want to know about the inconvenience of integrating their audio and video systems. The domestic upheaval involved in reorganising the sitting room, with the TV optimally placed and the speakers put around it, is probably more crucial to the success of CD-V (at least as far as the combi unit is concerned) than its picture and sound qualities and operational functions.

Packaging

Reaction to the jewel box packaging of the larger format discs has been mostly one of reluctant acceptance by dealers we have spoken to. The basic concept of establishing a common packaging theme for all sizes of optical disc is undoubtedly logical, and in some ways appealing, but day to day practicalities suggest the plastic box might not be as good an idea as it first seems.

Increased manufacturing, distribution and storage costs aside the jewel box is essentially a fragile beast, at least if dealers experience with CD boxes is anything to go by. Jewel boxes do break, and from the long term point of view of the end user, they also abrade very quickly, losing that glossy sheen that makes them so appealing initially. The thickness of the jewel box also immediately doubles the shelving requirements of any collection. (Though the Clip disc we have uses a thinner and more flexible type of plastic box that is about two-thirds of the conventional box depth.)

Also from the aspect of collectibility, the plastic box has no intrinsic value beyond its basic production cost. One of the great strengths of the vinyl LP (and the LV disc when they get it right) is the perceived value of the cardboard sleeve. Consider a simple test (which you can actually try if you like). Take any CD you own; separate it from the disc and the sleeve notes and step on the box and break it. It messes up the floor, but cost apart, that's about the only inconvenience. Now take a vinyl or LV sleeve and tear it in half. It hurts doesn't it? You can replace the box, you can't replace the sleeve. That's a value the cardboard sleeve has that the anonymous plastic box does not. The cardboard sleeve is also infinitely more suited to reproducing high quality artwork than the flimsy paper insert of the type used in CD packaging.

There is one other reservation about the jewel box - a practical one. Warpage is not a significant problem with CDs. They are small diameter pieces of polycarbonate, a plastic that is fairly flexible but stable. LV format discs are made of a perspex-type plastic that requires conscientious storage to maintain flatness (and thus playability). Such discs, kept hub-mounted in a case that does not restrain the outer edges, looks like just asking for trouble in respect of long term storage. There is just nothing to stop a warp developing over a period of time.

Combi to Omni

To conclude, a brief glimpse of what is to follow - the omni player as it is being called. This machine will appear when the CD-I format is sorted out and ready for the market place.

What is CD-I ?

CD Video is only a stage in the masterplan of home optical disc usage. The logical extension of the interactivity of the media is to be achieved by linking the disc player to a computer and using its control potential to expand programmes beyond their basic linear running time. It's something that can be done to a degree with the LaserVision format, but a glance at the accompanying table of player/programme combinations will reveal some extra tweaks that can be wrought in the CD Audio format to do

much the same thing - and more.

CD-I (the 'I' standing for Interactive) is a further step up from CD-ROM, the 550 Mbyte data disc based on CD Audio technology. CD-I puts the data and the sound together, mixes in some video and comes out with a product suited to a number of informational/educational needs - home learning, interactive training, car navigation, talking/illustrated books and dictionaries, animations and so on. It's a 'smart' format designed to function with the user and a computer - and in the latter respect that doesn't necessarily mean a typical keyboard installation. The smartness could be built in to any number of pieces of home entertainment hardware.

BASIC SPECIFICATIONS

As far as PHILIPS and SONY are concerned the specifications for CD-I have been established. There is some lingering resistance from the computer industry that may delay its realisation or modify the final format, but in essence the concept is clear.

Operating System - The format relies on the exploitation of one of the Motorola 68000 family of microprocessors to do the general housekeeping duties required to keep all the signal functions of the CD-I disc in harmony. There is a CD-I Real Time Operating System (CD-RTOS) designed to do this and it based on the OS/9 operating system.

Data - Pure data is assigned the greatest level of signal integrity. Data can only be right or wrong and cannot be allowed to be degraded. With audio and video the format allows a choice of output qualities depending on application.

Audio - For audio four basic levels of sound quality are provided for:-

CD DIGITAL (16-bit PCM)
- 1 channel stereo

HI-FI (LP quality)
- 2 channels stereo or 4 channels mono

MID-FI (FM broadcast quality)
- 4 channels stereo, 8 channels mono

SPEECH MODE (AM broadcast quality)
- 8 channels stereo, 16 channels mono.

A channel is specified as having 70 minutes (approx) of playing time ie. the CD Digital format (same quality as present CD Audio) runs for c. 70 minutes in stereo. With each reduction in bandwidth the playing time is increased in multiples of this figure, but a gap of 1 to 3 seconds occurs between each 70 minute sequence. A Hi-Fi quality disc would therefore play for 140 minutes (stereo). In the Speech Mode it would be possible to have (in a multi-lingual application) 16 different languages running together, each lasting for 70 minutes. Or you could have over 18 hours of near continuous speech, the gaps occurring to allow the disc to restart each time.

Video - The video specification provides for a world standard disc. This is made easier by the fact that the format does not offer real time moving pictures - only an animated movement mode of lowish resolution. CD-I, being an extension of CD Audio, does not generate sufficient information density to achieve full bandwidth motion in video. (That's why the new CD-V discs require new hardware - the discs have to be run at a much higher speed to achieve sufficient data output for full motion video.) The best video CD-I can off load is about 10 frames per second in its lowest resolution mode.

However, there are several video modes on offer. Two resolution levels exist; normal (the equivalent to present domestic TV receivers) at 384 x 280 pixels; high resolution 768 x 560 pixels. Colour for 'natural' stills is achieved by 4:2:2 YUV coding. Such pictures normally occupy 325 Kbytes, but with signal compression this can be brought down to 108 Kbytes with negligible image degradation. With this reduction such pictures can be read off disc in under a second. There is a CLUT (Colour Look Up Table) graphics mode only requiring 10 Kbytes per frame that comes closest to an animation mode offering approximately 10 pictures per second (with sound). Between these two extremes lies a further RGB mode. Interlaced and non-interlaced modes are catered for, the latter option demanding twice the disc information density. The world-standard aspect of the CD-I format involves only the very slightest compromise of picture quality - a distortion effect of 3.5% being claimed.

PRODUCT AVAILABILITY

Tentative predictions of a showing of CD-I hardware and software in 1987 are looking increasingly optimistic and it may be a year or two before things really get going. Somewhere down the road is the omni player (as PHILIPS call it), an expanded version of the imminent combi unit. Software development for CD-I is proceeding in both the US and Japan. Indeed, the mention of computer interactivity in Warren Lieberfarb's Amsterdam address reflects the efforts of WARNER's Record Group off-shoot where software preparation is already in progress.

The optical disc family

Player & Programme Options

	MUSIC	MUSIC & GRAPHICS	VIDEO SINGLE	MUSIC VIDEO	MOVIES	GAMES	EDUTAIN-MENT	INFORM-ATION
COMPACT DISC Player	●							
CD VIDEO SINGLE Player	●		●					
CD & GRAPHICS Player	●	●						
CD VIDEO Combi Player	●		●	●	●			
CD-I Interactive Player (T.B.A.)	●	●				●	●	●
CD-V.I. Omni Player (T.B.A.)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	PASSIVE «						**» INTERACTIVE**	

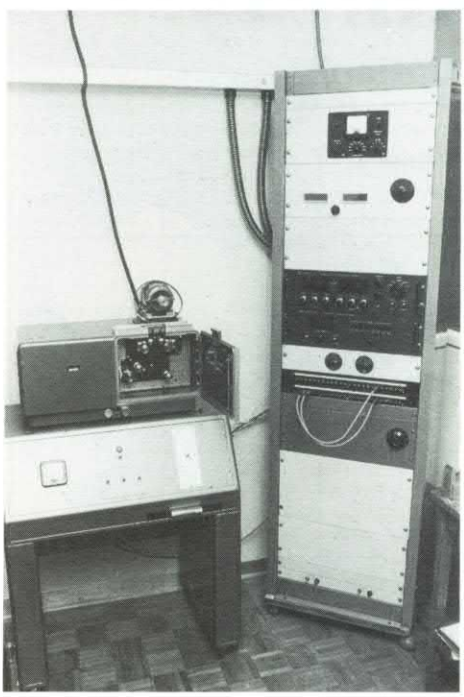
DOLBY SURROUND

Mixing Dolby Soundtracks at Warwick Studios

The trouble with publishing a magazine about the upmarket end of home entertainment is that it tends to attract the 'difficult' type of reader. Not difficult in **that** sense, but in the sense of 'more knowledgeable'. There would appear to be high percentage of the readership who can boast some level of expertise in the areas of film, video and broadcasting and as such are demanding folks to write for. So we'll change things round a bit.

Ernie Marsh knows quite a bit about DOLBY Surround - mainly because he spends a good deal of his time mixing and dubbing the soundtracks for the feature films that end up bearing the magic logo on the end-credits. An encounter with Ernie, perched at the controls of his mixing desk, in the labyrinth of work-rooms at WARWICK STUDIOS - a post-production facility located in London's Soho - provided some background of how it's all done.

WARWICK STUDIOS is presently one of but a handful of places that can handle the complete DOLBY Surround process chain - right from the early film rushes up to the final printing of the stereo optical track onto film. For this last stage in the sequence (before the film goes off to the lab for processing) they have recently installed a new $70,000 digital optical recorder - *Aliens* is one job that has already been done on it.



[The stereo optical printer at WARWICK. Film in light-tight cassettes is fitted onto the top of the printer - situated at the left of the picture. After exposure the film goes off to the lab for processing and marrying with the final film print.]

The room where Ernie spends his working day is more akin to a mini cinema than anything else. The wall at one end is filled with the screen - which is wide enough to take all formats of film - and facing it at the other end is the mixing desk. Behind the desk, in another room, are the projectors. In a different room again are the recorders. Everything is controlled from the desk. While the projectors are loaded and tended by someone else, Ernie has full transport control and can shuttle the film back and forth at will. There is a beam running across the ceiling about halfway down the room where the projector throws up a footage count that enables the film to be lined up to within a few frames.

Ernie designed the desk himself and had it built to his specification by AMEK up in Salford. Among all the many faders and knobs, pride of place goes to a couple of specially imported joystick controls that enable sounds to be panned through 360 degrees with some amount of finesse. Perched on top of the desk is a small control unit for the DOLBY encoder, which sits in a rack behind, along with various patch bays and ancilliaries.

Apart from its special suitability for DOLBY work, the studio also pays its way by doing general film dubbing duties. Language dubbing - foreign films into English or English-language films into foreign languages. There's quite a steady demand. While there Ernie was doing a preliminary run through of the new Richard Gere/Kim Basinger movie *No Mercies*, in advance of dubbing it into French, Spanish, Italian and German. (Interestingly, the villain of this piece, Jereon Krabbe, was the lead in *The Fourth Man* - a film Ernie recalls doing the English language dubbing for and that ended up on disc.) For these foreign language versions the dialogue is usually recorded by actors and actresses in the countries themselves and the finished tape shipped to London to be married with the backing track.

A somewhat novel job Ernie recently did for the BBC is of special interest here. When the BBC came to play their film print of *Kagemusha*, they found the soundtrack to be distorted and unusable. To the rescue came the LaserVision disc version, for which Ernie bought his VP700 into the studio in order to dub off the soundtrack that was then synched to the BBC's print for the actual transmission. Viewers saw a film print, but heard the soundtrack of a standard LV disc.

ORIGINATION & MIXING

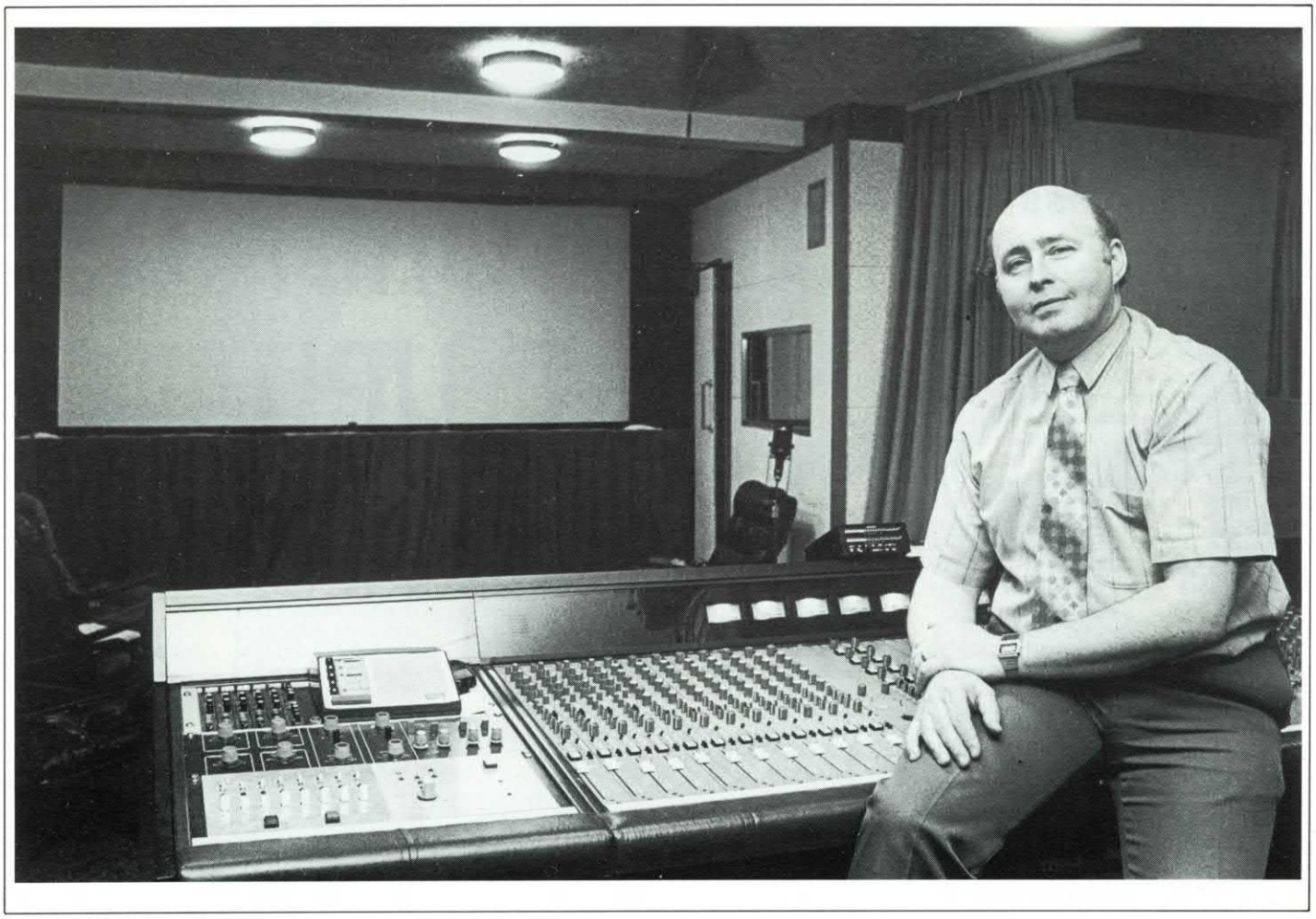
There is a sequence of steps in the production of a film that influences the success of the final soundtrack. DOLBY encourage the use of Type-A noise reduction (a professional version of the Type B used on cassette recorders) during the original recording and later mixing and transfer stages to prevent noise build up. As far as those original location dialogue recordings are concerned, they will nearly always be done in mono. There are often more soundtracks recorded than is at first apparent. Even something as simple as people talking in a traffic-filled street might require several different tracks to capture. If the street noise ('the atmosphere', which can be done in stereo) is not recorded separately you can encounter problems with subsequent cutting of the picture, where portions might be edited out. If the dialogue is on the same track this will result in jumps in the street noise in an apparently continuous scene. Little of what is 'real' on screen is really what what was recorded in the field.

The final 'sound picture' is built up from many constituent parts that can be recorded at different times and away from the original location. Even dialogue, for various reasons, can be dubbed on later. Ernie believes there several misconceptions about what a stereo film actually is and here describes what happens to the various components of the movie's sound to create the final stereo surround mix.

"Basically, you find that with a stereo feature the music is in stereo (channels 1 & 3, the left and right in the final format) and part of each is bled to the surround channel (channel 4). Dialogue, 90% of the time is centered, and the reason for that is the compatibility between mono and stereo. Sometimes in the filming they'll use two microphones on a voice - but only to cover someone turning their head, say, where they might otherwise go off-mike."

"Now the effects, though it depends how you do it, are mono. So of the three constituents of the mix - the dialogue, the music and the effects, the only thing that is in stereo is the music. Sometimes you pan things to **create** a stereo image, like a car moving across a screen."

"The way I like to start off is to



build a stereo atmosphere." (Suggests an open-air scene in a field with birds singing and flying about as an example.) "In Hollywood, and a lot of major studios in Britain, they use a mono effects track which they put on one channel, and then run it a certain number of feet out of synch on the other side. But all you really end up with is birds flying up the sides. If you use a genuine stereo track, the birds can fly over and fill the middle in. You can then take another track and move it across that stereo field."

"With dialogue, unless you have someone off-screen or talking through a wall, it's much better to put it into the centre, because when it gets into a cinema that is mono, this is when you get compatibility problems. Most soundtracks are compatible, but you have to realise with DOLBY stereo that when you are listening in mono you never hear the surround channel, because it is recorded out-of-phase to the front."

TRANSFER STAGES

"So, we start off with four tracks - left, centre, right and surround. They come to this gadget here, the DOLBY DS-4 Encoder, which takes the four tracks and makes two of them. It puts the left all on one channel, the right all on one channel, the centre matrix is pulled into both, and for the surround the phase is reversed and put on both. The signal from the DS-4 goes to the master recorder where the original four channels just come up on tracks 1 & 2 - and that is the final encoded track which is then transferred to optical (or magnetic)."

"The critical thing with the encoding process is the azimuth, the horizontal alignment of the heads on the recording machine. So beforehand we put pink noise on both tracks. Because the surround track is out of phase, unless your azimuth is dead accurate you end up with dialogue coming up on the surround channel. You'll always get a certain bleed through, but when it's wrong you end up with people talking out the back of your head, lose it on the front, and get bounces on the left and the right."

COMPATIBILITY

One of the effects that never seems to work with complete success on DOLBY MP encoding is the recreation of movement between front and back speakers. As Ernie pointed out this would involve compromising the cinema to cinema compatibility of the Surround format - one of the crucial reasons for its success. The fact that a print can be shown in any location, regardless of the sophistication of the sound system is a valuable asset. Playing an MP encoded stereo print in a mono-equipped cinema is easily done, though some compromise with the dynamic range and the dialogue level is required in the mix. Should this compatibility be sacrificed, the front/rear effect could indeed be increased. Seeing as no such thing as a mono LV disc player has **ever** been made, there is an opportunity here for future exploitation should the disc market ever be of sufficient size to justify the additional re-mix cost.

70mm STEREO SURROUND

There are some DOLBY Surround films that do contain different left/right information on the surround channel. The six-channel audio available on 70mm film uses the two extra tracks for low-frequency bass effects and these carry the separate left rear and right rear information to enable movement between the rear speakers. (The surround track on standard DOLBY MP is, of course, just mono.) Films such as *The Wall*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Superman I*, *Supergirl*, *Top Gun*, *Return To Oz*, *The Black Cauldron* and *The Jazz Singer* exist in this enhanced Surround format, but it is unlikely that they could be recreated in the home environment in the forseeable future. It is conceivable that the four soundtracks on NTSC discs - the two PCM ones and the two analogue - could be used to exploit these 70mm Stereo Surround films, but the results would only be effective on Digital Sound players and there would be no PAL equivalent.

AT HOME WITH ERNIE

The prints Ernie works with are mostly just proof quality prints. (The print only needs to be good enough to work out the sound mix and synch it to the film - the marrying of the picture and the sound proper is done later in the lab when the bulk release prints are made). The shuttling of the projector back and forth does the print no benefits at all! Even still, the couple of reels of *No Mercies* that went through during the visit looked impressive in size, format (no sides chopped off!), tonal quality and definition. (Don't get too excited - it's on RCA for one and Ernie reckons the BBFC will have a few of the more violent bits hacked out by the time it reaches video.) Being exposed to films on this level doesn't prevent Ernie being an avid disc collector. There obviously are compromises, but he reckons that keeping a balance between screen and speakers goes a long way to recreating an effective cinema experience in the home. Ernie has one of the 70cm PIONEER monitor TVs and keeps his speakers fairly close in so as to make sure the sound is in harmony with the size of the picture.

Three victims of the censor's scissors come under scrutiny .....

Heartless Cuts

What's missing out of Indiana Jones & The Temple Of Doom? A look at the American disc tells all. There the video release bears the same PG rating the UK issue does - but it doesn't have to endure the following listed cuts to achieve it. These are itemised with the US disc's frame numbers (we had the CAV version to play with). By dividing the totals by 30 (the number of frames per second in NTSC) one can get some rough idea of the length of the edits. In total the amount removed from the movie is about 30 seconds. Most everything occurs in the thuggee sacrifice scene - side two of the UK disc, side three of the American one.

4434 - 4518 Close-up of Mola Ram pushing fingers into the chest of the unfortunate chap about to be sacrificed.
4724 - 4805 The chest is seen to heal itself and close up - that's how no wound is visible on the UK disc.
6114 - 6257 Close-up of heart in Mola's hand. It's throbbing and smoking. (This is what makes Willie clasp her mouth.)
6282 - 6453 The heartless victim is lowered into the flames screaming and starts to burn.
6471 - 6779 More heart close-ups - this time giving off more smoke. Cuts to final death throes of sacrifice - who is breaking out into flames. (He dies this way, before reaching the flaming whirlpool.) Cuts back to Mola in close-up and the heart bursts into flames - the long shot of this is where the UK disc rejoins the action. Within this sequence there are also frames of the cheering followers, that presumably out of convenience, are edited out too.
22265 - 22430 Indy's whipping scene. The edit occurs after the second whip stroke. You miss a third stroke that produces a bleeding cut in his back and the following sequence. Here the young maharajah emulates the whipping exercise - directing it towards 'his' adversary, Short Round, who is similarly thrashed, but in less explicit a manner.

VIDEO RECORDINGS ACT UPDATE

With luck, this should be the final boring tirade against the Video Recordings Act (VRA) and the damage it has done (and is guaranteed to do) to the whole future of disc technology in the UK. It all took on a new perspective when an American subscriber wrote and said "I should hope that the whole British populace would rise up in arms and demand immediate repeal of this Act". Well, we don't do things like that, do we? And because we don't everything just cranks down a notch and we adjust - while the rest of the world moves on. You have to remember that the Act exercises control over all "video works" destined for home use. That means films, music, computer games, and indeed, any published work that ends up viewed on a TV display.

While the music industry mulls over the marketing possiblities offered by the latest optical novelty - the CD-Videoclip - they may care to devote some time to the prospect of their entire future output being subjected to this fresh form of pre-censorship.

The Act supposedly exercises little control over music and informational software, but such are the exclusions contained within its provisions that any controversial subject matter on disc can now be controlled by the threat of harrassment and prosecution. Any one of the notorious or 'banned' pop records of recent years would have fallen within the control of the Act - if the titles would have been available on CD and the display potential used to display the song lyrics and some related digitised pictures.

The Act does not appear specifically targetted at such an application, but at the same time, it wouldn't take a very bright lawyer to realise that it could be very effectively used for such a purpose. More alert readers may have noticed many music videos already appearing with BBFC certifications (The *Duran Duran/Arena* disc for example) and this is a trend that is likely to increase as companies take the safe (but pricey) insurance against prosecution. (As was the case with *Rupert & The Frog Song.*) But to more immediate matters.

Many of the bizarre contradictions brought about by the sloppy conception of the Act have already been mentioned in LDR-9. What follows here comes as a result of following up the idea of attempting to obtain full versions of titles when they come to be released on disc - even if it means them carrying a higher BBFC rating - an 18 instead of a PG say.

The catalyst to all this was the disgraceful nine cuts inflicted on the UK version of *Indiana Jones & The Temple Of Doom.* But while it it turns out there is no problem, in principle, of obtaining a separate certificate for a full version of such a film, the obstacle presented by the BBFC is that a 50% re-certification fee is required (about £250 in this case) - even though the title has been previously viewed and charged for.

THE SYSTEM

The procedure is that when films are submitted for BBFC certification it is often with the request from the distributor that they hope to achieve a specific rating to suit their target market. If the BBFC, on viewing the film, considers it merits a higher rating than the one requested (ie. a '15' instead of a 'PG') they will suggest cuts be made to bring it into the desired category. The re-cut film is then re-viewed and, all being well, passed with the required certificate - no additional fee over that originally stipulated being levied. This seems straightforward enough.

However, if one then turns round and says to the BBFC that you want to issue the original full version of the film, with the higher rating, the BBFC demand a 50% re-certification fee. Even though they have already seen that exact same version. On a two-hour film that brings you to a £250 added cost - presently too much for the videodisc market to bear on its own.

Although it might appear the BBFC has 'got it in' for the video market, the reality is that they are essentially just trying to screw as much money out of the system as they possibly can, in order to cover their costs. This is quite a reasonable attitude, given that the Government expects the BBFC to be self-financing, even though, of course, the ultimate cost is borne by the consumer.

In conversation with a spokesman for the BBFC an interesting aspect of the Video Recordings Act came to light. (Which for once will work to the distinct advantage of the disc buyer.) This is the significance of the rating applying to a specifically identified version of a programme. This became apparent when he made it clear that the cut version of was re-viewed before a certificate was finally granted. They don't just suggest cuts, give out the certificate and leave it at that. Realising that the removal of a few 'offensive' seconds of content may require minutes of supporting

Is this the end of serious film collecting on disc ?

plot exorcised as well (to avoid losses of continuity) they are alert enough to understand that this further abbreviation might again upset the balance of the programme and exaggerate a previously insignificant aspect of the action. In brief, shorter is not always less 'offensive'.

So when they apply a certificate to a title it applies solely to that version - not a longer one, not a differently edited one.... or a **shorter** one. This means that any temptation to cut a film to fit it on to disc is henceforth removed - unless the 50% re-certification fee is forthcoming. And if they are not going to pay for a fuller version they're sure as hell not going to fork out for a lesser one. (Come the time for *Wild Geese II*, *Who Dares Wins* etc to be re-certified for home viewing, the new certification will only apply to the complete videotape version, and these discs will thereafter become illegal products.) There are ways round this disc overcapacity problem - the Act does make specific provision for programmes to be time compressed without the need for re-certification. But, as PAL video transfers (from film) already suffer a 4% speeding up there would seem little potential for this option, bar its use on credit sequences and the like.

NO 'COLLECTOR' DISCS

But that's about the only good news to come out of the VRA. Things don't look so hot for the serious film or video collector. There seems little possibility we will enjoy those interesting restored versions of films being issued with increasing regularity on NTSC disc - such as the MCA Encore Edition series or the CRITERION re-issues. The UK market will have to be huge in comparison with its present size to sustain the additional certification fees levied on such releases.

What will make it doubly frustrating, even when just trying to obtain complete versions of films, will be the constant showing of such movies on TV unhindered by the limitations of the Act. It seems almost bizarre that the software companies, who are usually so aggressive in protecting the value of their properties, seem prepared to sit back and let these full versions of films be broadcast for anyone with a VCR to record at will. Quite how they imagine consumers will then rush out and pay for a shorter version is difficult to conceive. Video-disc collectors are only likely to turn to off-air dubs when nothing else is available. Given the choice they would still prefer to buy a nicely-packaged, superior quality disc. But what is the value of a disc that is less complete than the off-air videotape dub? (Maybe there'll be a new law to control the TV companies and put this anomaly to rights?)

[Now that's an unfortunate giveaway, isn't it? It shows how long it takes some of these articles to appear after they've been written! In those few short months an attempt to sort out the contradiction has come to pass. On 3rd April a Private Member's Bill to introduce legally-enforceable censorship control over broadcasting - TV and radio - received overwhelming support, and is only likely to fail on a second reading - and thus become law - if that reading cannot be fitted within the allotted parliamentary timetable, or is 'lost' should an election be called.]

That the video companies have appeared to take the implementation of the VRA lying down is something of a misnomer, however. In conversation with Norman Abbott, the Director of the British Videogram Association (BVA) that represents 90%+ of the major software companies operating in the UK, it became apparent that the industry's initial response to the Act was one of resistance, but realising they were out on a limb and there was no public or media support forthcoming, they capitulated and made the best of a bad job. The VRA does offer certain benefits to the trade, which has acquired a tacky image in the last few years.

By clearing the shelves of a lot of the second-rate "nasty" type of product little room was left for the fringe dealer to make a living and, as such, those who were to be left could be seen as more family-orientated outlets offering quality software. For the software distributors the Act also has other merits, in that it can be used against counterfeiters in place of weaker existing legislation. The £1,000,000+ a year presently being paid in certification fees by distributors to the BBFC (plus, by Abbott's own estimation, an equivalent amount again in administration/inconvenience costs) is seen as a small price to pay for the new image. Mainstream video rental business has improved recently, and this is the significant factor of the equation.

For disc buyers, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that the companies have a special devotion to the

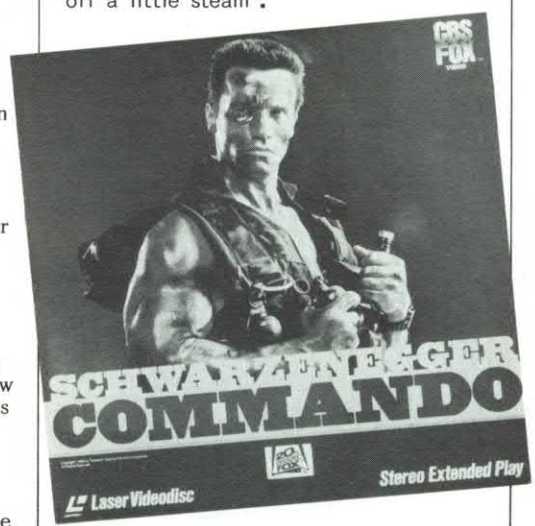
'Armless Fun

There are two occasions where the UK disc of *Commando* is cut. In total, only 5 - 6 seconds of screen content is lost.

If (on the second CAV side of the PAL disc) you go to frame 21770 (the scene where Matrix is surrounded in the woodshed), you'll be able to count five soldiers lining up around the door in the hope of eliminating our unarmed hero. Of course, Matrix dispatches the lot of them, using a selection of gardening implements and power-tool accessories. However, only four of the adversaries are actually dealt with. The fifth doesn't run away, though.

After soldier number four gets the chopper between the legs (maybe 'axe' would be more appropriate?) there is an edit following frame 22705. What we don't see on the PAL version is Arnie slicing off the fifth soldier's arm. Scan back to just where Arnie comes out of the shed with the axe. It's in his left hand. But, he also has a long knife in his right that we don't see used. In the original film he grabs the fifth soldier's outstretched pistol arm with his now-free left hand (having dropped the axe), and chops the man's arm off - midway between elbow and shoulder. The severed stump is woggled about a bit and some blood drips out. Using the SONY LDP-730 (we reviewed last issue) it is possible to still-frame though the sequence on the NTSC CLV disc. The effect is quite realistically done when seen in real time (all 1 - 2 seconds of it!), but in still frame you can see that the actor's genuine arm is poked down the inside of his shirt. (But we won't let on, eh?)

There are two rather mysterious edits in the final hand-to-hand conflict between Matrix and Bennett. After frame 34977 there is a break where originally there was a brief - but 'non-explicit' (ie. there is no blood or wound visible) - close-up of the pipe stuck in the chest. Both disc versions are the same for the close-up of Bennett's bloody face (34978 - 35001), but then we lose another non-explicit tracking shot - where the camera pulls back to show the dying man full-length, pipe in chest, smoke coming out the end. This lasts two or three seconds and shows nothing which is not in the continuation of the shot that we do eventually get to see on our disc - after Arnie advises the man to "Let off a little steam".



Haltered States

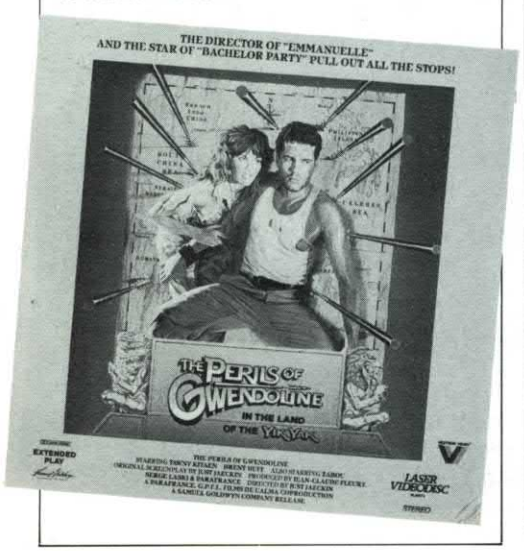
Comparing British & US versions of *Gwendoline/The Perils Of Gwendoline* is a difficult task. Both versions are cut. In fact, the US disc is a whopping 12 minutes shorter (see review) than the UK one, but it is not the quantity as much as the specifics that are of interest.

The cinema version was originally cut when it came into the UK and may have been 'revised' again for video - if a trade press report at the time of release is to be believed. This was all before the implementation of the Video Recordings Act, since when it has been certified again, but only after 2'51" of footage has been removed. The UK disc has not been re-mastered to accommodate these revisions. When the disc appears in France or Japan we'll probably be able to tell you exactly what is missing from the movie, but three or four segments deemed acceptable for US viewers obviously raised objections with the UK censors.

Gwendoline's earliest encounter with the Yik-Yaks (who are all women) results in a fight in the prison with some of the guards, one of whom falls back against a cage full of prisoners (who are all men). Prison grub has obviously been as inadequate here as it is in all such similar institutions, and an opportunist inmate takes advantage of the situation by tucking into the nutritious flesh of the woman's upper arm while his confederates' hands are thrust through the bars to restrain her.

Gwendoline and sidekick, Beth, are inevitably captured, but as soon as the girls start appearing stripped to the waist, with bondage halters round their necks, the UK disc starts getting a bit jumpy. Even the US disc bottles out eventually. Both discs are equally cut in a chariot chase scene, but the US one does have a momentary shot of an impaled Yik-Yak warrior (who has just lost a fight with the heroine). It's not a particularly gruesome shot and would have likely escaped attention if the subject had been a man.

In all there could be some minutes missing from both discs in these racier moments. The reason the US disc is shorter (and almost incomprehensible as a result) is that a whole chunk of the story is missing in the middle of the movie where Willard, Gwendoline and Beth are making their way across the desert. Nothing 'controversial' is excluded here.



product they handle - but at the end of the day it is just business. As long as the money continues to roll in no-one is going to push for a change from the inside.

FUTURE OPTIONS

For the forseeable future the disc will have to function within the disciplines of the overall video market. As a result the videodisc disc will fail to fulfil its own potential or the requirements of its supporters. That's rather sad. For some reason the Video Recordings Act excludes films on film or imported videos, so those who still intend building up collections of movies do have some options open to them.

Shifting allegiance to 8mm film has its disadvantages. The selection is a bit limited and at £200+ a throw it is not a cheap alternative. Setting up a projector each time is a bit of a rigmarole too. Bringing in discs from overseas is another possibility. The selection of PAL software is presently extremely limited, but with the imminent boost of CD-V (even though that will be mostly directed towards music titles) there is a good chance of something happening in this direction. Alternatively there is the NTSC catalogue, if the extra hardware outlay can be accommodated. They seem to care more about movies in the US too.

Or, of course, you could just read a book.

Small Ads

SMALL ADS are printed free so please keep your entry brief. List details clearly on separate piece of paper from other correspondence. Deadline June 20th.

□□□ WANTED - Everly Bros, King & I, Beachboys, Girl Groups, Tom Jones - Hart. Tel: (0527) 36588.

□□□ FOR SALE - The Blues Bros. Highest offer secures - Tim. Tel: (0823)83328.

□□□ FOR SALE - 500 Film LV discs, every film release so far. Also some music titles. Plus VLP700 player. Only interested in selling entire collection in one lot, £3,000 - Tel: Mr .Andreas 01-691 8376, after 6pm.

□□□ WANTED - Kate Bush/Singles File, Tom & Jerry (all) + others & LDR 1-3. Lists to S.Munro, 246 Claymore Drive, Glenrothes, Fife KY7 6TQ.

□□□ FOR SALE - PIONEER LD1100 v.g.c £200. Sea Power £6, Jerry Lee Lewis £3, Thompson Twins £3, Bob Marley/Live £10 (Import), Pioneer New Product Review No 2 £15 - R. Chrichton, 5 Meadow View, Bordon, Hants GU35 0UA. Tel: (04203) 3771.

□□□ FOR SALE - Orig. Philips player, any reasonable offer. Tel:(0702) 74159 (day) 76213 (eve).

□□□ FOR SALE - Beneath The Planet Of The Apes, Grease, Airplane, Raise The Titanic, Mr Smith's Veg, Star Trek I, Hands Of The Ripper, Mission Galactica - M. Smith Allen, 33 Wynford Way, London SE9 3EE.

□□□ FOR SALE - Brainstorm, Ruckus, Hoodwink, Codename The Soldier, Great White Hope, Inferno, 11 Harrowhouse, Mr Billion, Visiting Hours, Royal Flash, Vanishing Point, Reuben Reuben, Rider On The Rain, Salamander, The House Of Long Shadows, Zardoz, Imagination - All as new. Offers over £4 each - Mike. Tel: 01-958 4326.

□□□ WANTED - Dire Straits/Alchemy Live - Peter Ward. Tel: 061-430 2934 (day).

□□□ WANTED - LV newcomer requires cheap second hand discs + LDR 1-3. Tel: (0509) 268020 (eve).

□□□ LDR's very own spring-cleaning sale ..... PAL LV discs for sale - £10 Xtro; £8 Year Of Living Dangerously; £6 Blue Max, Those Magnificent Men, Urgh Music War, Soccer Game Of Century, Eric Clapton, Kevin Rowland, Duran/Sing Blue, Sammy Davis, Barclay James/Berlin; £4 Oh Heavenly Dog!, Green Ice, Reuben Reuben, Postman Always Rings, Death Hunt, Fourth Man, Forbidden World, Carnal Knowledge, Eddy Grant, Elton John/Central Park, Highest Honour, The Nightcomers, Other Side Of Midnight, Charles Aznavour, Winter Kills, Class, Street Of The Damned; £3 The Kids Are Alright, Mr Billion, Boston Strangler, Animal Magic, Boston Strangler, Bandolero, Modern Problems, Liar's Moon, 100 Rifles, 99 & 44/100 Dead, Fantastic Voyage, Players, Shock Treatment, The Undefeated. NTSC LV discs for sale - £27 Indiana Jones (CAV); £20 Space Archive Vol 3/Mars; £15 Into The Night, Strike Up The Band, Dressed To Kill, Commando; £14 Scarface('32), Choose Me, Meatballs II, Clue, Hardbodies, Songwriter, Breakin' 2, Scream Greats Vol 1; £12 The New Kids, The Band Is Back, Lionel Hampton at Disneyland,Cab Calloway at Disneyland, Prince/Live, Windham Hill/Winter; £10 Burns & Allen 1, Cameo; £8 Pat Travers/Killer Day, Ray Charles, Krokus/Video Blitz; £4 Knack/Carnegie, Joni Mitchell/Shadows & Light(CAV).
Inland Postage £1-50 per shipment, any quantity. Overseas, write first to ensure availability.
LDR, PO Box 526, London SW10 9AB. Tel:01-351 4535

All currently available discs supplied

LEGEND VIDEO

MAIL ORDER

A QUICK DELIVERY WITH FAST TURN-AROUND & PROMPT PERSONAL SERVICE.
FREE DELIVERY OF ALL REGULAR PRICED DISCS, SENT IN CARDBOARD CONTAINERS. (DISCS SENT OVERSEAS, POSTAGE EXTRA.)
STILL REDUCED PRICE DISCS AVAILABLE.

SEND CHEQUES/POS TO:
LEGEND VIDEO, 153 FRANCKLYN GARDENS, EDGWARE, MIDDLESEX, HA8 8SB
TEL: 01-958 4326 (After 4.00pm)

LEGEND VIDEO LaserVision

LEGEND VIDEO LaserVision

U.S.A. REPORT

CHICAGO CES

Expectations are that the Chicago CES launch of CD Video will revolve around a group promotion from several of the companies committed to the format. Some of them will be showing CD-V players capable of taking all sizes of disc (combi) while others will just be showing machines able to deal with the 12cm disc - in both audio and video configurations.

TECHNICS/PANASONIC (MATSUSHITA) are expected to fall into the latter category, and their position in the whole CD-V development begs some interesting questions. In Japan the company is an unreserved supporter of the Japanese-only VHD videodisc format, as are JVC, an independent but related MATSUSHITA company. VHD is not a particularly high quality video system and will certainly be put under pressure by Super-VHS. How the MATSUSHITA group will eventually drop VHD and go all laser will be an interesting development to watch, but in the short term it may feel compelled to stick with putting video on the smaller format optical disc only. SONY are expected to show an all-format combi player prototype (which may take a while before becoming a market-ready product) and it seems almost inconceivable that PIONEER won't have something new to show. (Their top-end, LV only LD-S1 player that also has a digital frame store is expected to make its bow at around a $1,600 list price. Latest news to materialise is of of a new combi player, the CLD 1010, with a suggested $800 list price. Whether this is a Clip capable player is not yet known.)

CD-V v LV

When it comes to the actual marketing of CD-V there may be some confusion in the market place. Because videodiscs are generally better established in the US, the arrival of CD Video will not bring about a dramatic change in the market. There could be some confusion about what the product is to be called, even with existing manufacturers sticking to the LaserVision generic for long form programmes and only using CD-V for the Clip disc. In Japan the term LaserVision is to stay, according to the LaserVision Association Pacific, and a report in a US trade journal stated that "when and if the issue is brought before" the similarly named US promotion group it could well follow the Japanese thinking. CD Video could end up being a European-only designation.

DISC NEWS

By the time you read this PIONEER's Carson plant should have finished its refit. It's already the biggest LV plant in the US and the revamp should allow a doubling of output as a result of changes in the manufacturing process and full automation of the assembly line. Output will be able to reach 400,000 discs monthly as a result of the changes and most all of these will be able to be digital sound discs. Many digital discs are still pressed in Japan. *Indiana Jones* and the recent *Top Gun* being examples of such.

While on the subject of disc pressing, some of the latest IMAGE discs (that are mostly pressed by 3M now) have turned up with the old minutes-only (no seconds) elapsed time readout. Some of 3M's new discs do not have the CAV type lead-in at the start of each disc side either. CRITERION usually have all their discs pressed by 3M but have had to go to PIONEER for the pressing of *Help* because 3M do not presently offer digital sound mastering. CRITERION's most recent release has been an Alec Guinness double disc set pairing of *The Horse's Mouth* and *Tunes Of Glory*. Later in the year they will be doing wide screen CAV versions of *The Graduate* and *Blade Runner*. MCA's upcoming release of *Sweet Charity* will feature the musical numbers done in wide screen, the dialogue sequences in normal cropped TV format.

One of IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT's new discs - the NEW WORLD film *Soul Man* - has been pressed in the UK, at the PDO, Blackburn plant. That'll mean both PAL & NTSC versions of this title will end up being pressed in the same plant as a result of the new LASER CENTRE/EV deal.

RECENT LV RELEASES

APRIL

FILMS - THE FLY(S), WHITE HEAT(B & W), PUBLIC ENEMY(B & W), IRON EAGLE(S), SID & NANCY(S), MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE(S), BULLIES, MARNIE, NO MAN OF HER OWN (B & W,CLV/CAV), THE PATRIOT, REBEL(S), DOWN & OUT IN BEVERLY HILLS(S,Di), PINOCCHIO(S,CAV), SLEEPING BEAUTY(S), RUTHLESS PEOPLE(S,Di), ONE CRAZY SUMMER.
MUSIC - BARRY MANILOW/CONCERT AT BLENHEIM PALACE(S,Di), FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD/FROM A WASTELAND...(S,CAV), METROPOLITAN OPERA/L'ELISIR D'AMORE (S,Di), ROCK'N'ROLL:THE EARLY DAYS, MICHEL PETRUCCIANI/LIVE AT VILLAGE VANGUARD(S,Di), THOMPSON TWINS/SINGLE VISION(S), LIONEL RICHIE/THE MAKING OF DANCING ON A CEILING(S), THE PRINCE'S TRUST/ALL-STAR ROCK CONCERT(S,Di).
OTHER - MAX HEADROOM(S), PLAYBOY VIDEO CENTERFOLD No 1(S,CAV), HOWIE MANDEL'S WATUSI TOUR, JAY LENO/AMERICAN DREAM(S), GEORGE CARLIN/PLAYING WITH YOUR HEAD(S), THE MYSTERY OF PICASSO.

MAY

FILMS - DARK PASSAGE(B & W), THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY, THE LETTER (B & W), HELP (S,Di), KEEPING TRACK, SUMMER CAMP NIGHTMARE, THE GREAT WALDO PEPPER, INTERNATIONAL HOUSE(B & W,CLV/CAV), LEGAL EAGLES(S), STATE OF THE UNION (B & W,CLV/CAV), FRIDAY THE 13th Pt VI (S,Di), HEARTBURN, CROMWELL, FROM HERE TO ETERNITY(B & W), JOLSON SINGS AGAIN, LOST HORIZON(B & W, includes 22 mins of restored footage), THE PROFESSIONALS(S), SINCERELY CHARLOTTE(Subs), STEWARDESS SCHOOL, THE COLOR OF MONEY(S,Di), TAIPAN(S), VALET GIRLS, FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR(S), DEADLY FRIEND.
MUSIC - RSG/BEATLES LIVE(JR), ROYAL BALLET/ROMEO & JULIET(S,Di), SCORPIONS/WORLD WIDE LIVE(S), THE PAUL WINTER CONSORT IN THE GRAND CANYON(S,Di), CAMILO SESTO(S).
OTHER - THE SECRET POLICEMAN'S PRIVATE PARTS(S), THE FIRST MONTY PYTHON'S, THE SECOND MONTY PYTHON'S (BBC Shows), PARAMOUNT COMEDY THEATER(S), SCREAM GREATS VOL. II/SATANISM & WITCHCRAFT(S, CLV/CAV), NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC/MINIATURE MIRACLE: THE COMPUTER CHIP, NAT. GEOG./CREATURES OF NAMIB DESERT, NAT. GEOG./POLAR BEAR ALERT, DISNEY/A TALE OF TWO CHIPMUNKS & THE UNSINKABLE DONALD DUCK.

Laser Video Discs

Largest selection in the U.S., with over 1,400 titles. We STOCK what others just list. 10% discount on all titles. C.O.D.—personal check, VISA, MASTER CHARGE, and telephone orders accepted. No time limit on warranty returns. FOR FREE CATALOG, write: Starship Industries, 605 Utterback Store Road, Great Falls, VA 22066. Or call (703) 430-8692 or (703) 450-5780.

LASER DISC HOTLINE

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

DISC REVIEWS

THERE'LL BE SOME CHANGES MADE

Some small changes occur in the layout of the review section this issue, the aim being to make a more positive separation between the technical quality of discs and their content. The change was meant to coincide with a complementary article discussing the various transfer styles of the major labels, but this piece has ended up falling foul of our enduring shortage of space situation. It will now appear in a future edition.

The idea is to identify the characteristics of the different film companies' transfers and then relate subsequent reviews to their norm. Most of the feature film originated titles presently appearing on disc exhibit a certain uniformity when compared with others on the same label. You can often identify a WARNER or CBS/FOX title by just looking at the picture on the screen, for example.

Some preliminary notes are necessary now though. The following reviews make use of the term 'low contrast' to refer to the tonal range of the picture. Most of the American companies transfer to video from special low contrast prints or negatives, which give the most accurate representation of the grey-scale of photographic emulsions. Video cannot encompass such a range of densities and transfers from regular contrast (cinema grade) prints tend to be over contrasty and lacking in shadow detail. Look upon low contrast as a positive comment. Also the term 'American transfer' is used to indicate where the film to video process took place. There seems to be some dispute as to whether these are done via an NTSC video stage so this term encompasses both possibilities.

Because there are so many factors that govern the fidelity of a transfer (contrast, colour, resolution, scanning, generation loss, film scratches and blemishes, grading plus all the audio aspects) it seems unlikely that it will be possible to re-introduce the letter grading system used up till a few issues ago. There are just too many variables. But there is obviously a need to identify the technically good titles as they occur and so these will be signified in future by some sort of recommend comment. As of this writing, with only a couple of reviews to be added to the current issue section, it doesn't look as though any of the new discs will of sufficient quality to merit such an endorsement.

This is a rather sad state of affairs and illustrates how far short of the potential of the LV medium the current level of software preparation is. It's quite easy to walk into a shop and buy a new CD audio disc and hear a full fidelity transfer from the original mastertape. It is well nigh impossible to buy a new videodisc and find the same level of signal integrity. Only *Rocky IV* and *A Nightmare On Elm Street* stick in the mind as being worthy recent candidates for recommendation.

On the audio side, things have been much better of late, and there is now a steady supply of movies with good quality soundtracks. It's difficult to recall the last time a film title turned up with a crackly, distorted optical soundtrack - the like of which was almost the norm a few years ago. *Indiana Jones* stands out as probably the most recent audio highlight but a lot of other titles are, from a transfer point of view, equally good. The reason they don't show up so noticeably is that not all movies are made with the same attention to such matters (or such budgets). A good audio transfer, such as *Commando*, does not sound as good as *Indiana Jones*, but in its way it's as conscientious a transfer.

While on the subject of sound, note should be taken of the use of the initials DS to denote DOLBY SURROUND from here on. This now harmonises us with the Silver Disc Club list (to a degree), and for what its worth, the Japanese LV catalogue. (The Americans still use DS for Digital Sound though.) There are no NTSC disc reviews this issue but we will continue to run them in future, as and when possible.

PRESSINGS

Comments about the quality of disc pressings have not been included in the reviews of late. This has become something of a redundant exercise as there tends to be more consistency in disc pressing these days. The occurrence of faulty discs is mostly down to sample faults rather than batch faults. Current releases are now reviewed separately from back catalogue items and only these older titles will usually receive individual pressing comments - where they are of more significance.

Most UK discs are pressed in Blackburn (formerly PHILIPS, but now PDO) and are identified '(Bla)'. German pressed discs also appear in the UK catalogue and are identified accordingly. Blackburn discs come in three basic types: Silver 2P (the earliest types), gold 2P (up till about mid-1984) and injection-moulded types (from that date on). The injection-moulded discs show the least sample to sample variation.

CURRENT PRESSINGS

The magazine gets to handle near enough all new UK LV releases and experiences a pressing defect rate of about 10%. On one occasion a disc skipped over an invisible blemish, but the main problems are either rolling lines or excessive colour speckling. With the former it often occurs towards the end of a side and inspection of the disc always reveals a scuff or scratch mark on the reflective surface, underneath the plastic. We get the odd speckly disc, but for the most part discs put out since the initial WARNER release batch have been quite clean. Only recently have things taken a turn for the worse and neither *Silver Bullet* or *Hitcher* were really acceptably clean (though your copies may be). *Ladyhawke* was the spottiest new disc ever seen and this would appear to be more than a sample spotty copy as readers have reported similar speckle problems with their personal copies. *Hitcher* has been the first disc encountered that wouldn't track at the beginning of a side, though some readers have complained of this problem in the past. Now we've seen a disc with such a defect it would seem to exclude player/disc incompatibility as the cause and such a problem must be considered another variation of pressing fault.

Laser discOUNT
VIDEO DISCS AND COMPACT MUSIC DISCS
86a Main Road, Broomfield, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 5AA

10% OFF ALL NEW FULL PRICE FEATURE FILMS

* LOTS OF CHEAPIES STOCKED
* RAPID DISPATCH GUARANTEED
* P & P £1.50 First disc or £2.00 any quantity (UK only)
* Credit Card orders taken by phone CHELMSFORD 441851
* *Why not visit our shop - Mon - Fri 10 - 8 Sat 9 - 6*

Commando

CBS/FOX	1484-70		£19.99
CLV/CAV	COLOUR	STEREO	DS
1985	86mins		Rated 18(V)

Cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Rae Dawn Chong, Dan Hedaya, Vernon Wells
Music: James Horner
Director: Mark L. Lester

MASTER: Low contrast transfer with good tonality, fair colour and better definition than many of the company's American transfers (of which this is another example). There is some mild exaggeration of the scanning lines in some scenes (to be found on both PAL and NTSC discs) and the picture does have too much noise to be ideal. The audio is a good magnetic transfer and is sufficiently detailed to reveal shortcomings of some of the original location sound recording.

Arnold Schwarzenegger will never be as big a name on video as in the movies. You really do need a pretty wide cinema screen to fit all those letters across. In the opening scenes of *Commando* - his first film on UK disc - he's Colonel John Matrix, dragged (hauled? winched?) out of retirement to help the military 'just one more time'. He does it under protest. They can't do without him. The protests wane when some would-be South American revolutionaries kidnap his daughter so as to pressure him into bumping off the current head-of-state for them. Details, details.... it's just an excuse for a lot of action and general screen mayhem. It's not an artistic movie.

Arnie (if we may be so familiar - we won't be if he knocks on our front door to complain about it) is a diligent performer. His attention to small details of the plot obscures as many of the B-movie aspects of the production as it highlights. When he has to look across the airport concourse, for example, he actually does it. Most other actors just put on a pose and pretend. He doesn't really have a lot of competition in the acting department as it turns out. There are some good players and Rae Dawn Chong, as his doubting air-stewardess side-kick, manages to inject a bit of humour that it is difficult to believe someone had the foresight to put in the original film script.

The music isn't bad either. It's by James Horner (of *48 Hours* repute), but it's so similar one wonders whether the producers didn't try and save a few bob by using the exact same track - in preference to commissioning a fresh score and recording. They obviously wanted to have enough of the budget left over for the action sequences, but even in this area the good/bad conflicts of the production are again manifest.

An early car chase between Rae Dawn's Sunbeam Tiger and the villain's Porsche is a mess of continuity errors. After the Porsche is seen thoroughly banged up down the whole of one side Arnie jumps into it and drives away - revealing a generous flash of dent-free bodywork. When the car arrives in the next shot the dent is seen to have returned. That looks careless (and you notice it - even in CLV).

But in the big climax Matrix attacks (now you rushed through that, didn't you?) a whole army post single-handed, and even though using the CAV facility reveals some of the explosive effects didn't quite work out as planned, you can tell they really tried. You don't believe it. Well, go to frame 16289 and you can see the two figures in front of the building are dummies. The ensuing explosion doesn't catch them as it should and they resolutely refuse to keel over while the building behind is totally destroyed in the blast. You have two chances to see this unfortunate 'miss' repeat itself as the sequence is shown three times in quick succession to try and fool you into thinking that many buildings have gone up. But the shot at 16373 and then 16415 is all part of one and the same set-up.

Arnie shoots a lot of people during the attack. He just waves his gun vaguely in the air each time and men in all corners of the screen fall down dead. What a terrific shot! The two guys who cop it at frame 19750 are worth watching in slow-motion. All the stunts in the attack are well done and still look convincing slowed down.

Even the man himself took part in some of the stunts - though he didn't swing across the shopping hall and he didn't drive the digger through the surplus-store window. But it really is him on the landing gear of the plane, and in all the fights. The sleeve of the US disc tells some of this background information, that along with a rundown of the plot, is regretfully missing from the UK package. But even with this loss, and the brief film content cuts (detailed elsewhere), the UK disc is still good, mindless fun.

The Emerald Forest

EMBASSY	ELV 2179		£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	STEREO	DS
1985	110mins		Rated 15(V)

Cast: Powers Boothe, Meg Foster, Charley Boorman, Rui Polonah
Writer: Rospo Pallenburg
Music Composed & Performed by: Junior Homrich & Brian Gascoigne
Photography: Philippe Rousselot
Director/Producer: John Boorman

MASTER: Low contrast (American) transfer with slightly pastelly colour, softened definition (a bit too soft), and some screen patterning visible on occasions. It's a bit grainy and noisy too in the darker scenes. The audio is a good magnetic transfer, lacking only a touch of brilliance in the treble (which can be compensated for by some tone re-adjustment).

Or, the redressing of the balance. Those attracted to John Boorman's style of film-making by the inspired bone-headedness of *Zardoz* will, I fear, be sorely disappointed by this latest work. This is a 'proper' film, absolutely beautifully photographed, reasonably intelligently plotted and well acted.

The emerald forest of the title is the Amazonian jungle, fast being eaten away by the onslaught of technology at its edges. Powers Boothe portrays an engineer working on a dam construction project at the edge of it. When he takes his wife and family to see the site he is working on, his young son, Tommy, is spirited away by the Invisible People, a tribe of Indians who have managed to avoid contact with the 'Dead World' - their name for the popular notion of civilisation.

Tomme, as the boy is renamed, is brought up by the Indians, while his father spends every free moment searching for him. The years pass and father and son do, of course, meet again. But not until Tomme is a fully-fledged adult member of the Invisible People. Clearly their relationship can never be the same as it was, but a bond is formed between them. The reunion, rather than being the finale, is simply a marker along the way. As the plot develops, 'Dadee' is able to be of great help to Tomme's adopted people and there are some exciting set pieces before the film reaches its final conclusion.

Worth watching for its photography alone, the fact that *The Emerald Forest* has a decent plot (which is allowed to proceed without undue meandering) comes as a welcome bonus.

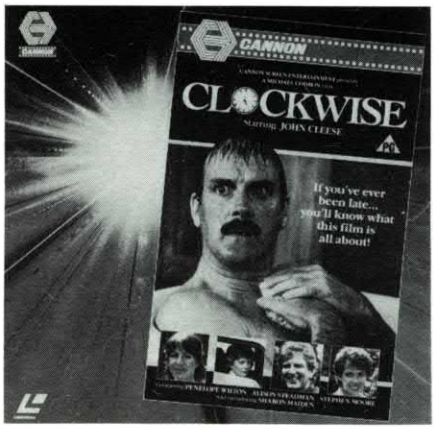
[PAUL RONCHETTI]

Clockwise

CANNON	TLY 90 3956 1		£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	MONO	
1985	92mins		Rated PG(V)

Cast: John Cleese, Penelope Wilton, Alison Steadman, Stephen Moore, Sharon Maiden
Screenplay: Michael Frayn
Music: George Fenton
Director: Christopher Morahan

MASTER: This has to be another one of those 16mm films. There is just not the detail and definition of a proper 35mm cinema feature. Be prepared, therefore, for a rather grainy, contrasty, documentary-looking image with an added brown colour cast. There is no distortion on the optical soundtrack but it is a little 'fluffy' in the treble regions. Some spitting is audible in the background.



Hot on the heels of *The Supergrass* comes another peculiarly British comedy piece, though this time with broader appeal. John Cleese is mercifully restrained (physically that is) in his portrayal of an obsessively time-conscious headmaster whose usual clockwork-precision approach to daily life is totally defeated the day he sets out to attend a conference in far-off Norwich.

There are only one or two occasions where the plot departs from believable reality (the character is based on a real-life London headmaster) and the Michael Frayn script is sufficiently detailed to reveal more with subsequent viewings. In fact, the film may seem a bit of a disappointment the first time round as it concludes in a rather anti-climactic manner. You expect a more eventful ending in a movie. *Clockwise*, in many ways, is close to a cinema equivalent of a good BBC TV drama and it is a shame that there no longer appears to be the market to give a worthwhile endeavour like this a better production budget.

As a movie it will find favour with those familiar with any of the cast names. It is John Cleese and Sharon Maiden (as the unfortunate pupil who ends up having to drive him halfway across the country, after he misses his train) who monopolise most of the screen time. There is a nice restful pace to the story - maybe brought about by the viewer being allowed to transfer the pressures of their daily life on to the clockwatching head. By the time the car they are travelling in is to be seen ploughing (hopelessly lost) across trackless open fields, the absolute chaos of their situation acquires that perverse serenity that only comes in times of such complete failure and despair.

Some of the framing struggles to keep all the characters on screen and whatever format the movie was shot in there is evidence of left and right hand sides of the picture missing. The photography looks a little two-dimensional as a result and it was probably more interesting in the cinema. That excessive brown cast can be effectively corrected by removing some colour on your TV without affecting the overall colour signal to any major degree.

Weird Science

CIC-UNIVERSAL	LVH 1193	£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	MONO
1985	90mins	Rated 15(V)

Cast: Anthony Michael Hall, Ilan Mitchell-Smith, Kelly LeBrock
Writer/Director: John Hughes

MASTER: Video transfer is basically similar to other recent UNIVERSAL discs. That means good scanning and acceptable definition, but there is a tendency this time for the interior scenes to be a little contrasty and/or dark - to the detriment of the colour which turns out a little sepia-hued as a result. Side two has a few good outdoor scenes though. In spite of this movie appearing on disc in the US with a digital soundtrack the UK release has been sourced from what sounds no more than an average MONO optical track. Apart from a very faint whistle there is nothing actually wrong with it - but what happened to the stereo, the surround and the hi-fi?

What do you get when you hook up a Barbie Doll to your home computer? Well, if you 're as lucky as the two lads in *Weird Science* you get Kelly LeBrock (although, knowing my luck, I'd end up with Hilda Ogden). That's the basic premise of the film and in director John Hughes' assured hands every possible embarrassing situation arises - along with a few impossible ones. Hughes pedigree for this type of film is impressive as he's previously helmed such crowd-pleasers as *Pretty In Pink*, *The Breakfast Club* and his current success *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. Of course, it's all been done before (*Risky Business* and Hughes' own *16 Candles* spring to mind) but never with quite so much style and deftness. The two central performers (Anthony Michael Hall and Ilan Mitchell-Smith) have no trouble with the material they are given, and even if Kelly LeBrock's English accent appears as out of place here as it did in *Woman In Red* you can't deny she has other assets which make her well qualified for the role.

What more is there to say? The title really sums it up so don't expect high drama or sensitive performances. It's loud, raucous and tasteless and I loved every minute of it.

[PETER MOVERLEY]

Ladyhawke

CBS/FOX	1474-70	£19.99
CLV	COLOUR STEREO	DS
1985	117mins	Rated PG(V)

Cast: Matthew Broderick, Rutger Hauer, Michelle Pfeiffer, Leo McKern, John Wood
Director: Richard Donner
Music: Andrew Powell

MASTER: Tonally pleasing transfer from low contrast print spoiled by defective standards conversion (see text). Good, magnetically-sourced hi-fi soundtrack. DISC: Review sample has major colour speckling outbreaks in several places. Defects of similar nature have been reported as occurring on readers' own copies.

Well, thinking about it, for every *Nightmare On Elm Street* there has to be a *Ladyhawke*. Sort of a balance of nature thing. *Ladyhawke* flew this way once before - about a year back when the CLD900 combination player came under scrutiny - and the sound on that NTSC disc did indeed justify its being pressed up in digital form. Given the limitations of the non-CX analogue accompaniment to the PAL picture, it has made a passable trip across the water. The clashing swords and breaking twigs don't quite have you jumping out of your seat, but it's an interesting stereo track nonetheless. But what happened to the picture? This is supposed to be where we are still ahead, right? We've got a 100 extra scan lines over our US cousins for starters, so how come the PAL disc looks worse than the NTSC one?

Even though the US disc was on WARNER our disc is sourced from the same basic transfer. You were aware of the limited bandwidth of the NTSC disc - it was sharp but one craved for a little more fine detail - but the UK version needs to be watched from so far away the desire does not even arise. If you found the in/out-of-focus effect on *Star Wars* distracting you'll find the same fault running through the entire length of *Ladyhawke* more than tedious. There would appear to be something wrong with the standards conversion. If it wasn't for the fact that the side changes are in different places one would be sorely tempted to believe that the UK mastertape was dubbed from a store-bought NTSC LV disc.

It's a shame too as *Ladyhawke* is a pleasantly daft and slightly off-beat period fantasy that is good to see come out here on disc. Lurking somewhere in

its generous production budget (spent mostly filming around some ruined castles in Italy) is a tale of two lovers who are always standing each other up on dates. His problem is with turning into a wolf each nightfall, and hers with turning into a hawk every time the sun comes up. Blundering through the entire episode, providing a sort of commentary to the whole affair, is Matthew Broderick who makes no attempt at a contemporary medieval accent and sails through it all in '80s New York-ese. Difficult as it might be to imagine, it's an effective clash of styles. This man could make Shakespeare accessible.

However, the warning about the poor state of the image must be the paramount feature of our review, and more quality-conscious readers would be well advised to pass this turkey by.

Jewel Of The Nile

CBS/FOX	1491-70		£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	STEREO	DS
1985	101mins		Rated PG(V)

Cast: Michael Douglas, Kathleen Turner, Danny DeVito
Music: Jack Nitzsche
Director: Lewis Teague

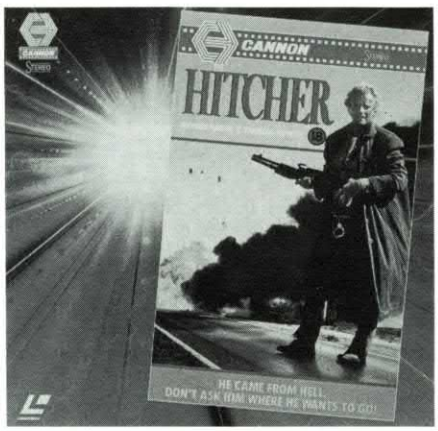
MASTER: American transfer. Good contrast and pleasant colour though the soft definition (too soft) and noticeable picture noise count against it. The dark scenes are particularly grainy. The magnetic soundtrack is of very good quality and is clear, detailed and eventful.

Opinions on *Jewel Of the Nile* vary. Some find it a pale imitation of its predecessor; others claim it to be a rare occasion where a follow-up has lived up to expectation. This time the action takes place in the deserts of North Africa and it is to the credit of the film-makers that the stunts and chase scenes come off so effectively. The plane chase sticks in mind the most. A quick drive round the yard and you expect it to fizzle out - just before the location accountant has a heart attack. *Jewel* must have had a decent budget. Or maybe the plane ran the accountant over too. But it's not just the money. There are a lot of crowd scenes where the presence of the film crew is not felt to the slightest degree. It all feels very spontaneous and realistic.

As does the romance between Joan (Kathleen Turner) and Jack (Michael Douglas). The ups and downs of their relationship keep the film interesting. The best bit occurs when they encounter the Namibians and Joan joins in the courtship dance. Neither of them speaks the line that makes the scene so good but it works because of what you know about them already.

The film trails off a bit after that point and the pseudo Indiana Jones climax doesn't achieve anything beyond filling up the second side of the disc. This might leave a slight emptiness in one's final appreciation of the piece.

The Hitcher



CANNON	TLY 90 4019 1		£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	STEREO	DS
1986	93mins		Rated 18(V)

Cast: Rutger Hauer, C. Thomas Howell, Jeffery DeMunn, Jennifer Jason Leigh
Music: Mark Isham
Director: Robert Harmon
An HBO/Silver Screen Partners prodn.

MASTER: Print transfer with fair amount of contrast and showing film grain in many scenes. Definition varies in accordance with scanning, which is a bit tight and ungainly at times. Audio is from an optical track. Slight hiss but sound is good for what it is and has some effective bass tones and clear treble stereo effects.

Jim Halsey has a real problem. A complete stranger has decided to make his life murder. Halsey (C. Thomas Howell) makes his big mistake when he stops the car to give a ride to a hitcher (played by your friend and mine, Rutger Hauer) who shows every sign of just having escaped from a maximum security nuthouse. Halsey's life is then made a misery through a variety of insane and destructive acts, all calculated to implicate him as the person responsible for a series of murders, which were in fact perpetrated by you-know-who.

Why has the hitcher decided to wage this one-man war against the innocent Halsey? Well, this is never explained, and come to think of it, this lack of justification does not spoil your enjoyment of the film. Director Robert Harmon has wisely chosen to concentrate upon the two central characters' battle of wills, and this is the element that supplies the tension and propels the film.

Hauer has recreated in *The Hitcher* the same kind of brooding intensity he gave us as Roy Batty in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. Even if you do find yourself wishing someone would give this remarkable actor a meaty, dramatic role, you cannot deny that he is admirably suited to this kind of part. C. Thomas Howell also demonstrates he is capable of living up to the promise he showed in *The Outsiders*. (As long as he avoids comedy roles.)

All things considered, this is one for the collection I think. Don't be put off by the horror 'label'. *The Hitcher* is uneasy, uncompromising and unpredictable. At least, see it.

[PETER MOVERLEY]

Back To The Future

CIC-UNIVERSAL	LVH 1204		£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	STEREO	DS
1985	111mins		Rated PG(V)

Cast: Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson, Crispin Glover
Writers: Robert Zemeckis, Bob Gale
Director: Robert Zemeckis

MASTER: Transfer in usual Universal style - good scanning, colour, contrast etc but it is a touch less crisp. There is also more noise in the picture that makes the interior/night scenes look a little flat.
The audio is good but it doesn't have quite the sparkle and immediacy one has

"ALL OUR VIDEOS ARE BRAND NEW!"

OUR LATEST COMPREHENSIVE CATALOGUE HAS OVER 7,000 VIDEOS LISTED.
ONLY £1.90 UK, OVERSEAS £3.00

IF YOU PREFER:
SEND A 9 X 4 SAE FOR ONE OF THE FOLLOWING LISTS -

LASERVISION DISCS FROM.... £4.99
VHS CASSETTES FROM..... £6.99
BETAMAX CASSETTES FROM. £6.99

PLEASE REMEMBER TO GIVE YOUR VIDEO FORMAT

SIDEWINDER VIDEO (DEPT 2),
17 CHURCH LANE,
SUTTON COLDFIELD,
WEST MIDLANDS B76 0BJ

come to expect in this type of film. OK though.

The big movie of 1985, *Back To The Future* is the kind of mainstream film that needs no recommendation from me to make every LaserVision owner in the land rush down to their video shop with twenty quid in their hot, sticky palms.

The plot (for those of you who have been on the moon for the past couple of years) concerns a young lad called Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) whose (unhinged) scientist friend, Dr Emmett Brown (Christopher Lloyd), has converted a DeLorean sports car into a nuclear-powered time machine. Due to the untimely intervention of a group of Libyan terrorists Marty accidentally finds himself transported back to the year 1955 - whereupon he immediately bumps into his parents. This causes all sorts of problems which result in Marty having the difficult task of making sure that his parents fall in love in order to guarantee his own future.

Robert Zemeckis (fresh from the successful *Romancing The Stone*) deftly directs the proceedings and extracts great performances from the cast. The script is fresh, witty and exciting and the labyrinthine twists of the plot are handled with great dexterity. Alan Silvestri contributes an excellent score and Huey Lewis & The News throw in *The Power Of Love* for good measure.

Back To The Future works well on almost every level and is that rare thing - a movie whose parts gel together to create an experience.

[PETER MOVERLEY]

Cobra

WARNER	PEL 11594	£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	STEREO
1986	83mins	Rated 18(V)

Cast: Sylvester Stallone, Brigitte Nielsen, Reni Santoni, Andrew Robinson, Lee Garlington, John Herzfield, Art La Fleur, Brian Thompson, David Rasche
Music: Sylvester Levay
Director: George P. Cosmatos

MASTER: Low contrast American transfer that shows much promise but is degraded by a crawling black grain visible in many of the lighter parts of the picture. The effect is similar to that achieved by turning an enhancer too far up and the remedy with the disc is to roll off the definition from the TV picture. This, however, is not what video fidelity is all about. The audio transfer is a good quality magnetic that has some effective thuddy, atmospheric bass tones.

The number of discs up for review that feature a husband and wife team playing the lead parts is quite rare. In fact, we couldn't think of any. The closest we could come was George and Gracie in *Burns & Allen Vol. 1.*

There is comedy in *Cobra* too. The opening supermarket hold-up looks set to be predictably violent and gross - that's what we've been led to believe the film is like, right? - till 'the boss' drives up in his automobile to sort the situation out. The registration plate reads "AWSOM 50" and it doesn't pay to read anything more into *Cobra* than an updating of the Hollywood Western. The star even swivels his revolver a few times before returning it to his holster. (Needless to say, this is after the supermarket hoodlum has been permanently 'checked out').

What goes on after this is open to conjecture. The movie isn't very well constructed and hovers between dramatising a series of recent West Coast prowler murders and suggesting an organised uprising by a dissolute bunch of degenerates whose alternative life-style errs some way from mom and apple pie. Cobra is Stallone (or vice versa) and is the undercover man left to sort it out, but not without some conflict within the police department. This conflict lacks credibility but was worth keeping in the final edit for the chance it gives to feature more of Art La Fleur. He looks more like an American police captain than the real thing could possibly be.

The stunts come thick and fast. There is a car chase (gosh!) and all the tricks missed out of that are fitted into the final shoot-up. While individually skilfully executed the stunt continuity is not very good and the sum of the parts is not really up to expectation. To pre-empt the question, there was a request to have *Cobra* in side-two-CAV, but we missed getting the message through in time. The side splits are good, though, and a short second side would have probably been difficult to do without spoiling the flow of some of the action sequences.

Cobra is a good movie for Stallone fans but will unlikely have much appeal for others past a single viewing. (And maybe those in the former category might be able to work out why the underground car park where Brigitte fights off her attackers has a fitted carpet.)

Those curious about the EAGLE STEREO logo on the closing credits will be interested to know that *Cobra* was recorded in a stereo surround format other than DOLBY. There is a system called ULTRASTEREO that has been used on a few smallish movies and *Cobra* was its big-time debut. Sylvester Stallone even put some money into the company (and caused the name to be changed to WHITE EAGLE STEREO). Those with DOLBY Surround decoders might achieve some surround effects from this disc. DOLBY thought the ULTRA process close enough to their's to complain of patent infringement, so future appearances of movies in the format are uncertain.

Note: This version of the movie is not the same as the UK theatrical release and small cuts have been demanded by the BBFC. As far as we know the edits occur in the supermarket and underground car park scenes.

9½ Weeks

CBS/FOX	6162-70	£19.99
CLV	COLOUR	STEREO DS
1985	111mins	Rated 18(V)

Cast: Mickey Rourke, Kim Basinger, Margaret Whitton, David Margulies, Christine Baranski, Karen Young
Music: Jack Nitzsche
Director: Adrian Lyne

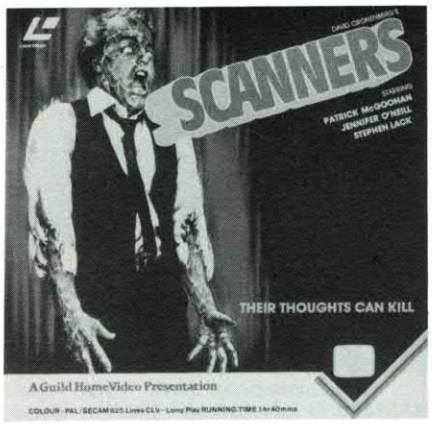
MASTER: Transfer has good contrast in outdoor scenes but suffers a little in the low-light interiors that reproduce a touch murkily. The colour also tends to drift off a bit in these darker moments but is good otherwise. The picture is sharp.
The audio transfer is basically good - much more dynamic and hi-fi than one might expect. Some of the dialogue passages reveal fluctuating background hiss levels from incorrectly set noise reduction, either in the production or transfer stages.

This movie is apparently complete, at least it's supposed to be the same as the UK theatrical version according to CBS/FOX. It is a bit steamier than the typical disc release of late and is a rare occasion when an 18 movie veers more towards sex than violence. Whereas in a film musical the dialogue is broken up at regular intervals by a song, here the interrupts usually involve having it off in some moodily lit location, preferably with some creative use of hi-tech furniture or even the contents of the refrigerator.

What violence there is is mental rather than physical. Rourke and Basinger play a couple of New York sophisticates - well almost yuppie types, really - and the nine and a half weeks defines the length of their strange relationship. Rourke portrays some financial whizz-kid with plenty of dough and more than his share of personality problems. You know that if they ever make a sequel in another ten years times he'll be a 24-carat dirty old man by then. The film would have been more satisfying if one felt any sympathy for the girl's part, but her lamb-to-the-slaughter submissiveness wears the patience well before the time comes to turn the disc over. As the book on which the film is based was written by a woman (Elizabeth McNeill) and the screen adaptation

[Concluded on page 34, column 3]

Scanners



GUILD	GHLV 0888	£6.99
CLV	COLOUR	MONO
1981	99mins	Rated 18(C)

A Filmplan International/Canadian Film Development Corporation production.
Cast: Patrick MacGoohan, Jennifer O'Neil, Stephen Lack, Lawrence Dane, Michael Ironside, Robert Silverman
Writer/Director: David Cronenburg
Special Effects: Dick Smith, Gary Zeller, Dennis Pike
Music: Howard Shore

MASTER: Poor quality, contrasty video transfer, severely lacking in shadow detail and with diminished colour and limited resolution. Limited range optical soundtrack but free from major distortion. Listenable at moderate volume if a little hissy.
DISC: Gold-2P (Bla) pressing of 1982/3 vintage. Quite clean in the many dark scenes.

The plot... Fans of *Firestarter* will have no difficulty in suspending their disbelief accepting the basic premise that there are 237 people endowed with the power to mentally manipulate others. At its lowest level the power enables them to read minds, but with concentration scanners can cause their victims to pass out, go into convulsions, or even explode - messily. Hitherto they've been an unco-ordinated bunch of social misfits, but that is changing. One of their number, a particularly anti-social character called Darryl Revok (Michael Ironside - that's him on the sleeve) cherishes ambitions of world domination. But Dr Ruth (Patrick McGoohan) suspects Revok's plan and sets another scanner on his trail in an attempt to stop him.

Not over-burdened with cash expenditure, *Scanners* is no barrel of laughs. It takes itself rather too seriously and would have benefited from a lighter touch - the constant gloom (dramatically and pictorially) can be a bit relentless. Nevertheless, it's well put together and retains the interest of the viewer. Although it is by no means the exploitative "nasty" the sleeve image conjures up, it does have its gory moments and the climax is not for the sensitive. [PAUL RONCHETTI]

Pinedene Films

MAIL ORDER SPECIALISTS

WE HAVE IN STOCK SEALED COPIES OF MOST OF THE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE LASERVISION DISCS AS WELL AS MANY HARD TO GET ITEMS. SEND FOR OUR LISTS.

WE OFTEN HAVE SECOND-HAND DISCS TO SELL, AND AT PRESENT SOME NEW REDUCED PRICE DISCS TOO.

AS ESTABLISHED DEALERS IN CINE FILMS, WE CAN ACCEPT THESE IN PART-EXCHANGE FOR LV DISCS.

PINEDENE FILMS
99 HILL LANE
SOUTHAMPTON
HAMPSHIRE
SO1 5AE

SOUTHAMPTON 631680

Xtro

SPECTRUM	790 648 1	£13.99 (Del)
CLV	COLOUR	MONO
1982	82mins	Rated 18(C)

Cast: Bernice Stegers, Philip Sayer, Simon Nash, Maryam D'Abo, Danny Brainin
Director: Harry Bromley Davenport
Written by: Robert Smith, Ian Cassie
Special Effects: NEEFX
Effects Make-Up: Robin Grantham

MASTER: Reasonable video transfer from regular contrast print. Acceptable in better lit scenes but transfer retains a coarse video look. Clear, optically sourced audio track usable at modest volume.
DISC: Cleanish gold-2P (Bla) pressing of 1983 vintage.

A British-made horror cheapie about the return of Sam to his family after a three-year disappearance. As the cover shows, he has changed during the interim period. Reptilian when he initially re-appears and recognising the potential social disadvantages, he organises a gory rebirth (quite well special effected, this) and emerges in his original human (if somewhat wooden) form. Apart from some strange behavioural characteristics, he is now ready to be reunited with his wife and son (and to meet his wife's appalling boyfriend).

It's difficult to understand why he bothered. However, having come home, Sam (and son, swiftly won over) wreak a spot of havoc - some of it upon Anna Wing (pre-*East Enders*) as the very oddly-accented downstairs neighbour. Then, with film stock about to run out, father and son go off together to wherever Dad has been for the last few years, divesting themselves of their flesh before departure.

Apparently made as an excuse to use up a job lot of special effects and ideas left over from another film, the style is strongly reminiscent of John Landis' *See You Next Wednesday* (see 0.33, side 2, *American Werewolf In London*) but without more than a smidgin of sex. I suspect, though, that the producer here would have preferred the comparison be made with *American Werewolf* itself. No chance.

[PAUL RONCHETTI]

Great Railways 1

BBC VIDEO	BBCV 1008L	£6.99
CAV	COLOUR	MONO
1982	98mins (4 sides)	Rated E

Compilation of three documentaries introduced by O.S. Nock.

MASTER: Originated on 16mm film, and though of varying quality (see text), the picture is better than the usual 16mm inserts found in many other BBC programmes. Sound is of satisfactory documentary standard.
DISC: Early silver-2P (Bla) pressing with an unacceptable level of colour flecking and dropout. Be prepared to make several attempts to obtain a satisfactory copy.

Ostensibly a limited-interest enthusiast title *Great Railways 1* is appealing in other ways, and the second disc of this two-disc set presents an involving travel documentary of India via its railways - at least, as much of the huge country one could hope to cover in 48 minutes. Armchair travellers will be more motivated to visit as a result than, say, might be the case with viewing *Octopussy*.

But to return to the first disc. It's introduced by the restrained, almost faltering, O.S. Nock, and most of side one is given over to the Forest

Railroad Park in Cornwall where life-long rail enthusiast John Southern has established an extensive 1/8th-scale railway system worked by authentic model steam engines. Passengers sit astride the 'carriages' and are hauled through scenic simulations of the mid-West by locomotives modelled after bygone specimens of the Union Pacific Railroad.

This opening segment gives way to a 35 minute documentary on the 1968 run of the preserved Flying Scotsman 4472 loco in an effort to recreate the London-Edinburgh journey it once operated. This was the longest (392 mile) non-stop rail service when inaugurated in 1928. Some drama is created in this modestly produced film. While the picture quality is possibly the weakest of the three programmes on the disc it is still good for its age.

The Romance Of The Indian Railways (on sides 3 & 4) is much crisper and more colourful, and the photography more interesting. The weather is also noticeably better. While train enthusiasts will be ogling every discernible nut and bolt, less committed viewers could easily be equally stimulated by some of the extensive scenery footage. The James Cameron narration (he also wrote the words) is geared more to the non-specialist viewer.

The main theme of the documentary focusses on the preservation efforts of ex-pat Brit, Mike Sarto. It is often difficult to decide which item of rolling stock he is about to pounce upon, such is the quaintness of much of the Indian Railways' rolling stock. Sarto's enthusiasm spills over to the viewer too. When he stumbles across some cut-up tracks lying at the side of the line, what looks to the uneducated eye as just a pile of old scrap metal is soon revealed to be some rare and, so far unrepresented in the museum, 1887 30-foot rail. The timely discovery will elicit a sigh of relief from enthusiast and casual observer alike.

So, a disc that turns out to be of more general interest than its packaging would imply. Doubts about the quality of the pressing inhibit recommendation to any other than those patient enough to persevere with a faulty return or two to achieve a satisfactory copy. Incidentally, though this disc is labelled as Volume 1 there are no subsequent volumes listed in the main BBC video catalogue.

Gwendoline

EMBASSY	ELV 6013	£6.99
CLV	COLOUR STEREO DS	
1984	97mins	Rated 18

Cast: Tawney Kitaen, Brent Huff
Director: Just Jaeckin

MASTER: Low contrast transfer of average quality - though the colour saturation is severely lacking (not the case with the NTSC disc, but this PAL version is significantly sharper). There is also too much noise in the picture. The audio transfer is very good and shows much detail.

Based on the '40s John Willie cartoon strip *The Adventures Of Sweet Gwendoline* the film is an attempted transfer to the big screen in the style of *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. The man responsible is Just Jaeckin, who also brought us *Emmanuelle* and *The Story Of O*. So, where Sylvia Kristel and Corrine Clery have gone before, Tawny Kitaen follows - though this is **meant** to be funny.

Tawny is Gwendoline, off to the mysterious East to find her missing father, who has disappeared trying to search out a rare butterfly for his collection. Brent Huff, taking the Harrison Ford role, is a mercenary seaman unwillingly caught up in the expedition. The search ends up in the lost city of Yik-Yak that is populated entirely by women. It's all very lavishly produced - and needs to be.

The UK disc is packaged in order to exploit the sexier aspects of the film and this is possibly something of a misrepresentation. That the film doesn't really make it as the adult spoof it is intended to be is mostly down to the international nature of the production and the resulting use of dubbed dialogue. Nobody speaks their own language. Consequently any spontaneity and sparkle that may have existed is stripped out. It's a bit dull. Even if the censors hadn't had their way it would still have been dull - it would just have taken that bit longer to realise it.

[Some more coverage of this disc occurs in the article on the Video Recordings Act. The explanation of the 12+ minute difference in running times of the PAL & NTSC discs mentioned there is as follows. As a result of the 4% speeding up of film when transferred to PAL video, the UK disc is effectively the equivalent of nearly 101 minutes of original cinema running time. Because film to NTSC video transfers do not involve any speed alteration one must compare their 88 minute running time with this (approx) 101 minute figure.]

MOZART · Konzerte für zwei und drei Klaviere und Orchester

PHILIPS	405.3020 (Germany)	DM.59
CAV	COLOUR STEREO	
1983	50mins	

Featuring: Christoph Eschenbach, Justus Frantz, Helmut Schmidt with the Zurich Synfony Orchestra

Side 1: Konzert für zwei Klaviere und Orchester Es-Dur KV365 (316a)
Side 2: Konzert für drei Klaviere und Orchester F-Dur KV242

MASTER: Originated on video the disc shares that same 'detached', soft feel common to other programmes having suffered the correlation process in order to achieve a perfect still frame effect. Picture quality compares with the Pavarotti/Albert Hall disc. There is a degree of hiss on the audio that is otherwise of reasonable range and clarity. (But see below.)
DISC: The pressing is a later-period German one with some spots/dropout. There is some spitting on the audio too (that we have encountered on other German-pressed discs) that one does tend to notice on this type of programme content.

This disc was recorded at the Zurich Tonhalle which seems to have a nice roof for we see little else of the interior. Christoph Eschenbach, who both conducts and performs, soon establishes his control over the proceedings with a set of mannerisms worthy of the head waiter of the Hotel du Lac. On side one he is closely aided by Justus Frantz; their timing is superb and their interpretations of Mozart's work is near faultless. To emphasise their chemistry the camera makes much use of a split picture, though this does cause problems for several of the musicians who appear and disappear throughout the work.

On side two they are joined by Helmut Schmidt, the former German Chancellor, who ploughs on through the concert oblivious to Eschenbach's nods and encouragement, eyes glued to his score and fingers firmly pressing the right notes. Only once, towards the end of the work, does Schmidt relax and allow himself a little flourish and a cursory glance in Eschenbach's direction, in complete contrast to Frantz who follows every move the others make. [PAUL NEWTON]

[Continued from page 32]

done by two women and only one man one assumes some substance to her acceptance of the relationship.

Kim Basinger herself is good in the role - believable - as are the many minor characters and situations woven into the production. Director Lyne would appear to have a thing about pets. Scattered moments featuring some dogs and a cat linger in the memory. The film is visually appealing but is ultimately soulless, almost boring. The musical content is strong, with thoughtful use of old and new songs, and watching the movie in small chunks is more in keeping with its near music-video style.

LASER LIBRARY

'Play and try before you buy'

Join the **LASER LIBRARY**

Specialist APPROVAL Service for the FULL RANGE of Silver Discs

OVER 1000 Albums usually in stock

ALL UK and Pioneer Titles Available

Frequent Special Offers to Library Members

Price Lists constantly updated with availability details

Send for Library Membership details

The LASER LIBRARY, Richmond House, Richmond Road, Ipswich IPI4DL

LaserVision

The Laser Library Limited · Richmond House · Richmond Road · Ipswich IP1 4DL

FOR ALL YOU WANT...

(The fullest range of Laservision discs in the country... Free Catalogues and lists ... Shop premises open 7 days a week ... Helpful, knowledgable staff ... A mail order club ... Special offers ... Plus over 6,000 C.D. titles.)

AND MORE!

Lightning

LASERVISION CENTRE

90, GOLDERS GREEN ROAD, LONDON NW11 8EN TEL. 01-458 9427

The Laser Calendar

New LV releases, now available

COMMANDO (DS, CLV/CAV) - CBS/FOX 1484-70 £19.99
NINE 1/2 WEEKS (DS) - CBS/FOX 6162-70 £19.99
JEWEL OF THE NILE (DS) - CBS/FOX 1491-70 £19.99
COBRA (S) - WARNER PEL 11594 £19.99
SILVER BULLET - CANNON TLY 90 4000 1 £19.99

New LV releases, scheduled May onwards

ENEMY MINE [DS] - CBS/FOX 1492-70 £19.99
ALIENS [DS, CLV/CAV] - CBS/FOX 1504-70 £24.95
YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES [DS] - CIC LVG 2198 £19.99
PRETTY IN PINK [S] - CIC LVG 2199 £19.99
EUROPEAN VACATION - WARNER PEL 11521 £19.99
NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2 - WARNER PEL 35015 £19.99
SHANGHAI SURPRISE [S] - WARNER PEL 11695 £19.99
FRIDAY 13th - WARNER PEL 61172 £19.99
THE COLOUR PURPLE - WARNER £24.95 (After June)
A ROOM WITH A VIEW [DS] - EMBASSY ELV 1856 £19.99

LV releases previously announced, now cancelled/postponed

PIRATES [DS] - CANNON £19.99

Status in ( ) confirmed, in [ ] likely but unconfirmed

Deletions

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, ALIEN, AND GARY NUMAN/MICROMUSIC are presently listed as deleted but will eventually re-appear (at full price).

These titles have sold out and there are no plans to re-press them at present - BACHELOR PARTY, FOOTLOOSE, STREETS OF FIRE, FAWLTY TOWERS/GERMANS, FAWLTY TOWERS/PSYCHIATRIST, FAWLTY TOWERS/BASIL THE RAT, ZORRO THE GAY BLADE, STAR TREK THE MOVIE, LA BOHEME, CATHERINE WHEEL, IDOMENEO, SWAN LAKE, JULIUS CAESAR, TROPICAL HI-NOON, GROVER WASHINGTON/IN CONCERT, ABBA IN CONCERT, STEVIE NICKS/LIVE, THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER, EDUCATING RITA, QUEST FOR FIRE.

Many of the following titles have been deleted due to being uncertified in accordance with the Video Recordings Act. Some titles may re-appear if certification is obtained, but it is not known which titles this might be. Some titles are contractual deletions - WORLD OF MORECAMBE & WISE, MODERN PROBLEMS, INFERNO, MYSTERY OF MONSTER ISLAND, TERRYTOONS 2, SAILOR WHO FELL FROM GRACE, GETTING WASTED, CRUISING, CALIMERO, HIGH ICE, GOING ALL THE WAY, ONE SHOE MAKES IT MURDER, LIANNA, STRANGERS KISS, KILLING MACHINE, HUMONGOUS, STREET OF THE DAMNED, WHEN A STRANGER CALLS, STUNTMAN, S.O.B., HIGH RISK, DASTARDLY & MUTLEY, SCOOBY & SCRAPPY DOO, TOP CAT 1, ANIMALYMPICS, WILDCATS OF ST TRINIANS, RAISE THE TITANIC, CAPTAIN FUTURE, WHY NOT STAY FOR BREAKFAST, ALONE IN THE DARK, KING & I, BUTCH CASSIDY & THE SUNDANCE KID, OKLAHOMA, RIDDLE OF THE SANDS, TARKA THE OTTER, BUGSY MALONE, BEST OF KENNY EVERETT, BY THE SEA/PICNIC, VICE SQUAD, MANITOU, GWENDOLINE, SCANNERS, WICKED LADY, MERLIN & THE SWORD, REVENGE OF THE NINJA, SAHARA, EL CID, 55 DAYS AT PEKING, PRIVATE LESSONS, DEATH VALLEY, CONQUEST OF THE EARTH, BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS, FRUIT IS RIPE, GORKY PARK, NOW MUSIC 2, ON THE TOWN, PAT GARRET & BILLY THE KID, COMPLETE BEATLES, EASTER PARADE.