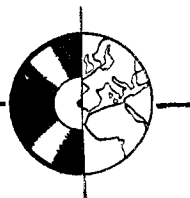


THE OTHER SIDE



STEREOPHONIC TAPES, MAHLER FROM ISRAEL

LONDON.

IF EVER any company tried hard to live down a reputation for standing in the way of progress, that company is EMI. It is little more than six months since they surprised us all by introducing HMV and Columbia pre-recorded tapes—the first and, so far, the only such tapes to be marketed in this country—but, without waiting to consolidate this new advance position, plans are already afoot for a far greater scoop at this summer's Radio Show: the first commercial stereophonic recordings and reproducers! The idea, of course, is not new, since twin-track tape is only too obvious a medium for bin-aural sound, yet, so far as I am aware, it will be the first time that a major record company has decided to cater to a market which, for the time being at any rate, must remain severely limited. Such a display of the pioneering spirit from EMI, who only a few years ago looked askance at LP because it might appeal only to a minority of highbrow music lovers, is indeed heartening and shows what keen and healthy competition has done to an industry which, before the advent of LP, had become too set in its ways and was in danger of stagnation.

It was most unfortunate for EMI that the impressive demonstration of stereophonic reproduction, which was given at Abbey Road Studios for the benefit of the press in early April, should have occurred while we were in the midst of an unprecedented newspaper strike. As a result, it has gone unreported in the national press, along with other events of almost comparable significance—such as the resignation of Sir Winston.

A great orchestra, new to records, makes its first appearance in Columbia's April list. This is the Israel Philharmonic, which was founded by Bronislaw Huberman in 1936 and whose first concerts, in December of that year, were conducted by Toscanini. During the coming summer the Israel Philharmonic is to make its first European tour—for many of its members, who were refugees from Nazi persecution, it will almost be a "home-coming"—and, by way of preparation, Columbia has released two LPs on which the orchestra is conducted by Paul Kletzki. One disc is devoted to Mahler's First Symphony, the other to music by Mendelssohn—the "Scotch" Symphony and the Overture "Calm Sea and Prosperous

Voyage." Kletzki's readings are very satisfying by virtue of their sobriety and musicianship, while the orchestra emerges with flying colors. It is a splendid instrument with a particularly impressive string section, even if it does perhaps lack the ultimate degree of discipline.

Last summer Glyndebourne presented Busoni's one-act opera "Arlecchino" as a curtain-raiser for Strauss's "Ariadne." It is an odd little work, a true *hors d'oeuvre*, containing something for everyone—wit, irony, sentiment, and much amusing parody—but little real nourishment. The dissertations between Doctor and Abbé are brilliantly humorous and the love scene between Leandro and Columbine is full of clever pastiche, but the opera as a whole (the composer called it "a theatrical Capriccio") is perhaps too intellectual to be effective in the theatre. HMV's record of the Glyndebourne production, however, is a most enjoyable affair and suggests that the gramophone may well be the ideal medium for "Arlecchino," since it does not offer any visual distraction from the many felicities of the score. Performance and recording are admirable: Kurt Gester invests the spoken title-role with roguish authority, there are superb contributions from Ian Wallace, Geraint Evans, and Fritz Ollendorff, while the love music is pointedly sung by Elaine Malbin and Murray Dickie. Under John Pritchard's skilled direction "Arlecchino" moves along briskly and effortlessly.

Recent arrivals from Decca include a selection of Auber's most popular overtures, played in sparkling fashion by the Conservatoire Orchestra under Albert Wolff and superlatively recorded; Ansermet and the Suisse Romande contribute a highly unorthodox but remarkably persuasive performance of Borodin's Second Symphony (coupled with the unfinished No. 3 and the "Prince Igor" Overture); there is a lyrically restrained and eminently satisfying performance of Elgar's Violin Concerto by Campoli and Boult (far more idiomatic than the flashy and superficial Heifetz/Sargent version); the celebrated colored jazz-pianist, Winifred Atwell, whose popular records have enjoyed fabulous sales in this country, demonstrates the soundness of her academic training by means of a reasonably competent performance of the Grieg Concerto.

—THOMAS HEINITZ.

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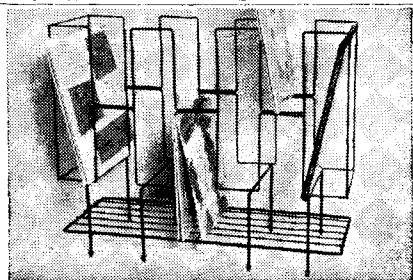
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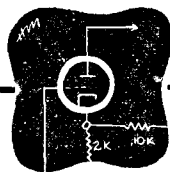
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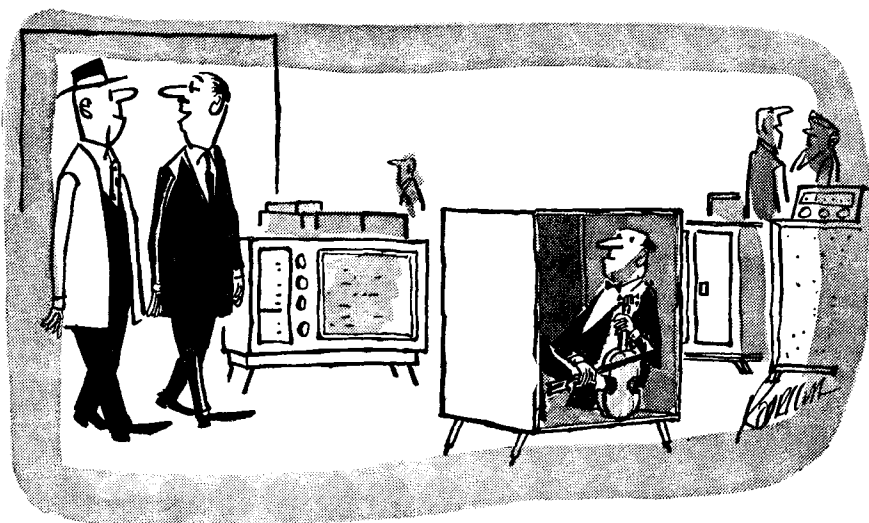
For those who can ☐ hear the difference**HIGHS AND LOWS****THE ERSATZ MELODY**

IN ONE of three audio "sessions" at the Institute of Radio Engineers' annual convention, held March 21-4 in New York City, Dr. Harry F. Olson, RCA Victor's prodigious researcher, described his latest creation, an "Electronic Music Synthesizer"—the most versatile and impressive device ever conceived to coax musical sounds out of vacuum tubes. At present I must echo the comment of one musically minded engineer's acclaim of the Synthesizer as "the most fascinating abomination I've ever heard!" But the adjective should be stressed no less than the noun: in the hands of imaginative composers as well as of ingenious technicians, the Synthesizer well may prove to have genuine artistic potentials. Meanwhile, there is of course no need to sell your conventional piano, organ, and orchestral stocks short. This two-ton monster is fabulously complex, expensive, and demanding, and its practical as well as its expressive exploitation will require well-nigh infinite pains if not years. Nevertheless, it is an unmistakable, dread, and yet exciting harbinger of an impending *deus ex machina* for an ever-nearing cybernetic musical age.

Home listeners can receive with greater equanimity the latest and far more immediately inevitable adaptation of the "book-of-the-month" notion to recorded music: a pre-recorded Tape-of-the-Month Club, the main enticements of which are the comparatively low fees (\$5.95 per selection to subscribers) and the

monthly distribution to members of "pre-view" tape samples. The first releases are Lengsfelder's "Musical Notes from a Tourist's Sketch Book" and the already broadcast- and disc-famous "Investigator," both of which are excellently recorded, although the former has little if any musical value to other than Muzak-conditioned ears. I can't imagine that serious listeners are likely to abdicate their personal tastes to the necessarily limited range of the club's program-makers, but the scheme has obvious advantages to any tape-fan anxious to build up a miscellaneous pre-recorded library as cheaply and easily as possible.

IN THE field of discs, all but the most insatiable of hi-fi fanatics have begun to gag over "demonstration" releases of high-decibel spicing and scanty musical or educative substance. It is a pleasure to report that technical neophyte and "expert" alike will find much more mental than physical stimulation in Tyler Turner's illuminating word-and-tone presentation, "This Is High Fidelity" (Vox DL-130). It includes "demonstration" passages, to be sure, but here they are subordinated to illustrating specific audio principles and dangers—common types of distortion, frequency-spectrum imbalance, the suitability of different studio acoustical characteristics to various kinds of musical textures, etc. The bulky accompanying booklet serves as an admirably comprehensive introduction to the mysteries of audio technology, but the prime attractions of this work (apart from its general



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