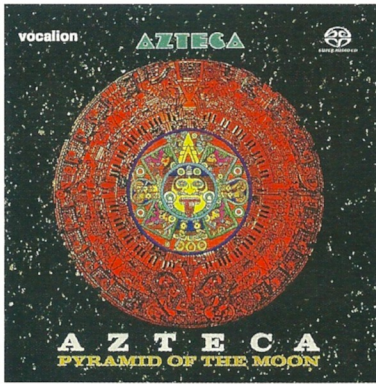


AUDIOPHILE: DIGITAL

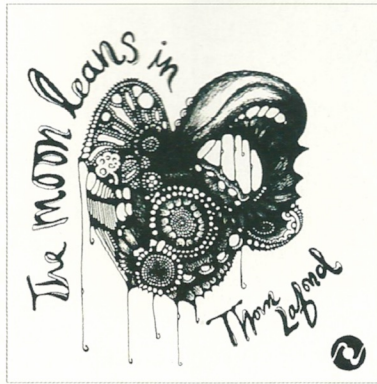


AZTECA Pyramid Of The Moon

Vocalion 2CDSML 8579 (SACD)

Vocalion really does perform a service, specialising in what precious few labels have been willing to exploit. Simply put, SACD has made it easier than ever to access original quadrasonic, pre-Dolby Digital/DTS surround recordings without having to dig up SQ or QS LPs. This time, it pairs Azteca's eponymous 1972 debut offering the original quad mix, with the follow-up that was issued only in stereo. Azteca were never huge, but clearly operated in the sphere personified by Santana, emphatically Latin-flavoured rock of the era. They mix smooth vocals reminiscent of The Doobie Brothers' Tom Johnston, with dazzling percussion and fiery guitar work. *KK*

Sound Quality: 90%

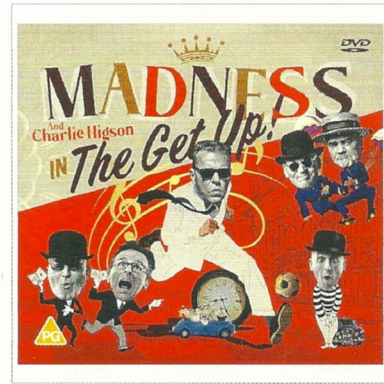


THOM LAFOND The Moon Leans In

Octave OCT 0014 (SACD + Data DVD; downloads to 192kHz/DSD64)

By now, you know the drill. Octave, like 2L, provides an SACD with an alternative disc, in Octave's case a DVD containing Stereo DSD and PCM files [HFN Jun '22] to contrast with the SACD. What the label has also established is a reputation for rootsy music that veers from singer-songwriter to alt-country, while Lafond operates a groove that reminded me of Tony Joe White with less growl. As this is an audiophile disc, the sound is nearly as important as the content; rest assured the percussion, piano, vocals and especially the violin will dazzle you. Lafond is an eclectic performer, so this is full of surprises, like the good-timey 'To The Moon'. It's one of the label's best yet. *KK*

Sound Quality: 90%



MADNESS AND CHARLIE HIGSON The Get Up!

BMG BMGCAT650 (DVD + CD film soundtrack)

Following Madness's interminable reissue programme, this witty effort is refreshing. I suppose that was its intent as it has been described as their 'unique 2021 lockdown show'. Not the only set to emerge to counter Covid's effects on socialising, John Fogerty and others having lifted our spirits while in exile, but Madness, Charlie Higson of *The Fast Show* and guests that include Paul Weller have fashioned a semi-autobiographical stage performance caught here on CD and DVD. This cornucopia of the band, with new and familiar material, rehearsal footage and more, proves that Madness was and remains the most vaudevillian of all British rock bands. *KK*

Sound Quality: 85%



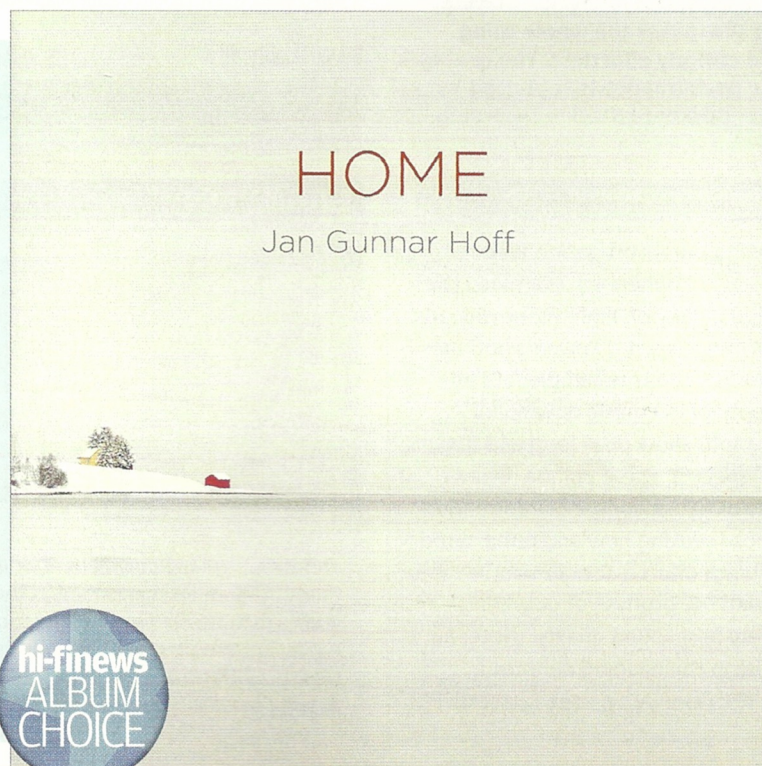
JAN GUNNAR HOFF

Home

2L 2L-168 (SACD + Blu-ray)

There are plenty of solo piano recordings out there to provide you with one of the toughest tests to which you can subject your system, but this release continues a tradition it shares with Octave (see Thom Lafond, above) in providing the fastidious audiophile with both an MQA SACD and a Blu-ray for comparison purposes. The latter begs multiple playings for those with multichannel set-ups, offering 5.1 DTS-HD MA 192kHz/24-bit, 7.1.4 Dolby Atmos 48kHz and 7.1.4 Auro-3D 96kHz as well as 2.0 LPCM 192kHz/24-bit, and it's an education hearing a single instrument in stereo vs surround. All that aside, *Home* is simply a gorgeous performance, mixing original compositions and standards such as 'Moon River' and 'Summertime'. *KK*

Sound Quality: 95%



HOME

Jan Gunnar Hoff

