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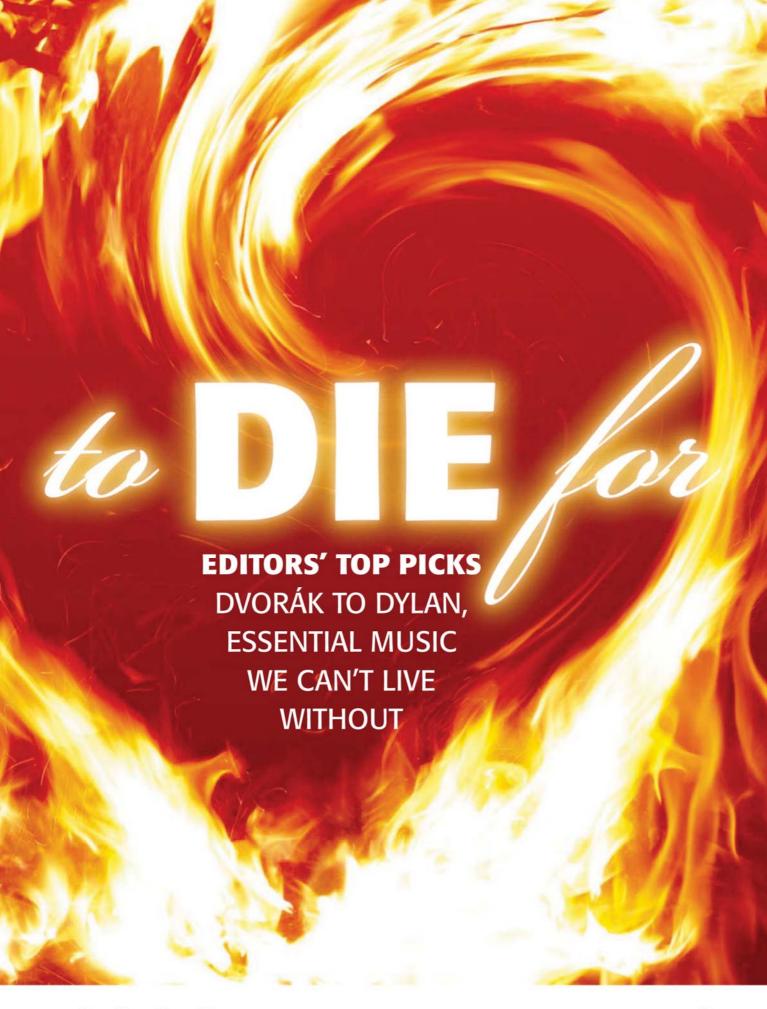


A SOURCE INTERLINK MEDIA PUBLICATION

A CRIME OF PASSION? Deprayed indifference to the importance of tuneage? Death by music? The simple fact is that most audiophiles got that way by having too many records. That's right-very few got into this rewarding, non-contact sport because they were aroused by shiny brushed-steel boxes or supersexy speaker grilles. It's because they wanted to hear their piles of music-their Mahler, Monk, or Rick James-sound the best it could. (And, okay, yes: It is cool to show drooling friends your designer gear.)

It's in that spirit that we present our annual "Records To Die For" extravaganza. Each Stereophile writer was asked to choose a pair of recordings, be they CD or LP, of music they would not want to live without. The only restriction is that these recordings must still be available, if only in the deeper, darker recesses of the Internet. Not to get all Fireside Chatty or anything, but in these troubled times, investing in great music and gear-from both of which you can derive endless pleasure and fulfillment-seems a smart move for both the wallet and the head. So please, read on and enjoy!-Robert Baird

NOTE: If a recording listed here has previously been reviewed in Stereophile, whether in "Record Reviews" or in past editions of "Records To Die For," the volume and number of the pertinent issue appear in parentheses at the end of the review. For example, a listing of "(XXI-11)" means that a review of the recording appeared in Vol.21 No.11 (November 1998).



families of leitmotifs to represent the various creatures, species, characters, tribes, peoples, places, and things of J.R.R. Tolkien's vast novel. In some cases Shore has outdone Wagner; his sinuous theme for the One Ring is far more convincing an embodiment of fatally unsatisfiable yearning than is Wagner's strangely pale motif for Alberich's ring; and Shore's theme for

the equestrian Rohirrim is at least as dark, tragic, and noble as the one Wagner wrote for his Volsungs. Shore is also a sensitive and masterful conductor-throughout, the London Philharmonic heaves and sighs in the rhythms of breath, sounding like a huge restive beast. Unlike most film composers, who are seldom given more than a few weeks to compose, rehearse, record, and edit, Shore had time to orchestrate these immense scores himself, and his close attention to details of color, texture, voicing, and inner harmonies is unprecedented for the genre. These are perhaps the bestcrafted film scores ever written, and have genuine musical substance; The Return of the King's "The Lighting of the Beacons" is the most inspiring marriage of music and film image I have ever heard and seen. Though hardly examples of audiophile engineering-the number of microphones probably ran into the high two digits-these are also some of the most vivid, well-balanced, three-dimensional, full-bodied orchestral recordings I have heard. The senses of space and orchestral texture (the cymbals! the low strings!) in

the 24-bit/48kHz hi-rez versions of all 10 hours of music on the included DVD-Audio discs are not subtle in their differences from the sound on the CDs, which sound plenty good themselves. The sumptuous and meticulously antiqued packaging matches the aural richness and the music's own high seriousness. Shore's deep generosity in his work here is audible

and humbling.

Robert Levine

HAYDN: The Creation

Sandrine Piau, Miah Persson, sopranos; Mark Padmore, tenor; Peter Harvey, baritone; Neal Davies, bass; Chetham's Chamber Choir, Gabrieli Consort of Players, Paul McCreesh Archiv 477 7361 (2 CDs). 2008. Nicholas Parker, prod.; Jonathan Stokes, eng. DDD. TT: 108:56

Sung in English, this spotless recording uses the forces Haydn led at a 1799 performance-200 players and singers-and the effect is epic: the world is being created. The massed brasses and winds, along with the huge choir, remind the listener of nothing short of a Technicolor, Cecil B. De Mille spectacular, except that there's no kitsch and the details are never blurred-the use of period instruments assures clarity, with flutes like birds, timpani like God's wake-up calls, and the gut strings alternately mellow and fiercely attacked for emphasis. McCreesh goes for color and expressiveness without being Romantic, and the recording is resonant, bright, and roomy, capturing everything from the gigantic finales of choruses to the softest solo soprano pianissimo without fidgeting. The soloists are superb as well. Put it on and sit back. (XXXI-7)

RADIOHEAD: In Rainbows

TBD/ATO ATCD47 (CD). 2008. Mark Stent, prod.; Nigel Godrich, prod., eng. DDD? TT: 42:34

So much was made of the marketing of this CD that the music almost got lost. Well, it's the most approachable album Radiohead has made, but it never cuts corners; Thom Yorke's vocals are more aggressive than introverted this time, but he still knows how to pine. More rock than psychedelia, they've added pianos, celestas, and the wonderful, wacky Ondes Martenot to

their palette, which also includes strings and varied electronica. I'm not willing to claim that this is a cheerful CD, but it includes a real love song (the stripped-down "House of Cards"), and a kid's chorus (in "15 Step") that contradicts Yorke's darkness. "Faust Arp" is actually reminiscent of the Beatles. But true fans need not fear-the final song, "Videotape," shows Radiohead at their most layered and complex. What gorgeous music.



More rock than psychedelia, they've added pianos, celestas, and the wonderful, wacky Ondes Martenot to their palette. -ROBERT LEVINE

John Marks

BANTOCK: Omar Khayyám

Catherine Wyn-Rogers, mezzo-soprano; Toby Spence, tenor; Roderick Williams, bass; BBC Symphony Chorus, Stephen Jackson, choirmaster; BBC Symphony Orchestra; Vernon Handley, conductor

Chandos CHSA 5051 (3 multichannel SACD/CDs), 2007. Brian Couzens, prod.; Ralph Couzens, eng. DDD. TT: 2:51:31

Orientalism always exercised tremendous pull the British on imagination, and here are nearly three hours of settings-as lush and suggestive as an Alma-Tadema nude-for vocal soloists, chorus, and orchestra, of verses by a medieval Persian poet. Granville Bantock's Omar Khayyám (1906–09) is contemporary

with Schönberg's Gurrelieder and Debussy's Le martyre de Saint Sébastien, and it displays the same late-Romantic, fin-de-siècle, overripe opulence. But comparisons to late Elgar, early Strauss, and even Mahler are not out of line either. The scale and scope are such that at times I looked up, expecting to see a David Lean film. I mean that as praise. Plaudits to Chandos for pulling off such a gigantic undertaking as this world-premiere recording-and on SACD, no less.

ISLANDSMOEN: Requiem, Op.42

Hilde Haraldsen Sveen, soprano; Marianne Beate Kielland, alto; Ulf Oien, tenor; Trond Halstein Moe, bass; Norwegian Soloists' Choir, Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra; Terje Boye Hansen 2-L 2L36SACD (multichannel SACD/CD). 2006. Wolfgang Plagge, prod.; Hans Peter L'Orange, Ståle Hebæk Ødegården, engs. DDD. TT: 50:56

Sigurd Islandsmoen (1881-1964) wrote his Requiem, Op.42, in 1935-36. The work had its premiere in 1943 and was briefly popular in Europe in the post-WWII period, but by 1960 it had vanished. Although the melodic material comes from Norwegian folk songs, the Prelude sounds like vintage orchestral Elgar. Islandsmoen, who studied with Reger, handles his materials and forms deftly. This requiem is more energetic than down in the dumps; the choral sections with organ fills (Islandsmoen was an organist) are particularly rewarding. Norway's own 2L label provides world-class sound in this world-premiere recording; the multichannel program is said to place the chorus behind you. A wonderful rediscovery.

Stephen Mejias

GRUPO FOLKLORICO Y EXPERIMENTAL NUEVAYORQUINO: Concepts in Unity

Salsoul SAL 2-400 (LP). 1975. Rene Lopez, Andy Kaufman, prods.; John Laico, Don Puluse, Lou Waxman, engs. AAA. TT: 60:17

I remember the day my uncle Edwin introduced me to these guys. I was in the middle of a deep, deep obsession with New York City salsa, and thought I had a pretty good grasp on things. I'd become familiar with the rhythms and the progressions, I knew the percussionists and the brass sections and the soneros. But then I heard "Anabocoa," and everything I thought I knew about salsa was obliterated. In Grupo Folklorico, a collection of New York City's most versatile and accomplished Latin jazz musicians come together to explore the roots of salsa, and to honor the traditional musical forms of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Africa. In "Anabocoa," bassist Andy Gonzalez enters with a slow and simple four-note riff. He plays it just twice before the song suddenly erupts into a furious and maddening groove. About three minutes in, Manny Oquendo fashions what might be the most powerful timbale solo ever captured on tape-it's the sound of Puerto Rico, Cuba, Africa, New York City, the oceans, the mountains, and the whole damn world coming together to celebrate life. Everything there is to know about everything is banged out in those perfect strokes. Musical genres and cultural boundaries are erased, leaving only concepts in unity. (XXI-2)

JOHN HANDY & THE CONCERT ENSEMBLE: Projections

John Handy, alto saxophone, saxello, flute; Michael White, violin; Mike Nock, piano; Bruce Cale,

bass; Larry Hancock, drums, tambourine Columbia CS 9689 (LP). 1968. John Hammond, prod.; Stan Tonkel, Martin Greenblatt, engs. AAA. TT: 44:38

We were hunting for lost treasures at the Princeton Record Exchange. I pulled Projections from the heavy, crowded stacks. "Know anything about this?" I asked John. "Nope, but it looks cool," he replied. On the cover, John Handy stands alone, dead center, impeccably and flamboyantly dressed in a bright red shirt, red and black striped tie, light gray suit jacket, pink pocket square, black slacks, and pointed leather boots. His head is cocked ever so gently to the left, and his sax hangs from his neck to rest comfortably across his torso. His right hand is held at shoulder height, and between two fingers he balances a lit cigarette; his left hand is poised at his waist. Dude looks satisfied-as if his band has just got finished whipping your silly ass from New York to Japan to Brazil and right down to your own front porch, got you all curled up into a blissed-out ball of so much useless flesh with all their violent plucks and thunderous attacks, searing solos, seductive melodies, freejazz explosions, and bossa nova sway, and left you dumb and wondering and begging: Why the hell have I never heard of these

guys before, and where, please, can I get some more—like now, fast?

Paul Messenger FLEETWOOD MAC: Tusk

Warner Bros. K66088 (2 LPs, original UK edition). 1979. Fleetwood Mac, prods.; Richard Bashut, Ken Caillat, prods., engs.; Hernan Rojas eng. AAA. TT: 74:06

The record-breaking global success of Rumours doomed its much-delayed, way-over-budget follow-up. Tusk was criticized

as overblown, self-indulgent, and lacking direction, all of which had some truth. But it has weathered well. Revisited 30 years on, it's a mostly delightful if disparate collection of highclass AOR that's worth a place alongside the Beatles' "White Album" or the Stones' Exile on Main Street. I can't speak for the remastered CDs, but system improvements now cut through the overproduction that made the original vinyl confusing, allowing fresh enjoyment of these fine songs and subtle, complex arrangements.

ENNIO MORRICONE: The Soundtracks: 75 Themes from 53 Films Déjà Vu Definitive Gold 5X031 (5 CDs). 2007. No recording details available. TT: 3:56:15

Everyone's music collection should include some Morricone. The music establishment might sniff at film soundtracks, but in my opinion they'll be remembered long after most "serious" modern music is forgotten and ignored. Morricone, especially when helping director Sergio Leone reinvent the Western, is a great innovator, adding wit, charm, and tension in his unusual use of voices, whistling, and strange instrumentation. Although I bought an LP of the original soundtrack album of The Good, the Bad and the Ugly back in the 1970s, finding a good collection proved difficult-until I discovered this Italian compilation, which, at \$20 for five CDs, is also a bargain. Hours of Googling have failed to find any provenance whatsoever, though the scores, different from the performances on my OST, have

presumably been rerecorded-and to a very high standard.

Fred Mills

JACOBITES: Robespierre's Velvet Basement Secretly Canadian SC55 (2 CDs). 1985/2002. Bob Lamb, prod., eng.; Nikki Sudden, Dave Kusworth, prods., remastering; John Rivers, remastering. AAD. TT: 95:00

Rock writers generally don't get groupies, but sometimes our proximity to rock stars makes the notion theoretically . . . achievable. When Nikki Sudden's post-Swell Maps outfit, the Jacobites, issued their second LP in 1985, yours truly was so smitten by the British group's edgy blend of the Rolling Stones, the Velvets, and vintage blues that I wrote a hyperbolic 1000-word review. Five years later, Sudden comes to town on a rare US tour and, remembering my name, greets me like an old friend. In the dressing room after the show, I'm guzzling his Jack Daniel's and watching him paw a local groupie known as the Dragon Lady. Noting my apparent envy, Sudden leans over to whisper in the ear of another lissome lass who'd come backstage. She promptly gets up, walks over, slides onto my lap, and begins, ever so delicately, to nibble on my earlobe ... (XXIV-2)



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U2: War

Island/UME B0010949-02 (2 CDs). 1983/2008. Steve Lillywhite, Bill Whelan, prods.; Paul Thomas, Kevin Killen, engs.; Cheryl Engels, Arnie Acosta, remastering (overseen by The Edge). AAD. TT: 111:27

This edition of the 1983 album War, part of Universal's ambitious overhaul of U2's back catalog, boasts a bonus disc comprising a dozen remixes, rarities, live tracks, and B-sides. It's the significance of the original LP, however-key cuts such as the soaring anthem "New Year's Day" and the violin-fueled swooner