

# Comeback for quad on videodiscs?

Many of the movies I've seen in theaters that claim to be in Dolby stereo have actually turned out to be in Dolby quad—something like the old SQ and QS matrix system from the early '70s. I'd like to know if any LaserVision stereo disc releases of these movies (*Star Trek—The Motion Picture*, for example) are also encoded in quad.

Vincent Vijnola  
Houston, TX

**A** Amazing as it may seem, yes, they are. For a number of major big-budget Dolby-sound pictures, the audio mixers have used a special process called Dolby Surround, which matrix-encodes four audio channels into two stereo channels, which are then placed on the 35 mm print. The theater can then show the movie as a regular stereo movie, or, with an appropriate Dolby Surround decoder, add the two rear channels for the back of the theater.

Since the same magnetic master tracks used to make the theatrical prints are used to transfer pictures for video release, the subsequent disc and tape copies are also usually encoded with four-channel sound.

Playing back a high-quality two-channel videodisc or Dolby tape through a four-channel matrix decoder can often result in wonderful sound, depending on your personal tastes. While some audio purists are known to dislike gimmicks like quad sound (and especially matrix quad), many people do prefer hearing sound through four speakers. Who knows? Someday, quad—like the South—may rise again.

**Q** I have a problem with my new RCA model VFT-650 VHS-format video recorder, which is connected to a Sony KV-1946R TV set. When I watch the TV set with its own tuner, it looks

perfect. But when I watch the VCR on the TV, there's too much red in the picture. Fine-tuning doesn't help. My friend has a similar VCR, the model VET-650, and his does the same thing. Yet my brother has an RCA model VFP-170 portable, and his looks fine.

Also, when I play tapes recorded on my machine or my friend's machine, I can get all the special effects (freeze-frame, slow motion, etc.) in the SP and EP modes, but my brother's tapes have terrible noise bars at all the speeds. I had the VCR and the TV set checked, and my

possible—but not necessarily the case—that some of the RCA 650s, which are manufactured in Japan by Matsushita Electric, are adjusted a little differently from some of RCA's portables, which are made by Hitachi.

If the difference between the two bothers you that much, our advice is to watch all of your programs through the VCR's tuner, and adjust the TV set to provide color pictures from the VCR.

The noise-bar problem you're experiencing is the result of the portable using a single pair of 30-micron heads to record all three speeds. Your special-effects 650 VCR has four heads—70 and 90



*Star Trek—The Motion Picture: quad sound on LaserVision disc?*

service technician said that they are both normal. What do you think?

Robert Kusiak  
Yonkers, NY

**A** First, you should realize that there'll always be subtle differences between a TV set's tuner and the tuner on a VCR. The VCR's tuner will almost never look as good as the set's tuner, because the VCR's output is being re-modulated to channel 3 or 4 before it appears on your set. As a result, the additional noise created by this extra modulation step is bound to make the final picture worse than the TV set's tuner reception—but usually only a little bit. It's

microns for SP, plus 26 and 31 microns for LP and EP. Since their gaps are wider, they almost always provide better special effects than narrow-head machines. Since the tracks on your brother's tapes are narrow, the noise bars between the tracks are plainly visible during special-effects playback.

As a matter of fact, you may also be able to see a qualitative difference in standard playback between these tapes, since the narrow-track tapes are just a bit noisier than

### What's Your Question?

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