

Many recordings of the quad era were created with close miking, multitracking, and unusual mixing techniques. A number of recording studios worked to *remove* the sound of the room from recordings, while quad's real strength was in capturing it. Unfortunately, quad recordings were largely gimmick-laden.

#### Digital Revival

The Compact Disc could revive quad. Four-channel CDs would be easy to create, and the amount of music on a quad CD would equal current stereo analog issues. One of quad's biggest headaches—the medium—is overcome by the CD. And there's more.

The subtle benefits of those near-silent reverberations that describe the size of the room in which a recording was made were previously masked by analog hiss. Without the nemesis of analog noise, and under the educated hand of a master recordist, quad could contribute significantly to the accuracy of classical recordings made in concert halls.

In addition, digital technology has given us a gadget (known under various trade names) that allows the creation of the reverberative fingerprint of an enclosed space of any size, with any resonance and decay characteristics.

After some study, an educated operator of such a device can create, within minutes, the sound found in the Mormon Tabernacle, Boston Symphony Hall, your bathroom shower, or a combination of the three. Digital recording can capture those nuances.

But when it gets quiet—really quiet—as it does in digital recordings, an old problem crops up. Interruptive airplane, train, construction, and traffic noises already plague classical

recording sessions and motion picture location sound crews. Without the masking effect of analog noise, I foresee real problems maturing in this area.

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### *Quadraphonic sound and other CD surprises may be nearer than any of us think.*

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Before quad can catch fire again (if it does) other problems must be overcome. Although most amplifiers are still equipped with only two channels, the solid-state world of electronic manufacturing stamps out stereo amplifiers on chips like a candy factory churns out licorice sticks. Adding channels three and four to next year's model may be less expensive than you think. Quad speakers, on the other hand, pose a costlier problem. You still need four instead of two.

#### The Demanding Consumer

Stereo television, with the music video to coax it along, is fine-tuning a general appreciation for good sound, and perhaps enticing a few more viewers. Likewise, the coming of digital audio, with the CD to coax it along, is fine-tuning a general appreciation for hiss-less and pop-less music.

The combined result is an already increasing number of consumers less

tolerant of poor-quality sound. The possibility of all these demanding consumers seems to be frightening some manufacturers.

Some analog accessory makers view digital audio as a threat to their existence and future. They advertise and promote digital audio's present stumblings and shortcomings while ignoring the problems of analog.

If a manufacturer's contribution to better sound is more fizz than Coke, he's in the same trouble he was *before* digital appeared.

If, on the other hand, a manufactured product improves or preserves the physical and aural integrity of an LP, the advent of digital is the opportunity of a lifetime for that company. The reasoning is this: As more and more CD players infiltrate the mass market, more and more consumers will learn what nice, clean sound really is. Therefore, CD owners provide a new and expanding audience for high-end analog goodies, including LP preservation and cleaning devices.

I encourage your support of those advertisers whose products enhance your enjoyment of LPs and magnetic tapes.

Some manufacturers of analog sound equipment, in recognition of the existence of a digital debate, hesitate to speak directly (through advertisements) to the digital audience. They feel their clutch of existing analog supporters may abandon them. That logic is one-sided and self-serving.

#### The Future Is Now

Hans Gout, Senior Director of CD Coordination for PolyGram, was instrumental in the realization of affordable digital audio discs and players. He spoke recently to an assembly of record retailers and CD-curious people. In his conservative but educated address, he stated that by 1990 the sale of CDs would equal LPs in number, and by 1995, the production of LPs would decline rapidly.

Significantly, only the *production* and sales of LPs are forecast to decline. LPs still will be around, and still will need care. The market for *good* turntables and cartridges will flourish for many more years. But crummy turntables and bogus cartridges are doomed.

Quadraphonic sound and other CD surprises may be nearer than any of us think. To paraphrase a recent digital audio advertising campaign, "I have heard the future, and it works."