

Super Fidelity

By John Sunier

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Flanders Recorder Quartet|Banchetto Musicale|Various Composers|Aeolus Multichannel SACD AE-10156

The Flanders Recorder Quartet is one of the world's top recorder ensembles. One of the Flanders' many attributes is its huge collection of differently-voiced recorders—ranging from descant high soprano models to long contrabass instruments. The quartet's musical attributes include technical perfection and the ability to achieve a homogeneous sound without ever being the least bit off-pitch. The disc's programming is wide-ranging and creative, with music from Johann Schein (one of his suites opens the program), Bach (the included Prelude and Fugue was probably transcribed from the keyboard original), Vaughan Williams, Tarquino Merula, Frans Geysen, Piet Swerts, and Jan van der Roost. The low noise floor surround recording presents the four players very specifically arced in front of the listener and makes it easy to appreciate the subtle sound of these polite instruments.

Mikis Theodorakis|Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra|Suite from Les amants de T  r  l|Johannes Moser, cello|Coviello Classics Multichannel SACD COV 30612

Theodorakis is Greece's leading living composer, known for his film scores, songs, symphonies, cantatas, ballets, five operas, and music for some of the great Greek tragedies. His Cello Rhapsody dates from 1997 and uses themes from some of his previous song cycles. Theodorakis feels the cello is the instrument most closely related to the human voice, and has created nine "songs without words" for the concerto, which are named for the nine muses.

All are very short movements, under three minutes. Moser has a lovely tone and interprets the often-traditional melodies with much emotional fire. The Lovers of T  r  l is based on a 13th century legend about a pair of young lovers who are barred from marrying. The boy goes to seek his fortune but while he's gone the girl marries another. The boy returns and dies of grief, as does the girl. Both performances and the sonics are exemplary.



Respighi|Ballad of the Gnomes; Three Botticelli Pictures; Suite in G Major; Adagio|Geoffrey Simon|Cala Multichannel SACD CACDS4028

Another imaginative collection from conductor Simon, who finds obscure but worthwhile works by well-known composers to spice up his concert programs around the world as well as provide material for his Cala record label releases. The series of which this SACD is a part normally has a concert warhorse as the centerpiece. In this case it's not a warhorse at all, but one of Respighi's loveliest works, the three musical impressions of famous paintings by 16th century master Botticelli. The Ballad of the Gnomes is a symphonic tone poem, and a smashing piece of music that would be a wonderful replacement for the usual boring overture on many concert programs—and an audiophile's dream. The Adagio could be the middle movement of a gorgeous cello concerto, but the rest of it unfortunately doesn't exist.



This Is K2 HD Sound!|Sampler|Various artists|First Impression Music K2HD xrcd 078

JVC's xrcd K2 HD technology seeks to squeeze the ultimate resolution into the standard 44.1kHz/16-bit compact disc format. FIM's Winston Ma was so captivated by the K2 HD enhancements that he has scheduled a new series of reissues of his previous xrcd recordings.

The 16 selections on this sampler are clearly exceptional audio demo tracks, and even more interesting and exciting than some of the selections he has made for previous FIM samplers. The excerpt from Rachmaninoff's Symphony Dances and the War Dance from Respighi's Queen of Sheba Suite are smashing audiophile demos. The Tchaikovsky track from the original Decca LP of the Swan Lake score has the rich analog soundstage obtained back in 1959 in London's Kingsway Hall. Bruce Stark's sax is right in your lap in the track from his Tale of Foreign Lands CD, and the double bass in the Hot Club of San Francisco comes through with gusto in the Stardust track. The clarity and transparency are truly impressive.



Nat King Cole|The King of Sound|TopMusic International|Stereo-only hybrid SACD TM-SACD9006.2

This SACD appears to have been produced as a promotional/giveaway disc for the Asian importer of Tivoli Audio table radios. The 17 Nat Cole hits are from the 40s and 50s so it's a surprise they are really in stereo. Perhaps they were re-recordings made in the late 50s when stereo had

become a reality. Some notes about this would have been welcome. The sound was very good, and it was enjoyable to hear these classics again, but they are really not SACD material. So my main question about the disc would be: "Why?" Perhaps these tracks are old enough that no licensing payments were required. A 180-gram vinyl remaster is available from China's ABC Records. Track List: Unforgettable, Mona Lisa, Nature Boy, Smile, Sweet Lorraine, For Sentimental Reasons, Tenderly, Blue Gardenia, A Blossom Fell, Walkin' My Baby Back Home, Route 66, It's Only a Paper Moon, Straighten Up and Fly Right, Too Young, For All We Know, Answer Me My Love, Darling Je Vous Aime Beaucoup.

BCQ(Blue Chamber Quartet)|First Impressions|Stockfish Multichannel SACD SFR 357.4046.2

On this, their first disc, BCQ's four classical players—Julia Bartha (piano), Angelika Siman (harp), Thomas Schindle (vibes), Holger Michalski (double bass)—combine their classical roots with elements of jazz. The familiar Toccata from one of Prokofiev's piano sonatas starts things off at a good clip, followed by five of Chick Corea's Children's Songs. Two Piazzolla selections employ more equal use of all the instruments. There is a three-movement jazz suite by Richard Michael which is something in the line of Claude Bolling's suites, and the program ends with the up-tempo Corea tune *La Fiesta*. The mixing and spatialization of the four players is very creative. Sometimes portions of the piano are heard from one of the surrounds, similar to the "Moving Real Surround" on Tacet's SACDs. It is clearly a performance creatively intended to be listened to in surround.

