Welcome to *Copper* #68!

By the time you read this, the first day of Fall will have passed---and we're approaching Rocky Mountain Audio Fest, closely followed by (yikes!) the Toronto Audio Fest, the Capital Audio Fest, the New York Audio Show, the Audio Video Show in Warsaw, the Tokyo International Show---and maybe
a few others I’ve forgotten! Maybe some day I’ll explain how the crowded Fall show scene almost got even more crowded....

Getting into this issue, **Larry Schenbeck** tells us about not Jobs, this time, but *snobs and slobs*: **Dan Schwartz** recently underwent surgery, so we’ll revisit his memoir of the *Tuesday Night Music Club*; **Richard Murison** brings us John Corigliano’s striking *Symphony No. 1*; **Jay Jay French’s** tells us about *his guitars*—LOTS of guitars; **Roy Hall** fulfills a childhood wish and visits *Cairns*; **Anne E. Johnson** brings us lesser-known *songs from R.E.M*; **Christian James Hand** deconstructs Thin Lizzy’s major hit, “*The Boys Are Back in Town*”. I scrutinize the times *when sharing isn’t caring*, and present part 4 of our series on *phono playback*.

**Anne** is back with *Something Old/Something New*, featuring new recordings of *Schubert Symphonies*; **Industry News** looks at developments at *Krell*; and our friend **B. Jan Montana** shows us around *the CEDIA Expo*.

**Copper #68** concludes with **Charles Rodrigues** telling us how a laser turntable *SHOULD be made*, and a *Parting Shot* view of the beautiful coast of *Sardinia*.

**Woody Woodward** is still on sabbatical, and will return in a few issues---he promises!

Thanks for reading. See you soon!

Cheers, **Leebs**.
Here’s a (lightly edited) exchange that took place right after I sent in my “Steve Jobs: the Opera” copy to our Esteemed Editor:

**Leebs:** Wasn’t *Nixon in China* weird enough?

**LS:** Musically *Nixon in China* was indeed weird. Although it opened new territory, it was still Adams in his Trying To Sound Totally Like Phil Glass period. *Nixon* does have some boring stretches. Best thing is Alice Goodman’s script, which manages to turn Tricky Dick, Pat, Chou En Lai, Mao, and Madame Mao into flesh-and-blood, interesting humans. The only clownish sub-human is Henry Kissinger. On the other hand, the *Steve Jobs* libretto represents every character as a cardboard figure, although the music is often good enough to overcome that. After all, Henry Fonda and John Wayne usually worked from scripts that treated their cowboys as two-dimensional cutouts, but somehow—in conspiracy with John Ford—they managed to make classic Westerns.

So I’m not sure whether to praise *Steve Jobs* because it’s slick, checks all the boxes, moves things right along, etc. etc., or to criticize it for exactly the same reasons. Apparently the thing in American opera now is: (1) for the love of God, keep it under two hours and without an intermission, otherwise people will drift out to the bar at halftime and never come back; (2) make all the music sound like John Williams, all the characters act like people Tom Hanks or Juliette Binoche might play, and all the visuals look like *Star Wars* or *Avatar*. But—even though it’s 2018—let the singers make noises like Eileen Farrell or Mario Lanza. Why?? Incidentally, I am thinking about adding one really whiz-bang audio clip so that readers will have a better idea of the show.

**Leebs:** I still think it’s weird.

And that brings us to today’s topic. I could have labeled it “Elitists vs. Populists.” I could even have defined those terms (here and here), which doesn’t help. Don’t they both imply something reactionary, rigid and shallow? You can defend such behaviors variously, e.g., as an attempt to demonstrate superior values or else to show your down-to-earth, communitarian sentiments, but! A fully developed, grownup aesthetic should be flexible enough to encompass Tchaikovsky and
Lightnin’ Hopkins. Yes, some populists are blockheads, but then there was Carl Sandburg.

I realize now that my review of Steve Jobs was partly a Snob Job: I offered faint praise but carped about the predictable nature of the characters and the lack of truly innovative, challenging music. (That’s avant-garde-elitist talk for no no no, not weird enough by half!) But my response to Editor Leebens went in the other direction: I wanted to show that I’m a Man of the People. A more probative approach would have emphasized that much of the weirdness and flatness of Nixon in China stemmed from the fact that Adams and his collaborators were experimenting. In 1985–87, he was attempting to help create a new musico-dramatic language. (In Slob terms: he wanted to do Glass, but way better.) When you are starting from scratch, some of what you try is going to fall flat. That’s the price innovators pay. (Think of Leonardo and The Last Supper and the sub-par technology of the new paints he was using.) The important thing for any innovator is to spot not what failed but what worked, and to keep doing it again and again and again. That’s how Adams arrived at The Death of Klinghoffer, El Niño, Doctor Atomic, and more wonderful stuff he hasn’t yet written.

Let’s face it: sometimes we’re all Snobs. Sooner or later we’re all Slobs too. It’s part of being an American and living in a marketplace culture: everything becomes merchandise. As an experiment today, I’m going to offer brief reviews of new, interesting recordings (merchandise!). I’ll provide the facts, the Slob angle, and the Snob angle. We’ll see whether those terms matter.

**Percy Grainger, Complete Music for Wind Band.** Naxos 8.573679/80/81. This nice new set of recordings is a near-perfect example of elitism and populism, lion and lamb, lying down together, making something lovely and distinctive from their union. Grainger (1882–1961) was an Aussie, a multitalented, globe-hopping eccentric, a man possessed: he had boatloads of energy, he made many friends and not a few enemies, and he liked folk music and wind bands. Here conductor Bjarte Engeset and the Royal Norwegian Navy Band give us everything he wrote or eventually rescored for wind ensemble. Things like this jaunty, slightly off-kilter march, “The Gum-suckers,” honoring residents of the state of Victoria and their fondness for the refreshing blades of the Eucalyptus tree:

Instrumentation includes piano, staff bells, Grainger’s own Deagan marimbaphone, and more. Volume 2 of the collection also features two versions of Irish Tune from County Derry and this Colonial Song, based on the composer’s own melodies:

**What I Liked:** The music is richly scored, taking full advantage of wind instruments’ wide pitch range and color spectrum. Melodies are simple and heartfelt, performances topnotch. Everything’s delivered with satisfying precision without sounding at all “military.” Quite well recorded too, although it may not tempt you to throw away your Fennell or Dallas Wind Symphony recordings. **What I Liked Less:** One thing you learn from a “compleatist” edition is that some music ages less well, whether it’s an experiment or a cultural statement whose time has come and gone (e.g. The Power of Rome and the Christian Heart). Nevertheless, this set’s Snob/Slob score is nearly faultless.

**Eric Moe: Uncanny Affable Machines.** Various artists, New Focus FCR212. This and the following album are from artists and a label unfamiliar to me. They’re first-rate, however, and well worth hearing—depending on your personal Snob/Slob tendencies, of course. **What I Liked:** As a composer Moe isn’t afraid of blending pop, world, and experimental sounds.

That’s Cross Chop, named after a surfing term. It begins with a classic quotation, but what matters is what comes next. A tasty opening slice of Slob is followed by enough skilled follow-through to warm any elitist heart; Mr. Moe keeps you listening!
That’s from *The Sun Beats the Mountain Like a Drum*, featuring a pipa player and samples from Huddie Ledbetter and percussionist Michael Lipsey. The result is as raw, dramatic, and extreme as—well, as classic pipa repertoire like “The Ambush From All Sides.”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtrthXXmKgA

Let’s hear one more sample, a wonderful essay in microtones entitled (after Keats) *And No Birds Sing*. The piano is re-tuned with 19 notes to each octave. Snob note: I’ve been hearing a lot of microtonal music lately, but this piece is handled especially well.

We didn’t even get to the title track, or to *Let Me Tell U About R Specials*, a charming sound construction. *What I Liked*: everything. *What I Liked Less*: I wish artists wouldn’t waste liner note space with lists of all the awards they’ve won or the places/people/orchestras they’ve worked with. *We don’t care*. Your music will tell us whether you’ve got the right stuff. *Snob/Slob score*: Between “Wipeout” and Leadbelly, Moe scores with pop-culture cred galore; conversely, I hope any FOMO-oriented snobs feel validated by the quantity and variety of experimental music on display. And: had you ever heard of Eric Moe? Me neither.

Here I must mention another New Focus Recording, *Wang Lu: Urban Inventory* (FCR 197). As with Moe’s disc, this multi-artist collection is presented in a Digipak with stunning visual design. The participation of Ensemble Intercontemporain, ICE, and Alarm Will Sound, among others, provides a clue to Ms. Wang’s recognized talent, but then so does her music, a fascinating blend of East Asian social consciousness and Western ultra-modernism. Here is a clip from “Gifts of Gab”:

Finally: *Karlheinz Stockhausen: Klavierstücke I-XI*. Sabine Liebner, piano. Wergo WER 7341 2. What?? Stockhausen (1928–2007) is at that awkward age: dead, but not dead enough. How do we handle the young lions of yesteryear? Especially when they made utterly tasteless, insensitive remarks after 9/11? You could do worse than check out these piano works, written between 1952 and 1961. For much of that period, the composer was obsessed by what his annotator Wolfgang Rathert calls “a mechanistic number fetish.” For Stockhausen “the abstract nature of numbers became the very definition of beauty.” In six single-spaced pages, Rathert explains just how every parameter of the music was determined via religiously applied numerical theories. I’ll take his word for it. Here are the first two-thirds of *Klavierstücke IV, No. 2*:

*What I Liked*: It’s hardcore, like string theory or a Diane Arbus photograph. It doesn’t care whether you understand it or like it. Stockhausen holds firmly to his convictions, resulting in sounds both inscrutable and implacable. The piano is well recorded, its timbres often the most arresting feature of this music; Sabine Liebner’s “interpretation” seems flawless. *What I Liked Less*: Come on. “Liked” and “liked less” are meaningless here. *Snob/Slob Score*: Well, it’s not Dvořák. Does that win points with snobs these days? Depends on your brand of elitism. Would Johnny Rotten get it? Probably not: this music can be brutal, but it’s painstakingly planned, thoroughly controlled, so its Slob rating might be basement-level. You may argue that the Sex Pistols engaged in a perverse elitism all their own, which rendered their Slob status equally problematic. Looks like we’re trapped between dueling definitions, a sure sign it’s time to abandon both.

I’ll be back in two weeks with great music—including some wonderful Dvořák—and absolutely no pseudo-issues attached. I promise!
Sometime during the summer of 1992 I got a call from Bill Bottrell. It had been a few months since we had talked, during which time he'd been working on finishing up *Triage*, mostly on his own. He called to say that he and David Baerwald had decided to continue, doing... whatever. And to do it on Tuesday nights: thus, the *Tuesday Night Music Club*.

It was sort of my ideal. It combined what I'd been doing for more than a decade, collaborating in improvising songs or pieces of music with a completely new kind of first-class studio: my vision of music married to Bill’s vision of music, along with the other three guys.

The first night I went we jammed up a song that instantly became “Joytown”. David wasn’t there that night. Brian (MacLeod, already a great drummer, who has only aged into the groove), Kevin (Gilbert, a sub-lessee of Bill’s, who played a bit of everything, but was an amazing keyboard player) and Bill were asking what we should do, but I was already playing the first thing that fell out of my fingers, the bass line of “Joytown”. Everybody went to their instruments and before the evening was over the song was there: MacLeod playing a plastic tub in among his drums, Bill playing a very processed guitar, and Kevin ran next door to get some lyrics he already had and a Gretsch acoustic guitar. (This is kind of amusing to me, as I’ve read Kevin Gilbert devotees insisting that only he could come up with a bass line like that.)

Shortly after, I went east for a couple weeks and when I got back, Bill called again asking me to come in the next morning, a Saturday. He wanted me to hear what they had done while I was gone. I
think he was using me to check himself --- to allay any doubts he had.

The songs he played were “Strong Enough” and “Leaving Las Vegas”. They featured a singer who Bill said was Kevin’s girlfriend. While I was gone, Bill complained about the lack of women in the group and Kevin called his girlfriend, who was staying at his house. Enter Sheryl Crow.

Like it or not, what he played that morning is what came out (except unmixed). He wanted to know what I thought. I said that if it was real, I was in love. But I doubted its, “veracity”, let’s say. He said, no, it wasn’t --- but that he had to decide if it was worth continuing; he was confident he could make a great pop record with that voice. I replied that while I appreciated being consulted, it was probably a mistake to ask me, that I didn’t know what to tell him, because if he went ahead with it, I would jump in all the way: it was that compelling.

And that’s how we lost our new band.

We were never a band in the formal sense, but we talked (as did various managers) about doing local shows and touring behind the people we did records for, a TNMC cabaret, with David, Sheryl and Kevin as the singers. This all got subsumed by the expanding career of one of our creations. Not that it was strictly our creation; she had been working towards building it for some time.

She had already made one record, produced and mixed by Hugh Padgham, with the requisite star players, remixed by Kevin --- and tossed out as not very good. She was already nearly half-a-million dollars in debt to A&M, and was in limbo, a far worse state than having lost her label: she was contracted but shelved. [The songs were by her and a collaborator, in my impression, picking and choosing them in a one-from-column-A-one-from-column-B way. Everything about it reflected a style of record-making that I had run (screaming) from some years earlier --- although I didn’t hear it until we were done with the one we made: it was almost as if they’d deliberately kept it from me. When I finally heard it, I was horrified at what we’d done. But: we had also grown to believe our own bullshit.]

Our songs are what they are: some people love them, some like them, some hate them, and some don’t give a shit. But 12,000,000 people bought them in the last century, back when people still paid for music. The bass part on “Run, Baby, Run” I remember recalling as a high-point for me --- I played it as big as I felt it ---- but it was made smaller by being tracked through a Fairchild 670, which cuts bass the more it compresses, and eviscerated further by being mixed through the Fairchild.

I want to focus on one song, though: “We Do What We Can”, and in particular, its bridge.

The procession on the TV screen
What could it possibly mean for a man
Who’s come this far just to turn around
Could there still be life in Kenton’s swing
With the Kennedys gone and everything
Those sad rows of houses with their optimistic colors
Democrat grandparents and draft-dodging brothers
Riots down the street and discontented mothers
We do what we can

This is pure Bill, whose art is paramount, above everybody else’s, on that record. It sums up his whole attitude in a paragraph, given liberation by having worked on Triage. If almost everybody missed the point of “All I Wanna Do” (a couple of drunks, drinking themselves to death in a bar in the middle of the afternoon), anybody who read the lyrics to “We Do What We Can” couldn’t miss
them now. The song is credited to four of us but --- that bridge, that’s all Bill.

During the mixing of the album, I would frequently kibbitz the mix, but I found myself saying that Bill listened to my suggestions only in order to reject them. That would later not always be the case, but it’s my memory of how it went down at the time.[1]

And then the album came out, and life would never be the same.

[1] Like Triage, Tuesday Night Music Club was mixed to my EAR/Studer 1” machine, the 3rd one made, re-machined to order from ½” to improve bandwidth and signal-to-noise specs, with all-tube electronics by Tim deParavacini. Bill said it was the only device he’d ever used that sounded like his mixes.
It is probably evident at this stage of our relationship—and yes, contrary to my curmudgeonly nature, I perversely feel that writer and reader actually have a relationship—that I am wary of the overly-familiar, the faked laugh, being called “buddy” by someone I just met, being addressed by my first name by someone two generations younger, or worst of all, having my first name spoken every other sentence, like a bad car salesman verging on saying, “Bill, what'll it take for you to take this baby home this afternoon (slap on fender), Bill?”

Ever listen to Alex Rodriguez doing color commentary of a baseball game? Yeah, like that, Jessica.....Ooghh.

It’s difficult to develop real, meaningful relationships in a world geared to the one-click sale and the accumulation of “friends” —and with over a thousand of those on Facebook, some of whom I actually, honestly know, I’m as guilty as anyone for perpetuating that practice. Outside of my immediate family, I probably have a dozen or two relationships I consider to be, well, pretty good friends. Meaning, our familiarity and knowledge of one another is far beyond that of mere acquaintances, but there is still a bit of geographic distance or emotional reserve that prevents me from thinking of those folks as being truly close.

Ironically, my really close friends are those who supported me in my direst moments, and whom I’ve supported during their own crises. I suspect that that whole Upper Midwestern Reserve thing in my DNA makes me a little suspicious of relationships that consist only of hilarity and, God forbid, good
times. There is in my personality a touch of what Greg Brown rather brilliantly called "One Cool Remove" (the Colvin/Carpenter cover, please).

“So, Leebs---if you don't like faked friendship and forced familiarity, how do you feel about a zillion anonymous coders somewhere who likely know your every move and financial misstep, and who periodically try to slip a bogus charge past you?”

Funny that you mention that, Reader---and may I call you Reader?

Truth be told, it usually doesn't bother me as much as it probably should. Until it does: and then it really bothers me.

As the youngest of four siblings and as one who was married for two decades, whatever expectations of privacy I might've once had were washed away ages ago. So while the occasional excerpt from a "private" email appearing in an awkward place is less than pleasant, it doesn't shock me. And while I was a latecomer to online financial transactions, I've honestly had fewer issues in that world than I did back when I was mailing checks or presenting payments in cash. In over 40 years of using ATMs, I've never had one short me or miscount a deposit. In comparison, I had numerous interactions with "real" tellers who couldn't or wouldn't count---I still vividly recall a teller who deposited an $850 check and then proceeded to hand me the whole amount in cash---and similarly, numerous merchants who oops, forgot to credit my payment and then decided to ding my credit.

Astonishingly---and I really mean that, being a semi-converted luddite---the systems created and put in place by humans generally work better than direct interactions with humans.

Until they don't. At least these days, banks and other entities are willing to admit that, well, things happen (and Wells Fargo, you know I mean you). While reviewing one of my accounts online recently, I found a hit for $79 that I didn't recognize. The transaction showed only a phone number and a generic company name (not Amalgamated Everything, but close). Checking the phone number I saw it was linked to a very fundamentalist group that I knew I had nothing to do with. That was annoying, by itself, but the really rankling part was that the transaction was on a card that had been canceled and destroyed a year ago, after it had been compromised.

How the hell does a transaction on a dead card go through?

It's a mystery---and not the kind old priests bring up. It wasn't all that comforting that it was a mystery to my bank as well, but the usual bureaucracy of disputing a fraudulent transaction is going through, and I've already been refunded the money.

This falls under the "and then it really bothers me" heading. But what's the alternative? Cash only? Bitcoin?? I don't think so.

For the most part, I'm astounded at how well most of these complex systems work---even if I have no idea how they work.

But then: bafflement is a big part of everyday life these days---isn't it?
In the world of classical music, you typically need to die before your music gets taken too seriously. Kind of a bummer from a career-building perspective. So many major classical composers did not enjoy anything like their well-established reputations during their lifetimes – stand up and take a bow Bruckner, Mahler, Berlioz, etc. I guess once you're dead, your oeuvre is sort of set in stone, and you can't go about upsetting the pronouncements of the 'experts' by releasing a confounding new work.

Even so, there are today a number of living composers whose work does gain a grudging degree of respect, and one of those is the American composer John Corigliano, who turned 80 earlier this year. I am a huge fan of his Symphony No 1, written thirty years ago in response to the then-emerging AIDS crisis, and subtitled “Of Rage And Remembrance”. It was inspired by the famous AIDS Memorial Quilt, an enormous mosaic made up of thousands of separate quilts, each an individual memorial woven by friends and relatives of a person who had died of AIDS. Corigliano was inspired to create a musical memorial in commemoration of the many personal friends he had lost to the disease.

At the time, he was composer-in-residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the CSO premiered and recorded the work under the prestigious baton of Daniel Barenboim. The work had actually been commissioned by Sir Georg Solti, but Solti declined to set aside the time to learn and conduct it. Although this was - and still is - by far the weightiest, and most ambitious work yet to emerge from Corigliano, he remains best known to the general public for his score for the movie “The Red Violin”, for which he received the 1999 Oscar for Best Film Score.

Symphony No 1 swings violently between passages of rage, serenity, helplessness and nostalgia, as it weaves a musical AIDS quilt in remembrance of three particular musician friends around whom the work is structured. One particularly effective device is an off-stage piano playing Albeniz's Tango in D which in the CSO recording emerges ghost-like behind a curtain of shimmering strings. Unusually, for a major work of the last century, Corigliano manages to express both modernity and
originality without being derivative of Stravinsky’s Rite Of Spring, which towers so massively over the compositional landscape of the 20th Century. The composition has received numerous awards and accolades. I am hoping that I will one day be able to catch a live performance, which is not an unreasonable ambition as the piece does get performed quite widely. Incredibly, it seems it was performed here in Montreal a couple of years back, and I never got to hear about it!

The opening movement sets the stylistic tone for the work straight off the bat with a loud metallic clang and a strident, portentous single note – an A as it happens (A for “AIDS”?) – held for a seemingly interminable time, before resolving into a jarring G#. It repeats, this time resolving into a different, but equally uncomfortable, D#. In the wrong hands, it can descend into parody before the symphony has a chance to get off the ground. Think of one of those old Disney cartoons where the hapless mouse finds himself on a podium conducting an orchestra, and his every accidental gesture produces a blaring sound from the orchestra, and you’ll get the idea. So, within the first minute, a listener can get a good sense of what kind of performance is about to unfold.

The opening serves to introduce a jumbled cacophonous fanfare, following which the movement proceeds through waves of nostalgia for good times past, interrupted by bouts of rage at the unfairness and horror of the terrible AIDS disease. The ghostly apparition of the off-stage piano is really the signature moment of the whole work, and in the right hands can be truly magical. It introduces a dream-like nostalgic section that makes a serious effort to establish itself before chattering interruptions start to break the mood, building a rising, inexorable, and almost uncontrollable tension which culminates in a series of pounding, dissonant chords, repeated over and over, slowing down, but without diminishing in intensity and ferocity, before grinding to a painful halt. Some of the earlier themes and motifs then return, including the off-stage piano, as the movement works its way to an exhausted close, ending on a dreamy reflection of that extended opening note, A.

In 1970, Corigliano wrote a set of dances entitled “Gazebo Dances”, of which the final dance was a Tarantella dedicated to a musician friend. Many years later the friend succumbed to AIDS, and in particular suffered badly from dementia brought on by the disease. The second movement of Symphony No 1, a tarantella, is based on this earlier work. It illustrates his intelligent and witty friend’s descent into schizophrenia, hallucination and eventual madness. The tarantella’s theme is constantly interrupted by blaring interjections which gradually take over the piece, eventually totally subsuming its receding moments of lucidity.

The final movement (or movements, as the final ‘Epilogue’ is formally listed as a separate movement) is complex and layered. It is titled “Chaconne: Giulio’s Song” and was inspired by an old 1962 tape of Corigliano and ‘Giulio’ improvising on piano and cello. A lengthy solo cello, eventually joined by a second solo cello, makes use of material from this tape, but then Corigliano sprinkles in a number of short musical themes, each set for a solo instrument, and each representing another of the composer’s friends lost to AIDS. These are interwoven into a dialog between two solo cellos, over the ongoing backdrop of the chaconne. This exposition eventually, and quite unexpectedly, ends with the sudden unannounced return of the A note, which heralds a recapitulation of the symphony’s opening bars. The Epilogue sets in, and we bid a final farewell to the symphony’s three main protagonists – the off-stage piano playing Albeniz’s haunting Tango, the second movement’s Tarantella, and the third movement’s solo cellos ... which closes the symphony where it began, on that long-held single A, fading away to nothing.

The CSO/Barenboim release on Erato captured the live performance of Symphony’s premiere. Barenboim conducts with precision – always his calling card – and the complex orchestral sound is nicely presented. Conducting (and recording) a premiere of a modern symphony always represents an enormous challenge for a conductor. He has no points of reference to go by, never having heard
it performed in advance of the start of rehearsals. Generally speaking, the end result will rarely stand up for long as a reference interpretation if the work ends up being widely performed. Nonetheless, it was a surprising success, and was recognized at the 1996 Grammys with the award for Best Classical Album. It is available in red book only. However, the interpretation itself is rather lukewarm, neither conductor nor orchestra seeming willing to make an emotional investment in the performance. There’s a lot of going-through-the-motions on show. You can almost hear Barenboim sighing, pondering “I wonder what Beethoven would have made of this?”. Nonetheless it has its high points. In particular, the crucial off-stage piano is captured wonderfully, and the pangs of nostalgic longing it delivers remains unmatched.

The symphony was next recorded by the National Symphony Orchestra under Leonard Slatkin, coupled with a related work “Of Rage and Remembrance”. The Slatkin recording is more highly regarded among the critics, and one gets the immediate impression that he actually likes the piece more than Barenboim does. It is overall a more polished performance. The playing is more confident and assured, and the Symphony as a whole seems to come together a little more coherently. But in the end it still fails to say much more about the work than Barenboim and the CSO. It just says it more forcefully, and more confidently. And more bass-heavily.

Another widely-available recording is by the National Orchestral Institute Philharmonic, an annual one month long summer school orchestra for outstanding young orchestral musicians, in this instance conducted by David Alan Miller and released on Naxos. Here we have a much more frantic and in-your-face interpretation, perhaps truer to Corigliano’s vision than either the Barenboim or the Slatkin, but ultimately perhaps a little over the top in terms of its apocalyptic aesthetic. It is seriously lacking in subtlety, and the contrasts between the Rage and Remembrance elements are simply too stark and too relentless to hold together over repeated listening. The playing itself almost careers out of control in places, but you really have to give them a solid A for effort and sheer commitment, which often counts for more than a sleek, sophisticated tone with music like this. And that bass drum slam is awesome to behold! I must mention a technical faux-pas that always annoys the crap out of me. David Alan Miller’s breathing – indeed his downright snuffling – intrudes gratingly during the quiet passages. But overall, in terms of providing an insight into where Barenboim and Slatkin fall short, it has a lot going for it, and I do rather like it.

I have a bootleg recording by the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by James Judd, recorded live in glorious 24-bit 192kHz. While the recorded sound is absolutely terrific, musically it adds nothing in terms of interpretive insight to what Barenboim and Slatkin have already put out there, and the quality of the playing is not to the same standard.

Why do I think there is more to come from this work? Well, try this for starters:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHqHleU0l90

It is a crummy YouTube recording of the second movement (the Tarantella) performed by a Rutgers University orchestra, conducted by one Peter Stanley Martin. The occasion of the performance is a concert which forms part of Martin’s master’s thesis. This is a spectacular interpretation by a young man who, if he had just a smidgeon more stage presence, might make a successful career as a professional conductor (such are the vagaries of the profession). Oh, and at the end of the video, the white-haired gentleman making his way up to the podium to heartily congratulate him is none other than John Corigliano himself. I would really love to hear Martin conduct the whole symphony – particularly with a first rate professional orchestra at his disposal. Any wealthy patrons of the art out there interested in funding a project?.....
I mentioned that this movement has its origins in an earlier work, Gazebo Dances, and here is the same conductor, elsewhere in the same recital, playing the Tarantella from Gazebo Dances. In effect, we get to see the same individual, as interpreted by John Corigliano, both before and after the ravaging effect of AIDS on his sanity:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLR3QZ4esAY

But we’re not quite done yet. If you are inspired as much as I am, and are willing to go the extra mile, there is a Japanese recording made by a minor Tokyo orchestra, the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Tatsuya Shimono. It was released on SACD by Avex Records and is available by mail order. Finally, we have an interpretation to make you sit up and take note. This really is quite good. Shimono attacks the symphony with commitment, and a keen ear for the overall narrative arc. He is, by and large, on top of his players, and one gets the impression that they have learned to enjoy and appreciate the Symphony as much as he does. If one wished to pick nits, it would be with the Japanese character of the orchestral players, who appear reluctant to loosen their collars and play with a bit of an edge. Also, the off-stage piano fails to evoke the dreamy, ethereal quality we hear in the Barenboim recording. But this performance offers, thus far at least, the best interpretation of this standout symphony while we wait in hope for Yannick Nézet-Séguin to get around to it. And the DSD sound is exceptionally clean, dynamic, and detailed.

Those of you who enjoy classical music should try and find some time to listen to this magnificent modern symphony. Both the Statkin and the Miller are available on TIDAL, Qobuz, and Spotify ... and even on YouTube for that matter. Unfortunately, the Barenboim and Shimono (and the Judd, obviously) are not. It is a work that I hope (and believe) will eventually establish itself in the standard repertoire - but, sadly, probably not until its composer has duly shuffled off his mortal coil.
Early on in my writing for Copper a few readers asked me to write about my influences. I understood that to be about the guitar players/bands that inspired me. There is, however, another part of that ‘influence’ and that is in the guitars that I play.

As high end audio tends, by and large, to be a long term passion to most of the readers here, I would expect it to be understood that there may be other passions that also started at about the same time (mid 1960’s).

Those for me would be:

1. Rock ’n’ roll in general, but the Beatles in particular.
2. My fascination with, and the collecting of, electric guitars.

The other obsessions I have had are/were:

1. Running (from 1980-1990 before injuries led to the end of this) including running and finishing 2 NYC Marathons.
2. Wine (over the last 5 years)
3. Watches (over the last 5 years)

This article is about my guitar collection: what I own, have owned, and why.

Associated with this articles are 3 photos. The long shot is a photo of all the guitars in my house at the time the photo was taken and the other 2 are close ups of the same photo session.
Yes, these are guitar porn shots for those who know...

This may sound weird but I had no idea how many guitars I had at the time these photos were taken.

I had been contacted by the high end custom guitar manufacturer Juha Ruokangas, who wanted to do an interview (both video & audio) with me as I had Juha make me 4 of his guitars. I had read about Ruokangas guitars in a magazine article in The ToneQuest Report.

The ToneQuest Report is one of those super insider publications (no ads!) written by and for musicians who delve into the minutiae of guitar tone that readers of Copper would understand as an almost mirror-like fixation of their own audio addiction. The editor of ToneQuest, David Wilson, has become a good friend and I joke with him about his magazine being the “last stop on the Crazy town express for guitar nuts”.

Sounds familiar?

Anyway, David wrote about a boutique guitar company based in Finland called Ruokangas Guitars and I took the bait, contacted the owner Juha Ruokangas and had him build me a guitar, and then another and so on and so on.

See more about Ruokangas Guitars here:

http://ruokangas.com/players/jay-jay-french/

Juha builds exquisite guitars but I digress...

Juha wanted to do a video about me and by extension, my guitar collection. The latter request, however, I didn’t know about until the video crew came over and wanted to see and film some of my guitars.

When they asked if I had any in my apartment, I said I thought I had about 10.

Well…I had way more in my apartment then I realized, 25 at the time (22 I found for the photo shoot and another 3 under beds afterwards.

I also have another 30 or so in various warehouses.

I started to go through my closets and pull them out.

Now, I can see how, since many of them are collectors items (and very valuable) you may ask yourself how I could not know how many I had.

Only a collector of these instruments may understand the explanation.

I have collected so many over 40 years that sometimes I don’t look at most of them for years or I pull them out to show close friends.

I can hear some of you howl..”How can you leave these in cases or at least have them displayed?”

The answer isn’t complicated. I don’t have room to display them all and I also don’t need to see them.

I pull some out from time to time to play them for a little while, however.
I probably have owned more than 500 guitars total since 1967. I currently have about 50 guitars and most pros I know (who also collect) have on average about 60 guitars per person. I have friends who have 600+.

Why?

Because we love them and have our own unique reasons as to why we own what we own.

For me, I own what I own because I started collection based on the guitars played by guitar players I admired and were photographed playing a particular model on their respective album covers.

The photos accompanying this article show the variety.

There are Gibsons (mostly), Fenders (a couple of Telecasters ), an Epiphone ES-335, a Gretsch 6120, a Martin 00-18 acoustic & 2 Ruokangas guitars.

My first real buy was in 1967. I wanted the guitar that Mike Bloomfield played on the debut Paul Butterfield Blues band album. A photo on the back really hit me and I wanted that guitar.

I went down to 48th street to Manhattan’s “music row” which is now, sadly completely gone, to buy the Fender Telecaster model that Bloomfield played.

I had $135.00 to spend.

I walked into Manny’s music (the original store located closer to 6th ave. and ironically was sitting on the exact spot of the Fox Morning News outdoor concert stage) and I met Henry, Manny’s son and then owner. I told him that I wanted to by the guitar. He told me that it was $147.50.

I told him that I only had $135.00. He told me to come back when I had the rest of the money.

Angry and frustrated, I walked directly across the street into another music store called Jimmy’s. I told the salesman that Manny’s wanted $147.50 but that I only had $135.00. The guy said “give me the $135.00 kid, here’s your guitar!”

And so, with that, I made my first of dozens of purchases on 48th Street! I had that guitar for about 6 months, then sold it.

6 years ago, on my 60th birthday, I had the opportunity to buy a perfect original 1967 Fender Tele (with case) fo $8,500.00 I bought it.

You can also see a real (not reissue) 1952 Fender Tele. I got that one about 15 years ago before the vintage craze started to make owning this stuff crazy.

I fell in love with Les Pauls because I heard that Eric Clapton played them. This was in 1966 and I thought that a "Les Paul" was a company not a model of a guitar made by Gibson Guitars. I became infatuated with their sound and quickly learned all I could about them.

With Cream, Clapton played a Gibson 1962 SG Les Paul painted a psychedelic motif by a group of artists called “The Fool”. When I saw Cream for the first time in 1967, Eric was playing it and I always lusted after one. I finally got one, in perfect all original condition, in 2003.

Interestingly, I never wanted the guitar models that the Beatles played (Rickenbacker, Hofner or Gretsches), nor did I care for a Fender Stratocaster ( the guitar of choice of Jimi Hendrix). I can’t exactly say why. I just never cared for them.
I did, however, wind up owning several “Strats’ over the years including a rare 1957 one and I own one (custom now. I also own a Gretsch. I really only ever lusted for Gibsons.

I collect ‘Gold Tops’ because I have an album cover of Freddy King playing one and it blew me away.

I bought my first Gibson Les Paul Gold Top in 1972. It was made in 1953. I traded a 1969 Gibson Les Paul Black Custom that I bought for $300.00 and $400.00 in cash for the Gold Top at the Music Inn on west 4th street in Manhattan

I collect Gibson Les Paul Juniors because Leslie West played. I saw Mountain 2 days before Woodstock and Leslie blew me away with the tone of his Les Paul Junior.

I bought my first Gibson Les Paul Junior on May 1st 1970 off a junkie in Central Park. (I made him sign a receipt and I overpaid!- $275.00).

Those who know, will know what they are looking at. To the rest of you: None of the guitars are vintage reissues. All are real and I collect, for the most part, pristine examples of the guitar models.

The Martin acoustic on the chair is a 1953 00-18, with the 2 Fenders Telecasters below. The Christmas wreath Les Paul is a 2013 Epiphone white Les Paul custom painted for use in our Christmas concerts.

To the left of the chair are a Pink Burst custom painted (by John Cruz) Fender Telecaster, a 1961 Gibson SG Les Paul, a 1967 Gibson Burgundy ES 330, and behind that, a Ruokangas sunburst Unicorn and next to that, a Ruokangas Mojo Grand.

I own a Red Gibson semi-hollow 335 because Clapton played one on the final Cream tour, and the 335 model may be the single greatest guitar that Gibson ever made. The pickups are original PAF’s (for those who know) and the nest and tone are, well, very Cream sounding!

At the extreme left of the big photo you will see a pink Les Paul. That was bought by me as new originally in 1978 and had a tobacco burst color. It was re-painted by a Long Island luthier named Steve Carr, who passed away many years ago. He became famous for building Gene Simmons’ first Axe bass for KISS. That Pink 1978 Gibson Les Paul can be heard on all Twisted Sister recordings.
The Gibson Les Paul Juniors are not pristine but all are original with no parts replaced. Left to right by year: ’56, ’54, ’58 and a ’56 Les Paul Special.

The Gibson Les Paul Gold Tops on the couch are (left to right) are by year: ’52, ’53, 55, 57.

To the right of the couch are great, but not vintage guitars: 1 new Epiphone ES 335 (natural finish) and 1 new Gretsch 6120 (natural finish).

In 1999 I was managing a band from Atlanta called Sevendust. One of the guitar players really liked Epiphone guitars. I got him an endorsement and became friends with the president, Jim Rosenberg.
At the time, Twisted Sister had yet to reform but Jim told me that if I ever put the band back together again, to contact him and he would endorse me. Epiphone is owned by Gibson and are the only company allowed to make copies of Gibsons most famous models.

These guitar are built in either China or Indonesia in factories that are totally up to date. They make copies so well that I fell in love with the quality of Epiphone Les Paul’s. Furthermore these ‘copies’ sell for 20% of their American made cousins.

When Twisted reformed in 2003 I contacted Jim and not only started to play Epiphones, but Epiphone made my own Jay Jay French model Les Paul. These guitars were/are beautiful and I began playing Epiphone model Les Pauls exclusively for the next 14 years!

If you see photos of me on stage you will always see me playing my Epiphones. I no longer had to worry about carrying expensive Gibsons around that could get stolen, damaged or lost. They were perfect professional tools that always worked.

Maybe, at one of our local shows I played one of my very expensive vintage models but that happened once or twice in the 14 years that we returned to live performing.

Having said that, there is one guitar in my collection that I truly covet. If you ask me which of all these would be my desert Island guitar, the answer is easy:

My sunburst 1954 Gibson Les Paul Junior (second from the left on the couch) which I bought in 1984 for $325.00. It is by far, for me, the most perfect combination of tone and feel.

The guitar was made as an electric guitar ‘practice model’ and sold for $99.00 in 1954.

In contrast, the larger and more robustly built and painted Gibson Les Paul Standard that same year sold new for about $200.00

I have many great ones but that ‘little’ Les Paul Jr. is, well, the one!
As a child growing up in Glasgow, Scotland, I was, from an early age, an avid reader. At one point (maybe I was 8 or 9 years old) I started reading adventure stories about kids travelling to interesting places and doing unusual things—like climbing a palm tree and drinking the juice from a fresh coconut, or collecting flying fish as they landed in the skiff. In cold, wet, miserable Glasgow the idea of just wearing swimming shorts and walking barefoot in the sand was enormously seductive (much later on, I did get to drink from a fresh coconut in the El Yunque rain forest in Puerto Rico and see flying fish off the coast of the Bahamas).

Another of the places I read about was the Great Barrier Reef, off the eastern coast of Australia. Thousands of exotic sea creatures swam these waters in an azure sea. To my sun-starved body, this was the culmination of my dreams. I vowed one day to go there and snorkel with the fish. It only took me 60 plus years.

On a recent business trip to Sydney, as a way of overcoming jet lag, I had intended to visit friends in Melbourne. But on hearing that the weather there was cold and miserable, I changed my plans and flew to Cairns in far Northern Queensland. In my mind’s eye, Cairns was this dusty colonial town with a few buildings and an occasional kangaroo hopping down a sandy street. Unfortunately, Cairns has turned into a tourist nightmare. It’s one of these, ‘shove them in, and shove them out’ towns. Everything is geared towards milking the foreigner, and it looks like any one of several beachfront towns around the world: numerous shopping malls, too many restaurants, lots of places to buy scuba
and snorkeling gear, and an occasional didgeridoo shop.

One evening I came across a duo that was playing very haunting and rhythmic music. One was playing the didgeridoo and the other was playing a Balinese hang drum, a drum reminiscent of a Jamaican steel drum but played by hand. I listened for a while, as the music was hypnotic. When they stopped, I gave them a healthy tip and asked about their music. They told me that they had just met that morning and decided to play together. This was their first performance. Thinking they were local as the hang drum player was very dark skinned and the other well tanned, I asked,

“Where do you come from?”

“Portugal,” said the didgeridoo player.

“Israel,” said the drummer.

There is a train that takes you up to the village of Kuranda. It is a narrow gauge railway with old carriages pulled by a massive diesel train. It was built in the late 1890s as a way of getting supplies from the coast to the highlands of Herberton. It takes just over an hour to climb from Freshwater Station, at sea level to Kuranda at an elevation of 1000 feet. The train offers spectacular vistas of gorges and waterfalls as it meanders through the rain forest. On board we were served tea and scones as well as local beer followed by ANZAC biscuits, which are dense and delicious. They were developed during world war one as a high nutrition food that wouldn’t spoil on the long sea journey to the Middle East. The recipe uses rolled oats, sugar, plain flour, coconut, butter, golden syrup, baking soda and boiling water. Apparently it’s an old Scottish recipe.

Kuranda, like Cairns, was another tourist trap with stores selling Australian knickknacks (made in China). I did visit a butterfly farm and passed a Koala petting zoo but I was quite eager to return via the cable car that passed over the top of the rain forest. The vistas were spectacular, especially on the last leg, which dropped down quite dramatically with a view of Cairns and the Coral Sea beyond. Two young Chinese men from Guangzhou shared my cable car; their English was quite good and they told me they were students of Chinese Medicine. To tease them I held out my arms for them to take my pulse and see if they could find any ailments. One of them took my right arm and after a minute told me that I had a strong pulse and that indicated that I exercised regularly and that I was healthy (both true). The other took my left arm and spent quite a while feeling my pulse. He told me that my right ventricle was slightly stronger than my left ventricle.

“Did you have heart disease?” he asked.

I replied in the affirmative that I had had open-heart surgery over a year ago. His face brightened.

“You mean I am right?”

“Yes,” I replied

“I am so happy,” he said. “You are the first westerner I have touched and I can’t believe I got it right. Can I take a selfie with you?”

The next day I took a catamaran out to the Great Barrier Reef. The clientele were a mix of divers and snorkelers. I was in the latter group. I don’t think I have ever met a more professional crew—solicitous and very detailed about the rules of snorkeling. As I was old, they gave me a special colored life jacket so they could keep an eye on me—just in case.

The reef was disappointing. Instead of beautifully colored coral, most of what I saw was brown and
sandy. But some of the fish were spectacular. I saw Surgeon Fish, Butterfly Fish, Groupers (big ones) and Parrot Fish. I really wanted to see a Clown Fish but they inhabit a certain type of poisonous coral and I missed them. Other travellers saw turtles and Trigger Fish.

On board, I made friends with a charming woman from Malaysia. She was intelligent, attractive, outspoken and amazingly frank. She was also seasick. She really hated the sea and boats but desperately wanted to see the reef. As she was so distressed on the way out, I talked to her a lot to distract her from being sick. This was, I must admit, a little self-serving, as I didn't want her to wretch over me. At one point she felt well enough to go snorkeling. She suited up and took the plunge. When she returned, I asked her if she was okay. She said yes and handed me her waterproof camera to look at video she had taken. An array of eye-popping, multi-colored fish were gobbling up a mass of bright particles.

“What are they eating?” I asked.

“I vomited in the sea.”
In our last installment, we looked at the range of record groove sizes that were used through the years, and we jumped ahead a bit to the launch of Stereo. In this column we'll backtrack a bit and look at the record-tracing hardware of the Hi-Fi boom in the '50s, leading up to the Stereo era.

Microgroove LPs brought with them new concerns regarding tracking. The lighter tracking weights (compared to 78s) increased the likelihood of the stylus jumping out of the groove due to vibration caused by footfalls or acoustic feedback. In addition, the soft vinyl compounds used for LPs were more prone to scratching than the shellac and clay amalgam used in 78s.

A new generation of phono cartridges and tonearms was needed to replace the massive arms and carts of the 78 era. As we saw back in Part 2, ground-up designs like the GE Variable Reluctance line of cartridges and the Fairchild moving coil cartridge designed by Joseph Grado, led the way in lighter, smaller, better-tracking playback gear. The sonic spectacular records often used to show off the new Hi-Fi set required more compliant cartridges to track them, in turn requiring lower-mass tonearms. Although the term “tonearm” was still used in the Hi-Fi and later stereo eras, the term no longer properly described the arm's function, as it did in early acoustic phonographs. In those days the tonearm carried the needle and sound box which generated the sonic output; sound was then
channeled down the interior of the arm, which formed a section of the gramophone's horn.
Stronger permanent magnet materials developed during World War II made possible the magnetic phono cartridges that quickly became the choice of audio aficionados of the Hi-Fi era. Cartridges like the Pickering shown in the ad above often featured turnover stylus assemblies which allowed the listener to play both 78s and LPs, at lower tracking weights and with greater precision than earlier ceramic cartridges. Magnetic cartridges had far lower electrical output than ceramics, requiring more-sensitive phono preamps with lower noise—units like the Marantz unit shown above, often referred to as the Model 1. Given the sensitivity of the phono stage, it’s a little astonishing to see the Marantz unit incorporated into a turntable base, in close proximity to the electrical and magnetic fields generated by the turntable motor. Let’s hope everything was well-shielded!

Trackability became an even greater concern with the onset of 45/45 single-groove stereo, as mistracking would be unpleasantly evident in two channels, rather than just one. In addition, mistracking could affect the channel balance, distorting or even destroying the stereo illusion. At the beginning of the era, some popular cartridges could be converted from mono to stereo. This article from *Audio* magazine showed how they converted one of the popular GE VR cartridges:
How to Make a Stereo Phono Pickup

C. G. McProud

With the high current interest in stereophonic discs, the curious experimenter wants to be able to play any that he may get his hands on. A fairly simple conversion of the G.E. VR-II cartridge makes it possible, and gives excellent stereo results.

When we first received our review copy of Audio Fidelity's initial stereo disc, we were naturally anxious for some means for playing it. The unit employed in the Westrex demonstrations had been, we were told, hand built from two ESL cartridges, and we felt that if Westrex engineers could make such a modification we could, too. After hours of thinking on the subject, we made our first attempt using a GE RPX-650 cartridge. Results were satisfactory as to stereo effect, but quality was not quite so good. Furthermore, it appeared that the modification of a VR-II would be much simpler, so we made several more conversions just to get into the swing of it—and to gather the information necessary to pass the method on to others. In the course of the project, we undoubtedly became one of GE's best customers, for we exhausted the supply of both cartridges and styli in our own particular segment of Long Island. We have, however, converted five VR-II cartridges, and the results are quite uniform. Figure 1 shows a completed stereo cartridge.

Theory

To understand the requirements of a stereo cartridge, let us first consider the mechanics of the Westrex stereo disc system. Figure 2 shows the action of the walls of the record groove. In (A), modulation is applied only to the left wall—this modulation being "hill and dale" with respect to the flat side of the wall, which makes it at an angle of 45 deg. with the vertical. As the groove wall is modulated, it takes the positions shown by the dotted lines, and the stylus moves on a line at an azimuth of 45 deg. If only the right wall was modulated, the stylus would move at an azimuth of 31.5 deg., or -45 deg.

Fig. 2 (right). Geometry of Westrex stereo system. (A) shows stylus motion for modulation of only one groove wall; (B) shows motion for out-of-phase modulation; (C) shows motion for in-phase modulation. Identical signals fed to both channels should produce motion of (B).

Fig. 3. Schematic arrangement of normal monaural GE VR-II cartridge.
than a pivoted one. Even on home record-cutting units like this Presto, such was the standard:

Logically enough, tonearms appeared which attempted to duplicate the action of the cutting head and eliminate tracking era. There were two basic approaches to maintaining the cartridge tangent to the groove: a true tangential arm, moving the cartridge and arm on a track or trolley across the record; or a somewhat simpler approach using a pantographic, pivoted arrangement. Both design approaches required low friction: any sticking during record playback would likely generate more tracking error than the conventional arms the parallel-trackers were designed to replace.

The tracking requirements of single-groove stereo discs heightened the interest in parallel-tracking. Even earlier mono arms like the English Burne-Jones pantographic arm were converted to stereo:
An early example of a tangential arm was the Truline—here shown with two cartridges for playing back Cook Labs binaural records:
Both types of arms still exist today, in addition to the usual pivoted arms.

In our next installment, we'll follow the continued development of playback gear as the stereo era progressed.
On October 19, 2018, Craft Recordings will release the box set *R.E.M. at the BBC*, available in both 8-CD and 2-CD versions, each with one DVD. Most of the tracks are live versions of hits, which is always fun. But this collection is also a reminder that the band’s catalog of 15 studio albums is worth mining for unheralded gems.

The four-man band from Athens, GA, helped to invent the subgenre called alternative rock. They found themselves a brainy, broody fanbase -- teens and college types who shrank from the hair metal and shiny synth bands of the ’80s. Their first single, “Radio Free Europe” (1981), appealed to that hungry market and helped their first album, *Murmur* (1983), to hit the U.S. top 40.

Their second album, *Reckoning*, did even better. Tucked away at the end of the LP’s Side 1 was the insistent “Time after Time (AnnElise),” showing influence from Indian music as drummer Bill Berry plays bongos in the style of tabla drums before switching to a march rhythm on his kit. Lead singer Michael Stipe sings typically baffling lyrics (“cryptic” is the number-one adjective critics use to describe R.E.M. songs), and he never does mention the woman from the title.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRABx2EhXjA

It’s been reported that “Time after Time” is Patti Smith’s favorite R.E.M. song. And speaking of punk, you can hear an echo of a group called Gang of Four in “Feeling Gravitys Pull” [sic] which opens the 1985 album *Fables of the Reconstruction*. R.E.M. guitarist Peter Buck, a Gang of Four fan, borrowed dissonances and harmonics from these U.K. punk pioneers.

But because it’s R.E.M., it features multiple styles that “shouldn’t” be together in one song. Stick around long enough, and you’ll hear a string quartet. “Feeling Gravitys Pull” is also a particularly good example of how Stipe’s voice is more of a band instrument than a vehicle for articulate
meaning. He’s singing words, but “cryptic” doesn’t begin to cover it. It reminds me of the Renaissance poetic theory of piacevolezza, which claims that the sound of the words is as essential as their dictionary definition for their expressive power.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eNljSR-U0Y

Despite appealing to introverts, R.E.M. has reached out many times to collaborate with fellow musicians. One fine example is found on the 1987 album Document. They turned to saxophonist Steve Berlin, from the band Los Lobos, to provide a wild jazz solo in the song “Fireplace.”

The track is immediately notable for Berry’s drum pattern against the triple time, smacking the third beat of every other bar. The lyrics seem ritualistic, about lifting chairs out of the way, clearing the floor to make room for dancing. But with that syncopated drum rhythm, it won’t be a smooth glide across the ballroom tiles.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Etb2xinNstA

Also in triple time, but with more of a standard waltz feel, is “Half a World Away” from the Out of Time album of 1991. Stipes’ missing-you lyrics (yes, you can almost tell what this one is about!) are set to a highly hummable melody interrupted at the end of each verse by a chromatic rise on some angsty word-association: “Go it alone, and hold it along, haul it along, and hold it.”

Another quirk of this track is its instrumentation vis-à-vis the personnel. It’s the usual band, but everyone’s playing something not-quite-usual: bassist Mike Mills is on organ and harpsichord, drummer Berry plays bass guitar, and guitarist Buck plucks a mandolin. The result is pleasantly folkish and twee:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bn4pBPSbggc

The 1994 album Monster marks a return to more of a rock sound after a few years of contemplative music with complex arrangements. For Monster, they wanted to let loose. And the fans ate it up, taking the album to number one in the States. Besides hit singles like “What’s the Frequency, Kenneth?” and “Bang and Blame,” the album also includes “I Took Your Name,” which seems specifically designed to let Buck have a field day with the flanger and whammy bar.

The vocals have a punkish petulance that works well with the hard-rock instrumental backing. It’s difficult to believe this is the band that recorded “Half a World Away.” But again, it’s all about contrast with these guys.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQeca6jS5LQ

Drummer Bill Berry left the band in 1997, causing a musical midlife crisis that’s reflected in Up (1998), their first album without him. Not wanting to hire another core bandmember, they went with session drummers and drum machines for their first heavily electronic offering. They also used a new producer, Pat McCarthy.
The album afforded them a few hits in the UK, including “Lotus” and “Suspicion.” But dig a little deeper for the plaintive “You’re in the Air.” There’s something appropriately uncomfortable about the band’s use of synthesized sound, which on this track is mixed with more traditional rock guitar. Despite the quietness and moderate beat, there’s an almost frantic busy-ness in the arrangement. But it works here, making an effective contrast with Stipe’s long-noted, soaring vocals.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qJB51_wYm0

Although they slowed their output after Berry’s departure, R.E.M. continued to produce albums every few years for the first decade of the 21st century. But much of the fanbase had grown up or moved on. Sales of Around the Sun (2004) were poor in the U.S.

On that album, the band seems to have grown more comfortable with its late-life identity. A story song called “The Worst Joke Ever” opens with a dissonant chord on the acoustic guitar. The waves of diffuse sound billowing under that constant guitar beat is reminiscent of Pink Floyd.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cv3s3ryTMg

R.E.M. finally called it quits in 2011 with their album Collapse into Now. The farewell effort did not disappoint fans; it’s a fitting culmination of everything the band had created over the decades. As one critic put it, it’s their first album since Berry left in 1997 to “sound unmistakably like themselves.”

In “Walk It Back,” Stipe’s usual melancholy seems intensified by age and life experience. And there’s that fight between opposites: ease and unease simultaneously, a slow tempo and simple acoustic accompaniment crushed by the stress in Stipe’s voice. Rhythmic hiccups prevent the country-tinged melody from letting you sit back and tap your foot.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tpfchv-WU64

R.E.M. was the enigmatic band that never explained itself. And it turns out they were doing us a favor.
If you have ever been to Dublin, Ireland, then you know that Phil Lynott of Thin Lizzy casts a long shadow over the city. There is a statue in his honor and his gravesite is a national monument, visited by tens of thousands of fans a year. His Mum, Philomena, routinely visits the site and will invite a fan or two back to the house to see his room and talk with them about Phil. Quite something. Dublin celebrates two days, one is his death, the other his birthday, with Thin Lizzy cover bands and music throughout the city. Philomena even does a little tour of some of the establishments. He’s a National Treasure. A singular achievement--- ESPECIALLY for a mixed-race man in Ireland. And if there is ONE song that personifies the reasons why, it’s “The Boys Are Back In Town.”

By 1976’s *Jailbreak* the Lizzy were on their sixth album and badly in need of a hit. They entered the studio with Producer John Alcock, who had extensive knowledge of the location that they had picked. The resulting record would be their biggest seller and garner them worldwide success, although some members of the band bemoan the "stiff" nature of the recordings and wish that it had reflected the looser sound that they were known for when playing live. Either way, the proof is in the pudding and the album is a monster that came to define them in the eyes, and ears, of the General Public.
The line-up of the band featured on *Jailbreak* is:

**Drums - Brian Downey** (We share a birthday and the choice of instrument. #useless facts)

**Guitar - Scott Gorham** (Born in Glendale, CA, Scott was originally a bass-player who switched to guitar after the death of a friend. He went to the UK in 1974 and auditioned for Phil who hired him on the spot)

**Guitar - Brian Robertson** (He was 17 when hired for Thin Lizzy. In Nov of ’76 he got in a bar fight that ended with him damaging his hand and a furious Lynott kicked him out of the band. He returned within a couple of years)

**Bass/Vocals - Phil Lynott** (Born Phillip Parris Lynott. He passed away in Jan of 1986 from sepsis/pneumonia)

All right...let's get started!

Downey's drums part is deceptively simple. The whole thing rests on two significant choices: The first is the groove on the hi-hats. That bounce is VERY difficult to nail and then maintain. So clever. It gives the whole song that swing necessary to support the "swagger" of the lyric. As a drummer I'll tell you that that ain't easy AT ALL. The second choice is to hit the "pushes" on the open hats and the cymbals. It's the moment that almost feels like a shove from a bloke staring you down in the pub and waiting for you to say something so it can REALLY pop-off. There's a malevolence to it. Matched with the guitar it really is brilliant. Especially in that middle bit where the whole song breaks down to a whisper. Simple. Complex. Simple. My favorite thing. Brian went on to play in a number of harder leaning bands including records by John Sykes, Gary Moore, and Lynott. Hit like a champion!

The Bass. Good grief. Just listen to it. One of the things I generally find with bass-players who are also the lead-singer in the band is that they play in a VERY melodic manner. It makes sense. They're instinctively going to be making choices in relation to the ones that they have made with the vocal melody. Lynott's choices here are all inspired. Sinuous, snake-like, weaving through the track with a liquid ease that almost sounds like it's ALSO wearing leather pants JUST like Phil's. It's sexy as the Dickens and a little dangerous. Just as it should be. It's when you hear the drums and bass together that you hear the importance of the hi-hat groove. It's the back-bone. Lynott's R'n'B line in the verse is in stark contrast to the Panzer Division thumping used in the choruses. I particularly love the counter-melody part at the conclusion of Verse 2. So bloody good. Phil Lynott is an under-appreciated bass-player, in-fact, I would hazard a guess that most would imagine that he played the guitar in this band. It is VERY hard to have THIS much swagger and be playing bass. Lemmy may be the only other bloke to pull it off! There's a reason Sting ain't on the list of "Swaggeriest Bassist Lead Singers In The World." It would be a VERY short compilation. If you can think of any others please leave their names in the comments. I would love to check them out.

*Here's Christian's breakdown of "The Boys Are Back in Town', track by track. Enjoy!*

https://soundcloud.com/theklossessions/fhf-the-boys-are-back-in-town

One of the things that set Thin Lizzy apart from all others is that, usually, in a band, with two guitar players one of them plays lead and one of them will provide the support with rhythm parts. The combo of Robertson/Gorham set the stage for the Twin Axe Attack of Iron Maiden and many, many, others to follow. The solo section at 3:30 is pure perfection. It must've been so amazing to have been in the room hearing that all come together. All was not paradise, however, as they BOTH disliked the "rigid" nature of their performances and the lack of improvisation allowed by Alcock and the guitar
tones that he chose for the recordings. An argument CAN be made, though, that it is PRECISELY his instruction that allowed for this track to become the success that it was/is. Such is the ephemeral nature of the relationship between Producer/Musician/Song. One can never know where one stops and the other starts. No matter their feelings on it the truth is that his song is the best example of all of the elements coming together to create PERFECTION! I mean...the riff ALONE!! Incredible. Put on some phones and focus on the hard-panned guitars, even in the verses the interplay between the two of them is Tetris'd in such a way as to bring the fight to the pub. Almost like the two blokes on either side of you, egging the protagonist on. The Boys are, indeed, back in town! And the tones are exactly the razor-blade 6 strings needed to cut through the mix. these guitar players, I tell you!

As I first listened to the vocals solo'd on this song, I was immediately struck by how much of Phil's vocal style was influenced by Van Morrison. It is hard to over-emphasize the importance of THAT man in the history and creation of Ireland's musical output. Even if Lynott HADN'T been a fan he would've had no choice but to wear that influence on his sleeve, such is the power of Van The Man. I love Phil's voice. The husky, cigarette-worn, whiskey-soaked, growl of a bloke who has spent his life yelling into the abyss. It is no surprise that he became addicted to heroin. That drug takes the best of the music world, the confusion, and pain, of the artist is not to be taken lightly.

Lynott was raised by his grand-parents. A mixed-race child in 1960's Ireland. One can only imagine the complications of that life. Philomena wrote a book about it all called My Boy. It's on the list of "Things I Need To Read." There is a plaintive, sweet, "edge" to the lyric and vocals in this song. He released books of his poetry and always spoke for the Common Man. In this way he was much like Ireland's Bruce Springsteen, another musician who owed much to Van. The two chose to take the every day occurrence and speak of it in, almost, mythological tones. Lynott's anger in the lyric is tempered by a tiredness. It feels to me like he is simply over the repetition of conflict and fighting he witnesses nightly. He just wants to have a drink, and a chat, and then head home with someone to while away the hours with. He's a lover, not a fighter. But he WILL bring the fight to you, if needed. A complicated man. With a voice that spits itself at you and then, just as quickly, softens in exhaustion. Beautiful.

Phil Lynott passed-away on Jan 4th of 1986, at the age of 36. He was incredibly proud of being Irish, and Ireland is incredibly proud of him. It's a shame that we didn't get to share in his journey into the Elder Statesman that he probably would've become. His perspective on Ireland's future as we have witnessed it would've been fascinating, I'm sure. But he is frozen in time. The lanky, leather trouser'd, bruiser, that we see in the video for this song. He was one of the coolest looking mother f'ers in all of music. Gone but not forgotten. Especially by the people of Dublin. It's just a bummer we only really have Bono left to hear from about it all.

In 2017 I traveled to Ireland to do a couple of my live shows, and it was with great pleasure that I was allowed to break this song down on one of Dublin's local radio stations. The host I shared the experience with was brought almost to tears by the vocals. Stunned silence greeted the conclusion of the last lyric. It's one of my favorite moments in my broadcasting career. An honor. I can only hope that I served Phil well.

"The Boys Are Back in Town" is one of those songs that has gone on to have a Life of Legend far beyond the music itself. It will never NOT be the perfect song for THAT moment in the TV show, or film, you know the one, it's when the blokes return to do the thing that they are going to do in that place they were at, but aren't anymore and then came back to. It is flawless. Iconic. And blistering. Wherever you are today, get in the car, turn it up, and cruise around. You will become One Of The Boys in Lynott's gang, trust me. It's a helluva magic trick. But, then again, isn't all music?

Thanks for reading.
See you at the next one.

cjh

**The Video:**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quyB8PMTD3o

**Recognize THIS bloke?**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXB9U57J-yI
The past 12 months have seen the release of several important new recordings of Schubert symphonies, two of which are part of series of all nine (yeah, I’m counting that “Unfinished” one, but I count it, since it’s probably Schubert’s most often-recorded work).

Following their 2016 recording of Symphonies 1, 3, and 4, the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra and conductor Philipp Herreweghe are back on the Phi label with another volume in the set. This one features Symphonies 2 and 5, both of which are in B flat.

Nobody who hears the slow introduction to the first movement of Symphony No. 2, D. 125, can doubt that young Schubert was obsessed with Beethoven. The wind-heavy, thundering orchestration, the intense harmonies – these are tributes to his favorite composer. The transition from slow introduction to main first-movement sonata form themes (in this case marked Allegro vivace) is subtler in this piece than in some, and before you know it you’re flitting along on sixteenth notes. Herreweghe shows his signature grace, and the Antwerp players produce a relaxed yet virtuosic sound.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0RoCJnPBkE

The other work on his recording, Symphony No. 5, D. 485, ends with a movement that’s also marked Allegro vivace. Herreweghe takes the tempo easy, pulling the reins tight in a way that some might find too confining. But vivace means “lively,” not “wild,” and this interpretation is both energetic and elegant.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9j4-D-V1bw
It seems likely that Herreweghe and Antwerp will record the remaining symphonies while they’re at it, although it has not been officially announced. There’s no speculation required about the new recording by Residentie Orkest The Hague and conductor Jan Willem de Vriend, which is titled Schubert: The Complete Symphonies, Vol. 1. This first offering, on the Challenge Classics label, includes Symphonies 2 and 4.

Comparing de Vriend’s opening Largo – Allegro vivace with that of Herreweghe, the immediate difference is the interpretation of the initial dotted rhythm. Herreweghe, whose background is steeped in early music, uses a technique called “overdotting” (not normally associated with repertoire of Schubert’s day) to draw the first dotted eighth note longer in each pattern, thus making the following sixteenth shorter. De Vriend’s more mathematically correct interpretation is the standard one.

Throughout the Largo, de Vriend shapes each phrase as an answer to the last, often using slight dynamic changes to etch out the contrast. The allegro vivace, although a hair slower than Herreweghe’s, makes up for that by sounding more frenetic and less controlled.

De Vriend proves he can do elegance as well as anybody in the second movement, a theme-and-variation Andante. He shapes the phrases exquisitely, with the tiniest delay at each climax and cadence. It leaves you breathless. And that Residentie Orkest woodwind section is word class.

The so-called “Tragic” Symphony, No. 4 in C minor, D. 417, rounds out the album. The dramatic Allegro finale movement doesn’t have quite the bite and rhythmic delineation it might, with the technically challenging A-section bridge coming slightly unglued.

Besides those two worthy studio recordings, 2018 has also brought out two top-notch live recordings of Schubert symphonies. BR Klassik released a performance of the “Great” Symphony No. 9 in C Major, D. 944, with the Symphonieorchester des bayerischen Rundfunks (Bavarian Radio Orchestra), conducted by their current music director, Mariss Jansons.

The Ninth Symphony hasn’t always been called that. It was published posthumously – in 1840, a dozen years after Schubert’s death -- as Symphony No. 7 (his actual seventh symphony was written but not fully orchestrated), and some sticklers still call it the Eighth because the one before it is the famous “Unfinished.” In any event, it is Schubert’s last completed symphony, although not his last completed work; it’s also known that he was drafting a tenth symphony when he died in 1828.

And, while the nickname “Great” was first attached to this work to distinguish it from the shorter C major symphony, No. 6, these days it’s associated with the grandeur of the piece. That’s a good term for this B.R.O. performance. From the French horn’s hunting call in the opening Andante bars, through the Allegro ma non troppo first movement, Jansons fills the Philharmonie am Gasteig with sweeping grandeur. In spite of some ensemble issues with the violins, the way Jansons distinguishes
the instrumental voices – particularly the reeds – makes this first movement an interesting addition to the catalog.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lh24le24Xp0

The articulation in the Scherzo Allegro third movement gives a sense of Teutonic rural foot-stomping, a timely that Schubert was, in his bones, a composer of folk music. Again, the careful articulation earns attention: listen to the slight bite of the third beat in the violins during some passages, propelling the dance forward, and the slight delay of the last downbeat of some phrases.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWla6hEmMDQ

The other new live recording features the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique led by Sir John Elliot Gardiner at the Concertgebouw. This is the second live release of ORR/Gardiner on the SDG label, the first being Beethoven Symphonies 5 and 7 at Carnegie Hall. This one includes Schubert’s Fifth plus Brahms’ Serenade No. 2 in A Major. It’s a thrilling performance, marred somewhat by extraneous audience noises, some of which are so loud that one wonders if it’s the sound engineer coughing. Nevertheless, it’s a great reading of Schubert 5.

Because YouTube only has the entire Schubert as a single video, here are the start times of each movement:

1. Allegro
2. Andante con moto (starts 7:18)

III. Menuetto. Allegro molto – Trio (starts 18:04)

1. Allegro vivace (starts 23:12)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWIc9MgjsrE

The third movement is an interesting miniature, a mere five-minute affair, but intensely symphonic, with so much harmonic development and complex orchestration it could be mistaken for an excerpt from a sonata-form first movement. Gardiner revels in the drama, slashing the downbeats like he’s conducting a windstorm, the better to contrast with the sweet, gentle Trio.

That sense of abandon is also present in the finale. It’s fun to compare Gardiner to Herreweghe, since both conductors have such solid resumes in early music. Herreweghe sculpts the Antwerp Symphony’s sound into delicate wisps. Gardiner rides the ORR into a burning building; apparently he does believe that vivace can mean “wild.”
Krell Returns

Written by Bill Leebens

The title of the article is mildly misleading: strictly speaking, Krell never went away. Earlier this year, however, a lot of murmuring in the audio underground indicated that the company was facing difficulties and might be in serious trouble.

This wasn't the first time there had been drama related to the company: back in 2009, founders Dan and Rondi D'agostino were ousted by investors. Subsequently, Dan went on to form a new company, now thriving. Son Bret went on to found BSC (Bully Sound Company), and sadly passed away in January, 2017. Rondi regained the company in recent years, and refuted the stories of problems at the company.

Recently, industry veteran Walter Schofield was hired as Chief Operations Officer (COO) of Krell. In a recent interview with Ted Green of Strata-gee.com, Schofield detailed a number of steps being taken to rebuild the company, including new products being launched at RMAF in October.

We hope to hear of more good news as the company's efforts progress.
San Diego is famous as a nice place to live, mostly because of its weather. Recently, it’s become more crowded than LA, so it’s far less nice than it used to be, but the weather is still pleasant. Summer temperatures are moderate because of the influence of the ocean. But the cooling off-shore flow often means fog, so mornings can be cool and damp, as it was on the first morning of the CEDIA Expo at the San Diego Convention Center (held September 4-8).

The Custom Electronic Design and Installation Association holds an annual show for audio/video installers and custom home integrators every year in rotating locations around the country. This year and last year, it was in San Diego; next year, it’ll be in Denver. It’s a great place to learn about custom home theater and home automation, but I attended from the point of view of an audiophile, and was primarily interested in audio equipment. For me, this show was much more interesting than last year as it seemed to have twice the number of audio companies represented. The CEDIA Show doesn't typically attract audiophiles, but like many shows, things are changing. If audiophiles are able to find a way to attend, I recommend it.
I generally visit this event on Thursday, when attendance is lightest, and experts like David Lavine from Monoprice has lots of time to explain things to neophytes like these two students from a local Technical college. He spent an equal amount of time with me and I left impressed with his technical knowledge and candid responses.
Theory Audio Design from Lake Forest, California demoed a 5.2.2 system which retails for just over $10,000 including amplifiers and DSP. I was impressed with both the sound and the value.
This is the first time I’ve seen High End audio companies like McIntosh and MBL at a CEDIA Show, which underscores the importance of Home Theater to the audio business. The MBL demo was in stereo, and they got it right -- the sound was great.
Dynaudio was out in force with one of the largest static displays at the show.

The design of Gallo's speakers translates well to on-wall/home theater applications.
I felt that Starke had some of the best sound at the show, regardless of price. The exhibitor in the white shirt with the girls is Dan Wiggins, another friendly, very knowledgeable engineer willing to share his wisdom and expertise.
This 160" Samsung TV had the brightest, most vibrant colors at the show -- deliberately intensified for outdoor use. You can invite all your friends over to watch the game and beer spilled on the lawn won't upset anyone. The unit is fully waterproof and has two vertical hinges (visible on the back shot) allowing the screen to close on itself like window shutters. It's yours for just over $50,000.
Video as art. This wall display incorporating 8 screens changed slowly and constantly to present different images over time. It may not be Picasso, but it's cheaper, bigger, and, I suspect, more interesting to many consumers.
Anthony Grimani, a world-renowned acoustics expert---he made an interesting presentation to the San Diego Music and Audio Guild a couple of years back---now has his own line of speakers. This was a static display, so I didn't get a chance to hear them, but he'll be doing a demo for our club this winter.
Sandy Gross from **Golden Ear** was on hand to run the demos in the sound room behind the door. The sound from his 9.2 system was excellent -- for just over $13,000 retail (excluding electronics).
The affable designer Andrew Jones from ELAC (formerly with TAD and KEF) making a point to a potential customer. He was so busy all of the time, I never got a chance to chat with him.

Seemed like there were a million booths offering accessories and gizmos of all types at the CEDIA show. I’m using this photo to represent all of them as I had neither the time nor interest to investigate them.
The $800 Bose Soundbar 700 is brand new and features 7 drivers and some sophisticated engineering.
This chrome plated **KEF** Muon speaker made quite an impression, as did this custom LS 50.
The **Focal** display featured new finishes and flax/fiberglass drivers for light weight and rigidity.
This giant Sony LED screen displayed stunning resolution -- the best I've ever seen. Apparently, its proprietary crystal LEDs are smaller than a grain of flour. This enables a 1,000,000:1 contrast ratio and very deep blacks. The screen is assembled with 360 x 320 pixel display modules, so it can be sized according to the customer's preference.
This is the first time I’ve seen D’Agostino products at CEDIA.

Lots of soundbars at the show. Many of them seemed well designed, like this one from Artison, but
it was impossible to assess the sound in this noisy venue.

Beautiful marble finishes on these monitors from Truaudio.
Didn't know **CAT** made speakers, but these look interesting and I'd like to hear them. [This CAT is California Audio Technology, not to be confused with longtime tube amp maker Convergent Audio Technology...which doesn't appear to even have a website! ---Ed.]

The **Harman** Group offered complimentary coffee and water to show goers. This was much appreciated as the hall is huge and the food vendors are seldom nearby. The demo in their sound room was impressive, but far too loud for many audiophiles. It's difficult to assess audio quality by the sound of car crashes and natural disasters, but I understand that's what home theater professionals want to hear.
"... Let’s say a guest touches the turntable without your permission. That gun fires a laser beam at his wrist—from then on he’ll keep his hands off."
Mediterranean Coast, Sardinia

PARTING SHOT

Taken by Paul McGowan