

the village Voice

SPECIAL HIGH-FIDELITY SUPPLEMENT
N. Y. HI-FI SHOW, TRADE SHOW BUILDING, OCTOBER 7-12, 1957

The Night People:

Hi-Fi, Shepherd's Law, And the Witches' Brew

by Jean Shepherd

THERE have been a few fugitive straws seen already. Hi-Fi, which has been a sort of last frontier of INDIVIDUAL entertainment, culture, or what have you, has been showing unmistakable signs of going in the direction of the inevitable mass market. There of course is, nothing per se wrong with mass marketing except that there seems to be a law that goes into effect as soon as the mass is approached in any field. This law we shall call *Shepherd's Law of Magic Ingredients, or The Secret for Success*. It works this way:

It has been found by laboratory tests that actual quality of product has little to do with sales even in an area where it is possible to secure accurate measurement or performance. What really affects the sales is the Secret In-

redient content of said product and its direct parallel: The Promise of Magical Aids to Buyer Ecstasy. Perhaps it would be better to state this law algebraically, as follows:

$$M\sqrt{x} + 2\pi f = S_m$$

where x is equal to the quality built in the product, M equals the potency of the magical ingredient, f equals secret-formula content as aid and guarantee of buyer ecstasy, while S_m , of course, is the total

appeal to mass market. From glancing at the formula it can readily be seen that sales are less dependent upon actual quality than on the promise of magic.

For many years our law has worked resoundingly well in the sales of such items as toothpastes, automobiles, and Presidential candidates, but only recently has it begun to be applied in the field of high-fidelity sound reproduction. Engineers, a notably naive lot, for about 10 years past have faithfully adhered to strict graph-and-curve claims regarding the hi-fi components they had designed. Feeling that proof was

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necessary when such-and-such a factor was being discussed in the unit under consideration, they provided it in abundance. They knew that in those days' most buyers had the knowledge, and access to equipment, to enable them to spot a phony graph easily; hence they rarely hedged, and when they did, it was usually as the result of a memo from the sales department.

All Changed

But now all this has changed. The sales department discovered The Law, and at the same time realized that the term *Hi-Fi* itself had magical connotations to the mass public. What was merely an improvement over something that had existed basically since the early 30's now became something

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2nd Annual Hi-Fi Show Opens Here

Music-lovers, homemakers, and hobbyists should have a field day when the 2nd Annual New York High Fidelity Show sponsored by the Institute of High Fidelity Manufacturers opens at the New York Trade Show Building next Tuesday, October 8, for a five-day exhibition.

More than 100 exhibitors will display \$5-million worth of high-fidelity music systems. Upwards of 50,000 people are expected to view the latest advances in the medium of high-



fidelity reproduction. The interest in high fidelity is reflected by the fact that the sale of parts alone has increased from \$12 million in 1950 to \$166 million in 1956 and is expected to rise to over \$200 million next year.

Artists on Hand

Each day a varied program of demonstrations and exhibits will inform the public of the rapid progress being made in the component parts high-fidelity field. Artists from major recording companies exhibiting in the show will be on hand to meet the public.

On the lighter side, one exhibitor will present an exotic dancer undulating to authentic music of the Middle East and another will demonstrate how faithfully bird calls have been reproduced on high-fidelity records by comparing them with live birds.

Other exhibits range from straight displays to demonstrations of how high-fidelity recordings are made. One manufacturer of diamond stylus will highlight his exhibit with a diamond-cutting exhibition.

Stereophonic Records

The latest achievements in stereophonic recordings, newest of all music-reproduction mediums, will be exhibited by a number of manufacturers.

There will be no selling at the show, it has been announced by George Silber, President of the Institute of High Fidelity Manufacturers. "The show's only purpose," Silber says, "is to give a vivid demonstration of the gigantic strides high fidelity has made to bring listening pleasure into the living rooms of America."



THE LATEST DEVELOPMENT in high fidelity — Stereophonic (or Binaural) Sound — has been fully explained to the lay reader in a book of that name by Norman H. Crowhurst, above. Published by the John F. Rider company, it costs \$2.25 on the open market, but by special arrangement can be obtained free, during the run of the Hi-Fi Show, by any new subscriber to The Village Voice (see advertisement on front page of this supplement). "STEREOPHONIC SOUND" and many other Rider publications can be browsed through by show visitors at the Rider exhibit, room 411.

For Your Convenience

AUDIOGERSH CORP., 514 Broadway Hi-Fi Show Room:401
Exclusive distributor for Miracord record changers, Miraphon record players, and Miratwin cartridges.

CAEDMON RECORDS, 277 Fifth Avenue
CHESTERFIELD MUSIC SHOPS, INC., 12 Warren Street
Record and tapes by mail order.

COLUMBIA RECORDS, 799 Seventh Avenue
Manufacturers of records, stereophonic tapes, stereophonic tape recorders, transistor radios, high-fidelity phonographs and phonograph accessories; also custom pressing.

CONCERT HALL SOCIETY, 71 Fifth Avenue
Records, and stacked and staggered tapes; supplying stereophonic stacked tapes to some of the tape recorder exhibitors at the N. Y. Hi-Fi Show.

THE DOOR STORES, 246 East 51st Street, 161 West 4th Street
Table tops and legs; pre-fab furniture and cabinet components.

ELECTRONIC WORKSHOP, 26 West 8th Street
Records and high-fidelity equipment.

ESOTERIC RECORDS, INC., 333 Sixth Avenue

FAIRCHILD RECORDING EQUIP. CO., 10-40 45th Ave., L. I. C.
Rooms: 430 & 433

Manufacturers of high quality cartridges, arms, turntables, amplifiers, and professional recording and playback equipment.

GARRARD SALES CORP., Port Washington Rooms: 407 & 447
Manufacturers of high-fidelity record players and record-playing equipment.

SAM GOODY'S, 235 and 250 West 49th Street
Records and high-fidelity equipment.

GRADO LABS, 4616 Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn Room: 545
Manufacturers of phonograph cartridges, transformers, and tone arms.

HAYDN SOCIETY, INC., 119 West 23rd Street
Hi-Fi HQ., 150 East 46th Street Room: 406
Custom installation for the professional.

HIGH FIDELITY CONSUMERS' BUREAU OF STANDARDS, Suite 506, 286 Fifth Avenue
Consumer's quality control service for high-fidelity equipment. Sets standards of performance; tests and issues Seal of Approval for acceptable equipment.

KARLSON ASSOCIATES, INC., 1610 Neck Road, B'klyn, Rm: 340
Manufacturers of high-fidelity enclosures, hi-fi furniture, and pre-recorded tapes.

LAFAYETTE RADIO, 100 Sixth Ave., 165-08 Liberty Ave., Jamaica
Distributors of electronic parts and high-fidelity components and complete systems, stereophonic components, records,

LIVINGSTON AUDIO PRODUCTS CORP., Box 262, Caldwell, N. J.
Manufacturers of magnetic recorded tapes.

LYRIC HI-FIDELITY, 1190 Lexington Avenue
Distributors of high-fidelity equipment; custom cabinetry.

MARANTZ COMPANY, 25-14 Broadway, L. I. C. Room: 547
Manufacturers of control preamplifiers, power amplifiers and electronic crossovers.

MERCURY RECORD CORP., 745 Fifth Avenue Room: 500
High-fidelity records and stereophonic tapes.

Continued on page S-12

During the New York High Fidelity Show only
we can offer

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the brand new book by Norman H. Crowhurst

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501 Madison Ave. N.Y. 22,

**Hi-Fi. Shepherd's Law
And the Witches' Brew**

Continued from page S-1

entirely new and tremendously saleable. Almost overnight, anything that could reproduce any sort of sound became known as Hi-Fi. Guys who turned out cheap plastic-bound kitchen radios found that they could triple sales merely by tagging "True Hi-Fi in a Small Package!" to the current ad—and not only that, but the public would pay double the price for something it wouldn't look at before the magic phrase hit home.

I knew a record manufacturer who was stuck with 8000 LP's of very ordinary quality and less than mediocre performance by a European orchestra. He hit it big by simply ordering up a batch of impressive silver gummed labels which stated: "Recorded in Europe using the new Exclusive Unlimited Fidelity System." He jacked up the price an extra buck, sold out in less than a week, and ran through three additional press runs in a month.

The big manufacturers found

that the mass knew the term Hi-Fi, but knew absolutely nothing about it. It was a simple thing to stick another cheesy \$1.49 six-inch speaker on the side of the cabinet of a perfectly orthodox portable record player and advertise it as



—A Shepherd Original

"Multiple-Speaker Hi-Fi," again raise the price, and wait for the flood of orders; the public had somehow gained the erroneous impression that more than one speaker meant hi-fi. Just another application of The Law.

Today, right this minute, the claims are getting more outrageous as each operator jostles the

other, in the rush for the bucks. I read an ad the other day that baldly stated something to this effect: "Wherever hi-fi experts—a magic phrase—"gather, arguments always rage, but there is one thing they all agree on, and that is that the Fignewton X-D7 with magic Expando-Tone is the finest hi-fi available." This sounds great except that exactly the opposite is true. And all the experts do agree.

The resultant of all this hogwash has been a wholesale substitution of such nonsensical phrases as "Expando-Tone" for genuine technical advances and actual hi-fi research. The dollar that used to be spent by the manufacturers on lab work is now invested in public relations and upon market-data reports which long ago proved that magic is anything but

dead. There is some talk that X-D7 is actually powdered bats' wings, but the label doesn't say.

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277 Fifth Ave. New York 16, N.Y.

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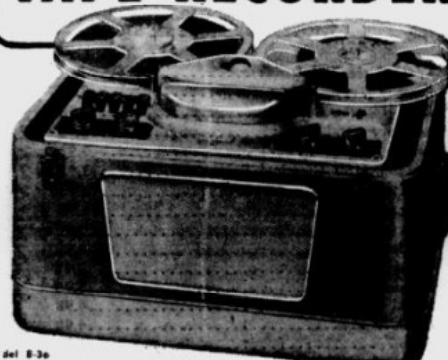
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