

ORGAN

ORGAN RECITAL

Arabesque for the Flutes; Jean Langlais
"Gigue" from Concerto in F major; Al-
binoni-Walther
Carillon-Sortie; Henri Mulet
Harmonies of Evening; Sigfrid Karg-Elert

John Eargle, Organist
KLIPSCHTAPE KST-1002
Stereo, 15 IPS...\$10.95

On this tape John Eargle ably demonstrates his artistic, as well as technical, proficiency as a musician. The organ he plays is an Aeolian-Skinner located in the First Presbyterian Church of Kilgore, Texas, and his choice of selections highlights the fine features of this superb sixty-rank instrument.

Technically, the recording is excellent. Microphone placement was varied according to the heavy or light quality of the music performed. In the very lovely "Carillon-Sortie" several sessions were required to adjust to the "auditory perspective" achieved from the use of the "longitudinal" stereo technique. The notes supply details as to the recording procedures followed.

I did not derive the feeling of spaciousness as heard in the recording of Richard Purvis (HIFITAPE, April 1956); however, it must be pointed out that Mr. Eargle is perform-

ing on an instrument in a church while Mr. Purvis' organ is located in a cathedral. The latter structure is naturally more capacious. You will find the reproduction on this tape is both warm and natural.

Mr. Eargle's playing is flawless and in perfect accord with the moods of these less-commonly heard selections. We are looking forward to the first releases of Klipschtape's 7½ series (scheduled for mid-September) as Mr. Eargle will be among the artists represented.

Reviewed by Dr. John Leahy of Washington, D. C.

ORGAN

WELDON FLANAGAN AT THE PALACE IN DALLAS

Mambo Number Five
The Yellow Rose of Texas
Boogie
Petticoats of Portugal
My Darling
Honkytonk Train

Weldon Flanagan, Organist
KLIPSCHTAPE KST-1006
Stereo, 15 IPS...\$10.95

Some of the most pleasant added attractions on the bill at the Palace Theatre in Dallas, Texas, are the intermission programs performed on the theatre organ by young Weldon Flanagan. It is not difficult to understand his popularity when you listen to this tape. He plays with a cleanness that indicates his absolute command of the instrument and knowledge of exactly what it will do without overcrowding its many tonal resources. His rendition of "The Yellow Rose of Texas" is especially delightful.

Flanagan has almost singlehandedly rebuilt this 4-manual, twenty-rank Wurlitzer instrument and he is still working on the project.

The Klipsch engineers have done an excellent job of coping with the difficult problems presented in recording this thirty-year-old instrument. Some of their headaches were caused by noise level due to the multiple blowers, motors and pumps as well as air leaks. Meanwhile, Mr. Flanagan continues his worthy do-it-yourself campaign of repair and perhaps when the next recording is made the engineers will be faced with an easier task.

Reviewed by Dr. John Leahy of Washington, D. C.

JAZZ

JAZZ AT SHREVEPORT—Volume II

Fine and Dandy
Indiana
Pennies From Heaven
Perdido
Holland's Holiday

Joe Holland Quartet

KLIPSCHTAPE KST-1004
Stereo, 15 IPS...\$10.95

This is the first opportunity I have had to hear the Joe Holland Quartet, and I was so delighted with what I heard that I have played this tape over and over. In the first four selections Joe Holland's drums are ever-present, but not so much as to detract from the smooth and well-balanced playing of the rest of the quartet. But in "Holland's Holiday" Joe moves his drums to the center of the stereo-stage and really takes off! This is certainly the most exciting example of the jazz drummer's art that I have encountered on tape . . . or elsewhere.

As with all of the Klipschtapes, the quality of the recorded sound is superb. However, I was a little dissatisfied with the mixing on the last selection . . . I had the feeling that I would like to move my speakers closer together since the drums were stretched out too far across the room. I also got the impression that the recording was in a big empty hall which doesn't seem to fit the mood . . . a hall would never be empty when a group like this is playing!

Reviewed by Dr. John Leahy of Washington, D. C.

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Monday, May 28, 2012

KLIPSCHTAPE (CD review)

First-generation stereophonic copy of the original stereophonic master. HDTT KLIPSCH-1.



First, let me allow the folks at HDTT (High Definition Tape Transfers) to explain their new release, *KLIPSCHTAPE*, better than I could: "In the 1950's, Paul W. Klipsch, inventor of the famous 'Klipschorn' corner bass horn loudspeaker, began recording live performances in stereo as 'reference' recordings to aid his own loudspeaker research and development. The 1950's saw enormous activity and expansion in the Hi-Fi world which was spearheaded by the emergence of stereo recordings for public consumption, and during the latter half of the decade, the first stereophonic reel-to-reel tapes became available, produced by recording companies such as RCA, Mercury, Westminster, and others. The tapes proved to be so popular that in 1956 Paul Klipsch would jump on the reel-to-reel bandwagon by founding the Klipsch Tapes Division. Headed by the redoubtable Mr. Klipsch and assisted by future recording engineer John Eargle, *KLIPSCHTAPE* produced a total of seven titles, and marked one of the first attempts by an equipment manufacturer to make direct tape masters available to audio enthusiasts. Klipsch's tapes were among the earliest stereo recordings ever offered to the public, and survive today as a prime example of primitive but exemplary 'purist' recording art. Unfortunately, Klipsch's tape enterprise lasted only about 2 years, and is today a virtually unknown and forgotten fragment of audio history. However, thanks to the kindness of the present-day Klipsch company, which has made the original master tapes available to us, we have been able to carefully transfer and preserve some of Klipsch's amazing recordings to CD."

What HDTT have done is take selections from three of Klipsch's tapes and transfer them to CD. The disc contains twelve musical tracks and ends with an interview with Klipsch. The music comprises small jazz ensemble pieces and large organ works, so the results show off most aspects of a speaker's range and power. Whether you actually enjoy the music is probably secondary to the recording quality involved, but in any case it is fairly well performed and fun overall.

Now, here's the thing: Most people today are unaware that the state of stereo recordings hasn't really improved much (or at all) since the early Fifties. I listen daily to brand-new recordings that haven't nearly the depth, breadth, range, or fidelity of the Klipsch tapes, which were among the first of their kind. Strange world.

The disc begins with the Flem Ferguson Trio (what a wonderful name) playing the "Tin Roof Blues." It's pleasant enough and gets the program off to an arresting start. Following that is Weldon Flanagan (another great name) playing the Wurlitzer pipe organ in "The Yellow Rose of Texas." Remember, these are live recordings made in acoustically amenable surroundings; play this one loudly and you'll experience a truly gigantic effect. Then we hear organist John Eargle (who would later become one of the world's most prestigious recording engineers) playing an Aeolian-Skinner organ in the "Carillon Sortie," followed by the Joe Holland Quartet doing "I Think You're Wonderful."

Next is an impressive organ recital by John Eargle that includes Bach's *Tocatta in D minor*, Langlais's *Arabesque for the Flute*, Gigue, Liszt's *Harmonies du Soir*, and Alain's *Litanies*.

From the final demonstration tape, we get three numbers by Flem Ferguson and his Dixieland Jazz Band: "Lady Be Good," "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans," and, the best of the lot, "Muskrat Ramble." If you can't find any demo material in here, you just are trying. The tapes carry with them a few background noises associated with live, unedited performance. You live with it.

The disc concludes with a June, 1954, television interview with Paul Klipsch, about ten minutes of audio. He's an amusing gentleman, and the information he provides, while rather elemental, is nevertheless captivating.

In terms of recorded sound, Paul Klipsch was a purist in the literal sense. He made his tapes using Stephens C2-0D4 condenser-type microphones with transformers bypassed; Berlant series 30 recording machines; and IRISH Brand Shamrock 300 tape, some of the best products available at the time. In Klipsch's own words, "Unlike most tape copies, where a good deal of 'engineering' and 'dial twiddling' have been employed in the duplication processes, KLIPSCHTAPES are recorded and duplicated without anyone 'riding the gain or tone controls.' Throughout a given piece the volume level is thereby the same as in the original performance. There are no tone controls; the flat response maintained results from the use of precision equipment throughout."



To be sure, the sound of the HDTT disc is quite good, if not quite in the absolute audiophile category we know today. However, to be fair, there are only a handful of topflight audiophile discs in that category, so maybe the point is moot. This HDTT disc displays an excellent separation of instruments in the jazz pieces, with the kind of wide left-to-right stereo spread we would expect from early loudspeaker demonstration tapes. Transient response is relatively quick; the dynamic range is reasonably expansive; impact is strong; lows are taut; and midrange definition is fine, if to my ears a trifle soft. Most important, I found no noticeable distortion even at very high playback levels. Maybe in some of the jazz numbers there could have been a tad more air to the acoustic (they're a trifle close and dry), yet in the organ pieces one hears a good sense of ambience and occasion, with lifelike hall resonances.

In all, the disc provides not only splendid sound and rewarding musical experiences but a valuable historical document that should interest most hi-fi fans. Although there is not a lot of content involved (about forty-four minutes of music, plus an additional ten minutes of interview), it's a matter of quality over quantity.

As always, the folks at HDTT make the music available in a variety of formats for a variety of pocketbooks, from Redbook CD's, 24/96 DVD's, and HQCD's to 24/96, 24/192, and 16/44 Flac downloads for playback on high-end computer audio systems. For details, visit <http://www.highdeftapetransfers.com/storefront.php>.

JJP