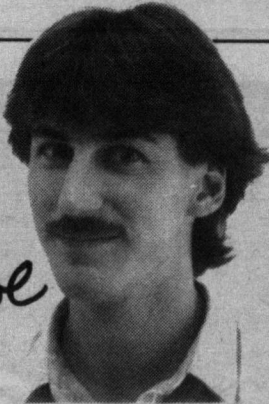


Mike Spindloe



When we left off a couple of weeks ago, we had just finished discussing CD software, i.e. compact discs themselves. In the interim, I had a very interesting conversation with Bob Meyer of Audio Ark, an Edmonton stereo shop specializing in high quality audio components.

His feeling is that the much-anticipated battle between CDA (compact disc audio; apparently the proper name for the format) and DAT (digital audio tape) is not going to happen. Rather, the two formats will co-exist peacefully the same way that conventional records and cassettes did before all of this new technology came along.

In this scenario, CDA will replace records as the pre-recorded medium of choice, while DAT will replace cassettes as the recordable medium of choice. There is only one minor difference: while records have always sounded better than cassettes, there should be no audible difference between CDA and DAT.

This might not have been the case. Right from the beginning, critics of CDA have noted the tendency for the high end to sound clinical; less "warm" than the high end on analog formats. There are very good technical reasons why this is so, which I won't attempt to get into here except to fill you in very quickly on the basics.

CDA lasers sample the pits encoded on the discs at a certain frequency, which happens to be 44.1 KHz. This is not far enough above the actual range of recorded records to be completely out of the way. Therefore CDA uses a drastic filtering system which has the unfortunate effect of throwing the high end audio signal (say 10-20 KHz) out of phase, resulting in the harsh sound.

The solution for this is oversampling. Many machines now on the market use four times oversampling, which conversely reduces phase error to 25% of what it is with single sampling. New CDA machines will soon be on the market which utilize eight times oversampling, thus reducing phase error much further.

Ironically, DAT players use a sampling frequency of 48 KHz, not much higher than CDA, but apparently high enough to eliminate the need for drastic filtering. In the end, then, a good CD player will sound as good as any DAT player.

Having said all this, the question is: where are all these DAT players we keep hearing about? According to Meyer, the format is still something of an enigma. Players are being manufactured by Luxman and Marantz; blank tapes for them are being made by Maxell, TDK, and Sony, three of the largest analog tape manufacturers.

None of this stuff is widely available yet in North America, though. Meyer cites consumer resistance to yet another format, the high price of DAT players (about \$3000), and the lack of available recordings and blank tapes as major factors.

A Catch-22 situation exists in the marketplace. Dealers hesitate to bring in the expensive machines while tapes are hard to get, and vice versa. There are currently only about 35 titles available anywhere on DAT, from two companies: Capriccio, a Scandinavian classical label, and GRP, an American jazz label.

We'll finish off with a bit of miscellaneous information about both formats. First, DAT is subject to some of the same weaknesses of analog audio cassettes. They

will wear out eventually, although with four times the required guide track information printed on the tapes, it would take a substantial loss of material to create an audible difference. Like regular tapes, however, exposure to a strong magnetic field can cause DAT cassettes irreparable damage. They can also stretch and break like analog cassettes.

Compact discs, on the other hand, are shaping up to be somewhat less than the musical rocks of Gibraltar they have been touted as. According to Meyer, tests have shown that the more times a CD is played, the greater the number of errors which the tracking beam will make in decoding the information. This apparently has something to do with the materials currently used to produce CDs. As I mentioned last time, there are now audiophile CD pressings. These are being done, using 24 carat gold, by Denon and Mobile Fidelity Lab. These are less prone to error but cost a whopping \$100.

Taking everything we've said into account, if you're shopping for a CD player, I would recommend either getting one with four times oversampling (currently \$400 and up) or waiting for the new eight times oversampling machines. On the other hand, I've owned a fairly basic player for almost three years now and have had no complaints.

## Vietnam DJ on speaking tour

interview by Dragos Ruiu

"Good Moorning, Vietnam..." is the phrase that has made Adrian Cronauer famous. He is the real-life version of the Armed Forces Radio D.J. that Robin Williams portrayed in the movie titled after his on-air introduction. The success of the movie has brought Cronauer to the lecture circuit, and he will be appearing in SUB Theatre on Monday.

"Last spring, my agent told me that he kept getting requests for me to speak. So, I took a semester off from school and went on the lecture circuit," says Cronauer. He is currently in his final year of study in law school at the University of Pennsylvania. "Law school is an expensive proposition — so financially, lecturing made sense..."

Cronauer's lecture will focus on how he wound up as the Vietnam DJ they made a movie about. He has film clips from the movie, as well as real newsreel footage from the war, that he will show.

"I'm going to talk about what's real and what isn't and what Saigon was really like... why some veterans had problems functioning in society when they returned.

But if you want to know more, you'll have to come to my lecture."

The lecture tour is one of the few differences the success of the movie has made in Cronauer's life. "The big effect of the movie was that a lot of people I haven't seen in years got in touch with me. I managed to talk to some relatives that I hadn't seen for twelve years.

"Other than that the only big change I noticed after the movie came out was that operators and people who made airline booking began to recognize my name. The only downside of the fame has been a series of practical jokes, where someone phones me at odd times in the morning, and yells, 'Gooood Moorning, Vietnam'."

A major part of the success of the movie is due to Robin Williams' zany charisma, but Cronauer never worked with Williams during the production of the movie. "I never met him until the morning the movie premiered. I said I was glad to meet him, and he replied that he was glad to meet him too.

"Robin is 'on' all the time. As soon as you say hello to him he goes into a routine. I think he's basically a shy person, and his routines are a way of hiding that shyness."



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