

The Lector Zoe

Given sufficient burn-in time (I'd say about 50 hours) and, later on, a little experimentation with different tubes (which I did not do for purposes of this survey), you're going to have a ball with this two-tubed unit from Lector. And the price, at a touch less than \$2200, makes it a veritable steal.

The Cutting Edge

HP'S WORKSHOP

Like its sibling, the CDP-7 compact disc player, the Lector is dark in overall tonal coloration, similar to that of the Tom Evans Vibe, and not so very different from The Vibe's sound—with one striking dissimilarity. And that lies in its ability to reproduce a dynamic range that is, by comparison to everything else in these evaluations, very nearly shocking, so electrifying is its ability to range from the pianissimo to the sonic thunderclaps. Try the first fortissimo on the Reiner reading of Ravel's *Alborado del Gracioso*. If you're like some members of my listening panel, you'll jump (as did I). Indeed, you have to be careful how you set the volume level with the Zoe, so close an approximation it is to the real-life wide jumps of the macrodynamic in big-scaled music. You may feel, by way of comparison against the competition, that the contrasts are

almost excessive. One thing for certain: you'll put a strain on your amplifiers if they aren't monsters. The microdynamics are just as finely gradated as they are with the ART, and the transients sound most excellent.

The bottom end is as solid and well-defined as that of The Vibe and Burmester, but more engrossing, because of Zoe's way with low-frequency shifts in dynamic level. The width of the soundstage, up front, is superb, but there is some collapse of the field of depth when the going gets going—you'll hear this as the brass choir coming forward, instead of staying firmly in place while sounding louder. There is a touch of brightness in the upper midband at times, depending on the music. But, all told, this little sucker has the gestalt of the music down pat. 