SPECIAL FEATURES:

SUMMER FASHIONS

TRAVEL:

NEW ENGLAND

FLY QUADFATHER:

HUGO MONTENEGRO
Recorded music has begun to sound different. How so? Credit quadraphonic sound. What’s that? It’s four separate channels of sound, creating a new kind of sonic illusion of space and motion. What’s wrong with regular two-channel stereo sound? It’s fine if you haven’t experienced the sensation of being engulfed by quadraphonic sound.

Hugo Montenegro, the noted popular music arranger, has been engulfing himself in quad sound for nearly two years. And in his own way he has begun to set patterns for the recording and arranging of popular music for this new medium, this newest electronic toy which promises to turn our living rooms into experimental laboratories for the sheer enjoyment of musical and possibly sensual experiences. Quad music offers all that.

Montenegro is the foremost arranger in America working in this newest medium, one which promises to turn the recording industry into a field for experimenters and emotional pioneers.

In his own way, probing, exploring and learning in the quiet of his Palm Springs residence, Montenegro is setting the parameters upon which other composers and arrangers will move to fully develop the art of recording sound in four-channel.

Montenegro, a classically trained musician who has been involved with recordings since the 1950s and television and film scores for the past decade, has become an unofficial pioneer, adventurist into the world of the unknown in sound.

In May of 1971, five months before moving from Los Angeles to his present spacious seven-room house, he was introduced to the potential of quad sound when he heard a demonstration tape at the RCA studios in Hollywood. “There were flickers of excitement which struck me,” he now recalls, “I felt it had the potential but it didn’t really come out for me on that tape. So I decided to try an experiment of my own. I met with several RCA engineers in New York and we wound up doing an experimental recording session in Hollywood. I decided that if I could produce four-channel music which was decidedly different from that which I had heard on those tapes, I would get into it full time.”

Hugo’s experiment proved so successful that it impressed the RCA people and he began planning for his debut as a quadraphonic artist — full time.

And as a result of appearing on the “Victoria James” talk show on KPLM-TV one day, Hugo met Dr. Archer Michael, a local clinical psychologist, and the two began talking about quad and how it could affect the senses.

They began to work together, Archer teaching Hugo about the sciences of psychoacoustics and psychophysics so that he could perceive how the brain discerns sound, and Hugo explaining to Archer the recording process. The two studied together from February to May of 1972.

Then with some basic concepts down pat, Hugo went into the studio in Hollywood and began recording his first discrete LP for RCA. This was a historical recording session, for Hugo was the first pop arranger on the RCA label to get involved in recording four-channel sound.

(A key word here is “discrete” which describes the system for encoding and decoding four channels of information onto a record. There are other systems for achieving degrees of quad and they carry with them their own inbred capabilities and shortcomings. However, the RCA discrete system, most experts agree, is the best system and the leading competitor in the quad wars with CBS’s own matrix system which came out one year before the discrete system was developed.)

Hugo’s first LP was titled “The Godfather,” from which Hugo was nicknamed “Quadfather,” a name which humorously follows him around now. That LP, which was released in May of last year was a tour de force in terms of effects used to show motion and sound direction.

A second LP, interpreting film themes, followed this past February, but it is a true musical LP. No gimmicks or effects used to show off the capabilities of directional sound. Just pure arranging skill and knowing where to position the instruments.

A third LP has just been completed in which Hugo interprets Neil Diamond songs, and that will be released in July under the title “Neil’s Diamonds.” So that gives the wiry, sun-tanned arranger three discrete quad LPs, or more than any other individual in the country.

In each of these three LPs, Hugo worked in the quiet of his home,
thinking, planning, writing out his material and then going to Los Angeles or New York for the recording dates.

His home is his base of operations, his laboratory, his test tube in greens and yellows. His den is his studio. It has three tape recorders, one four-channel amplifier, four loudspeakers, one turntable and two cassette recorders plus a duplicating machine for copying arrangements. The estimated total value of all this equipment in that one room is $4,300. There is also a piano on which he pecks out slowly any melody lines he writes.

The living room has recently been invaded by equipment from the Japan Victor Company since JVC and RCA have both been involved in the development of the discrete album process — the method for placing four separate signals of data within the regular stereo grooves of an album and extracting them so they are played through the four speakers.

Last April, JVC's top executive, Jumbo Mochizuki, brought two quad sets to Palm Springs. One set was installed in Hugo's house. The second unit went to Frank Sinatra. The equipment is valued at $4,000.

CD-4” — i.e., “Mr. Compatible Discrete 4-Channel”!

Hugo returned to Palm Springs and the serenity of his Canyon Estates residence May 20. The aura of cheery tranquility about the home is augmented by a broad, green view of Canyon Country Club fairways, a view that obligingly complements the charming furnishings created for Hugo by interior designer Steven de Christopher, including innovative custom-designed housings for the quad equipment.

“Quad is new, and one of the objections of consumers is the number of speakers,” Hugo noted. “A wife says, for instance, ‘I’m not going to have four ugly speakers in my house.’ Well, I don’t want four ugly speakers in my home either, and Steve has taken care of that magnificently.”

The speakers, encased in attractive pedestals, and the efficiently compact compartment for the quad equipment are elegant accoutrements to the sunny furnishings in Hugo’s living room.

Why is Hugo so keen on quad?

“It challenges you to create a new kind of reality,” he says.

Much of Hugo’s ability to understand what he can put on the disk and what he can’t comes from what Dr. Michael has taught him about the two “psychos.”

For example, Hugo now knows that the frequency level of one tonal color will hide the apparent level of another. This is called masking and is important in terms of where Hugo places his instruments within the 360-degree area he can work with. He also knows that since we are front-oriented in our sensory discrimination, sounds which are arranged to come from

As a reciprocal gesture for his trail-blazing in the new medium, JVC invited Hugo to spend some time in Japan this spring as the company’s guest. While there, Hugo conducted an actual recording demonstration to show how one of the sides of “The Godfather” was created.

The intensely active visit also included a barrage of television and press interviews which resulted in still another intriguing monicker for America’s “Quadfather.” Japanese newspapers headlined Hugo as “Mr.
"Quad lets the arranger spread out space, move tonal textures within the sound environment."

And yet that is what quad music is all about. In each of the three LPs, Hugo learned something which he carried over to the next project. In fact, his knowledge — his on-the-job training, so to speak — has placed him about one year ahead of his contemporaries in terms of knowing how to arrange music for quad.

At home, he plans out each song on a chart, positioning instruments on the 16 tracks of the master tape which will pick up all the music which will then be "mixed down" from 16 tracks into the four for the record. This is the most delicate step in the preparation of the album and the one in which Hugo has been gaining much expertise.

He found that on some songs some of the effects he wanted didn't work. One instrument overpowered another; the idea of moving an instrument around the room wasn't so effective. So he adopted a simple rule: Be flexible; either modify the effect or drop it all together.

On the second LP, for example, he discovered he had to shift instruments so they came from different speakers — not the ones from which he originally had planned they would emanate. "I originally planned the album with the brass instruments in the front, the strings in the back and a harmonica somewhere in the back, but it didn't work. The rear speakers tended to be melody-heavy and, while that's not necessarily wrong, it bothered me because I like to hear things better when coming from the front channels.

"When a person's attention is constantly drawn to a gimmick, like too much motion of an instrument, the listener won't appreciate it because he hasn't yet learned to listen to four-channel sound," Hugo says.

The most important thing Hugo has learned after three albums is not to over-arrange for quad. "The listener's mind can't attend to a lot of things going on at the same time all around him."

"The effect went jing, jing, jing, jing, like an announcement that you were listening to quad."

(continued on page 67)
air and history. It’s where it all began. The town contains the nation’s oldest library, its oldest tavern, its oldest synagogue and the nation’s oldest military organization, the Newport Artillery Co. The first bell ever to toll over a New England church rang out here, and Pelham Street was the nation’s first avenue to be lighted with gas. In Newport, John Kennedy and his bride repeated their vows and earlier Jackie Kennedy made her debut at the fashionable Clambake Club.

With springtime’s arrival, Newport as well as all New England comes alive. Tourists make their pilgrimages — and now the summer breezes will fill the spinnakers of graceful sloop boats on Narragansett Bay until autumn turns its golden hand and the earth gets back to the business of rest and renewal.

HUGO MONTENEGRO (continued from page 63)

Ideas coming from different places.

“With quad we can put the listener in the middle of the orchestra. It’s almost like being in the conductor’s chair.” This, Hugo says, shows off the environmental potential of quad sound.

In the studio, Hugo aims for a lot of isolation between instruments in the orchestra so that their individual sound does not leak into the microphones recording other sections of the orchestra.

Using echo and ambience properly in creating a quad sound are of great value, Hugo says. Ambience is a series of reflections of the tone, and is something which one experiences in a concert hall. Echo provides a “decay” to the tone and also adds a round feeling.

When Hugo came up with the arrangement for “Alfie,” one of the songs on the movie-themes LP, he used four keyboard instruments playing quick repeats of a note figure. “The effect went jing, jing, jing, jing,” Hugo says. “It was like an announcement that you were listening to quad.”

For Hugo, a successful quad experience is one that doesn’t unsettle or disconcert the listener. That’s why he spends more time on his four-channel arrangements than he has ever done for any other kind of music. The placement of instruments and what they are playing is vital to the way the sound either fuses together or comes out separated. Hugo is very aware that there are no standards as yet set for quad recording, so what he does may very well become the prerequisites by which other composers and arrangers work.

“Quad allows us to create a new experience by immersing the audience in both surround and directional sound. In classical music, for example, there are subtle things that happen in a score which can be heard only at a live performance and are lost in a conventional recording because the weight of certain instruments will overbalance and mask the texture of a delicate color. For example, the weight of strings can easily overpower the delicate texture of woodwinds.

The weight of brass can almost obliterate the texture of strings.”

There are record producers who feel that quad allows the listener to see what it’s like to be in the player’s or the composer’s mind. Quad lets the arranger spread out space, move tonal textures within the sound environment.

Hugo’s goal is to expand the library of legitimate musical experiences which bear his name.

Working in an uncharted area has its danger, he admits. It is only during the “mixing down” of the sound (continued)

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that he learns whether his arrangements work. For in addition to working with the fields of right and left front, and right and left rear, the composer also can place sound in the center between the right and left front speakers; the area between the left and right rear speakers; the area between the right front and right rear speakers; the area between the left front and left rear speakers, and the space in the center of this square. That's nine positions from which we can be bombarded with sound, musically, verbally or artificially.

Hugo has used an Arp synthesizer played by his 17-year-old son, John, on all of his albums. The instrument creates its own distinctive electronic sounds. On the new Neil Diamond LP, the synthesizer is a lead instrument within the structure of a legitimate orchestra flowing with the beauty of strings and brass.

Unlike other composers and arrangers who are concerned only with writing their music and leaving the technical side of making the album to the producers and engineers, Hugo oversees many aspects of the disk. He drives in regularly to RCA in Hollywood to be with his producer and engineer when they "mix" the sound.

"Only I know what I hear in my mind," he explains. "We are still in the early stages of quad and I feel the compulsion to sweat it out through as many of the steps as I can get involved with."

When he was planning "The Godfather" LP, Hugo sat around his pool tanning himself and planning how the music would sound. He admits that if it hadn't been for the quiet desert environment he probably couldn't have completed his first quad LP within the short deadline presented him by RCA.

Ask him today what quad means and he is quick to reply:

"It lets me utilize the entities aside from the orchestra's colors, like motion and space. I can work with the fields of sound that expand or contract and which let me realistically create environmental effects, like an amusement park merry-go-round on the song 'Me and My Arrow' or a nice wooded, tranquil area for 'Norwegian Wood,' or a jungle safari on 'Baby Elephant Walk,' (all from the first LP).

"Quad triggers your imagination more quickly than conventional stereo. It gives you limitless possibilities for feeling an orchestra around you."

What does he plan for future quad albums? He wants to plunge into more percussive things. "I'm finding it difficult to hold my interest in slow ballads. Besides, the public likes rhythmic things that can make your body move. I'm going to try to be more daring rhythmically."

Does that mean that the large string sound of Montenegro will fade behind the thumping of rock drums? Not at all. Hugo will keep the light burning late in his laboratory to ensure that his quad music is music first, combined with legitimate entertainment values.

And although he's no kid himself, he does keep abreast of current sounds in pop music; and that input is rolling around in his fertile brain and will undoubtedly come bursting upon us in brilliant directional, surround, echoey, ambient sound — all the components necessary for an open flight into the world of quadrophonic entertainment.

Fly "Quadfather"!