

Hois: *The Planets*. Los Angeles Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta, conductor. Decca SXL 5529 reissued by Speakers Corner Records. Distributed by Acoustic Sounds, Inc. Phone: 1-800-716-3553; www.acousticsounds.com

This 1971 LP has always been a favorite of mine (I was given my first England-pressed London copy by HP many moons ago, before I joined the staff), because of Mehta's underrated performance and the exceptional playing he got from the LA Philharmonic, as well as the superior sonics. Previn's 1974 British EMI version [ASD 3002] with the London Symphony Orchestra is wonderful, too, and used to be my favorite version of the work (so I'm a nut for *The Planets* – so jail me). But over the years, the Mehta has grown on me, and today I listen to it more than any other. The sonics are outstanding, from the weighty blaring of the brass to the thunderous organ pedals and mighty subterranean bass-drum strokes. But

the London version, in any of several copies, has always been noisy and crackly.

I've never seen, let alone owned, an original Decca version, but there have been at least a couple of attempts to bring this marvelous disc back to life: First, in 1987 or thereabouts, King Records of Tokyo, Japan, reissued a *Planets* "Suite" (they cut several bands from the original disc), and it was a humdinger, though few people knew about it. I have never seen a copy other than my own, and since I cannot find it as I write this, I cannot tell you the record number. Then King (now in a new incarnation as Cisco Records in Los Angeles) released in 1994 another attempt, this time as a full album. But the sound was eviscerated, with no low bass, no high highs, and a kind of odd veiling over the whole affair. My copy is still pristine – bet you can guess why!

Now we are saved. Kai Seemann of Speakers Corner in Germany has done a fantastic job with this reissue, keeping all the wonder of the London intact, but with better-articulated, more visceral bass response and lower distortion overall. And such wonderful surfaces! What appears to be a replication of the original artwork graces the cover (remember, I have never seen one), and the record label, like those on all of Seemann's other releases, is meticulously original-looking.

A winner, through and through. Get this one, too, before it is gone.