

STS Digital reel to reel tape review



...we like music very much, it is a wonderful way to express feelings and communicate with other people on a same level. We like also the sound of musical instruments, played in fine acoustic surroundings, they sound so pure and warm. Unfortunately most CD, LP and Reel to Reel tapes are bad recorded, with a harsh sound to close and without ambience. For this reason we started with STS Digital twenty years ago to do something totally different and the results are our recordings with a fine selection and series like: Extended Dynamic Experience, Celebrate the Art & Spirit of music, Siltech Test Demo CD, The Absolute Sound Reference lots of LP's and Reel to Reel tapes.

There you go folks, Fritz and Netty de With are a couple of entrepreneurs from the Netherlands deeply involved with the audiophile world and recording as well. These fellows breathe and live music all the way and has been brave enough as to embark on this tape masters saga, now en vogue almost everywhere. They know that they wouldn't become rich with this limited business, but at least they are enjoying what they love to do and that's what counts!



The Product

To begin with, the tapes are supplied in a custom, high quality made aluminum reel with the “STS” logo. The design is innovative and the color is beautiful. The very small “windows” make it difficult to thread the tape on the hub without leaving a “tape flag” protruding out as I like to thread my tapes, but this is just a small detail. The reel by itself is a collection piece.

The tape is a LPR35 from Recording the Masters (former BASF) and comes neatly packed in the reel. Then, you have this nice looking cardboard box with the production cover picture labeled to the box. It’s a high class presentation, second only to the extremely fancy “Open Reel Records” package. The STS box is a reminiscence of the glorious pre-recorded tapes of the 70’s and their 7” boxes with the picture on it. It’s easier and cheaper to just send a tape inside a generic box, but NO. STS prefers to spend a little more in order to give the customer something worth of the investment they do on this kind of products.

Inside, you’ll also find the “quality control” certificate, that also serve as the track list and a detailed description of their tape copy process.



This Tape is carefully copied from a Philips EL3501 master recorder to 6 Philips N4522 recorders. We copy with CCIR equalization with reference level 320 nWb/m on half-track 1/4" LPR35 tape from (Recording The Masters). Deliver on a special made silver or golden aluminum reel with a cut out STS logo (3X). We did our outmost best to give you the best quality possible, but remember it is analogue technology, there will be always some noise floor (we don't use Dolby) because it will kill the music enjoyment. Please listen with love for that old fashioned analogue recording technique. Make sure that you clean your heads regularly for optimal frequency response. STS also supplies empty aluminum take-up reels in silver or gold with special cut out STS logo (1X). If you want more information don't hesitate to email us - STS Team.

THE TRACKS OF STS DIGITAL REEL TO REEL TAPE T611113 .
ARTIST: L'IMPRÉVU SAXOPHONE QUARTET – KARLIJN SCHEEPERS – SOPRANO
SAXOPHONE, JANTJENKE GELDERMAN – ALT SAXOPHONE, HANS KUIJT –
BARITON SAXOPHONE AND CASPER DIK – TENOR SAXOPHONE.

Quartet:	Composer:
1. Arrival of the Queen of Sheba	G.F. Händel
2. Andante	C. Florio
3. Allegro	C. Florio
4. Presto	F. Mendelssohn
5. La Fileuse	F. Mendelssohn
6. Air	J.S. Bach
7. Ouverture de concerto	A. Vivaldi
Trois Pièces	
8. Presto Gioso	D. Scarlatti
9. Andante cantabile	D. Scarlatti
10. Scherzo	D. Scarlatti
11. Toccata and Fuca in D-mineur	J.S. Bach
12. The flight of the Bumblebee	R. Karsakoff
13. La Danza	G. Rossini

Analogue recording 1994 by Fritz de With on Philips 3501 with van den Hul carbon fiber microphone cables.

QUALITY CHECKED BY:

WARNING: TAPE TAIL OUT!
Before playback please rewind the tape.

MONO STEREO
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The Recording

The copies are made from the master running on a Philips EL3501 to a bank of 6 Philips N4522. The equalization is to CCIR standards, 320 nWb, half track format and the sampler I received runs @ 15ips. The recording level was right on the money: not too low and not too loud. Just where it's suppose to be.



They don't use Dolby, but the noise floor were extremely quiet!



The Sound

The sound quality is very good indeed. The instruments timbre is very accurate, the recording space is neatly distributed and you can pin point where're every musician, the stereo image is wide and well distributed with a very detailed presence and transparency. The illusion of "being there" is extremely realistic. I have the impression that this tape was meticulously mastered and if it's so, it was a great Mastering work. As a Mastering Engineer myself, I have found many nice recordings ruined by the Mastering process. Not this one. Well, Fritz has been doing this since the 70's, so, he must know a thing or 2 about recording and sound quality.

Conclusion

The main complaint from John Q Public about the so called "hi end" master tapes is that on many occasions the recordings are made by obscure artists and the music they play, besides the classical titles, are a little hard to listen to for more than 15 minutes. I understand them. For a person just looking to enjoy the music and not trying to constantly evaluate their systems using these tapes, it's hard to stick on a chair listening to esoteric pieces of music, full of ornaments, dissonances and counter tempos. They want mainstream music. Something more commercial and easier to digest. They want to listen to their favorite

musicians and not to “someone” from who knows where, pounding with a mallet on a Conga drum. If these labels want to survive, they’ll have to evolve.

There’s nothing wrong with original recordings from new and upcoming talents, but hey! Sometimes enough is enough, if you know what I mean. This is what I’m constantly hearing around my circles and not only from Joe Mid Fi, but also from seasoned audio professionals as well. The de Witt’s has found a niche where they could offer the interested party the sonical quality of hi end, but with a more pleasant music from artists they can identify themselves with.

Kudos to Fritz and Netty, that by the way is a very friendly and easy going woman in charge of the administration and relationships part of the STS equation. With Fritz behind the console and recorders and Netty on the Public Relations department, I augur a bright future for the STS label for years to come!

Carlitos Guzmán

Mono and Stereo Senior Contributor Writer