TANDBERG 3014A

Norwegian company Tandberg has, with the TCD 3014A, produced what might best be described as a semi-professional deck. The design is, like the price, pretty uncompromising. There are no superfluous controls, no exaggerated displays, only the essentials.

A closer look at the control arrangement (and the manual!) reveals that the engineers have decided to represent primary functions with their own buttons or switches, while leaving secondary operations (music search, drop-in recordings, etc.) to be accessed via combinations of those primary controls. Transport functions are arranged in a row beneath the two peak-reading meters. Clustered below the transport buttons are switches for the record pre-set, memory functions and timer interface. The bottom row includes the monitor, output potentiometer, Dolby switching, balance and input controls.

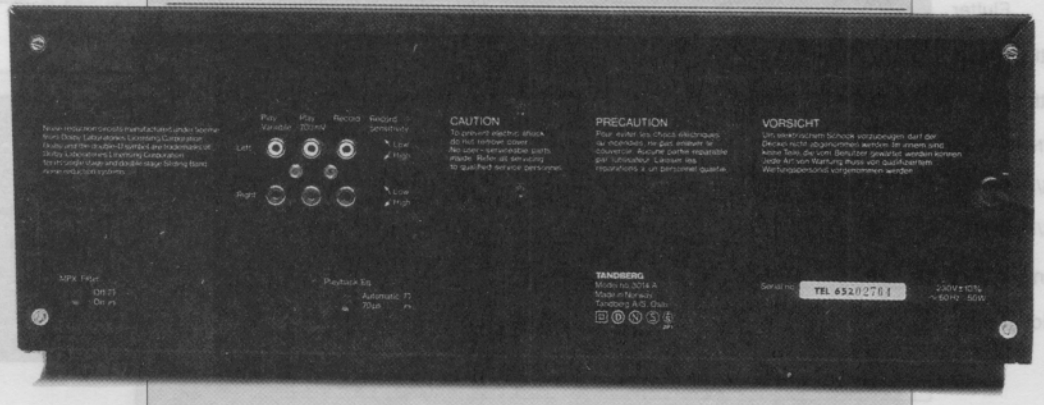
Provision has been made for optimising recording bias for different tapes. Recording azimuth is also adjustable (but, for some reason *playback* azimuth isn't).

Setting up the machine for a particular tape was not too difficult. On either side of each position of the tape type selector switch are pairs of recessed adjustment screws. With the deck recording, an onboard signal generator is used to produce the necessary calibration tones and, watching the meters, the operator makes the appropriate adjustments. In a minute or two, everything is set.

The 3014A's peak-reading meters are said to respond to 2 millisecond peaks within 1 dB (i.e. in the blink of an eye!). They also register the input signal before it reaches the record amplifier. As such the meters are independent of the source/tape switch and that means you're seeing the input signal.

By the way, the 3014A incorporates Tandberg's DYNEQ headroom extension circuitry. During recording the necessary high frequency boost is controlled to minimise the losses from overrecording.

Transport duties are handled by Tandberg's sophisticated four motor, servo controlled system. The dual-capstan, closed-loop drive system is gentle with tapes, whilst at the same time being very quick in the fast wind modes. It is a sturdy system, built to professional standards and



Category	:	Cassette Deck
Price	:	$4490.00
Distributors	:	Audio Dynamics Pty. Ltd.
Warranty	:	2 Years
Dimensions	:	435×166×350mm
Weight	:	9.8kg
Serial No.	:	65202764
Test No.	:	HFB-610

designed to last forever.

A removable dustcover makes access to the three discrete heads, the pinch rollers and tape guides simplicity itself.

Instead of the usual two pairs of RCA-pin jacks on the back panel, we find three pairs. A variable output pair, a fixed output (700 mV) pair and a pair of record input jacks that permit adjustment of their sensitivity. There is also an MPX filter and an equalisation switch (only used with obsolete Type III tapes).

Performance

Among audiophiles the cassette medium is not generally taken seriously. The reasons are many, but turn mainly upon the slow-moving tape's vulnerability to distortion, speed variations, hiss, limited dynamic range and frequency response anomalies. Throw in the sometimes bizarre effects of noise reduction systems and a tendancy to do strange and wonderous things to the bass end of the audible spectrum and you have a recipe for something other than audio bliss.

Nevertheless the medium has achieved widespread acceptance because it is a handy and, for the most part, adequate way to store music. Tandberg's problem is not convincing the average cassette buyer that the medium is a good thing. Instead they have to impress those few, demanding listeners who have made the kind of commitment to cassettes that sees them prepared to spend thousands on a machine like the 3014A.

After listening to the 3014A we are firmly convinced that even the most golden-eared listener would be impressed. It is an extraordinary machine.

We think the test bench results are pretty much self-explanatory, so instead we'll focus on our listeners' responses.

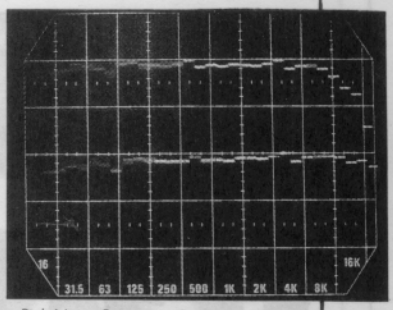
Peak performance was obtained with metal tape, but the results garnered from the humbler Type I and Type II tapes were very close. We recorded several media, including CD, and in every case our listeners found it virtually impossible to distinguish between the source and the tape.

A recording of solo piano made from a CD original (just about the toughest thing you can throw at a cassette deck) was nothing short of astonishing. Nor was the 3014A put off by complex orchestral or choral works.

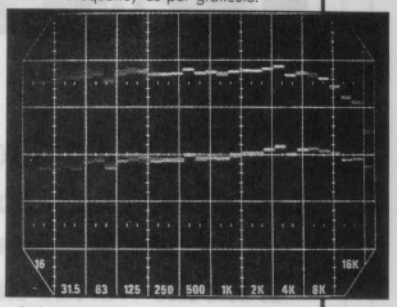
Copies were virtually indistinguishable from originals, every ounce of soundstage, imaging and sonic substance were faithfully transcribed.

From start to finish it was a bravura performance and an insight into the capabilities of this too-often dismissed medium. Listen to it—at your bank account's peril! SBG

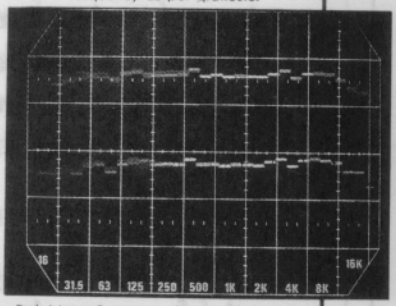
Use Reader Information Service for full details



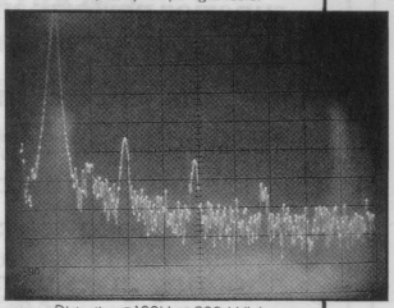
Pink Noise Frequency Response (Type I)
Log Sweep; Vertical 10dB/division
Frequency as per graticule.



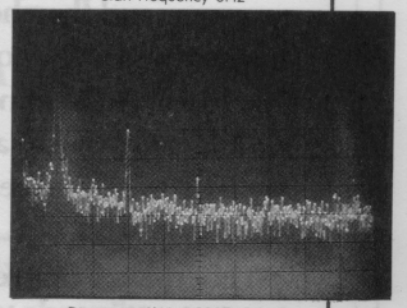
Pink Noise Frequency Response (Type II)
Log Sweep; Vertical 10dB/division
Frequency as per graticule.



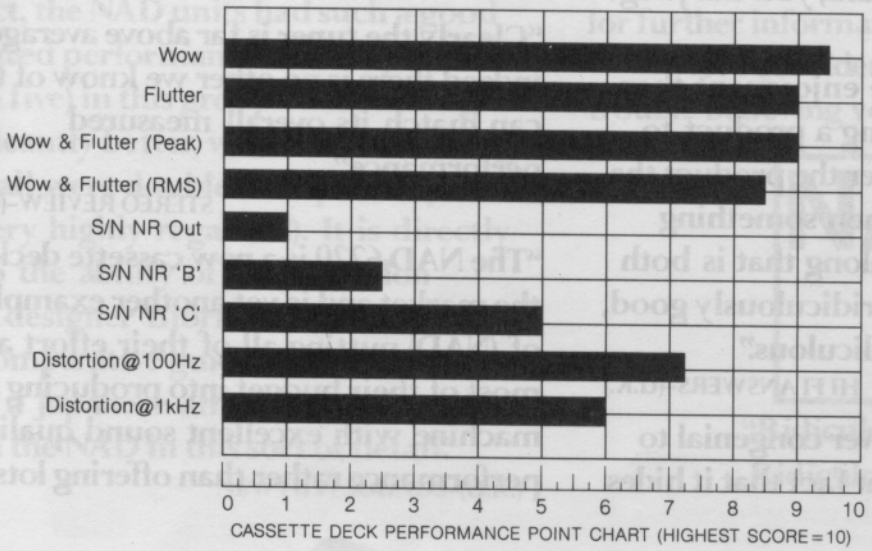
Pink Noise Frequency Response (Type IV)
Log Sweep; Vertical 10dB/division
Frequency as per graticule.



Distortion@100Hz@200nWb/m
Horizontal 100Hz/div.; Vertical 10dB div.
Start Frequency 0Hz



Distortion@1kHz@200nWb/m
Horizontal 100Hz/div.; Vertical 10dB div.
Start Frequency 0Hz



CASSETTE DECK PERFORMANCE POINT CHART (HIGHEST SCORE = 10)