

Positive Feedback

In the high fidelity first class... Pink Floyd's *Dark Side Of The Moon* quadraphonic eight-track sells for \$676

For collectors of the continuous-loop cartridge format known as the eight-track tape, it is a prize few have been able to find, let alone afford: the Quadraphonic U.K. release of Pink Floyd's *Dark Side Of The Moon* (Harvest/EMI Records Q8 SHVL 804).

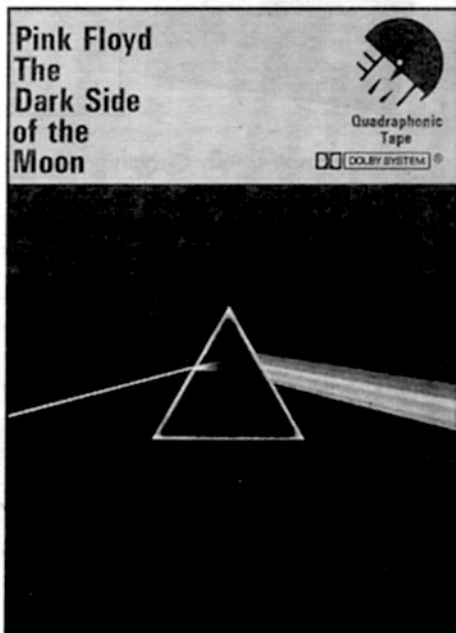
"The U.K. *Dark Side* quad is the granddaddy of all eight-track tapes, very desirable and extremely rare," said collector Paul Evans. The Austin, Texas, enthusiast, with an estimated 3,500 eight-tracks in his collection, had been on the lookout for the recording for several years. He had previously seen three for sale on eBay but was outbid on two. He managed to secure one, "on the side," from the seller of the third, but he kept his eye open for another.

Dark Side Of The Moon (DSOTM) was always conceived as a quadraphonic release, by producer Alan Parsons. Pink Floyd played it as such at concerts; however, when the time came to release the eight-track quad format in the U.S., Capitol used a matrix source, while over in Great Britain, EMI used the actual discrete, four-channel, fully quadraphonic mix. "It is an amazing experience to hear, Evans said. "It raises the hackles on the neck."

First introduced by RCA in late 1970, "quad" eight-tracks, when played in a specially designed quadraphonic eight-track player, combined the odd tracks as audio channels for *Program 1* and the even tracks as channels for *Program 2*, providing high-definition sound. A matrix source used on the U.S. release of DSOTM combined the four channels into an encoded stereo signal, which can then be decoded back into four channels. However, once you "mix" the sounds together they can never be really separated perfectly again.

"In the U.K., EMI was in possession of the original Parsons quadraphonic master reel — fully discrete and amazing," said Jon Urban of the QuadraphonicQuad Web site and forum. "They properly used this master reel to create the U.K. EMI quadraphonic eight-track tape, thus creating the only way in the world to hear the original Alan Parsons quad mix without corruption."

"I could barely wait for *Dark Side Of The Moon* to be released," said John Ife, 57, a former U.K. resident now living in Brooklyn, N.Y. "I had been into Pink Floyd since the very early days. I saw them at college gigs, the back rooms of pubs. I had been at their show at The Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park, London, where they debuted it [DSOTM] prior to its release. They made full use of quad effects at that show."



Over the past few years Ife had been converting his quad items to DTS (Digital Theater Sound) on compact disc and was willing to part with the eight-track he had owned since the day it was released in 1973. "It's really just the music I'm into, not the physical medium, no matter how rare. I actually find the ephemeral quality of live shows in small clubs to be more rewarding than looking at a plastic icon of music."

What Ife didn't realize was what that "plastic icon of music" would be worth. So earlier this year he put the cartridge on eBay with a starting bid of only \$5. "I had a total ignorance of the difference between the U.K. and U.S. releases. I thought about just putting a 'buy it now' price of \$150," he admitted. Within minutes of the auction's start the bidding shot up to \$200.

Evans patiently waited to strike as the bidding reached more than \$500, with a day to go. This eight-track wasn't the only item he had his sights on. "I was also bidding on his [Ife's] *Atom Heart Mother* quad [also by Floyd] (Harvest/EMI Records Q8 SHVL 781), which was ending 10 minutes after the close of the *Dark Side Of The Moon* auction," he said. At the auctions' ends, he had won both, with a final bid of \$304 for *Atom Heart Mother* and \$676 for *Dark Side*.

"I would have plucked down up to \$1,100.... Well, I probably would have stopped at around \$800, for the *Dark Side Of The Moon*, Evans admitted. "I actually would have been willing to pay more [than \$304] for the *Atom Heart Mother*."

— Lisa Wheeler

Web sites of interest
www.quadraphonicquad.com
www.8trackheaven.com