

Quad sales slow

By MICHAEL QUIGLEY

Although quad sound systems have been available in Vancouver for more than two years, sales are still at a touch-and-go level. That's the word from people connected with the hi-fi phenomenon.

While consumer interest in quad is high, actual sales are low. The main reason for this disparity is because of the choice between two quad systems — CBS-Sony's SQ and Japan Victor's CD-4 — combined with the initial outlay of money for a good set-up, between \$700 and \$1000. At present, only one manufacturer — Pioneer — makes an all-inclusive amplifier-receiver which will accommodate both SQ and CD-4.

"STILL WAITING"

"People are still waiting," was the comment of one store manager, Doug Argue of Miller's. "Until the soft goods (records and tapes) companies can make up their minds, people just won't invest. Since the companies can't get together to agree on one system, the consumer ends up paying more. The war between the two systems will probably continue until some legislative body like the FCC makes one of them official."

Quad records and 8-track tapes, on the other hand, are enjoying good sales in Vancouver, despite the small amount of product available. Perhaps people are stocking up for the future, since both quad records and tapes are compatible on present-day stereo equipment. Leading quad sales is Columbia, dealing exclusively in its SQ products.

SALES PICKING UP

RCA Victor, with its discrete CD-4 albums, is a more recent entry in the Canadian quad sweepstakes. Sales are picking up "more and more" according to RCA's John Ford, though the company is handicapped by relying on hardware from other manufacturers. As well, the number of CD-4 albums released in Canada is coming

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"very sparingly," affected by the U.S. vinyl shortage, among other factors.

Other quad labels available locally include A&M, Project 3, Ovation and Vanguard. Companies not yet committed include London and Capitol-EMI, while the Canadian branch of Warner-Elektra-Atlantic claims there are more important priorities to be met first.

NO RADIO

People with quad radio receivers haven't had much opportunity to use their equipment in the Vancouver area. The airwaves will be silent until government gives one of the two systems the O.K. sign.

Rod Gunn, program director of CFMI-FM, is interested in programming quad, particularly the easily adaptable SQ albums, but has to wait for approval from the CRTC. "The whole situation is at a standstill," Gunn says. "The CRTC doesn't want radio stations to broadcast in quad until they've had a chance to study the market. At present, no radio station in Canada has government approval to broadcast in quad."

Gunn says the CRTC decision will follow a similar move by the more powerful American Federal Communications Commission, a view echoed by CHQM program director Maurice Foisy, who claims it may be another year or more before such a decision is made.