

**HATTI SMITH**

**Horses**

**Speakers Corner/Arista**

“What makes this album different from many others we have is that it was cut in London by Ray Staff in Alchemy,” said Kai Seemann, MD for Speakers Corner, the same Ray Staff, who mastered Pure Pleasure’s Jim Hall album, ‘Concierto’, reviewed this month. Speakers Corner albums are normally cut in Hanover, so moving to another cutting plant, especially an untried outfit, can be a little daunting. The process of creating an audiophile album is an art and its inherent processes give it its own personality. Moving to Alchemy, even on a temporary basis could, therefore, spark some trepidation. Fortunately, ‘Horses’ passed muster, despite

teething problems with other albums mastered at the plant.

One of the questions often asked by audiophiles is, 'does the original artist ever get involved with an audiophile reissue?' With Patti Smith, the answer is no. "If possible I try to keep artists out of it," said Seemann. "They don't care about time or money. However, it somehow works with classical artists. It did work with the guy who did the Rodrigo: Concierto de Aranjuez, originally on Philips (the jazz version of which appears on the Jim Hall album, reviewed elsewhere – wheels within wheels folks...) by Pepe Romero. He was fast and efficient." Seemann believes that classical artists trust their engineers more than pop artists because classical artists want a natural sound. Pop artists prefer to tweak the final sound a lot more. He says that classical artists are also used to working as part of a team (i.e.: with a conductor, orchestra, etc) – all of which are hired on tight schedules, along with the expensive room and so on. Smith's album was a lot more freeform than that, however. In fact, freeform poetry dominated this album which merged with a punk ethic that soaked the music. It's intense, it snarls at you and, most importantly, it's original. The punk movement tended to embrace the female artist more than most, a facet of punk that has never been properly examined - if you ever wondered where Alanis Morissette to PJ Harvey came from, then listen to this masterpiece.