



Welcome to the Pasadena senior citizens' "Love-In."

GEORGE WRIGHT BIG AT THE "CROWN"

Pasadena, June 6 . . .



SHORTLY after "wowing them" in Portland, George Wright returned to the 3-11 Crown Wurlitzer for his second concert at the first-run house. As always before a "GW" concert there was a holiday spirit abroad as those who had left their three bucks at the box office scrambled for the good seats down front (the proscenium chamber installation favors the first 20 rows).

George started nearly on time as a burst of applause marked his appearance at the stationary console for a big band *Married I Can Always Get*, played in curtain-raiser style, after which he welcomed the audience with the "senior citizens' love-in" bit.

His first tune was a farrago based on *After You've Gone*. It was heard first as a sentimental ballad then as a samba a la Wanderly, with more than just hints of *The Man I Love* and *Tico Tico*.

Low-keyed shading marked a Crawfordian *Moonlight on the River* during which pastel coloring dominated the registration for the slow and moody ballad.

It was back to up-tempo for *Satin Doll* with pedal cymbal accompaniment and occasional piano plinks, then to slow waltz tempo for an even more graceful *Doll*.

Before *Strangers in the Night* George

said that his neighbors always know when he's been working in organ chambers because he comes home looking as though he's been exploring a sewer, as one of them put it.

Far from being "sewer" music, *Strangers* received some tango treatment. Then it was time for a *Thoroughly Modern Millie* medley which included a slew of old favorites given the special Wright treatment which makes them a joy to the ear. Outstanding was *Baby Face* with its calliope and croaking Kinura effects.

Tiny Bubbles fizzed through a Chryso-

glott intro. *Espana Cani* was most dramatic in its very Spanish rhythms while *Waltz Bluetie* was a string trio playing among potted palms on the balcony of a long gone hotel.

Perhaps the sweetest tune heard during the evening was *If He Walked into My Life* which was first afforded a Trumpet/Vox lead then a Tibia lead with Tuba counter melody for a soaring reading of a show tune on the way up.

After *Spring is Here* George apologized for his next choice, which he feels he has played too much. He was wrong. The reaction which greeted the announcement of *Jealousie* indicated that there were many among the "senior citizens" who consider that tune, as played on an early recording, as one of his greatest performances. He played it very much as it sounds on the record to the delight of his audience. Then it was intermission time and such words as "fantastic" and "fabulous" were bandied about liberally, especially by the ladies in the lobby. We resisted the tinted-ice drinks sold in the lobby this time.

A jazzy *Varsity Drag* called those intermissioners taking a last drag on smokes back to their seats. Then George started the post-intermission session with a mean and lowdown *Hard-Hearted Hannah*. The *Oklahoma* medley included a

clip-clop *Surrey* and a wispy *Out of my Dreams*.

After a super-subtle *You Go to My Head*, George said that he'd received some comment about his playing of his *Ecumenical Rag* at a previous concert and now it was time for the "other side" to be heard in "this song about the church," which, of course, was *Winchester Cathedral*. It doesn't seem that the old edifice will ever be the same after the musical "grafitti" hung on it by George Wright. The Tambourine accompaniment was in the best "put a nickel on the drum" tradition but those riffs on the chimes were too much! Then came the big untrem'd "catherdral organ" sound for a moment only to be shattered when it broke into a jazzy final chorus. George's wit is well expressed musically.

In reply to a request for "something filthy" George offered his routine wherein a *Ten Cents a Dance* hall girlie metamorphoses into a glamorous "bump and grind" stripper in nothing flat. It was downright grimy!

Next, George became serious for a tribute to gentle, talented Billy Strayhorn, long time Duke Ellington orchestrator-composer, who died recently. For his tribute, George selected two of Strayhorn's tunes, the jumping *Take the A Train*, and *Lush Life*, which, until George transformed it into a thing of beauty for pipes, we had known only as a vocal selection (remember the great Nat Cole recording?). Before it was heard, *Lush Life* as an organ solo just didn't seem feasible, but the magic lavished on it by George Wright made it the most memorable tune of the concert to this reviewer, one we hope he'll record soon.

After an upbeat *The Sweetest Sounds*, George thanked all the people who had helped him put the concert over, especially those who had worked so long and hard on the organ—John Curry former LA chapter chairman, Les Pepiot and wife Olive, and perhaps most of all, Peter Crotty, a young man who seems rarely to leave organ chambers.

The closer was *When Day is Done*, not in the Crawford style but "pure George." Yes, George played an encore in response to the waves of applause which rippled through the Crown as he took his bows, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World*, a fast waltz. Then it was all over—except for the tingling sensation one gets from a fully satisfying evening of music played on one's favorite instrument. The crowds spilling forth from the Crown reflected this feeling and there was no doubt that Mr. Wright had more than lived up to expectations. Some people stopped to ask manager Dunnigan the date of the next "love-in" by George Wright. "It'll be very soon," he replied.

—Stu Green, Hollywood