



**MAGIC MOMENT** — George Blackmore rides the huge console skyward on a shaft of light which penetrates the rich sound of pipes expertly played, and pictured below, A **BREEZY MC** — The Blackmore charm established an immediate rapport with the audience, although his very proper British accent sometimes got lost in a PA system more used to 'American'.



**Bottom: FROM THE BALCONY** — View show George Blackmore and a portion of the good-size crowd which showed up on Sunday morning to hear him. His performance rated a rare standing ovation.



*He came to California armed only with a magnificent ability to capture magic from pipes, but in no time he had added a willing crowd of Angelinos to his realm . . .*

## BRITISHER RECAPTURES A PORTION OF "THE COLONIES"

by Elmer Fubb

Los Angeles,  
May 28 . . .

**G**EORGE BLACKMORE, whose recent *Marble Arch* recording proved a pleasant and rewarding experience, stopped off in Los Angeles on his trip home to England to play a concert for L. A. Chapter ATOE members and their guests this morning, and fulfilled much more than the promise indicated by his recording. George had just come from Australia where he had dedicated the Theatre Organ Society of Australia's transplanted 3-15 Wurlitzer in the Dendy theatre. He explained that he rarely ventured far from Britain and that the theatre organ was the cause of this particular trip around the globe.

After riding the white console up the shaft of white light beamed from the booth, George greeted his better than 500 listeners and thanked them for coming to hear him. His first announced selection was *Espana Cani* which he gave full gypsy treatment. After that he praised the instrument, saying that it was the orchestral type which he preferred. The sound he got from the 4-29 Kimball (37 including the unused 8 rank Echo) was very similar to that of the large Christie he recorded in London Marble Arch cinema before it was steelballed. His next selection was a von Suppe-style overture whose title escaped us. It was typical of the loud-soft, fast-slow characteristics of the concert overture and the soft passages brought out some rarely-heard solo voices (the Kimball Clarinet is excellent).

George's friendly personality won over his listeners quickly. He next took on selections from Tchaikowsky's *Swan Lake Ballet* with the line, "I play orchestral material as well as I do the 'rub-bish'."

Perhaps on the latter category, *Moonlight Becomes You* was played exactly as heard on the recording, with passages on Glockenspiel representing the starry

*(Continued Next Page)*

BY THE time of Rudolph Valentino's death in August, 1926, there were over fourteen thousand five hundred motion picture theatres in the United States. Of these, some one thousand were in Illinois, almost two hundred in Chicago alone. William Emmett Dever, Mayor of Chicago, upped that figure one by opening the "Spanish shrine of silent art," the Patio Theatre, on January 29, 1927. Chicago in that January bought bread at seven cents a loaf, the auto show featured the Marmion and Kissel, and Ronald Colman and "2500 others" were starred in Paramount's *Beau Geste* at the Auditorium Theatre, strange fare for the most acoustically perfect theatre in the world.

Searchlights scanned the sky at the corner of Austin and Irving Park as the Patio Symphony played for its first audience. The first nighters saw the ceiling "stars" twinkling and the "clouds" floating by in the fifteen-hundred and seventy seat atmospheric house even though the night outside was a wintry one with snow in the air. George and John Mitchell, who had started with a nickelodeon in 1914, breathed a sigh of relief as their Patio was launched and the program got underway. Only six weeks later, but twelve hundred miles and five thousand seats apart, another former nickelodeon owner would breath a similar sigh of relief as another theatre, the New York

Roxy, was launched. It is ironic that the Portage Park neighborhood of Chicago still has its Patio Theatre and its Mitchell brothers while New York is without "Roxy" and his Roxy? Perhaps the reason was that the Patio was a neighborhood house, part of the backbone of the film industry then and today. The Roxy's fate was sealed by its six thousand seats. The Patio plays on, drawing the children and grandchildren of the neighborhood people that made up the audience the first night the golden-voiced Barton pipe organ sang out.

It is uncommon to find a neighborhood house with an organ as large as the one installed in the Patio. Dan Barton was obviously a good salesman, for here in a neighborhood house with limited stage facilities is an incredibly large instrument of three manuals and seventeen ranks. And whoever rode the all-gold console up on its four-post lift had an incredibly fine seventeen ranks with which to work.

In 1932, true to the fate bestowed upon him, the \$150 a week organist was let go. No one remembers who he was just as no one remembered the \$25,000 pipe organ he left behind.

No one that is until William Rieger, a man from the neighborhood, talked to the Mitchell brothers. So it came to pass in March, 1966, that this neighborhood movie house was to have its un-neigh-

borhood-like organ restored by a neighborhood patron.

Rieger was helped in his task by a fellow electrical engineer, Robert Mueller, who has a more neighborhood-sized style D Wurlitzer in his basement from the Bryn Mawr Theatre. Amid the expected dirty, dead rats, popcorn, and candy, the pair also found something which they thought to be unusual, a pork



Marquee of Patio Theatre on Irving Park Road tells a recurring story: 'S. R. O.' Hal Pearl's first show at the Patio Barton was also a sell-out.

chop bone in the console. But no matter how they tried, they couldn't get it to replace the Cymbal or two missing pipes from the Clarinet rank. Many Saturday and Sunday mornings were devoted to resoldering relays and junction boards. The glockenspiel, orchestra bells, and toy counter needed to be releathered.

(Continued Next Page)

## George Blackmore, con't.

"sparklets." The *Mancini Medley* started with a hand organ intro to *Charade*, developed into a solid boogie-woogie for *Baby Elephant Walk*, and closed with *Moon River* which sported a Tuba lead for the first chorus.

The South American group included *Brazil* (with tambourine accents and out of the ordinary harmony), and the first non-Ethel *Tico Tico* heard in these parts for many a moon.

Next, George assumed the plight of a one-tune artist who must play for dancing all evening yet providing variety. The tune he selected was *I Could Have Danced All Night* which he played as a Polka, (strongly similar to the *Petite Waltz*) a thumping Strauss waltz with *Blue Danube* frippery, a brassy, exotic Tango, a very-Ethel Samba, a cornball 1920s "jazzeroo" with a *Modern Millie* ending, a heavy-footed military march with bells, drums and cymbals and, for the finale, a high-kicking Can Can. The first installment closed with another tune from his Concert Record platter, the *Carousel Waltz*, heard exactly as on the record. How did he do it? By "cheating"; George is one of those musicians who can read music and isn't ashamed of it. Throughout the morning he played his

concert selection "by the book" but, except for special arrangements, he used sheet music mainly as a guide on which to base his performances of pop tunes.

After a brief intermission, the sound of a lively *South Rampart Street Parade* brought George Blackmore back to the limelight. The toe-tapping *Dixieland* rhythms found listeners rushing back to seats so as not to miss a single note played by this remarkable organists.

The second half was even more studded with variety than the first half. There was a big, majestic *Exodus*, a dithyrambic *Sabre Dance*, a *Cavalleria Rusticana*—*Intermezzo* rife with grandeur and a reading of *In a Clock Store* best described as timely—and cute. After all the alarm clocks had sounded off, the hour struck by grandfather's clock and all the merchandise wound up, George offered a British tune dating from World War I—*Keep the Home Fires Burning*, including the verse of this rarely-heard selection.

It was back to pops for what George called an "off the cuff" arrangement of *Somewhere My Love* which included lots of heel-and-toe pedalling. We noted that the Blackmore playing shoes were well-rounded at the heels, denoting a great deal of "heel-and-toeing."

*The More I See You* brought in a some-

what petulant exchange between the Kimball's right-chamber Kinura and the left-chamber Trumpet, while a set of Castenets added some extra Spanish to the well-known *Flea*, a tune which had George pacing the pedals.

The Blackmore touch made *Winchester Cathedral* almost for real; he didn't boot it around but he did manage to generate a high-pitched cipher. The squealer was hunted down and silenced by Bob Alder's able cipher hunters while George told a story.

Next came a delightful march-improvisation on *Waltzing Matilda* and then a "Roaring '20s" medley which included such memory joggers as *Bye Bye Blackbird*, *Don't Bring Lulu*, *Doin' the Raccoon* and even *Hello Dolly*. This peppy closing set sparked one of the few standing ovations we've witnessed at a Wiltern concert.

Later, Mr. Blackmore showed up in the lobby to autograph copies of the *Marble Arch* record which the Organ of the Month Club had on sale. He chatted with his legion of admirers and seemed to be having a great time. So were the concert goers. George Blackmore had proved to be someone very special, and his early return would be eagerly anticipated.