

Don Baker Draws 2,000 to Cincinnati Albee

The Ohio Valley Chapter, ATOE, once again took over the RKO Albee Theatre on Sunday evening, October 8, in order to stage another theatre organ-silent film event in Cincinnati, Ohio. This was the third presentation of this kind offered to organ buffs and silent film fans, as well as the general public. The star of the evening was well-known theatre organist Don Baker, whose ability at the console needs no embellishment.

Chapter Chairman Ed Wuest started the ball rolling for this event back in June, and much planning, promotion and preparation by the various hard-working committees brought about a grand success. ATOE and the Ohio Valley Chapter in particular, are indebted once again to the Taft Broadcasting Company, operators of Radio Station WKRC, for their sincere interest and firm support of our organ shows at the RKO Albee. Tape spot announcements of the upcoming program were made by chapter member John J. Strader. These were broadcast day and night by the station for weeks prior to the performance. Our "White Knight" is WKRC's own Bob Jones, popular star of an afternoon program called "Kaleidoscope," heard daily from 2 to 6 p.m. Not only did Bob play Don Baker recordings, promote our undertaking at the Albee and explain ATOE to his listeners, he was also kind enough to appear on stage and act as M.C. for the show. Needless to say, our audience was made up of not only theatre organ and silent film buffs, but many Bob Jones fans as well. For those who might not have been able to attend the show for one reason or another, Bob gave a verbal report on his program the following day. Indeed, the Ohio Valley Chapter is both indebted and grateful to WKRC and Bob Jones.

Our chapter is also grateful for the warm support received from Mr. Henry S. Humphreys, music critic for the Cincinnati *Enquirer*, Mrs. Eleanor Bell of the *Post Times-Star*, and Mr. Don Dunkel of WLW-TV's news department. Another solid supporter of theatre organ in our local business community is Mr. Chuck Davis, owner of Huber Photo Supplies. Chuck furnished and installed two 16-mm. arc projectors in the Albee's booth to enable us to show our silent films, as well as a slide projector for the song slides. The enthusiasm for our "cause" does appear to be catching and it is a wonderful thing to observe.

A Conn De Luxe theatre organ was used for this presentation and was fur-

nished by member Jack Schooley, owner of Schooley Piano and Organ Co., in cooperation with the Conn Corporation of Elkhart, Ind. Factory engineer Bob Backus arrived at the Albee at 7 a.m. on Friday morning to start the elaborate task of installing the instrument and speaker cabinets required to fill this 3,000-seat house. The console was situated in the center of the orchestra lift,



with cabinets behind the screen and in the box seats. Highlight of the installation were the Conn electronic pipes, mounted in the boxes on each side of the house and illuminated by soft gold spots. Our hats are off to Bob Backus and Jack Schooley for an excellent job, well done.

Despite stiff competition from other local entertainment being offered, plus a rain and wind storm of considerable

proportion, 2,000 people turned out to see and hear Don Baker. The massive Albee lobby began filling as early as 6:30 p.m., and the crowd was entertained by the Banjo Brothers with Brass (two banjos and a tuba) from their position on the balcony overlooking the lobby area. The familiar strains of the '20's and '30's wafted out onto the street and into the auditorium without much need for modern amplification.

Genial Albee manager Joe Alexander and his able assistant, Lou Ruth, were kept busy answering questions and giving directions. Mr. Alexander has reigned as "king" of the Albee palace since 1937 and can recall appearances on his stage by such greats as Burns & Allen, Eddy Cantor and a host of stars of that era. The Albee's 3/18 Mighty Wurlitzer is another topic that is guaranteed to bring a gleam to his eye.

At 8 p.m., John Strader welcomed the audience to the Albee on behalf of the Ohio Valley Chapter, then introduced Chairman Ed Wuest, who announced the change in films. WKRC's Bob Jones took over at this point and introduced Don Baker. Don and Conn ascended on the orchestra elevator in a golden spotlighted blaze of glory, playing his first selection for the evening, "Rise 'n Shine." Don played 22 selections prior to the sing-along, and a delighted audience was quite obvious by the fact that you could have heard a pin drop.

Following a ten-minute intermission, "Don't Park Here" and "Soldier Man" were shown and Don's accompaniment technique was excellent; both films were crowd-pleasers. Don received a solid ovation from the entire house and ended the evening with three encores. Thus ended another night of old-fashioned theatre organ entertainment at the RKO Albee Theatre.

