

**NUGGETS
from the
GOLDEN
DAYS**



Nuggets prospected by Lloyd E. Klos

Ever wonder what the effect Vitaphone had on theatre organists in the late twenties and early thirties? The nuggets we found concerning that innovation will prove interesting. References were American Organist (AO), Diapason (D), Jacobs (J) and Motion Picture Herald (MPH) magazines.

Mar. 1928 (J) Advertisement: Organist wishes position in motion picture theatre. Three years' experience as pianist in theatre. Cue anything pictured. As side lines, would direct choir and teach piano. Best of references. SIGURD RISLOV, Sherman, South Dakota.

Apr. 1928 (J) A Movietone and Vitaphone have been installed in the Embassy Theatre in San Francisco. With the latter now going strong in the small towns, it is causing an acute situation for musicians, mainly organists. It has caused the organists to be dispensed with at the Blue Mouse theatres in Seattle, Tacoma and Portland. A second installation is to be made shortly in Seattle at the Egyptian. What effect the installation will have on the organists of this suburban house cannot definitely be stated, although it is rumored that only the Vita acts and Movietone news are to be used.

Apr. 1928 (AO) At the Rialto Theatre in Omaha, the Vitaphone has temporarily at least, dispensed with the orchestra and organist GEORGE A. JOHNSON. Is this a case of "handwriting on the wall"?

Mar. 1929 (AO) Numerous Los Angeles theatre organists now manipulate the "Fader", controlling the tone of Vitaphone etc. as installed in many local houses. A good man is hard to find.

June 1929 (AO) Present days are more or less dark for organists and musicians connected with the picture world, owing to uncertainty in regard to sound films. A local organ company claims contracts for theatre instruments. Studios for motion picture production are supposed to be installing organs. However, it is difficult to pressure prospective students to enter the profession of theatre organist.

June 1929 (AO) The monumental Austin organ in the Eastman Theatre in Rochester, N. Y. has been silenced by the use of talking pictures.

June 1929 (AO) J. VAN CLEFT COOPER, Broadway theatre organist, has retired on a "real salary" and can't believe it when he doesn't have to work nights and Sundays. He left the business when sound came in and now creates crossword puzzles at the rate of two a day for an 1100-newspaper syndicate.

July 1929 (AO) ROBERT J. BERENTSEN, organist of the Eastman Theatre in Rochester, has resigned to go into the investment business. The idling of the organ and lessening demand for theatre organists in the Eastman School are responsible for his action.

Jan. 1930 (D) Some Cleveland organs are still in use; a few all the time, others on certain evenings. EMIL KOEPDEL plays a solo at each performance. He also interpolates interludes throughout the show.

Jan. 1930 (D) Shifting opportunities in his profession have caused WILLIAM BROWN, organist of the Temple Theatre and formerly of Keith's Palace in Cleveland, to return east after ten years there.

Mar. 1930 (D) A day of retribution seems to be dawning for those theatre organists whose jobs have vanished. Several have become theatre managers. The organist will now "have his innings" while the arrogant manager who once lorded over the man at the console and watched his downfall, is reduced to begging for bread. EDWARD C. MAY of Rochester, N. Y. and GEORGE GOLDKETTE of Niles Center, Ill., are two organists who have been named house managers.

May 1930 (D) The Los Angeles Society of Theatre Organists is proposing an "organ week" and is enlisting the aid of theatre managers, radio stations, organ manufacturers and organists. Membership in the

organization totals 52.

Mar. 14, 1931 (MPH) Many changes in the personnel of organists in San Francisco and vicinity have been made of late, making an almost complete new lineup. Organs are in use in almost all the largest downtown houses, even those also making use of orchestras, and it is anticipated that the organ will soon be restored to use in many neighborhood houses. Organists who pass muster nowadays are those who can present programs of the better class of music on the same high plane as orchestras and who can offer this as solos, as well as in playing with the orchestra. Among the organists playing in San Francisco are the following: CHARLES WILSON, RICHARD AURANDT AND LARRY SUTTON at the Fox; EDDIE SELLEN, Paramount; LOUIS FLINT, Warfield; ED MOORE, California; MEL HERTZ, El Capitan; BUSS MC CLELLAND, RKO Orpheum; A. G. FALK AND MELVILLE JOHNSON, relief organists at Fox houses in greater San Francisco. Across the bay in Oakland, BARON HARTSOUGH is at the Fox T & D; BILLY KNOX, Fox; DOROTHY JOHNSON AND AMY FREDERICK at the Grand-Lake.

GOLD DUST: There was still a healthy number of organists playing in spite of the ominous shadow of Vitaphone back in the late twenties and early thirties as this list will prove: 3/28 ARNOLD LOVERING AND DAVID BALL at Pantages 3-manual Robert Morton in Tacoma; BILLIE BILGER, Seattle's Blue Mouse; SIDNEY KELLAND, Capitol's Wurlitzer in Vancouver, B. C.; ENID ROTH, Loew's Cameo Wurlitzer, New York . . . 6/28 KENNETH CUTLER, Publix Riviera in Waterloo, Iowa; ANNA KARISH, Royal in LeMars, Ia.; TED COONS, Roxy in Gary, Ind. . . . 3/31 TED MEYN, Loew's Jersey, Jersey City, N. J.: EGON DOUGHERTY, Loew's Astoria-Triboro, New York; RALPH TUCHBAND, New York's Paradise; J. WESLEY LORD, Omaha's Paramount; MR. MARLIN, Brooklyn's Metropolitan; KEN WRIGHT, Orpheum in Green Bay, Wis.; JESSE CRAWFORD, N. Y. Paramount; ARLO HULTS, RKO 86th & 58th Street theatres, N. Y.

That should do it until next time. So long, sourdoughs!

Jason and The Old Prospector