

# WELCOME TO THE HOOSIER

by Bart Morton

Photos Courtesy *Whiting Times-Graphic*

Dick's technique is precision, but his playing could not be considered mechanical; he projects so much of his own feeling into it.

The program was well-planned and included something for everyone, old favorites such as "Back Home in Indiana," "April Showers," "Back in Your Own Back Yard," and Dick's special arrangement of "Nola."

Something for the teens was next as Dick rocked into "Hey Jude" and "In The Mood." Next, a salute to the armed forces with a group of military marches closing with a walloping "Stars and Stripes Forever."

More favorites accented the second half. Among them were "Gentle on My Mind," "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" and a case of the blues with "St. Louis Blues," with accents on the colored lighting. Some special requests included "In a Persian Market," "Song of India," "Summer Samba" and the "Bossanova."

The frosting on the musical cake was a group of favorites and novelty numbers: "Begin the Beguine," "Doll Dance," "Jamaican Rhumba," "Tijuana Taxi" and "Canadian Sunset." The last number gave the lighting equipment an opportunity to do a slow fade to a blue evening hue.

The program closed with "The Impossible Dream" which may be an apt description of the Hoosier theatre project. This selection began with a soft combination of organ stops and subdued stage lighting. Both increased together to a great crescendo of sound and light which brought the program to a breath-taking finish. In all, he played 38 selections.

Even after two hours of almost continuous music, the audience was still intact, which speaks well for Dick Smith. When he finished there was applause. His listeners wanted more.

For a spectacular encore, Dick played "Sabre Dance."

## THE ORGAN

The instrument is only a small fraction of the ultimate installation. Eleven ranks now play from a 3-manual console. The pipework will shortly be an Echo Division added to the original Uptown Wurlitzer. The 11-ranker consists of a Style D Wurlitzer from the Crown Theatre on Chicago's northside plus some additions from other Wurlitzer organs. It will be used as an interim organ until completion of the installation of the big organ on the theatre's large, deep stage.

### Echo Organ Stop Analysis

Concert Flute  
Tibia Clausa I  
Tibia Clausa II  
Violin  
Open Diapason  
Style D Trumpet  
Clarinet  
Vox Humana  
Post Horn  
Kinura  
Saxophone

The installation work is being completed by Bob Montgomery and Bea Lankow, aided by friends and theatre employees; among these is the Hoosier's Chief of Service, Joseph Estep and TOB's own former sea-going correspondent, Jon C. Habermaas, who is currently stationed at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center.

There was a new sound in the Chicago area on March 26. Making this sound was the dynamic young organist, Dick Smith. The place: The Hoosier Auditorium in Whiting, Indiana.

The program featured the Hoosier's recently installed 3-11 Wurlitzer pipe organ. This is the vanguard of the former Chicago's Uptown theatre 4-28 Wurlitzer which is currently being installed in the auditorium by one of the theatre's owners, manager Robert F. Montgomery. The 3-manual console plays the 11-rank echo division installed across the back of the auditorium balcony in the former mezzanine section.

The program, appropriately entitled "Welcome to the Hoosier," opened with a rousing rendition of "This Could Be the Start of Something Big," followed by MC Paul Lewis's introduction of the organist. Next was the "Lord's Prayer."

As Dick played "Ramona," "Blue Tango" and "Somewhere My Love," the Hoosier demonstrated its ability as a concert setting; the stage and proscenium lighting changed constantly to reflect the mood of the music, transforming the theatre into one gigantic color organ.

The beat picked up for the next portion of the program for a couple of old favorite "rags": "Tiger" and "12th Street."



DICK SMITH plays the temporary 3-manual console. Billed by the theatre as "the most accomplished and versatile organist of our time", the youthful organist easily holds the interest of his listeners.



A GOOD HOUSE — A well-filled theatre, a warmly appreciative audience and the artistry of a young man with enthusiasm and musicianship, these added up to an enjoyable evening for all concerned. Note the swell shutters installed behind the three center balcony arches. They mark the location of the 11 ranks currently speaking.

## THE THEATRE

Located in Whiting, Indiana just a few miles south of Chicago, it is easily accessible from the Chicago area. The house closed several years ago when a fire destroyed the Cinemascope screen and some of the stage rigging.

It was destined to make way for a parking lot when the present owners purchased it for the future home of the Uptown Wurlitzer. A feverish period of remodeling ensued as the damaged stage was repaired, a new cinemascope screen installed and a complete face-lifting afforded the water-damaged foyer (caused by burst water pipes during a previous winter).

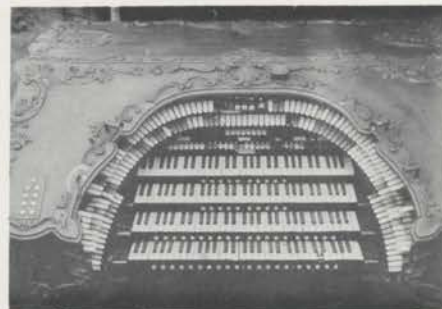
Resplendent with sparkling crystal chandeliers, a tinkling fountain and new carpeting, as well as yards and yards of Persian velour drapes rescued from

other not-so-fortunate first run Chicago houses, the new Hoosier Auditorium Theatre opened in August of 1967. The grand opening was complemented with live pipe organ music, played on the small Kimball originally installed in the theatre.

Originally seating 1000, the capacity has been reduced slightly to facilitate the installation of the Echo Organ and to extend the apron of the main stage. The theatre is currently operating as a

The author, Bart Morton, is the originator-assembler of the many-parented "BarMorKimbLitzer" installed in his home in Zion, Illinois, and is active in local organ activities.

motion picture house on weekends and features special musical programs on a monthly basis. —Bart Morton, Chicago



THE ULTIMATE — The 4-Deck console from the Chicago Uptown theatre will eventually control its original 28 ranks plus the current Echo Division. The console will be on display for the benefit of visiting ATOE Conventioneers in July.

## PIPE DREAMS

(Continued from page 18)

Wurlitzer. WENR shared its wavelength with WLS, and usually started broadcasting at 6:00 P.M., as WLS, "The Prairie Farmer Station," left the air. In time, many well-known programs were to originate from these studios.

Across the river, we find WMAQ in the Daily News Bldg. One day, two gentlemen named "Sam & Henry" approached WMAQ management and offered their talents for \$25,000 per year. Sam & Henry were well known over WGN, but left WGN for what they hoped would be a step in the right direction. They had tried to interest the Chicago Tribune in running a comic strip entitled, naturally, "Sam & Henry." They also wanted WGN to sponsor phonograph records of their various skits for public sale. Neither WGN nor the Tribune would have any part of it, and they parted company. The names "Sam & Henry" belonged to WGN and could not be used elsewhere.

The names "Amos & Andy" were born on the elevator going up to the WMAQ studios. They were not hired immediately; but, as we all know, they were eventually and "Amos & Andy" were to become household words.

A theme song was required, and many were considered. It was Joe Gallicchio who selected "The Perfect Song." His trio accompanied "Amos & Andy" from the very start. This was the order of the day until NBC purchased WMAQ and WENR. Almost at once, the theme was transferred to the organ, this being the WENR 3-13 Wurlitzer in the Civic Opera Bldg. studio. Dean Fossler was the organist from the start with "The Perfect Song" and he continued through 1942.

(Concluded in August Issue)

## LEE ERWIN CAPTIVATES ROCHESTER

by Lloyd E. Klos

One of the nicest fellows in the business, the "Moon River Man", Lee Erwin, did the honors for the Rochester Theatre Organ Society on its Wurlitzer, March 13. The former star of the Arthur Godfrey show (22 years), tooted his little Volvo to the Flower City and made a hit with two audiences. On the morning prior to his concert, he was interviewed on the Eddie Meath TV show, telling of his experiences and talking about the growing theatre organ hobby.

Lee began his concert with music he has composed for the Rudolph Valentino film, "The Eagle." Having played for the silents in their waning years, Lee then did a medley of "Sounds of the Silents" which included "Sleepy Time Gal", "When Day Is Done" and "One Alone", the latter built into an astounding climax. Terrific!

Next came Kreisler's "Caprice Viennois", a superb concert treatment, followed by the arrangement which Lee used when at WLW on the "Moon River" Show. He explained that this number was the theme, and in order to enable the DeVore Sisters trio to sing it, the key had to be dropped from B Major to F Major.

"Cabaret" and "The Apple Tree" were next, and effectively intertwined was the familiar clarinet wail of the "Rhapsody in Blue" opening. Counter melodies were used throughout the program, attesting to Lee's superb early musical education. Next, the audience was asked to imagine a simple silent movie plot, with a "Boy-Meets-Girl" theme. Using background music for the

Pickford film "My Best Girl," which he had composed, the organist played a medley of six songs. Three of these will be published.

The last time Lee Erwin had been to Rochester was in 1950, when with Abe Burrows and Janette Davis, he took part in the 25-year celebration of station WHEC. This reporter found a picture of Lee and Janette playing musical spoons, which he presented to the organist. Eddie Baker joined us backstage at intermission, and the memories of the old days were flying thick and fast between the two organists.

Second half began with three numbers from "Porgy and Bess", plus the lilting showtune, "Someone to Watch Over Me." Irving Berlin was represented by "Always" and "Remember", and then came five numbers featured by the Beatles. Lee explained that if "one strips away the guitar and drum sounds, these pieces are very fine melodies." How right he was! Especially "When I'm Sixty-Four" and "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite."

As is the custom with all artists performing here, they greet their audiences in the front lobby after the show, and it was here that Lee promised to work with this reviewer in preparation of his biography for this magazine.



—Photo by Tom Lockwood

Lee Erwin at The Auditorium Theatre Wurlitzer.