

I approach any recording session with weeks of mental planning. I like to have alternate introductions, modulations, "key relief" changes and finales in mind so that when the actual session arrives I'm able to discover which routine is best without wasting precious recording time in either studio or theatre. Rhythm is also very important; some rather drab or corny melodies can be spruced up to be at least acceptable "fillers" between better selections with an interesting rhythmic treatment. The converse is also true. While the drab tune can be made to sound better through an arrangement ("noodling" perhaps), the good tune profits from simplicity of treatment.

It is doubtful that many present-day recording artists recall the ordeal involved when the "78's" were cut on wax masters (kept cool in a refrigerator until used). In those long-gone days, if one hit a "clam" during a selection, the whole tune had to be repeated from the beginning on a second wax while the recording engineer's assistant glumly shaved the "clammed" disc smooth for subsequent use. This created fearful pressure on the artist, in contrast to today's tape technique whereby the artist can correct the bad passage after completing the "Take." Only the bars near the error must be retaped. Then the producer simply snips out the length of tape with the boo-boos and splices in the correct measures.

Even this system demands a close working relationship between artist and producer — and the latter had better have patience and a good memory. But back to the preparation.

As the hour of the taping session looms, I arrive at the location wearing the most comfortable (and least) attire

Golden Favorites

by Richard Leibert
Radio City Music Hall Organist

This is the second in our continuing BOMBARDE series which deals with the reactions of an artist when faced with an approaching recording session. The first installment dealt with Billy Nalle's contribution to the current Reader's Digest, "Golden Favorites" set. This time, it's a first person story by Dick Leibert, whose current release is also in the RD set.

possible. Soon enough the old adrenalin takes over and the cooler one dresses, the better.

"Take number one! Take number two!" and perhaps three, four, five and six. The next one may be the perfect one. So we pursue it; as long as the producer doesn't mind, neither do I. And then we tape the one we know is "it".

Actually, I feel my way through the early takes, rather like "forging" as the music industry meant when popular composers were called "tune smiths".

Progressing from one take to the next I "edit out" something and "edit in" something new. Around take 47, the job is done!

I'm kidding, of course. I never run

as high as that — but then, I don't reveal my age, either!

I have, so far, enjoyed good rapport with the recording producers and engineers. Recording engineers are very special people; they do their jobs exactly as producer and artist want them done. If the engineer is ignored, he adjusts the recording level to limits and dreams of the little chick he met while taping the local singing society in Sandusky last week. But, show some interest in him, listen to each playback and include him in all the discussions and he will become a fountainhead of cooperation and valuable suggestions. If you have his interest he can make the dynamics soar.

Conversely, a lackadaisical engineer can make you sound as dull as a butterknife. Needless to say, I do all possible to avoid the "butterknife sound".

Finally, the recording session ends and all concerned go their separate ways. Then, usually two or three months later, your record arrives. I should say "preferably two or three months later" because by that time most of the "clams" are forgotten.

So, you nearly bust a fingernail breaking the dust seal in your hurry to slap the disc on the stereo turntable. Then you settle down to listen to the music with the same objectivity you would with any other record — well, almost. And, unless the clams are so obvious as to make you wince, you may even enjoy it.

I suppose what I'm trying to say is that although my name appears in large type as the responsible artist on the record jacket, there is far more artistry than just my efforts involved in the production of a successful recording. To all who invested their skills in "Golden Favorites," my sincere thanks. □



'A SUPER CLAM'—Dick Leibert "flat-hands" a manual in relief over getting just the "take" he was aiming for. It's the RTOS 4/22 Wurlitzer Console in Rochester, N. Y. where Dick taped half of his current release for Reader's Digest magazine.

SIGN—OR ELSE! With Dick playing the "victim", his "inquisitors" gather to force him to sign—well, not quite. The "inquisitors" are members of the RCA recording staff, listening with Dick to a playback. The scene is the improvised control room at the Auditorium theatre. Dick couldn't resist writing "I confess" on the photo!

