

# BLACKOUT AT CLAPHAM JUNCTION but the Organ played on!

by Lee Haggart

*The effect of the recent electrical power shortage in Great Britain on organ enthusiasts is revealed in this communique from across the "pond."*

A new high in devotion to the art of theatre organ must have been set recently by the members of the Theatre Organ Club of England. On Sunday February 13, 1972 the concert at the Granada Theatre, Clapham Junction, London, presented three favorite theatre organists under the most difficult of conditions. The coal miners' strike and the resulting shortage of electrical power made the concert date doubtful due to the rotation shutdown of electrical power in the various sections of Metropolitan London.

A good attendance, most unexpected in view of the chance of blackout with only a five minute warning, encouraged the general secretary and the organists to put the program on as announced. After a hasty consultation with the theatre manager and his staff the program was allowed to proceed.

The theatre auditorium lights were not used. All seating of the large audience was done using two "work lights," 500 watt "clear" bulbs mounted on top of a seven foot standard.

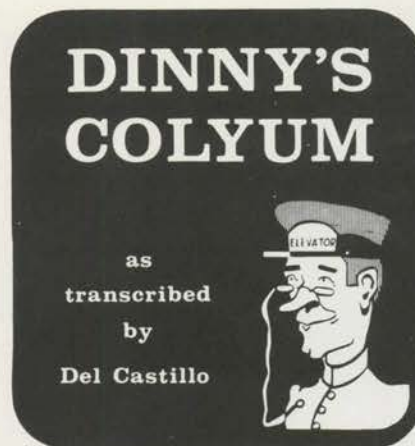
With the audience seated the work

lights were cut off and a spotlight was centered on the console position. The organ lift brought David Sheppard and the three-manual Wurlitzer up. When the lift attained solo position and stopped, the organ blower was started, not before.

Ralph Bartlett, acting master of ceremonies, using the public address system explained the house lighting arrangement in one word: "none!" The spotlight and public address were turned off and the program proceeded with nothing but the fire exit lights glowing. John Mann and Ray Bains were each introduced by momentary use of the spotlight and the P.A. Organists exchanged position with the lift in solo position. The program closed with a spotlight on the last organist as the lift went down. Then the work lights came on to allow the audience to depart. In the words of Ralph Bartlett as he made the first introduction "you came to *hear* the organ and the management is making that possible — but no lights."

Most of the audience seemed to like the opportunity of hearing the organ alone without the trimmings, giving each artist excellent support.

As we said: Surely this must be a record of some kind for devotion to the theatre organ. □



They's somethin kinda interestin goin on lately that takes me way back pratically to The Berth of a Nation. What I mean is they've started to show the old silent pictures all over again, and then they get the organ players to play the music for them just like they used to back in the twenties. I can remember back to them old silent movie theyters when all they had at first was a piano player and sometimes a drummer to put in all the sound effects. Then pretty soon they started puttin in them theayter organs which they called Unit Orkestras on acct. they had all kinds of different sounds on them which was suppose to sound like a orkestra. So then the piano players had to rassel with these organs. Sometimes they tried usin church organ players but that didnt work so good on acct. the church organ players wasnt hep to the kind of music they needed for pictures. So the piano players got in with both feet as you might say, except they just used there left feet for the pedals so they got to be called left-footed organ players.

Not havin a tin ear they say I got so I could tell whether the organ players was good at there jobs or not. A lot of them would just kinda dribble through a picture without usin any music. Some feller in the know about harmonics I guess you call them said that a organ player could play a whole adventure picture just usin what I think he called diminishin sevenths whatever they are. They had little tunes they used for different kinds of scenes. One of them was called misteriosos and it was in the miner and it went dum, dum, dum, dum, da-a-a-a, dum. Then they was another one for edgitatos and that was in miner too only it went faster like this — daddladdlum, daddladdlum. I guess they was



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