



Manufacturers, distributors or individuals sponsoring or merchandising theatre pipe organ records are encouraged to send pressings to the Record Reviewer, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. Be sure to include purchasing information, if applicable, and if possible a black and white photo which need not be returned.

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR MARY? Ed Welch playing the Lautzenheiser residence 3/11 Wurlitzer in Springfield, Va., Mark Custom Records No. MC 1802, (stereo) \$5.50 postpaid from Jean's Organ Studio, 7216 Neuman St., Springfield, Va. 22150.

This is an interesting disc from a number of viewpoints. The organist informs us it was recorded in a hurry during a single miking session as a substitute for another disc which wouldn't be released in time for the 1972 ATOS Convention. As a hurry job it has many faults but also enough flashes of good solid playing to make one wonder what Ed Welch would produce under ideal conditions.

The instrument sounds big and full for a residence installation and we assume some artificial liveness has been added during dubbing. However, according to Mr. Welch, a number of ranks were substituted just for recording, so we are not certain the resulting sound fairly represents the Lautzenheiser organ. Even so, the result is a good and satisfying sound, although a few ranks are out of tune during some numbers, apparently the result of the aforementioned hurry.

The organist is obviously an ex-

cellent copyist and while listening to the record the listener may do some double takes — "now where have I heard that device or fill before?" It's obvious that Ed has listened well to Crawford, Wright and the records of many other organists with distinctive styles. However, the borrowed devices are not overdone; they are just there to tickle or bug the seasoned listener.

"What Are You Waiting for Mary?" is an admitted recreation of the Crawford classic with good sensitivity to the maestro's phrasing, tempo and style, but with some surprising melody inaccuracies. Attractive registration is more Welch than J.C.

"It Happened in Monterey" features an engrossing celested string chorus and some well-performed "ooh-hoo's" on a fast-trem'd Tibia.

"Toot-Toot-Tootsie" is played in upbeat "vo-do-deo-doh" '20s style with lots of percussion to brighten the borrowed styling.

We've had many versions of "Battle Hymn of the Republic" since organists discovered it. The Welch version presents a number of interesting musical tricks with it but suffers from being overlong (9 min. 30 sec.). About after five minutes of stating the well-known theme the variations start and interest picks up. Your playback had better have a good bass response because its within that compass that most of Ed's embellishments lie.

The opener for side II is a brief but pleasant 3/4 time "Cruising Down the River" with strong Wright overtones. Ed Welch has an engaging ballad style and he's at his best during Romberg's "Serenade". It is played with great sensitivity, mainly on String and Tibia combinations (later on a full combination) which amplify its good phrasing.

"Carioca" is lively and rife with the organ's clackers and pitched percussors, paying due homage to the spirit of the Rogers-Astaire era.

"When I Fall in Love" is afforded tender registration for a most appealing ballad treatment.

"Begin the Beguine", a big, bold brass-flecked dance tune is done in solid theatre organ style, a satisfying closer. Sensitive ears note some out-of-tune ranks.

The recording technique is top-notch throughout, and the bass may rattle your woofers. Our review pressing was a little "off center" which may



ED WELCH

generate enough "wow" to annoy well-tuned ears. We assume it was just the one pressing (our usual luck). Be it known that a flawed pressing is returnable for a replacement. This is a "four track" stereo record, but playable also with two track equipment and monaural. There are no jacket notes about Ed Welch so we don't know much about him other than he was heard during the 1972 ATOS Convention.

In summary, its a good first try for Mr. Welch, who shows much promise, but we'd like to hear him under less pressing conditions.

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY, Tom Gnaster playing the 3/16 Wicks organ in the Wheeler studio. Custom Fidelity (stereo) No. CFS-2954. \$5.50 postpaid from Tom Gnaster, 347 West Hickory Heights, Illinois 60411.

The instrument is the famous "Oral Roberts" studio organ, built by Wicks in the late '50s under conditions of great secrecy (Wicks feared straight organ prospects might be negatively influenced by the news that they were building one of those awful unified theatrical organs again). This second release played on the instrument, now relocated in the Lockport, Illinois studio of Robert Wheeler, indicates that Wicks, after a lapse of perhaps 30 years, still has the skills to produce an attractive theatre instrument with a personality all its own. It has an especially bright high register, a mellow Tibia, a snarly Posthorn, and effective tonal percussions.

Tom Gnaster is well known in the

Chicago area where he teaches, plays in church and concertizes in theatres (e.g. the Avalon, Milwaukee and the Rivoli in Indianapolis). While the T.O. is his first choice, he was educated as a concert pianist.

The piano's loss is organom's gain; Mr. Gnaster has an intriguing way with a theatre organ, an especially clean playing technique, and natural good taste in working out his arrangements (all played here are his own).

"Carioca" is a typical console-upper, taken at a snappy clip but never hurried until the final chorus. It demonstrates the Wicks Tibia chorus effectively during a brief passage which leaves one wanting more. The xylophone and clackers get some exercise also during the swirls and flourishes of this graceful dance tune. Registration may be a bit on the too bright side for some.



TOM GNASTER

Soft Mutations, Tibia, Strings and Vox are heard during the subtle ballad handling of "In My Own Little Corner". This later picks up rhythm and fuller registration.

Big organ sound in steady rhythm first marks "On the S.S. Bernard Cohn" and later settles into a chorus of xylophone plinks sustained by a String. But its back to big sound for a bang-up closing.

Venerable "Poinciana" starts on Strings but for the refrain the registration features a full Tibia chorus briefly, then some solo reeds.

Side I closes with that ancient potboiler many of us once had for a piano lesson - "Dance Macabre". It's program music (it tells a story) which deals with the same ghostly subject matter "Night on Bald Mountain" covered

so effectively in Disney's *Fantasia*. The classical challenge brings out much of the "churchiness" inherent in the Wicks organ and the result may seem a little bombastic to some auditioners. Even so, it is first class playing throughout and we can fault only the Gnaster rendition of the stylized cock crow which heralds the dawn. Composer Saint Saens made it incisively distinct; Tom plays it pretty. Otherwise, excellent.

"A Young Man's Fancy" revives a once universally popular tune from a long ago musical of WWI vintage, a delightful melody which Tom gives the full treatment with a light touch and plenty of nostalgia for those who remember.

The sweet and soft ballad voices carry the sentimental melody of "Jean"; with an exceptionally lovely String chorus in evidence as well as those haunting Tibias.

The sweeping ballad possibilities inherent in "This Nearly Was Mine" are taken advantage of fully by Tom, who makes good use here of the expression pedals. "I Come From the Town of Mira" gets similar treatment.

The closer is "Andalucia", which is sometimes more of "The Breeze and I" genre. The bolero sequence comes off well on ranks which often sound very "straight" as perhaps they should for this selection.

The artist provides interesting but uncomplicated arrangements throughout. We'll be hearing from him again. The tune list avoids the overplayed. Recording is adequate. Some listeners may find the extra bright treble registers of the Wicks a bit too much. An adjustment in playback tone controls will help. Interesting jacket notes about artist and instrument are by organist Kay McAbee, who recorded this instrument for Concert Recording release some time ago. It's an interesting entry by a newcomer to the pipe recording field.

LEONARD MACCLAIN PLAYS BALTIMORE'S FABULOUS STANTON THEATRE ORGAN. Ralbar OLP-6302 (monaural). \$5.50 postpaid from Mobile Music Mart, Box 195, Abington, Pennsylvania, 19001.

This is not a reissue, rather it's a closeout of remaining stocks of a recording never before reviewed in these columns. With both artist and

organ now gone, this recording is the more precious.

Only the most recent T.O. addicts wouldn't know of Leonard MacClain, one of the true giants of the theatre organ. Listening to his artistry in retrospect can only inspire listeners; everything he did at the console was just so right, a complete master of his instrument.

The recording was made early in the '60s decade, just after ATOS Potomac Valley Chapter members completed the task of rousing the long-sleeping giant. The 3/31 Kimball provides a fine example of the Kimball T.O. sound - most effective in large ensemble combinations and with a pronounced emphasis on Strings. Some fine solo stops are heard, notably a sharp trumpet in the verse of "The World is Waiting for the Sunrise" and



LEONARD MACCLAIN

an untrem'd Tuba in "I Wonder Who's Kissing her Now".

The style used by Mr. MacClain here is mainly that associated with "intermission music" of the '30s and '40s, but far more subtle in its nuances than most. MacClain was a master of "suspense harmony" where he seemed to hit the wrong chord initially and then resolved to a more ear-pleasing one before the next phrase started.

Other selections are "Maryland, My Maryland"; "You're a Grand Old Flag", "Mary", "Wait 'til the Sun Shines Nellie", "Just a Little Love, a Little Kiss", "You Made me Love You", "Marcheta", "Poor Butterfly", "For Me and My Gal", "Smiles", "Your

Eyes Have Told Me So" and "All By Myself."

Although Leonard MacClain is gone, he has left a legacy of fine recorded music and a generous portion of his fine musicianship lives on in his pupils, such as Shirley Hannum and Dennis James. As ATOSers know, the organ came to an ignoble end; it was sold and broken up for parts in the mid-'60s by an "organ broker." But on this record all things are as they were during a brighter day with artist and instrument in top form. An elaborate "open up" jacket provides much information about artist and instrument. Highly recommended.

FIREWORKS, Don Thompson playing the 4/18 Wurlitzer in the Redwood City (Calif.) "Cap'n's Galley." CR-0120 (stereo). \$4.89 from Concert Recording, Box 531, Lynwood, Calif. 90262.

Reviewing this record was a most extraordinary undertaking. It is a collection of mostly well-known orchestral concert pieces, which sent us scurrying to our supply of Sir Thomas Beecham, Leonard Bernstein, Eugene Ormandy, Sir Malcom Sargent, Leopold Stokowski, Wilhelm Furtwangler and Dimitri Mitropoulis records for comparisons.

If there is one fault that persists through much of the music presented here it's excessive speed. Strauss' "Thunder and Lighting Polka" (actually a "gallop") was often used by organists playing silent newsreel horse race footage. The bangtails could never keep up with this version. The great speed precludes sufficient attention to detail, yet it comes out quite well. Wagner doesn't fare as well during Don's ambitious "Prelude to Act III to Lohengrin". The speed is there, so is a ponderous bass during the soft passages. The melody is partially obscured by the repeated triplet accompaniment during the baritone melody sequence, a registration fault.

7:03 minutes of "Orpheus in the Underworld" while Don raises his own Hades with tempos — well the familiar waltz tune comes off well, and registration is mostly good throughout.

Don delves into a Slavic mood for a wack at Monti's "Czardas", a sequence of fast passages followed by slow passages ad infinitum. The slow areas are well played except of an over-

powering pedal, but the fast parts are away and over the hill with great dispatch.

Don Thompson's programs always contain a generous portion of the unusual, in this case an ambitious undertaking, the "March" from the utopian film of the late '30s, *Things To Come*. It's a job for a full symphony orchestra but doesn't fare badly as an organ solo. Don gives it some rough treatment in spots (he emphasizes one of the inner rhythmic voices to the extent it upstages the melody) and his tempo is at odds with the London Philharmonic Orchestra's version which was conducted by the composer, Sir Arthur Bliss. For all that, it's a lot better than another rehash of "Lara's Theme."

Wagner's music is often difficult to reduce to the capabilities of two hands and two feet. Andrew Fenner managed it in a recent recording but even he didn't attempt the difficult "Ride of the Valkyries." I've heard Don play it better than he does on this record but at best one can manage only the outside voices and skip the complex weaving of inner colors inherent in the orchestration. Don's version is flashy but incomplete. And the Valkyries seem intent on driving their horses to win a heat at Hollywood Park.

His "Finlandia" is much better suited to the organ and it comes off well.

The closer is the lackluster Waltz from *Masquerade*. Even a bright talent such as Don's can't do much with its one idea. The only poor choice in an otherwise novel program.

The organ has been well recorded, and does its part effectively in several roles better suited to a straight organ. Voluminous jacket notes were most probably written by Don, who writes very well.

— THE PLUG-IN CORNER —
LARRY VANNUCCI PLAYS MUSIC FOR TEENAGERS OF ALL AGES on Bob Power's Rodgers "Style 260 Special" Angelus WR 5000 (stereo). \$5.50 postpaid from Vanclaire Records, 30 Mountain View Rd. Fairfax, Calif. 94930.

Those who may have been disappointed in the sound quality heard on a previous release of this most elaborate of all electronic theatre organs will be happy to hear an entirely different

instrument this time. Bob Power, wanting to take advantage of the wide range of tonal adjustments Rodgers built into the instrument, called in the logical doctor, Lee Haggart. Lee knows both pipe organs and electronics, having worked on one or the other for most of his life. Lee and Harvey Heck worked on the instrument for one day, voicing and detuning (yes, detuning). Next, loudspeakers were angled to better disperse the sound. Then Bob made a tape of all the C's and G's of identically labelled ranks on the Bob Carson 3/26 studio Wurlitzer. Armed with this information he adjusted each note of each electronic "rank" for quality and volume, using the recorded C's and G's for reference. The result is an entirely different sounding organ, much truer to the pipe ideal.

The record does much to under-



'The Vanooch' — (Stufoto)

score the improvement; it includes three selections recorded before the changes, so a comparison may be made.

Larry Vannucci is a pipe organist of many talents. He can play "fancy" or "earthy". Well known on the west coast through concerts, Home Organ Festival appearances and club dates, Larry played pipes in San Francisco's Wurlitzer-equipped "Lost Weekend" bar for 10 years and recorded a memorable disc on that city's Golden Gate theatre 3/12 Wurlitzer 12 years ago. Strongly inspired by Crawford and Wright, Larry sometimes uses their stylings. But he has a jazz style all his own.

The platter contains a variety of arrangements to carry its mainly 1932-1948 complement of tunes. "Want to Get a Girl" is a tribute to Crawford.

"Tangerine" and "Green Eyes" reflect their World War II vintage with 4-to-the-bar pedal, while ballad treatment of "I Can't Get Started" and "These Foolish Things" sound as though Larry is playing three-handed; a sharp reed melody accompanied by the unbroken shimmer of strings while the Harp marks the accompaniment rhythm. Actually its a very effective use of second touch; Larry's left hand holds down the string-rich chords while a little more pressure brings in the Harp beat. Note that gorgeous Lyn Larcenous modulation leading into the final chorus of "Things". There is nice ballad work during "Little Darling" and "They Didn't Believe Me." "Can Can at the Circus" is a "kitchen sink" for all the tunes Larry had left over, from Offenbach to "Billboard March."

Smooth "rolls" are heard during "It Had To Be You." Larry's "Third Man Theme" uses the "Mandolin" as a Zither. Two tunes recorded before the "metamorphosis" are "Who's Sorry Now" and "Basin Street Blues" ("Can Can" is the third). They show how the organ used to sound. Larry reserved this sound for the raunchier tunes where some raspy brass would help rather than hinder the effect he wanted.

All tunes are carefully orchestrated for the various voices of the organ, before or after. The Vannucci artistry is well showcased and the quality of sound recorded requires no apology for its being electronic. We consider it a milestone.

CHRISTMAS RECORDINGS

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JOHN STEELE - (Stufoto)

I FEEL CHRISTMAS, Helen Dell playing 12 Christmas pops and standards (on carols) on the Bob Carson 3/26 Studio Wurlitzer, \$5.50 postpaid from Malar Records, Box 3104, Glendale, Calif. 91201.

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Closing Chord

Johnny Duffy, westcoast organist with a long career in radio, TV and recording, died on August 5th, after a valiant six-month battle with cancer-generated brain tumors.



JOHNNY DUFFY - (Stufoto)

Duffy was born of Scotch-Irish parents in Motherwell, Scotland on June 26, 1927. His family emigrated to the USA when Johnny was six and settled in Pittsburgh, Pa. The youth took to music at an early age and was soon organizing local dance groups. He also discovered the electric organ and did some club work in the Pittsburgh area. Then he joined Art Kassel's orchestra on tour as pianist.

He settled in Hollywood with his family in the late '40s and joined ABC-Hollywood as radio and TV musical director for 15 years, then moved over to NBC for another 4 years. Shows he scored include *The Frank Lovejoy Show*, *Lassie*, *Michael Shayne*, *Richard Diamond* and the *Buddy Clark Show*. Later he did club work, with engagements at such posh spots as the Chicago Blackhawk and the Beverly Wilshire hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif. He also played long engagements in the San Fernando Valley (California)

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