

Let me give you a brief situation report. A number of apparently unrelated items make up the whole picture.

For example, I spotted an item in trade journal of British showbiz the other day. It said that a "giant" \$25,000 organ had been installed at the Futurist Theatre, Scarborough, specially for Sunday shows. Well, the Futurist used to have a perfectly good box of whistles which went some while back in the name of progress. This is not the only example of a wheel turning full circle. Cinemas are being twinned right left and centre, but it is not unusual to find their opening ceremonies conducted to the music of a plug-in when a real live organ has been disposed of.

On a sad note, I see that the Welwyn Garden City Theatre Organ Preservation Society have suspended operations. But I also note that a new group have started up, based on Guildford in Surrey.

Recent concerts have seen attendances as low as 30 – and also in the hundreds.

So what does it all add up to! The cynics will say SNAFU. Let's be more charitable and just pass you the message that in true British style we are muddling through still.



Not many organists have stacked up 30 years with one management. *Jan Mekkes*, who can be heard daily at the Tuschinski, Amsterdam, Holland, passed this milestone July 1, 1972.

Before graduating to the company's elegant and justly famed showplace and its fine 4/11 hybrid organ, *Jan* was at the Royale on a two-manual Standaard (the Royale was later to house an early "pijplorgel", otherwise known as Hammond).

Anyway, July 3 saw Dutch tv fans joining in the eulogies, with *Jan* playing his base organ on film and greeting old friends in the AVRO studios in Hilversum while the cameras dwelt on the scene.

A bit of good news is that a new main cable has been recently added to the Tuschinski organ and its had some



Jan Mekkes at the Tuschinski, Amsterdam. After 30 years with one firm, his own TV show.

leatherwork done so it's now in good voice for *Jan* and his co-organist *Rene de Rooy*.



Most of us bitten with the theatre organ bug count ourselves lucky if our wives are tolerant and understanding. So *Alec Leader* is more than usually blessed.

Not only is his wife *Kim* very personable, she is as big a buff as he is. Recently she penned an ode to the whole breed of organists and this bit of dogged doggerel was broadcast for



Alec Leader – all this and an attractive poetic wife, too.

the delight of pipe-lovers.

All of which does no harm whatsoever to the cause of *Alec*, who is much in demand as a recitalist on the club circuit and who has recently issued his first LP (not on pipes, alas).

He is a good example of that band of players who are too young to have made their mark in the golden age, though their roots are in that period. He started playing at the Gaumont, Wood Green (Compton 3/12), when he was 17. Then the war meant service with the RAF.

After that, there were various solo posts before the decline in organ-featured theatres meant he had to turn to electronics at a holiday camp and on a long-running tv show.

He has deserted the musical profession full-time now, but this has had the effect of giving him opportunities to play several of the fine real theatre organs we still have. Such is life.



STACCATO SNIPPETS – One of Britain's best-known preserved Comptons, the ex-Gaumont, Birmingham 10-ranker now in the Abbey Hall, Abingdon, is getting a new console. Out goes the three-decker and in comes the four-manual from the Gaumont, Camden Town . . . Summer 1972 replacement for *Dudley Savage* as the BBC's Sunday morning theatre organist – *Reginald Dixon*. Officially in retirement, *Reg.* has been keeping up a back-breaking load of concerts, broadcasts and recording sessions of late . . . Talking of the Beeb (local argot for Britain's state radio) and Black-pool organists, they have done a marvellous job in issuing an LP of Horace Finch at the Empress Ballroom. It's all taken from a couple of radio shows in 1958 and '59. Horace, of course, is also in retirement but a hand injury closed his career . . . *Lewis Gerard*, fondly remembered by patrons of Dreamland, Margate, where he opened the unique Compton/Noterman 4/19 before the war, pays the occasional visit there despite now living working in the U.S. He was slated to play the organ again publicly in September to provide plentiful nostalgia . . . □