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SIDNEY TORCH AT THE THEATRE ORGAN, a 2-record set of Columbia reissues made between 1932 and 1939, in simulated stereo. No's. DO(S) 1211 and DO(S) 1211. Available from Doric Recording, at \$9.95 postpaid, 1516 Oak Street, Suite 320, Alameda, Calif. 94501.

So much is currently in print about the organist and the circumstances pertinent to the release of these records, we'll try to avoid repetition. Despite their age, this is the first release in the USA for most, if not all, of these 24 sides. Better 40 years late than never because the Torch technique is magnificent. The quality of the dubbing is first rate and some cuts reveal a British 78 rpm recording technique that was far superior to that heard on US-made discs of the same vintage. The music is played on a variety of British theatre Wurlitzers and Christies, plus one on an 8-rank studio Compton. Other instruments range in size from 12 ranks to the now gone Christie in the Regal Marble Arch, Europe's largest theatre organ (36 ranks according to the jacket stoplist). Torch's strength is threefold; his orchestral imagination, his ability to translate his orchestral ideas to the theatre organ and his

technical ability to carry out the often complex orchestral ideas. If there is anything missing in the Torch concept it is warmth. He seems much more concerned with pyrotechnics, so the majority of the tunes in this set are ones which permit dazzling rhythmic improvisation. Even when he tackles a selection generally classed as a ballad, he is apt to change it to a quickstep loaded with jazzy riffs. An example is "When Day is Done", from which Crawford milked the last iota of sentimentality. The Torch concept is more "Nola"-like, played upbeat (except for a schmeary verse), sometimes with interesting variations in 3/4 time, then with overtones of the Paul White-man recording, but always bouncy.

If the Torch *forte* is in organ jazz, then he is both the pioneer and master of that style. Whether he is stating a theme or "taking off" on it, his bright arrangements tend to enhance even the more mundane tunes. All of the arrangements are Torch's except for the Dorsey-like treatment of "Song of India." Some may sound very dated to today's ears but they were "right on" in their times. Despite what ravages passing time may have imposed, there are no dull moments in Torch performances. Even so, Torch often restored to the "razzy-ma-tazz" approach to put some life into an otherwise dull tune, including bird-whistles, honks, slide whistles, train effects, and an occasional schmeary glissando (our apologies to Vic Hammett when we tended to blame him for the latter during his Doric recreation of the Torch style; Vic was just being accurate). One of his special skills is in his use of the Posthorn for jazz emphasis effects; in this genre he is a pioneer on recordings. He was doing it when organists elsewhere were concerned with stressing the "soulful" side of their instruments. There is little more than a hint of this style in the Torch tunes. He prefers almost brittle registration, and he doesn't seem to mind an organ which may be slightly out of tune. Another area of excellence in the Torch style is his novel use of percussions.

There are many surprises in each cut. For example, during "Butterflies in the Rain" don't be surprised if there's a sudden change to "Spring Song" with "fillers" Mendelssohn wouldn't recognize. And to make "The Merry-go-round Broke Down" more realistic he closes by turning off the



Sidney Torch — musician, arranger, artist. (Parlophone Co. Ltd.)

blower while still playing for a slow wheeze-out.

Tunes which US listeners may recall are "Jeepers Creepers," "Remember Me," "A Tisket, a Tasket," "You're a Sweetheart," "Where are You?," "Bugle Call Rag," "I Hadn't Anyone 'til You," "Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen," "Twelfth Street Rag" and "There's Something About a Soldier." The others are selections of no less merit which were intended for home consumption, among them, "The Flying Scotsman," "Dance of the Blue Marionettes" and the Torch best-seller, "Hot Dog."

The double jacket includes eight photos from the Torch collection and three pages of very pertinent notes prepared by ATOSer Judd Walton, who was deeply involved in the release of this set.

As mentioned before, the transfer from 78 rpm's (EMI's file copies) to tape to 33 1/3 rpm is very successful, with only one concession to today's stereomania; the music has been given "separation," a studio process which fakes a stereo effect. This in no way interferes with nor lessens the impact of the music, nor does it enhance it. Wisely, no phoney echo has been added.

We are much indebted to Doric's president Frank Killinger for making this labor of love a reality, for taking such pains with a release that, at best, will find a market among organ buffs. He hopes to recover his investment in it, the profit being the fun he had doing it.

As a parting shot, we can't help wondering how organ stylings in the USA would have shaped up if the Torch 78's had been available in this country to influence budding organists as the Crawford records did during the golden era. Interesting thought.

Summary: Top drawer sample of what England was enjoying from '32 to '42 in an inviting package. First rate nostalgia and an introduction to the engaging style of Sidney Torch for most of us on this side of the pond. Recommended.

FIFTY YEARS OF CHASING, Gaylord Carter playing the Bob Carson 3/26 studio Wurlitzer. Malar No. MAS 2019 (stereo). Available postpaid for \$5.50 Malar Productions, Box 3104, Glendale, Calif. 91201.

This one will be of special interest to those who have witnessed a live Carter film accompaniment performance. Five of the titles are those of silent films which Gaylord has accompanied during his frequent concert odysseys across the land. Theme tunes and incidental music with which Gaylord scores his silent film shows comprise the groupings. For the benefit of purists, Gaylord's scoring is not often in accord with what one finds on remaining cue sheets prepared for the films. Often Gaylord's choice is more effective. His selections always fit the scene and there are no dull moments on this record. In our opinion, this is Gaylord's best recording to date, and he's got some good ones to his credit. Yet on the RCA Victor release of some years ago (concert performances of movie themes) Gaylord didn't take advantage of the great tonal contrasts available on the Simonton organ. The monochrome registration was further devalued by masterers unused to handling organ music. A more recent release had Gaylord playing the San Diego Fox organ before its resources were ready to meet his considerable demands. But this disc re-unites Gaylord with his one-time *Amos & Andy* CBS Studio organ, now superbly maintained in the Carson studio in Hollywood. Again Gaylord has recorded "The Perfect Song," this time more leisurely than previous ones which tended to recreate his "all quarternote" console riser accompaniment. This rendition is less hurried though still shy of many note values, but easily his



Gaylord

best version. Another repeat is "Diane" from "Seventh Heaven," his best one yet. The remaining offerings are groupings of cue music according to Gaylord Carter. The first is a selection from his "Thief of Bagdad" score during which he replaced the now lacklustre original cues with such goodies as "Oh Moon of My Delight" for a love theme, and "Procession of the Sardar" to indicate the courtly formalities which Doug Fairbanks, Sr., reduces to a shambles in the course of the film. The *Phantom of the Opera* selection includes waltzes and "Wine or Beer?" from Faust and a couple of highly dramatic visual cues which the jacket notes identify: the crash of the huge chandelier and the horrific unmasking of the Phantom played by Lon Chaney in necrotic makeup. An eerie thriller which includes the "Dies Irae," the devil worship "black mass" theme.

"Ella Cinders" is an "all Gaylord" score which brings musical references to Ella's (Colleen Moore) adventures in Hollywood of the '20s, including a tinseltown Indian war dance and a "triumphal march" which, according to Malar's nutty jacket scribbler, "shows how virtue always reigns supreme, and how good girls always make good!" Indeed!

Almost half of side 2 is devoted to themes Gaylord has applied to Doug Fairbanks' *Mark of Zorro*, obviously one of his favorites. The music ranges from lively fiesta cues, to chase sequences, to love themes in accents Spanish; some of the most appealing

tunes on the disc. Included are Victor Herbert's "Habanero" and Vaquero's "Song," Albiniz' "Tango in D" and Byrne's "Lolita My Dove."

The Kid Brother is represented musically by "Oh Harold!", a lively pop tune of the mid-'20s which came out just in time to identify Harold Lloyd in another of his comedy hits, *The Freshman*. There's a big thud in the course of the music, and the jacket notes tell us Harold fell out of a tree.

The closer is the title selection, a wild single "take" melange of chase and near chase music, linked in mostly lickety-split tempos which pass in violent review so quickly it's difficult to identify them all. We did fairly well, catching sixteen of the nineteen musical fragments from "Poet & Peasant Overture," Gaylord's "Big Chase" (as previously recorded), "William Tell Overture" (finale), Offenbach's "Gaitie Parisienne Can Can," "Indian War Dance" from Victor Herbert's "Natoma," "Pony Boy", Fucik's "Entry of the Gladiators," Widor's "5th Symphony Toccata," Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries," "Hungarian Rhapsody No. 5," Von Suppe's "Light Cavalry Overture," "Charge!", "Stars and Stripes Forever," "I've Been Working on the Railroad" (or "Eyes of Texas," for Lone Star staters), "Swanee River" briefly counterpointed with "Dixie and a rousing "Battle Hymn of the Republic" finale. It simply leaves one gasping — and laughing at the wet noodle ending.

Dick Stoney's miking is excellent. This one is a must for silent film aficionados.

DOUBLE TOUCH VOLUME TWO, SIDE BY SIDE, Reginald Liversidge and Peter Jebson at the Manchester Gaumont 4/14 Wurlitzer. Acron label No. CF-215 (stereo), available postpaid from Mr. Cyril Castle, 61 Athlone Avenue, Astley Bridge, Bolton, Lancs. England, at \$5.00 (US) by sea mail or \$5.63 by airmail. Checks drawn on US banks are accepted and should be made out to The Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust.

This is a very late Wurlitzer, delivered in 1935 for the theatre's opening, and recorded here in its original understage chambers. This is the second volume of the "Double Touch" series through which the Trust (non-profit) organization hopes to realize funds

to finance the rescue of some of Britain's remaining theatre organs. This volume introduces two British artists until now unfamiliar to US ears, and both worthy of a hearing. Side 1 belongs to Reg Liversidge, a man born too late for the golden era but who, nevertheless, has played in English cinemas during most of his life. Opening with a few bars of his radio signature ("Desert Song"), he sails into a sometimes corny pizzicato "Darktown Strutters Ball" and continues with a lively "Kiss the Girls Goodbye" in the same vein, with plenty of Posthorn frosting. The melancholy "Anniversary Song" is played simply but effectively. Then come two "Mary's"; one, according to the voluminous jacket notes, being organist Harold Ramsay's theme (he prepared the organ spec) played partly on far-away chimes, followed by a chorus of the familiar George M. Cohan "Mary" in a popular styling.

Because all British organists must first become "straight" organists before being allowed to touch a theatre console, many feel moved to mix in their classical prowess with their the-



Liversidge and Jebson

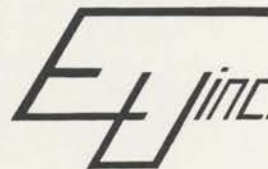
atrical programs, and this can enrich the concert. Reg's offering is operatic, the "Intermezzo" from "Cavalleria Rusticana." He plays it straight but with theatrical registration. Next a rhythmic novelty tune, "Midnight in Mayfair." The Liversidge closer is entitled "Lilac Time" but has no relationship to "Jeannine." It's varied selections from a musical show with strong Schubert overtones, possibly the operetta known as *Dreimaderhaus*

on the continent, and almost wholly unfamiliar to U.S. denizens. Well played light opera for the Romberg-Lehar-Herbert-Friml fans.

On side 2, Peter Jebson opens with a lively console riser, "Theatreland," then tackles an equally bright "Knightsbridge March" by Eric Coates and plays it in the bravura style it merits, with plenty of Posthorn in the many fanfares. "Heyken's Serenade" is one of those neutral intermezzos organists used to play when nothing was happening in a silent film, although it never happened to Peter (he wasn't born until 1950). Lots of charm but not much substance for this side of the pond. Next we go to spaghettiland for a bouncing "Funiculi-Funicula," played with humor and molto registration changes, then to an upbeat Gracie Fields medley of three tunes. "Pedro the Fisherman" apparently gets married, judging from the untrem'd nuptial march included (we regret being so ill-informed regarding English pops). The medley which follows "Pedro" includes "Side By Side," "Heart of My Heart" and "Home Town" played in good British pop style, mostly on

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large combinations (Peter has a liking for lots of high register most of the time, so the Piccolo, Fifteenth, Twelfth, and Tierce rarely go unused). The closing tunes are "Now is the Hour" and a martial "Goodbye" new to us.

The organ sounds Wurlitzer-good, and the tremis (Tibia, especially) have been set to the slower, sexier U.S. preference. Both artists offer representative examples of their musical abilities with Mr. Liversidge giving the more restrained performance to Mr. Jebson's bolder approach, adding up to a balanced program. Recording is good and the detailed jacket notes provide a visual stoplist, a history of the organ and biogs on both artists. □



Letters to the Editor concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are encouraged. Send them to the editor concerned. Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.

Address: P.O. Box 1314
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Dear Editor:

Some time ago I wrote to you regarding the feature, "Snippets from England" and the fact that Scotland was never mentioned.

I should imagine it was because Scotland had little to offer at that time and on a visit in 1966 to the "Odeon" in Glasgow, I was just in time to see the Compton Organ ready for moving to England; its pipes spread out on the stage and the console already on its way to New Castle on Tyne.

A round-up of other theatres proved to be fruitless. "Never knew we had an organ", said the young manager of one movie house. "Yes we have an organ, but it has not been played in 40 years", said another. Other picture

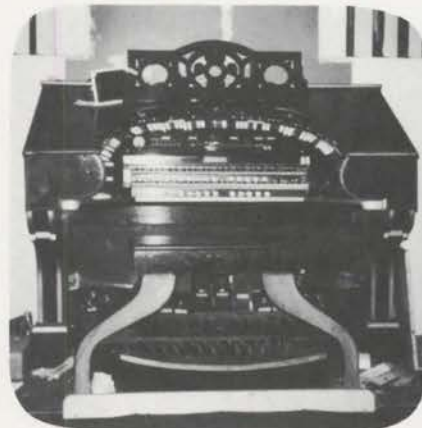
houses were locked up, out of business, or demolished.

However, this summer I found new life in the cinema organ world in Scotland. I enjoyed two wonderful



Hilsdon 3/35, Scotland.

concerts in one day, details of which are enclosed. The Playhouse organ is, of course, in its original "home" and though I am told it is a "beast" to play and sounded very much concert organ, it does have unusual tones and is used twice weekly in a theatre that seats, 3,000 which has been partly re-seated and completely redecorated — a healthy sign in the 70's.



Christie 2/10, Scotland.

The "Christie" organ installed in the auditorium of Bangour Village Hospital is a most unusual installation. This is a fair sized hall with a large stage, but the organ has been built into a recess at the opposite end of the hall. The console sits on the floor (on a small platform) under the three shutters, but the great "power of sound" comes from the fact that the organ is built beneath a domed ceiling that runs the entire length of the hall. No matter where one sits in this auditorium, the 10 ranks sound like 110.

The organ was mastered by many during the concert, but none like the guest of the evening, Hubert Selby. Hearing this artist play I could only think how worthwhile my 3,000 mile trip had been. If ever a guest organist is to be invited from Britain to play in the United States, I would say that the "organ enthusiast" will not be let down or disappointed. This gentleman and the organ are *one*.

I was welcomed to Edinburgh by two of the reconstruction crew of the Playhouse and Bangour organs, Gordon Lucas and Mike Beattie, who tell me they will be happy to show all installations in and around Edinburgh to any member of ATOS. They gave me the following list of installations available in Scotland.

Organs at Present in Playing Condition in Scotland

1. Paisley — 3/10 Hilsdon
Paisley Picture House (Bingo) used Saturdays.
2. Edinburgh — 2/4 Ingram
Astoria Cinema used during Summer.
3. Edinburgh — 3/35 Hilsdon
Playhouse Cinema used continuously.
4. Aberdeen — 3/10 Compton
Capitol Cinema used Saturdays.
5. Aberdeen — 3/10 Compton
Powis School ex Astoria Cinema used continuously.
6. Bangour near Edinburgh — 2/9 Christie.
Bangour Village Hospital ex A.B.C. Cinema Carlisle used continuously.

Note: (Sadly)

No Wurlitzers survive in Scotland in spite of a dozen or more installations.

Trusting that you will give Scotland its rightful place in publishing *some* of this information, I am

Sincerely yours,
James C. Donald, New York Chapter

□

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