

Wicked, Wicked

SILENT FILM MUSIC
IN
TALKING PICTURE

For the first time in a modern talking picture, a silent film organ score has been recorded to accompany the dramatic action. MGM's soon to be released *Wicked, Wicked* written produced and directed by Richard L. Bare with William T. Orr as executive producer, will be presented in the new process DUO-VISION and with accompanying music played on a huge Wurlitzer theatre organ. And the organist will be actually seen as well as heard. Duo-Vision, a process which allows the simultaneous projection of two images side by side, makes this all possible and while Mary Esther Denver is portrayed as the organist on camera, Ladd Thomas, head of the organ department at the University of Southern California, actually does the playing.

The 48 year old organ score from Universal's 1925 silent film *The Phantom of the Opera* starring Lon Chaney, has been used in its entirety as the musical background for the film, according to Bare. And when projected utilizing the film's four stereophonic sound tracks, the organ sounds as full and rich as if it were actually being played in the theatre.

"The music, although from a famous silent picture, does not sound corny because the melodies are fresh to the listener's ear," explains Orr. "After all they've been buried in Universal Studios' file for almost half a century." Bare tracked down the publisher, Belwin of New York, and obtained the talking picture rights to the

old silent score.

Finding a theatre pipe organ in good condition was not a simple problem says Bare. Finding one which could be played and recorded in synchronization to the film narrowed down the possibilities even more. And when it necessitated screening two films side by side with dual projectors in interlock, the problem almost was insurmountable. It wasn't until Bare met Richard Simonton, an organ and silent film buff, that things started falling into place. Mr. Simonton's residence in Toluca Lake not only had the pipe organ Bare wanted, he had two pipe organs and a 70 seat theatre

which could screen the dual reels simultaneously. After the scoring session in which Ladd Thomas played the "Phantom" score to the film, camera crews doubled back to the Simonton home and photographed Miss Denver running her fingers over the keys to a playback of the organ tapes.

Wicked, Wicked, a modern psycho-drama, was photographed on location at the eighty-five year old Coronado Hotel near San Diego, California, and stars David Bailey, Tiffany Bolling, Edd (Kookie) Byrnes, and Scott Brady. It is being released nationally by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer April 10, 1973. □

Closing Chord

EARL ABEL, a featured organist at many of the nation's largest theatres during the silent picture era passed away on February 9, 1973 in San Antonio, Texas. From 1919 until 1932 he played theatres such as the Southtown in Chicago, the Tivoli Opera House in San Francisco, and the Paramount in Los Angeles. In 1931 he was billed as "Personality Organist Earl Abel Just Raising Cain at the Organ" at the Brooklyn Paramount. His longest engagement was at the

Majestic, Aztec, and Texas Theatres in San Antonio. He was one of the first organists to introduce the community sing as a feature of his organ presentations. When sound pictures replaced many of the organists in theatres Earl retired and opened a restaurant which for many years has been the finest family restaurant in San Antonio. He leaves his wife, Lorena, two sons Earl, Jr. and Jerry of San Antonio, and a daughter, Mrs. Clyde Beatty of Beverly Hills.

Sam Dickerson

Earl Abel



It's Fun!

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