

relieved by the orchestra a half-hour or so later. I never was able to hear him develop themes for a picture because of this switching back and forth. Actually, he played about two-thirds of the film, once in the afternoon and once in the evening. What I did hear, though, were subdued melodious tunes which often were newly published material.

He didn't have much to say, although his relations with the orchestra musicians must have been congenial enough. I remember one day when Balaban and Katz stock was a matter of interest to theatre employees. I was sitting near the console. Crawford came out to play his solo and said loudly to the drum section, "Well, boys, stock is up another five points!" I heard him speak to an audience only once, though, and that was when he called for silence in the auditorium.

I cannot recall his ever playing anything demanding very rapid sustained finger work or pedal virtuosity. Whether this was a matter of choice or necessity, someone other than I will have to say; but I knew then as I know now (and as did thousands of others) that we had in him an entertainer who could be depended upon for a tuneful show full of delightful little tonal surprises. Much of his charm depended upon maximum use of the beauties of single stops or single-stroke percussions. A Chime or Bell-note in just the right place worked wonders. His pedal notes and left-hand accompaniments were usually short and often staccato, more suggestive than assertive. In fact, his habit of cutting notes short can be termed one of his major characteristics.

It was his phrasing, his flair for novel registration and ornamentation, his close harmony, and his Hawaiian roll that gave him popular distinction. What made him an organist's organist was his feeling for structure and form that turned his popular arrangements into artistically unified works. Other organists, like Albert Hay Malotte, Preston Sellers, and Arthur Gutow, displayed more consistently good musicianship, but Crawford held top theatre jobs for years, and when you do that you can get away with a little more than other people can. Anyway, his playing of popular music was excellent, and to this day no one has succeeded in doing as well with so much economy of style. □



*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.*

In the April issue we reviewed *The Golden Years of the Theatre Organ*, starring the late Leonard MacClain. We warned that supplies were limited, but between the time Dottie Whitcomb (MacClain's widow) provided the review pressings and our publication date, supplies ran out completely. The Mobile Music Mart, which had handled previous MacClain records reviewed here, was left handling several hundred dollars worth of orders and no merchandise. To make matters worse, the price we gave was incorrect — a dollar too low! Our apologies to the Mart and to those we inconvenienced. Now to the good news. "Golden Years" has been reissued on the Vantage label. Chuck Schrader of the Mart advises that the sets are available at \$11.00 postpaid. They are delivered less the jacket but with a brochure with equivalent information and a listing of additional MacClain records available. Schrader, who is Delaware Valley's Chapter Chairman, advises that all proceeds go into the chapter's 3/19 Moller (formerly in the Sedgewick Theatre, Philly) restoration fund. Send orders to The Mobile Music Mart, Box 195, Abington, Pa. 19001.

**TINY JAMES AT THE ORPHEUM,** Doric stereo No. DO 1405. Available at \$5.50 postpaid from Doric Record Sales Co., Box 605, Alamo, Calif. 94507.

Gather 'round Robert Morton enthusiasts! Here's Tiny James playing San Francisco's last remaining organ on "theatre row," the 4/22 in the Orpheum. This is Tiny's first recording since the memorable "Farewell to the Fox" series, not counting the recently reissued "Intermission Time." His big, broad style is best demonstrated in the acoustic environs of a large theatre; he was the Bay Area's most active organist in the '30s and '40s when film exhibitors used organs to fill the "popcorn breaks" between double features. There was no time for an organist to explore the subtleties of the instrument in the short performance time available. He had to make his mark quickly, before the Disney cartoon started. The arrangements presented here are all reflective of that period — the brief choruses, big organ sound — "get on and get off in a blaze of glory." Yet there is a smoothness in Tiny's style that avoids any sense of haste. The selection of tunes is naturally nostalgic, ranging from the 'teens



Tiny James at the Orpheum console.

through the '30s. "King Chanticleer" is a fast moving novelty tune often used as an "audience chaser", a fitting console riser. Perhaps the most recent selection in the list is "Lights of Roma," which features a baritone Tuba solo of great beauty. Tibia and Vox carry much of "Over and Over," a non-Strauss waltz in the grand style. There is much corned-up barnyard frolicking during "Goofus" with the "pedal Kinura" replacing the Tuba for laughs, some glock plinking which

might have been played on an open-mouthed cartoon hippo's teeth, plus a little elephantine fun down among the Morton's grunTERS. "Out of Nowhere" and "It All Depends on You" are memory-twanglers played with deep sentiment and gentle rhythm. "You" is the livelier of the two, except for a "rubato" verse. Verse? Yes, Tiny plays the seldom-heard verses to many of these tunes. His final chorus of "You" on full organ and "Paramount/Publix" ending hit full on target.

Side 2 opens with an upbeat, bouncing "Hindustan", long a James trademark, with its baritone melody and treble "noodling." Judicious use is made of the Morton's new Post Horn in the melody line ("Midnight Organ Supply" stole the original). It's back to the first quarter of the century for a broadly played "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now" (no, it's not a tribute to our new Secretary of State!), then into a well counter-melodied "Walking My Baby Back Home" with alternating LH and RH leads. "Come La Va" illustrates Tiny's way with a "Jealousie"-style tango while "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" reprises an all-time favorite of the Sing-along days, with a first chorus on a combination studded with color reeds. The closer is a brass band arrangement of the familiar "Repaz Band" as Tiny marches his brightly uniformed musicians into the sunset to the mighty boom of the Morton's bass drum. He leaves us wanting more.

On the technical side, some listeners may find the distant miking (and maximum house reverb) lacking in the "presence" which a mix of some closeup content could supply. Yet, recording engineer Frank Killinger is a thorough explorer of all possibilities, so we may assume there were reasons for the big hall sound alone.

The jacket notes provide some Tiny James biography from which newcomers to the organ hobby will learn that he's a past national ATOS president (and current director), former publishing coordinator for this magazine and the late *BOMBARDE*, and is currently the Chairman of the Annual Home Organ Festival held at Asilomar, Calif., each September. Also that he has a mean little dog named "Dover."

To the best of our knowledge this is the Orpheum Morton's recording debut. The logical pilot for the maiden voyage is the organist who has seen it through so many intermissions, overtures, spotlight solos and sing-alongs

over the years — Tiny James. He comes through with satisfying impact.

**MEMORIES OF THE FABULOUS FOX, Everett Nourse at the Mighty Wurlitzer, stereo DO 1404, available at \$5.50 postpaid from Doric Recording, Box 605, Alamo, Calif. 94507.**

Everything is as it was then — more than 10 years ago when the 4/36 Wurlitzer sounded forth in its original home, the 5000-seat, San Francisco Fox Theatre. When it became known that the house was doomed, Frank Killinger taped material for several record releases. Much of the music has been heard on the Fantasy label's "Farewell to the Fox" releases, with Tiny James playing one side of the disc and Everett Nourse the other. That was several years ago. Fans knew that Frank and more "Fox" music in the can so they kept after him to release it. This is the result; Nourse's first pipe organ "solo" disc, released on Killinger's Doric label.

In retrospect, the organ sounds even better than this reviewer remembers it. Hearing the big, beautiful Wurlitzer sound out in the acoustic condition for which it was designed — well, there's just nothing like it. Goosebumps guaranteed!

Everett Nourse was the Fox staff organist for the final 19 years of the house's existence, and he knows well the instrument's characteristics. He has a faultless talent for shading and phras-

ing. His registration brings out the most interesting sounds of the organ, but he avoids the sensational and garish. Killinger was careful to set up his microphones for both close and distant pickup. He alternates, as necessary, to get the best effect and often mixes the two. So it's sometimes like hearing the organ from balcony center (it was a steep one!) with the natural reverb of the empty house, then being transported to a spot close to the swell shutters to catch a subtle voice which might have been lost otherwise. As jacket note scribe Dewey Cagle points out, this record provides an opportunity to hear the Wurlitzer as no one in the audience ever did.

There is so much to hear on this disc. The subtle blend of Tibia and Musette (a rare voice on theatre organs), the blend of Vox Humanas, Krumet and plenty of Strings in several unified octaves, the two Brass Trumpets and Post Horn, the three Tibias (all different), the restrained use of percussions — these expertly blended voices carry such nostalgic memory-teasers as "Slow Poke," "A Little on the Lonely Side," "Stars Fell on Alabama," "Careless," "They Say It's Wonderful," "Maybe," "I Apologize," "It Must Be True," "The Things We Did Last Summer," and a generous excerpt from Luiginis' war horse, "Ballet Egyptian," the source of material for many a spotlight solo or organ overture.

Everett's style is easy going with much emphasis on expression over



Everett Nourse at the Fox 4/36 Wurlitzer.

strict rhythm. He prefers to play pretty rather than spectacularly, except during the "Ballet Egyptian," which often waxes dramatic. Dewey Cagle's concise notes deal with each selection and list registration highlights. Thus we learn that the "clop" heard near the end of the first chorus of "Tangerine" was due to the janitor dropping his broom while working in the balcony during the taping session.

This recording brings the definitive sound of the rare 4/36 Wurlitzer in its natural habitat in an aura of pleasant enchantment.

**MEMORIES OF THE ARAGON, Hal Pearl at the Mighty Wurlitzer, No. 1952, Monaural. Available at \$5.00 postpaid from Pearltone Records, 4345 North Hermitage, Chicago, Illinois 60613.**

As was the case with the previously reviewed disc, nostalgia probably played a large part in the release of this record. It was exactly 21 years ago when ATOSer Fred Kruse set up his equipment in Chicago's Aragon Ballroom and taped these tunes. The tapes were packed away until this year when ATOSer Bill Rieger, apparently hit by the nostalgia bug, convinced Hal and Fred that the tape had the makings of a record release. In the 21-year interim, the Aragon, once the Chicago home of the big bands, had gone downhill, its 3/10 Wurlitzer pilfered and mistreated. Rieger was correct; here are musical recollections of a happier era at the ballroom.

We had not heard a Pearl recording since one he cut long ago for the extinct Replica label, cuts made in about the same period as these. Therefore, fans who liked the Replica discs will approve of this one, and it's recorded better.

Words are hard to find to describe the style of Hal Pearl. Although he has been associated with roller rink playing for much of his career, there is none of the trap-happy "thrum-boom" style of, say, early Leon Berry. The characteristic which links him to what has been loosely referred to as "Chicago rink style" is his brassy pedal. Yet his approach is light and lively regardless of sometimes heavy registration. He works hard and comes up with a slew of lilting standards, usually peppered with tonal percussions (the Xylophone is his favorite) to



Hal Pearl

carry melodies and his variations on melodies. There is not a lot of registration variety here and perhaps too much swell pedal "punching." And there is a sameness in arrangements throughout. Yet it's the vigor which Hal applies to his work that carries the day. He is obviously enthusiastic and the organ sounds good.

This is not theatre organ music as generally defined. There is no "tempo rubato" or "oohooing" on the Tibia. Hal's touch is crisp and staccato and always in tempo, the kind of upbeat music one might have heard at the Aragon while Wayne King or Freddy Martin and their bands were taking a break. Or music for skating; plenty of Post Horn and Melody lines topped by Xylophone. It literally "jingles."

Selections include Foxtrot Medleys: "Just One of Those Things," "Anything Goes," "Singin' in the Rain," "Anytime," "Tea for Two" and "Easter Parade"; Strauss Waltz Medley: "Cuban Mambo"; "Maleguena"; "The Continental"; Dance Medley: "Three Little Words," "You're the Cream in my Coffee," "Zing Went the Strings of my Heart," "Chinatown," "Canadian Capers"; a Samba Medley (including "Tico-Tico") and a Memories Medley: "Small Hotel," "Tip Toe Through the Tulips," "Breezin' Along," "Blue Room," "I'll See You in My Dreams," "Beyond the Blue Horizon" and "Who".

Jacket notes provide some Aragon and Pearl history and seven photos. Recording is good and the pressing surface smooth.

**SWINGIN' PIPES, Don Simmons at the Wurlitzer Pipe Organ. Gamba No. D-103-S (stereo). Available at \$5.50 postpaid (add \$1.50 for foreign delivery). Make checks payable to Bill Peterson. Gamba Records, 4993 S.E. 30th Ave., Apt. 98, Portland, Oregon 97202.**

If there exists a "Chicago rink style," an equally intriguing one developed in the Northwest, and it's entirely different. Its chief exponents would include Bill Blunk and Don Simmons. This is Don's third record played on the Portland Oaks Rink 4/18 Wurlitzer (formerly in the local Broadway Theatre), and very likely, his best, because Don is one of those rare musicians whose playing ability seems to improve with time.

The "Northwest rink style" is far dirtier than its Chicago counterpart. There's that slow driving beat with strong blues roots, the brassy variations (the 4/18 has the snarliest Post Horn imaginable), and the Tuba counter melodies against block-chorded color reed mixes. Sometimes reminiscent of Fats Waller's Harlem, but Don Simmons is his own man.

His program is not restricted to rink music; included are ballad-with-a-beat treatments of "Over the Rainbow," "Li'l Darlin'" and "My Funny Valentine." How Don manages to put across a ballad without benefit of swell shutters is his secret, but he does just that. The pipework is mounted on a platform suspended from the ceiling in the center of the rink, with nothing enclosed. The echoing acoustics of the rink are de-emphasized by close microphone placement, so close the "chop" of the tremulants adds to the "presence."

"Northwest rink style" includes much variety in registration; although bold and brash combinations predominate there are gentler moments when the Tuba or Diapason carry the ball, and the color reeds are heard frequently in engaging combinations, even sometimes a lone Vox grousing in sultry solitude.

Selections include Jambalaya (that nasty Post Horn!), Li'l Darlin' (sweet legato flues and reedy punctuation, with Harp), My Funny Valentine (baritone Tuba lead, later in full chords), "Birth of the Blues" (about as low-down as a blues tune can get), "Just One More Chance" (ballad with a beat), "Cherokee" (with allusions to

Ketelby's "Persian Market"), "Over the Rainbow" (Tibia and Vox), "Georgia on My Mind" (filthy low-down), "Satin Doll" (color reeds, Strings), "I Aint Got Nobody" ("drag" tempo, color reeds, brassy "riffs") and "That's All" (ballad with a bounce).

The beat that marks most of the selections is catching. While this a quite different application of the theatre organ, its one which will please the ears of T.O. fans with even a rudimentary sense of rhythm.

**OPPOSITE RANKS**, Noel Briggs at the Mighty Wurlitzer of the Gaumont, Manchester and Eric Lord at the Mighty Wurlitzer of the Odeon, Manchester. Acorn CF-225 Stereo. Available at \$6.40 postpaid (airmail) from Mr. Cyril Castle, 61 Athlone Ave., Astley Bridge, Bolton, Lancs., England. Checks drawn on U.S. banks are accepted and should be made out to the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust.

The record releasing operation of the Lancastrian non-profit group of organ savers is by now familiar to readers of the column. This is Volume 4 of the "Double Touch" series. One side is devoted to the rhythmic stylings of Noel Briggs playing the Gaumont 4/20. He opens with one of famed composer Eric Coates' lesser World War II vintage efforts entitled "Dambusters". Briggs provides an interesting setting for the quaintly repetitious piece. Next it's a ricky-tick "That's a Plenty" and a style of registration continued through most cuts is initiated — a sharp reed (prob-

ably Post Horn) too often dominates the melody line when it isn't present in huge chord clusters. Just too much soloing of a rank best reserved for "riffs" in big band style arrangements, although Briggs uses it thusly in some arrangements. "Naughty Waltz" comes off well except when Briggs goes trap-happy. He is most effective on the swingband tunes. "String of Pearls" would get a nod of approval from original arranger Jerry Gray, except for the sometimes razz-ma-tazz chorus. The best tune is Charlie Barnet's "Skyliner". Briggs achieves just the right balance between the slow-moving melody and the faster brass punctuation, which would be more effective if the Post Horn were used and the sometimes corny improvisations omitted, to shorten an arrangement that exhausts the material long before the end chord. "Bedtime for Drums," despite its ominous title, is an unfamiliar but well-played instrumental and the subdued traps are incidental. "Quickstep Around 'Showboat'" is an uptempo medley of tunes from the Jerome Kern classic which benefits little from the fast-moving rum-te-tum treatment of tunes such as "Why Do I Love you?" and "Bill," music familiar as ballads. The chop-chop set includes a horrendous "calm" which the organist quickly covers. One gets the most favorable impression of Briggs' stylings by listening only to "Dambusters," "String of Pearls" and "Skyliner". This avoids the overdone Post Horn syndrome.

The flip side features Eric Lord at the 4/14 Odeon Wurlitzer. His smooth way with ballads is in 180-degree contrast to the Briggs approach. Taste-

ful registration, good phrasing and interesting intros are the marks of excellence found here, and Lord applies them with satisfying regularity to "Getting Sentimental Over You," "Sentimental Journey," "How Am I to Know?," "Love in Bloom," "Memories of You," "I'll Get By and I Left My Heart in San Francisco". Arrangements are simple and expertly performed, registration well suited to the selections, which are played in dreamy "late night" style. We examined the stoplist to see whether the 4/14 has an 8' Post Horn. It has, but one would never know it from listening to Eric Lord's music. Good show.

#### — THE PLUG-IN CORNER —

**BOB RALSTON, PLAYING THE GREAT MOVIE AND SHOW THEMES.** Ranwood stereo, No. R.8030, Album No. 7 Available at \$5.00 postpaid from Bob Ralston Records, Box 1220, Studio City, Calif. 91604. Also on 8-track cartridge at \$7.50.



Bob Ralston

This album, although released some time ago, is once more available. Being one of Bob Ralston's best sellers it was "sold out" for a time. Bob, familiar via Lawrence Welk telecasts, plays the "Electra" model Thomas for some very theatrical stylings. He uses a small rhythm section, rather than the Electra's electronic clackers, for some of the tunes. Playing is clean and orchestral in conception. Selections include "Watch What Happens," "When I Look in Your Eyes," "Sound of Music," "Impossible Dream," "Somewhere," "If Ever I Would Leave You," "A Man and a Woman" plus several more. □



OPPOSITE RANKS among Odeon pipes.