

You could call *Ronald Curtis* "the Compleat Organ Nut." He is a skilled professional builder of the beasties and he is rapidly emerging as one of Britain's top performers – particularly in the LP field.

What is more, he is making his mark on the big commercial labels. He now records for Decca, on whose Argo label he had two issues last year. His diary for spring 1973 included another release and another taping session for two more releases.

Which puts him well and truly in the big league locally. Only *Reginald Dixon* and *Joseph Seal* have been better represented in the post-war disc lists.

He was born in Liverpool, home of a vastly different kind of music to that he favours, and apprenticed to a famous firm of organ builders when he was only 14. A couple of years later, he transferred to the John Compton Organ Co. – and Comptons, of course, are the big ones in the theatre organ field here.

*Gordon Spicer* taught him to play and he got his first radio play at the age of 16. This was from the Savoy Theatre, Dublin (Compton 3/12). Since then, he has broadcast from many locations, including Hilversum, Holland, where he aired the ex-Reg. Foort, ex-BBC Moller 5/27 five times.

He set up his own organ company in 1960, when jobs in the cinemas had all but dried up. It's in Bolton, in the heart of our industrial North, and not normally a place with glamorous or romantic associations.

However, it is here that Ron has built a dream of a studio instrument. It boasts four manuals and ten ranks, with the console and relays from the Odeon, Liverpool, Compton and pipe-work from various instruments – mostly Comptons, but with a Wurlitzer tibia.

As a mater of fact, he made his recording debut with a Concert Recording issue from the Davenport Theatre, Stockport (Compton 3/6) but all his Decca issues have been on his own instrument which he uses to conjure up the sounds of yesterday with vivid effect. Among its visual delights is the

console which is beautifully painted and makes the evocatively named Paramount Organ Works justify its title, even in unlikely surroundings.

A typical Ronald Curtis LP will be an unpretentious programme of favourite numbers from the great days of Hollywood. The rhythm playing is precise and compulsively foot-tapping: the quieter numbers have just that right degree of schmaltz to curl the hair of true theatre organ buffs. But, of course, it's a fun mixture which is now attracting an even wider public.



RONALD CURTIS at his (mainly) Compton four-decker at the Paramount Organ Works, Bolton.

Towards the end of 1972, one of Britain's most intriguing transplants hit the headlines.

The Wurlitzer 3/19 of the Paramount, Newcastle, is now singing again in Diss, Norfolk – in the car showroom of a garage.

BBC radio was on hand to record the opening recitalists – *Eric Lord*, *Jimmy Swift*, *Graeme Wright* and *Geoff Stephenson* and an interview with *Dave Pawlyn*, who did the rebuild for new owners, the Kitchen brothers, was also broadcast nationally.

Apart from being a bit close to the nearby railroad, the instrument sounds

as superb as ever and looks like becoming a favourite for concerts.

It may even help to sell a few cars, too.

STACCATO SNIPPETS – Cecil Theatre, Hull, has now been quadrupled into three small cinemas and a large entertainment hall, but the unique Marshall Sykes 3/15 is reported saved... Britain's *Bobby Pagan* has featured the Wurlitzer 2/6 (ex-Svenska, Stockholm) of Karl Erik Eriksson on Swedish TV in a show hosted by *Mogens Kilde*, former organist of the Palladium, Copenhagen, Denmark... Plans are in hand for the tripling of many theatres in the Granada chain but hopes are high that the surviving organs will be retained at Harrow and Slough – and maybe elsewhere... "A London Lad" is the title of the autobiography of *Thomas Grosch*, prominent pedal pusher of the golden age – and it's all in verse, paying due tribute to "Viscountess Tibia, seductive, curvaceous"... Famous dual-console Christie 3/7 of the Odeon, Sale (formerly the Pyramid, which explains Egyptian styling of the stage keydesk) has been bought by the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust and will go into a legit theatre in the Manchester area... Now in retirement, *Jack Helyer*, long-time resident at the Odeon, Nottingham (it boasted one of the three Conacher 4/20s in these isles), celebrated his 70th birthday last Fall. Radio Nottingham, the BBC's local station, paid him tribute in a show presented by fellow performer *Roy Bingham*... In Holland, Utrecht's Rembrandt Theatre was slated for closing early 1973, but its owners have offered the Standaard 2/6 (boasting an exceptional Harp at 16', 8' and 4') to the Dutch Organ Federation. It is likely to be transplanted to the Desmet Theatre, Amsterdam – a revue house... Anyone know the true identity of *Harry Chrysler*? Vintage disc, definitely Stateside in origin, with this artist named has been unearthed by a Welsh buff who wants to know who he was. One guess is that it was *Lew White* owing to similarity of style. There's also an unnamed vocalist featured. □