

The Joys of Recording

by Ted Creech

Recording is possibly the most difficult of all music-making processes, but Lee Erwin, Dick Kline, and a crew from Angel Records can testify that it can be a joyful experience — if you get the right people together under the right circumstances.

Richard Kline gave the go-ahead to Lee Erwin and Angel Records for a series of organ recordings on his 4/28 Wurlitzer on November 30, 1973. From that date until mid-afternoon on March 14, when Lee finished the last take of a Scott Joplin tune, the Kline residence became a beehive of activity the

likes of which Richard couldn't possibly have foreseen.

Getting the organ ready for the exacting demands of recording was routine, except for several sets of pipes which made a trip to the Moller factory for a bit of voicing. But it does take a tremendous amount of time and effort to make sure that everything is in perfect working condition even for an instrument as beautifully maintained as the Kline Wurlitzer.

The fun part began a full week before the scheduled taping date when three people from Angel Records in Los Angeles arrived at the Baltimore airport: Patti Laursen, the producer; Carson Taylor, the recording engineer;

and Mike Doyle, the electronics engineer. The next day a very large moving van from the West Coast backed up to the Kline residence. Richard had anticipated the usual assortment of professional equipment but he was hardly prepared for the tons — literally — of recording apparatus that began to emerge from that van: two 8-track tape recorders, a huge mixing console, power supply, microphones, mike stands, cables, speakers, 100 boxes of 1-inch recording tape and dozens of small pieces of necessary equipment. Very soon the house was full, the garage was full, the master bedroom had become a control room, the den a conference room, the kitchen a

Play-back time in the control-room/master-bedroom.





Decisions, decisions! Which one of the 3 Tibias shall I use?

“canteen,” and the organ studio a forest of mikes, cables and playback speakers!

By the time Lee Erwin arrived four days later, the Angel people had all their equipment set up and checked out. Richard was beginning to get accustomed to living in a house suddenly transformed into a recording studio and even seemed to be enjoying it in spite of everything. He must have wondered, however, what surprises lay in store before it was all over.

A weekend of organ-tuning, combination-setting, mike-placement, and finally everything was ready for tape machines to start rolling on Monday morning. Ten days later 30 musical selections were on tape, three albums in all: two records of the music of Scott Joplin and one of excerpts from Lee Erwin’s own scores for silent films.

A miracle of teamwork-in-action is the only way to describe the entire crew at work. Dubbed “the Ubiquity” by producer Patti Laursen, host Richard Kline was always on hand to help with quick combination changes, page-turning, touch-up tuning, etc., but more importantly to supply an extra pair of ears in the control room for registration purposes.

With complete score in hand of each selection, producer-director Patti Laursen pounced inexorably on wrong

notes or minor changes made now and then, purposely or otherwise, by Lee Erwin. When a major score change seemed necessary, Patti and Lee clicked like partners in an ESP mind-reading act that never failed.

Carson Taylor, the recording engineer, was a genius with sound. Said Lee Erwin: “What a joy to have someone at the controls who knows *how* and *what* to get on tape, so that the final mix is a perfect representation of the original sound!”

Electronics engineer Mike Doyle, the young man who kept all the recording equipment in perfect condition, was also keenly interested in every note of music that was being piped into the tape machines.

With everyone working together so perfectly, it seemed at times (if not always) that things happened almost effortlessly. But even a casual observer could sense that high degree of seriousness and dedication that were joined to the professionalism brought by each person to the making of a record. A recording session without difficulties? No. But in this case the consensus was that the joys far outweighed the sorrows and that the results – three exciting and innovative new theatre organ records – far exceeded anyone’s wildest expectations. □



Patti Laursen and Lee Erwin, “like partners in a mind-reading act.”

Richard Kline

Carson Taylor

Lee Erwin

Patti Laursen

Mike Doyle

