

NUGGETS

from the
GOLDEN DAYS

Prospected
by Lloyd E. Klos



This column marks our Tenth Anniversary. Would you believe that Jason and I have been searching the theatre organ lodes as long as this? Yes, our first effort appeared in August 1967. It has been a wonderful ten years, and we take this means to thank all our reader friends for their kind words of encouragement. As we've said so many times: "You read 'em and we'll write 'em."

So let's start our next ten years with some humorous items to ease you over the dog days of August. The first two items were found in the December 1920 and September 1925 issues, respectively, of *Melody Magazine*.

Moe V. Dope says:

"Watta life you movie organists have to lead! Ain't you tired of seeing Theda vamp the poor, innocent man 'steen times in three days? And when Charlie Chaplin skids and slips on his nut 15 feet from the end of the picher not once, but four times, for a week! And when at the end of a perfect night, you're fast bound in the arms of Morpheus, it's tough to have that mole on Clara Kimball Young's neck haunt you in your dreams, and the next day lamp that mole 14 times in the same place. I sure am sorry for you guys who play the pictures! You betcha! You want a change! Like the guy who after paying the price to see the same program six times without a break, was asked by one of the ushers to tell 'em the wherefore. And his lamps lit all up as he explained: 'You know that scene when them girls are undressing to go in bathing, and that darn train goes by just when it gets most interesting. Well, some day that train is going to be late, and I want to be here when it is.'"

ORGANISTS! How do you appear to others when you play? How many types of organists are there? Have you ever thought of yourself as you play? Visiting a few theatres in the city we find: One young fellow who made his appearance by leaping onto the console and then to the bench from some dark opening on the stage. (It was a morning show). After a little while, he stuck a small stick or match between two keys, which held them down, did a few notes with his feet while he lighted a cigarette, took a couple puffs, put it out, removed the match once more, some tunes came forth.

A visit to another theatre disclosed an organist who popped up from the pit, put on the light, tilted the mirror so he could see all the front row seats, adjusted his grin, and then go up and down the keys, turning page after page of music, but his eyes never left the front seats, either via the mirror or directly.

It's a wonder one organist who used to play downtown didn't get a cramp in his neck! He kept his head crooked around so he wouldn't miss a trick in the house, and the bigger the house, the more he turned. He didn't miss a thing until one day, the management decided it wanted an

organist to play the picture and not the audience.

Have you ever noticed the one who plays with elbows crooked out, using all sorts of motions, including shaking his finger on the key? Wonder if that is supposed to increase the tremolo. And haven't you just been worn out watching the hard-working fellow with lights all over the organ pedals. He just works himself to death; tears the stops up and down, and kicks his feet around so that you can't spend time to watch the picture.

Then, how quiet and restful the fellow who slips onto the bench, turns on a soft light and plays with the picture. The one who knows one pretty stop at a time, once in a while, and depends on quality not quantity in an organ, is appreciated.

One organist must have opened swell shades and crescendo and pumped our everything in the organ in one theatre I was in, for it gave such a crash, I actually jumped right out of my seat! Then, with no warning, he dropped to a soft stop, and to my chargin, I heard myself shouting at my companion, trying to tell her what it was all about! Organists who jump from fff to ppp should have warning signals and not embarrass the patrons by sudden changes.

And the girls — God bless 'em! Who hasn't seen the cutie who puts down a stop, glances at the picture, then at the side mirror and fluffs up her permanent wave; and the candy eaters who play with one hand and eat with the other, and rattle the paper for accompaniment.

The organists are very much in the public eye and are all yelping for salaries in the \$100-zone, but until they see themselves as others see them, they will fall short. It's the worker, not the one who just plays or shows off, who gets the good job.

Mar. 1930 (Roxy News) Chief organist at New York's Roxy Theatre is **Lew White**, with **Dr. C.A.J. Parmentier** as assistant organist. On the screen is *Such Men Are Dangerous*, Eleanor Glyn's first talking picture. Stars are Warner Baxter, Hedda Hopper and Bela Lugosi. (Quite a trio!)

Mar. 1936 (Syracuse Daily Orange) It was like old times for Syracuse University Junior, **W. Stuart Green** last week when he was called on to accompany a revival of a silent film, *Monsieur Beaucaire*, starring Rudolph Valentino, at the Syracuse University-leasé Civic Theatre. "I used to do this for a living," said Green. The only sour note was that the Civic's long-neglected 10-rank Marr & Colton organ refused to work, so Green plinked out the score on a tinny pit piano for six shows.

Gold Dust: 4/27 **George Lee Hamrick** at Keith's Georgia Wurlitzer, Atlanta . . . 7/27 **Jesse Crawford** at New York's Paramount, features Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" for a full week . . . 9/27 **W.A. Dalton**, Boulevard in Los Angeles . . . 3/28 **Horace Weber**, Capitol in Melbourne, Australia; **Paul Knarr & Dr. E.H. Kanzelmyer** at State's 3-manual Marr & Colton, Schenectady, N.Y.; **Bob West**, Denver (Colo.) Theatre; **Stanley Bentley**, Carthay Circle, Long Beach; **Glenn Shelley**, Oriental in Portland, Ore . . . 4/28 **Michael Slowitzky**, Victoria in Mahanoy, Pa. . . 1/29 **Harold Ramsay**, Baltimore's Century . . . 1/40 **Dr. Edward Eigenschenk**, Chicago's Kimball Hall.

That should do it until October when we will feature some broadcasting organists. So long, sourdoughs!

Jason & The Old Prospector

