

in *Esquire* as being upset about "the constant struggle against annihilation and death" which is "absolutely stupefying in its terror and renders one's accomplishments meaningless." He can't seem to take the world on a day by day basis. Dorothy Parker, another cynic, said that no man ever came to a happy ending. People who worry about such stuff are too egocentric. Does it really matter much if all of our "immortal" words or sounds are destined to vanish? It is better to live the way Walter Pater recommended in 1876: burn each moment of every day with a hard gem-like flame of experience. Since everything is born, grows, declines, and dies, we must live to maintain the ecstasies of the moments given to us.

Music offers no exception. A great piece of music will last a number of years, become too familiar, and then die in neglect. Something new will pre-empt the time and interest of concert-goers. Changing life-styles, like television and other electronic wonders, eliminate whole institutions. See what happened to the coal industry when oil and electricity became cheap. Look at it, now that prices have risen. In the long run, music will take its course as it always has. In the short run, we shall do well to tolerate and adapt to the popular fancies of the moment, living, as Pater recommended, with a "hard, gem-like flame." □



ME AND MY WURLITZER. John Ledwon playing his 3/26 studio organ. Alpha No. 7703 (stereo). \$6.50 postpaid from Alpha Records, Box 115, Newbury Park, Calif. 91320.

John Ledwon started playing a plug-in at 11 years of age, encouraged and propelled by parents who had hopes he would seek a career as a concert organist. To rivet his interest they purchased a 3/11 "assembled" Wurlitzer and installed it in their San Fernando Valley (Calif.) home. They were partially successful; John developed a healthy respect and preference for pipes but a concert career didn't appeal to him. He wanted to teach music. So his college

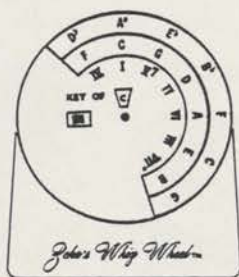
courses were in public school music. For the past decade he has taught music at Newbury Park High School (Calif.), not far from his Agoura hill-top studio home. He has recently come into national prominence as chairman of the Los Angeles chapter or ATOS.

From a biographical sketch by veteran theatre organist Del Castillo, we quote: "John is definitely a comer . . . To those who have followed him through the years, his musical development has been outstanding, whether playing, teaching or producing musical comedies at Newbury Park (high school)." Meanwhile the 3/11 has grown to a 3/26, augmented with carefully chosen ranks to combine, in the 22,000 cubic feet of studio listening area, to form one of the most complete and attractive recording organs in southern California. This is John's first recording with it as a 3/26, although he has several previous releases.

The program adds up to a variety show, presenting many types of music but always with the theatre organ aficionado in mind.

Whether John is presenting the heavily tripleted semi-rock of "Sh-Boom" or the romantic schmaltz of Romberg's "Deep in My Heart," he displays an understanding of the intent of the writer and the feel of the time the selection reached peak popularity. This latter quality is particularly evident during the E.T. Paul march, "Napoleon's Last Charge," a worthy relic from the early days of this century. Of course march time is limited as a means of expression (example: the French regiments never get out of step during the battle nor during the retreat from Waterloo in the E.T. Paul version). Still, John crams a lot of dramatics into the selection by variations in his arrangement which never appeared in the sheet music. In an entirely different aura, John pictures an incompetent but romantic knight, Don Quixote, pursuing his dimwitted Dulcinea in the title selection from *Man of La Mancha*.

But John Ledwon's forte is his treatment of groupings of 1920's tunes and later, 1940's titles. Rather than give them cursory treatment in order to list the titles, John provides each one a loving pat on the fanny which puts each tune into its most effective musical and historic perspec-



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tive. His intros and lead-ins prepare us, and the registration takes full advantage of the magnificent instrument he has assembled.

The '20s medley includes: "I Want to be Happy," "Four Leaf Clover," "Carolina in the Morning," "Bye Bye Blackbird," "Charleston," "Tea For Two" and "Hallelujah."

The '40s set includes: "Big Wide Wonderful World," "Sentimental Journey," "Oh What a Beautiful Morning," "You Are My Sunshine," "Over the Rainbow," "Zip-a-dee Doo Dah" and "In the Mood."

The jacket front has a fine color shot of John at his console (which came from a Plattsburg, N.Y. theatre) plus views of the chambers and the stuido. Technically, there are a few flaws. The end chord of Man of La Mancha is cut off abruptly. There are a few spots where our lightweight tonearm tends to jump heavily modulated grooves, a condition remedied by the addition of a few grams of weight to the pickup head.

Jacket notes are detailed, giving much information about the organ, the organist and the music. This is a disc which grows on one; with each

playing there seem to be new and enriching discoveries.

ALL THROUGH THE KNIGHTS. Don Knights at the Compton organ, Odeon Theatre, Leicester Square, London. Deroy (stereo) No. 1336 (Volume 82). Available in Great Britain from Deroy Records, Eastwood, Cove, West Scotland. In the USA from Stanley C. Garniss, 35 Union Street, North Easton, Mass. 02356. \$5.50 postpaid.

Don Knights' excursions into the recording field are infrequent. His previous recordings have been played on 2-manual Comptons but this time his instrument is the Compton 5-decker (17 ranks plus Melotone, we recall) in the Leicester Square Odeon, London, an instrument which will be forever linked with the name of the late Gerald Shaw, its most memorable resident player.

From all we have gathered over the years, this particular instrument is mechanically and tonally more "straight" than theatrical, and entertainment specialists must work hard to obtain a theatrical sound. Don Knights, an old hand at theatrical styling (he dates from silent movies), succeeds admirably. He is effective in all styles of music presented here, but we find his lilting treatment of the Viennese melodies of Robert Stolz to be among his best efforts, perhaps because we have knowledge of and familiarity with these lighthearted operetta tunes.

Selections are: "Here We Are

Again" (theme), "Paris Medley" (which covers most of Side 1), "Repasz Band March," "Officer of the Day March," "Memories of Robert Stolz" (Viennese potpourri, about one half of side 2), "Heartaches" (shades of Ted Weems' band and whistler Elmo Tanner!), "Happy Feet" (from the Paul Whiteman movie *King of Jazz*), "Mr. Wonderful," "Little Girl," "Au Revoir."

Don's marches are exceptionally well played; he thinks like a brass band and the organ provides the instruments. On tunes with less rigid rhythm requirements he does some swell pedal phrasing which should not be confused with "pumping." In his presentation he tends toward the medley idea, segueing from one selection of a group or type directly into the next, sometimes with a modulation separating them. This gives the effect of the fondly remembered late night organ broadcast of yore. About one half the grooves are occupied by two such groups, one Parisian, the other Viennese (Don is very hip on Vienna's light music).

The playing style is easy and uncomplicated, with melody dominating. There is variety in registration but this would seem to be secondary to expressive playing. Don had little time to become familiar with the Odeon Compton. Because the house is booked solid, he had to record between 2:00 and 7:00 a.m. (also the hours of minimum outside traffic noise in the busy London downtown). The late hour might have had something to do with an occasional minor clinker. He had a



John Ledwon and his Wurlitzer.



(Stufoto) Don Knights at the Odeon Compton.

(John D. Sharp Photo)

narrow escape during "Little Girl," but he did break out of a musical cul-de-sac. Don's recreation of 1929 organ jazz during "Happy Feet" is painfully accurate; he's a stickler for detail even when the bill calls for corn. So, corn we get, but briefly.

Recording is generally good, although the first selection is weak in the pedal bass department. And our review pressing was off center enough on Side 2 so that a slight "wow" was audible on sustained tones. Side 1 was perfectly centered.

Don't forget to fade out the music on the first beat of the final chord of "Gaitie Parisienne" (the last of the Paris medley) to avoid experiencing a rasping schmeer glissando, the only item we would argue over with Don.

Over-all, it's a pleasant and listenable melange of varied musical styles.

BILLY NALLE: SHOW BUSINESS, played on the RTOS 4/22 Wurlitzer organ. Telarc stereo No. 5031. \$7.00 postpaid from RTOS, Box 8114, Rochester, N.Y. 14657.

Billy Nalle's records are few and far between and worth anticipating. His first, played 20 years ago on the N.Y. Paramount "Dowager Empress" and entitled *Swingin' Pipe Organ* has long been a sought after set of grooves. Several more Nalle albums have been released across the years and we'll venture to state that we've never heard a cut wherein Billy wasn't in complete control every second. He's one of the most exacting craftsmen in the business. Which is as it should be because his often complex arrangements wouldn't settle for less. *Show Business* follows the discipline pattern established when Billy cut those two sides of swingband jazz tunes for RCA in 1958. The program heard here is much more varied in titles, playing styles and general mood; only the Nalle enthusiasm remains unchanged.

The instrument is one of the most attractive and well maintained organs on the scene today, thanks to its dedicated owners, the Rochester Theater Organ Society. It is located in a good acoustical environment, the Auditorium Theatre, and beyond that we'll say no more because readers are bound to know its story.

Billy Nalle first came to our attention in the mid-'50s when he was experimenting with free jazz improvisations as cue music for New York-produced soap opera broadcasts. Needless to say, he's never been out of our sight since, because he's an innovator, and that adds up to interest value. There's a good brief biog of Billy among the extensive jacket notes, another reason for buying the record.



Billy Nalle

But there are better reasons. A new Nalle record release is something of a musical event, and this one is among his best.

The selections include three originals which stack up well with the standards he presents. In the "That's Entertainment/No Biz Like Show Biz" style is his opener, "Show Business," which is as effective as either of the over-recorded titles to bring the spotlighted console into view. "As Long as He Needs Me" features the Wurlitzer's strings and later, full organ, before an introspective denouement. Harmonic treatment is often unusual, but that's a Nalle characteristic. "I Love To Hear You Singing" is pure Jesse, despite what the jacket notes say, and one of the best recorded recreations of the Crawford trademark arrangement. The inclusion of "Million Dollar Baby" is a lively concession to Billy's dad, who zeroed in on his future wife while "she was selling china, in a 5 & 10 cent store." "Sylvia," long a favorite of baritones, does very well as a melodic tour-de-force sans words. The Wurl's solo and color reeds come off very well. One of today's truly lovely melodies is "Alphie," a selec-

tion which defies the rule that a tune must be repetitious and easily singable. "Alphie" wanders, in a beautiful way, and Billy is there with just the right nuances to fulfill one of the most memorable arrangements on the disc. Billy has fun with "The Trolley Song" in a non-Judy way which in no way detracts from impressions which linger from the memorable movie. Lots of melody variations here. Then there's the Glenn Miller big band theme, "Moonlight Serenade." It's a natural for organ because Miller's arrangement was big and full, with those clarinet-topped Saxophones sounding much like a reed-topped Tibia chorus. "Center City Rag," a Nalle original, sounds like they was whoopin' it up at the Dirty Shame saloon with plenty of nickels in the player planner.

In his jacket notes Billy writes of "Ah Sweet Mystery of Life:" "I was struck all over again with the beauty and sweep of an inspired piece of music." Victor Herbert's tune is constructed so as to invite harmonic ornamentation. Naturally, Billy is right there with the ideas. In places where the melody is allowed to sing simply there are moments of magnificence but too soon the harmonic development becomes the focal point and the tail may seem to wag the dog. It gets big and thunderous, even goes into an improvisation. Then, in a moment of apparent madness, those years of electronic playing suddenly re-assert themselves and Billy reverts to a brief moment of "hammondry." Zounds!

Billy's closer is a fine tribute to Duke Ellington with a sensitively played "In My Solitude" which is interlaced with an empathetic Nalle original called "Mood Sultry."

It's a concert with no dull moments. Even when Billy stretches "Mystery of Life" out to 6 minutes and 34 seconds, there are no yawns, just a question: what'll he do with it next? Finding out is an adventure. The changes in volume and registration variety are noteworthy. Telarc Records deserves a huge "thank you" for resisting any urges recording people too often get to tamper with the frequency and dynamic ranges. Thus Billy was able to play his arrangements without the bass and treble roll-off and dynamics squeeze so common with the majors.

The cover bears photos of Billy at work and generous notes about the music, organist and theatre. Like previous Billy Nalle releases, we predict this one will be a winner.

DON THOMPSON AT THE RIVIERA, OP-005 (stereo). \$6.50 post-paid from Don Thompson, 58 The Esplanade, Toronto M5E 1A6, Canada.

Don offers forty-eight familiar tunes played in danceable tempos, in clusters of 3 or 4 of the same general type. Dance styles include polkas, foxtrots, waltzes, quicksteps and barn dances.

Titles are: "Shall We Dance," "La Paloma Blanca," "I'm in a Dancing Mood," "Top Hat," "Cheek to Cheek," "Red Roses for a Blue Lady," "Cabaret," "Steppin' Out With My Baby," "If You Were the Only Girl in the World," "All Alone," "It's a Sin to Tell a Lie," "Moon River," "Edelweiss," "Roses of Picardy," "Where or When," "Blueberry Hill," "Tea For Two," "Rose Marie," "I Love You" (with verse), "Cecilia," "Daisy," "Three O'clock in the Morning," "Little Sir Echo," "Peggy O'Neil," "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland," "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," "Loveliest Night of the year," "And the Band Played On," "Ain't She Sweet," "Who's Sorry Now," "Nobody's Sweetheart Now," "Margie," "Dinah," "When You're Smiling," "Walking My Baby Back Home," "Heart of my Heart," "Show Me the Way to Go Home," "Side By Side," "My Blue Heaven," "Peg O' My Heart," "Sleepy Time Gal," "Have You Ever Been Lonely," "Anniversary Waltz," "Always," "Together," "Charmaine," "Diane," "Fascination."

The tunes are mostly accorded one chorus each, and with such brief duration there is little time or need for expansive treatments. The emphasis is on maintaining a danceable tempo, rather than expressive playing, and in that area Don succeeds. He manages to make the 3/17 Wurlitzer in the North Tonawanda Riviera Theatre sound often very British, coming up with combinations not unlike those of Reginald Dixon (emphasis on mutations).

Bill Gallaghers' recording does

justice to a fine instrument. The cover photo shows Don in white formal attire dancing with famed ballroom dancer Anna Bohn in a deserted Toronto street.

This one is for dancing, uncritical listening or for Don's army of fans, who will love it.

A LYN LARSEN CONCERT, played on the Detroit Theater Organ Club's 4/34 Wurlitzer in the Senate Theater MC-101 (stereo) \$6.50 post-paid from Musical Contrasts, Inc., 415 South Main Street, Royal Oak, Michigan 48067.



Lyn Larsen.

(ESTMIM Photo)

Here's a collection of very listenable music recorded on one of the largest and best sounding organs available today. A special design of Wurlitzer evolved for the Detroit Fisher Theatre, it is now carefully maintained in the Senate Theater, for this record by Dave Brewer and Walter Plumhoff. Frank Laperriere, Mac McLaughlin and Ted Amano did the first rate taping.

Selections are: "In the Good Old Summertime," "Giannina Mia," "Shine On Harvest Moon," "In the Garden," "Radetzky March," "Midnight in Mayfair," "St. Louis Blues," "That's a Plenty," "Italian Street Song," "My Heart At thy Sweet Voice," (*Samson & Delilah*), and "Comedians' Gallop." Lots of vari-

ety in the tunelist.

All selections are played with impeccable technical skill, contrasty registration which fully exploits the goodies on the great instrument, in arrangements which give this reviewer an agonizing case of *déjà vu*. The harmonic and rhythmic effects applied often seem very familiar. True, Lyn admits that his pop organ "teachers" were the records of George Wright and Jesse Crawford. We must be very appreciative of Lyn's Crawford recreations because they help keep the great organist's contributions alive. However, Lyn leans much heavier on the stylings of George Wright. The selections on this record are peppered with the effects Wright originated on his Hi-Fi label and Dot recordings years ago but timeless in their musical values. Mr. Wright is still very much on the scene, making records and playing concerts. Is it conceivable that Wright could be accused of swiping Lyn's stylings and effects, which George originated on records years ago? We sought out the Wright originals of many of the devices heard here. One by one they turned up, a snatch here, a filler there, the juxtaposition of a roll in relation to the direction of the melody line, phrasings, the stings and stabs, the Glock ornaments, the Posthorn emphasis effects — many of them can be located, some times in the arrangements of other tunes.

True, Lyn applies the effects expertly but he doesn't credit the lifts, trick by trick. Which raises the question; is it fair to Wright? But even more to the point, is it fair to Lyn Larsen? As much as we may admire a flair for imitation, it's still imitation. We feel that a wonderful talent and ability such as Lyn Larsen's shouldn't be dependent on any other organist's accomplishments. And this is far from the first record on which Wright trappings have been heard on Lyn's records.

We have known Lyn since his first public concert at the Orange Theatre in Orange, Calif. when he was 19, even wrote the jacket notes for his first Malar record. We have been most happy with the success he has enjoyed. That's why we urge him to speak for Lyn in his music.

A.J. Miller's low key album design is attractive. Jacket notes are the usual. □