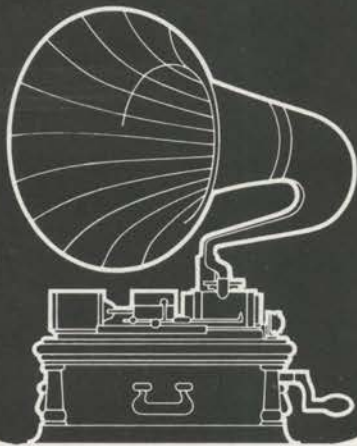


## For The Records



*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.*

**MUSIC OF THE '20s and '30s, Al Sacker at the Wurlitzer organ. Stereo. \$6.50 postpaid from Robert E. Cormier, Box 16094, Houston, Texas 77022.**

Al Sacker is the chairman of the newly formed Southeast Texas ATOS chapter, and rightfully so, considering all the effort he has put into saving the Jefferson theatre in Beaumont and its Robert Morton organ. In fact the voluminous jacket notes are devoted to the story of the lifelong love affair between Al and the Morton. Yet the music on this platter is played on an unidentified Wurlitzer which we'd estimate has about 13 ranks.

Al is an intermission organist of the old school who prefers the tunes written back when so many of them were good. His selections include: "Smile Darn Ya Smile," "Carolina in the Morning," "Five Foot Two," "Charleston," "I Want to be Happy," "Aint She Sweet," "Heartaches," "I'm Looking Over a Four-Leaf Clover," "By a Waterfall," "The Best Things in Life are Free," "Sonny Boy," "Little White Lies," "My Mother's Eyes," "Paradise,"

"Bye Bye Blackbird," "Makin' Whoopee," "Goodnight a Thousand Goodnights," and "When You're Smiling" — all those memorable tunes by DeSylva, Brown and Henderson; Gus Kahn, Irving Caesar; Vincent Youmans; Ager and Yellen, Sammy Fain and especially Walter Donaldson.

Al plays them in typical intermission style, mostly with a toe-tapping beat and no changes of key within a selection. In fact, there is little evidence of any special arranging; Al just plays the tunes in his exuberant and jingly style, mostly choruses with an occasional brief verse.

The "mystery organ" is well adapted to rhythmic selections. It has a bright presence and the prominent percussions indicate they are unhampered by expression. It doesn't fare so well during such ballads as "Sonny Boy," "Little White Lies," and "Paradise" when Al solos the Tibia, which has the hard sound of a rink "Stopped Flute" type of Tibia. The ensemble sound is well-knit, and Al solos a keen brass reed during "Paradise" and "By a Waterfall." The pitched percussions are used with restraint. Al is a tasteful player who keeps his obvious enthusiasm in check. He seems most at home doing the rhythm tunes and a little less so during some of the ballads. There are a couple of indecisive moments but they don't reach out to the listener.

As we mentioned the jacket notes have to do with the Jefferson Theatre which is not germane to this album,



Al Sacker and the 'mystery Wurlitzer.'  
(Hockmeyer Photo)

yet the Sacker history is of interest; Al has been musical since the age of seven and organ-oriented since nine. From the over-all sound we would judge that recording engineer Robert Cormier overcame a number of miking problems to obtain the quality of sound presented here. The review pressing was good.

This one is for those old timers who invariably sat through two shows to hear the intermission organist twice. It was worth it, wasn't it?

**WRIGHT ON! George Wright at the So. Pasadena Rialto Theatre 2/10 Wurlitzer and the San Gabriel Civic Auditorium 3/16 Wurlitzer. L112 stereo. \$7.00 postpaid (Californians add 6% sales tax) from Lurite Records, Box 27-522, Dept T, Hollywood, Calif. 90027.**

The release of this long-awaited recording was beset by many of the delays and misfortunes which can overtake a new record company. Release date was announced as coincident with George's ATOS convention "afterglow" concert last July 4. But Lurite's supplier failed to come through with the album jackets until much later. Then it was discovered that a large number of the pressings were flawed. More delay while the pressings were replaced. Lurite was very open and frank with its impatient mail order customers, explaining the delay and apologizing — which must set some sort of precedent. We can hold no grudge toward Lurite in view of their aboveboard admissions.

Side 1 consists of excerpts from a concert held at San Gabriel Civic Auditorium. It's complete with audience reactions and banter by George, some of which would require the visual scene for the full effect. So, this side will be most effective with those who were in the audience in October 1976 for George's "return to the concert stage" (in Southern California, that is) as the jacket notes describe it. There are snatches of George's MCing prowess and some of his humor comes through, although he is too far from the microphones to be easily audible. But, as always, the selections are played superbly. The console riser is an energetic "Butcher Boy," spiked with applause. A side



George at the San Gabriel Wurlitzer. (Stufoto)

of George rarely heard in his more formal recordings is evident in the concert excerpts, as he amuses his audience with informal musical jokes and inserts sound effects, most notably during his "old soft shoe routine" with exaggerated stop time during "Tea for Two," "Cuddle Up a Little Closer," and "Pretty Baby." "The Vamp" gets some of the fun treatment, too. But he's dead serious playing "My Romance," "Stairway to the Stars" and "Goodnight Sweetheart," the console "sinker."

Applause is frequent and voluminous during and following selections. It adds to the live concert atmosphere but there's a technical rub; the balance of George's voice (too soft), the applause (too loud) and the organ (just right) keeps the auditioner changing his volume control setting. For all that, it adds up to a valuable record of George in concert. The only real disappointment is "The Stars and Stripes Forever." Considering what George has done with this selection in the past (with both real and organ piccolo obligatos), this 20 second version leaves us hanging.

We found Side 2 far more satisfying, not only for the titles but for a rediscovery of the 2/10 (plus) Wurlitzer in the South Pasadena Rialto Theatre, an instrument destroyed by fire in the early '70s. Tonally, it compares most favorably with the larger organ heard on Side 1, and the microphone placement gives it a more satisfying presence. The mellowness of the Tibia chorus, the blend of the Vox, as well as its ensemble sound when soloed, and the

clarity of the Tuba up in the Clarion range during "I Don't Know How to Love Him" provides a much-appreciated tonal reunion with an old friend. We suspect much of the organ's excellence is due to the freedom George had in molding the sound of the ranks to his needs. Whatever the reason, the sound is tops. "I Don't Know How" is played reverently, not campy.

The remainder of Side 2 (over two thirds of the grooves) consists of a medley of six of the most appealing tunes from Rudolph Friml's *Rose Marie*, including "The Mounties," "Rose Marie," "Through the Door of Her Dreams," "Indian Love Call," "Totem Tom Tom," and "Finale." George plays the selections in the spirit of the time when they were new, with touches of Jesse but more of George. It's a wonderful romp through the innocent nostalgia of operetta days, and it is complete; the verses are included. Arrangements are varied to fit the tempo and style of each tune, and George's attention to registration is in keeping with his reputation as a master in that art. The organ meets all of his requirements from snapping Posthorn to caressing Tibia, plus that "rising crescendo" cymbal emphasis effect peculiar to the Wright interest in orchestration. If we were asked to pick a favorite from these selections it would be the *Rose Marie* set.

It would seem that Side 2 is more skilfully engineered, probably because there was only the organ to consider.

Summing up, the maestro demonstrates he's still holding down the top of the mountain. As a reviewer in the Hollywood Citizen-News put it: "Where he differs from all other organists is . . . in the sheer aristocracy of his musical conceptions."

**CONTEMPORARY WURLITZER, Greg Rister playing the San Gabriel (Calif.) Civic Auditorium 3/16 Wurlitzer organ. RTS-7701 stereo. \$6.00 postpaid from Rolling Thunder Records, Box 1384, Whittier, Calif. 90604. (Calif. residents add 6% sales tax).**

We have observed the musical development of Greg Rister since he was a promising and ambitious teenager. To say he has arrived may be



Greg Rister. Not one dog among the titles.

premature but he most certainly is on his way. Greg has undertaken an ambitious program, from Modest Moussorgsky to Mason Williams, with Irving Berlin and Glenn Miller somewhere in the middle. In Greg's favor is the variety in his program: March from *Star Wars*, "Saturday Night at the World," "Moonlight Serenade," "Hungarian Dance No. 8" (Brahms), "When My Dreams Come True" (Berlin), "Friends" (Elton John), "Promenade" (Moussorgsky), "Carillon Waltz" (an original), "On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe," "If I Loved You," and "Fiddler on the Roof" (selections).

Here is a record entirely free of the over-recorded tune syndrome. "Saturday Night at the World," "Friends" and "If I Loved You" (gorgeous Tibia) are the ballads, plus rarely heard "When My Dreams Come True," one of Irving Berlin's less successful tunes despite its use in both the stage and film versions of the Marx Bros' *Cocanuts* (1929) their first big hit. It's a good tune and well played, showcasing a solo reed. Greg has a special ability to make Gypsy music come alive, as he does with "Hungarian Dance" and later during the "Fiddler" medley. The Moussorgsky selection labelled "Promenade" is actually a portion of "The Great Gate at Kiev" from *Pictures at an Exhibition*. It's a majestic and thrilling tone picture of what might have been an imposing structure, had the Russians ever built it. But no matter. Greg's transcription of the maestoso work pictures the

gate in all its unrealized glory, with the Wurlitzer going straight briefly. The organist's original "Carillon Waltz" is properly peppered with Chrysoglott and chime tintinnabulation. It's brief but charming, in a minor mode. Not many organists can resist the temptation to add train effects to "Atchison etc" and Mr. Rister is no exception. His "choo choo" start is a convincing intro to an energetic boogie. About half of Side 2 is devoted to an absorbing selection from "Fiddler." The "Rich Man" theme, "Matchmaker" — all the major themes from the well-remembered score, complete with flourishes and Kazotskys, skilfully arranged for organ, provide a delightful closer.

But we haven't yet mentioned the magnificent opener, the "March" from *Star Wars*, played in a bravura style with enough thrills to start an R2D2 chirping in data bank baffle-gab. Greg gives it the full treatment and it comes out sounding like an English coronation march gone wild. To us, this is Greg Rister's best number.

So much for the favorable comment which applies to roughly 90 percent of the grooves. The one black mark is a very obvious one to those familiar with Glenn Miller's classic signature, "Moonlight Serenade." A repeated and jarring mischord of basic harmony simply spoils the whole thing. Omit this one and we have a most attractive set of selections.

Recording is good. So is the review pressing. Greg wrote his own jacket comments about the tunes. The 3/16 Wurlitzer has got to be familiar to readers as the organ recorded by Helen Dell, Gaylord Carter and George Wright in the recent past. It serves Greg Rister equally well.

**DINING AT THE SUBURBIAN.** Frank Cimmino playing the 3/17 Wurlitzer in the Wanague, New Jersey restaurant. HMR 1082, stereo, \$7.00 postpaid from HMR Productions, 574 West Court, Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076.

Frank Cimmino is an institution at the Suburban restaurant. It was Frank who dreamed up the idea of installing a pipe organ there while pumping a plug-in for diners. So

Frank talked the Provissiero family into buying a Style 260 special from Dick Loderhose. The organ was premiered on the July 4th weekend in 1971, by Frank Cimmino, naturally. The organ has been a solid attraction to diners ever since, usually with Frank at the console.

Frank's selections are: "Tonight" (*West Side Story*), "If," "Tie a Yellow Ribbon," "Today," "Spanish Eyes," "The Way We Were," "All Because of Spring" (a Cimmino original), "Beer Barrel Polka," "And I Love You So," "Loco Locomotive," "Bridge Over the River Kwai" (Colonel Bogey March), and "The Party's Over."



Frank Cimmino.

(Stufoto)

Frank is an exponent of the full combination more often than solo stops. Variety in registration often depends on the adding and subtraction of percussions. Of course, the name of the album tells the intent; Frank is providing music to promote digestion. Yet, diners can expect a boogie-woogie steam train to run through the restaurant as they partake of the Lasagne ("Loco Locomotive") and perhaps Alec Guinness and his fellow prisoners will build a railroad bridge over the salad bar. In brief, it isn't all pipe generated Muzak; Frank does some absorbing soloing e.g. his original, "All Because of Spring," which becomes majestic in the Radio City Music Hall tradition in spots. There's nice understatement in "And I love You So," which features lush registration and a touch of solo voices, as well as some question and answer moments. As for "Kwai," the bridge gets

built in record time as Frank presides over a hurry-up version, with all the percussions whamming away full blast. But he incorporates great subtlety during "If" and "The Party's Over." The "Polka" gets the slambang treatment with everything going (wonder if Frank is aware that in Italy, from whence he sprang, that tune is a love song with the romantic title "Rosamunde?"). Frank puts great emotion into "The Way We Were" as he does with "Tonight." His "Spanish Eyes" is a smoothie.

If there is adverse criticisms, they would be limited to two areas: (1) key changes — Frank plays nearly all of his tunes in the keys of C or F. (2) the organ is just enough out of tune (especially with the tonal percussions) to cause a slight irritation among those with pitch-wise tympani.

Recording reflects the closed-in restaurant acoustics. We hear it the way the diners do, without added acoustical enhancement. Recording is good. Some high boost would have helped. Jacket notes give some Subbian and Cimmino background. Easy listening with some better than average moments.

**REGINALD FOORT, LIVE, IN CONCERT — Played at the Orpheum Theatre, Vancouver, B.C. on a Style 240 - 3/13 Wurlitzer. Available from: Quest Organ Master Records, 6979 Curragh Ave., Burnaby, B.C. Canada VS/4V6, \$7.98 Canadian, plus postage.**

The subtitle of this offering is "A Sentimental Journey Highlighting a 65 Year Career," which just about sums up the recording and its contents.

It is strictly what an organ buff would expect from Mr. Foort doing his final public concert; a grouping of orchestral favorites played in the precise manner that has always been a Foort trademark.

Heard on this disc are "Finlandia," "Jealousy" (record jacket spelling), reminiscences of Chopin, "In a Monastery Garden," "In a Persian Market" and a musical tour of Britain.

The finale of the disc is rather unusual and it is the first time we've heard it done on a recording of this type. Mr. Foort asked the audience of some 2800 to join him and sing

"Auld Lang Syne," and then Reg leads them into "God Save The Queen." The result becomes very inspirational as the audience really put their hearts into it.

The acoustics of the theatre are superb making the organ sound much larger than it actually is. This coupled with the engineering of Frank Killinger results in a disc of excellent quality technically.

Since this is touted as Reginald Foort's last concert before retirement, the record should receive good reception from Foort's fans and most theatre organ devotees will want it in their collection.

**COMMAND PERFORMANCE, Lyn Larsen playing the 4/27 Wurlitzer in Organ Stop No. 1. Stereo. \$7.00 postpaid to the 48 continental states; \$7.50 to Alaska, Hawaii, Canada, Panama, England and Western Europe. Order from Organ Stop Pizza, 5330 No. Seventh Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85014.**

It's always risky to base the tune-list for a record release on "most requested" selections. Usually, the most vociferous fans dominate and the common denominator too often plummets to the level of another version of "Alley Cat" (preferably with synthetic "meows"). Obviously, Lyn Larsen wasn't going to fall into that trap despite the "command" appendage. With the exception of such over-recorded chestnuts as "Lara's Theme" and "The Entertainer," the program provides a fitting palette for Lyn's variety of colors, and vivid they are. Rarely, since Lyn left the Malar label, have we heard such a fine example of his artistry.

Selections are: "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang," "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head," "Candyman," "Toccata in D Minor" (Bach), "Lara's Theme," "Pink Panther," "Nadia's Theme," "The Hustle," "The Entertainer," "Tie a Yellow Ribbon," "Evergreen," and "Fiddler on the Roof" (selections).

For some unexplained reason Bach's "Toccata" is listed as "Phantom of the Opera" although it is more easily identified with Captain Nemo, who played it on his submarine pipes in Disney's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. But we won't quibble if Bach doesn't. It's an imposing rendition and the ex-Harvey Heck Wur-

litzer rises to supply the big cathedral sound. All arrangements are tailored to best showcase the selections, and that brings up another point. A recent review took Lyn gently to task for borrowing musical devices from another organist. We are happy to note that this group of selections is free of the "borrowing" stigma; it's all Lyn. And the previous review cannot be credited with influencing this recording, which was completed before that review was published.

The pizzery organ never sounded better. It has been brought to an elegant degree of tonal excellence, especially in the realm of such basics as the Tibia chorus (we hesitate to use the overworked term, "lush"). But the reeds, strings and deftly used percussions score, too, bringing us some of Lyn's most sensitive balladry to date, especially during "Evergreen," and "Nadia's Theme" (with added synthesizer). The upbeat "Hustle" has all the excitement of one of the Arthur Lyman sexy "jungle" fantasies of the '50's, complete with synthesizer sworls and sizzles and added percussions. Happily, the synthesizer in no way injures the music values and one added effect which sounds like the exhaling of a dragon fires the imagination. All selections are beautifully played, with much at-



Lyn Larsen. By whose command?

tention to phrasing (a Larsen specialty), varied registration and the general artistry which makes Lyn's playing so satisfying. It isn't so much the titles as the way Lyn treats each selection. He can even make an overdone standard such as "Lara's Theme" listenable.

Recording is very good and jacket notes adequate. Incidentally, this will be Lyn's final release on this instrument, at least for the present; after five years he has left the Bill Brown establishment to go with a new Arizona eatery. He will have to work very hard to top the musical and technical quality in these grooves. □

Nigel Ogden demonstrates the Manchester Town Hall Cavaille-Coll Organ to the Safari members and The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Manchester during the second Safari last November. Sandy Fleet is next to the Lord Mayor.

The Cavaille-Coll will be playing a major part in the Manchester International Organ Festival to be held in the City in September. This Festival, sponsored by the City with support from the British Arts Council, will be the first Worldwide Festival to include theatre pipe organs, classical pipe organs, electronic organs and street and fairground organs. There is a classical organ competition open to any young organists and the entertainment organ side will feature artists of high standing on both pipes and plug-ins.

The main theatre organ to be used will be the newly-opened Publix No. 1 Wurlitzer in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester which has strong American connections, (apart from its country of birth!).

It is intended to hold this Festival bi-annually and it is hoped that America will be strongly represented both artistwise and visitorwise. (Manchester Evening News Photo)

