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## the letters to the editors

Letters to the Editor concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are encouraged. Send them to the editor concerned. Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.

Address:

George Thompson  
Editor  
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Dear Editor:

To my regret I have noticed the recent tendency of certain correspondents to berate your recording reviewers and to denigrate Jesse Crawford. While it is not my desire to start (much less continue) any battle in print over these matters, I feel that I have valid personal reasons for speaking out against these injustices.

I have had numerous recordings reviewed in the organ and hi-fi journals within the past several decades. I have found the critics in those publications to be most fair and knowledgeable, generally speaking. If anything, they are occasionally inclined to overestimate the worth of many of the albums reviewed—some of my own included. A critic cannot be blamed for being offended when certain artists all but instruct him in how they wish their efforts to be reviewed.

Second, I cannot stand by idly and accept the desecration of the sacred memory of such a beautiful person and poetic musician as the late Jesse Crawford. To downgrade his musicianship is insulting to the many thousands of persons who continue to revere this beloved performer-innovator.

Jesse Crawford may be gone but he clearly is not forgotten. Wherever I go and wherever I play, young and old alike are intensely interested in the man and in his music. His song may have ended, but his memory vividly lingers on. Okay, so a certain English organist may have sold a million records in the 1940's, but Jess did it first in the 1920's commencing with "Valencia." Some younger persons of the present day have perhaps formulated their opinions of the great man from his latter day Decca recordings made in his twilight years on two pipe organs in

California — neither instrument of which I thought was completely or ideally suited to or worthy of his talents. In my opinion, the vintage Crawford recordings were made from the period of 1930 to 1933 when he had access to the then-incomparable Paramount Theatre studio organ in New York. Sure, there were a few public domain "dogs" recorded during those years, but those chestnuts were foisted upon the artist by tasteless "A. and R." men at Victor Records. When left to his own devices, Crawford was brilliant and unsurpassed in his own genre. When plagued by financial and domestic troubles in the middle and late 1930's, it seems to me to be understandable and pardonable that he occasionally may have performed in a perfunctory manner to place bread on his table. Haven't we all?

So much of today's playing — particularly in food emporia and in concert — passes for "entertainment." I find it difficult to believe that today's truly discerning musical public is content with and "entertained" by third-rate performances which are filled with total disregard for taste, tone color, tempo, technique and understanding of the intentions of the composers.

The Peter Principle applies where the shoe fits, certainly, but there *are*, thank God, other outlets for expression for music and musicians than in these special little narrow circles.