

with Tibia sound, you would always turn off the Tibias if you didn't like the sound provided you had enough other stops from which to choose. The purists hated theatre organs particularly for the excessive doses of Crawford portamento or Hawaiian roll. There they had something to complain about, but then they should have blamed the organists and not the instruments.

Purists have rarely been willing to give theatre organ manufacturers credit for pioneer experimental work in creative pipe-making, winding, electrical work, and reliability of mechanism under hard use. William H. Barnes is the only fair-minded critic I have read on the subject. The purists have never been remiss or tardy in appropriating good new ideas from theatre organ people. A detailed account of their borrowings is long overdue.

A little dip into history shows, surprisingly enough, that organs in general were long in disrepute, even with churchgoers. Between 1642 and 1644, at the beginning of the English commonwealth period, the instrument was so hated that troops of soldiers were given orders to invade churches and destroy the organs. Organs were torn apart wholesale under a January, 1664 ordinance of the House of Parliament. John ("Father") Howe, the most famous organ builder of the time, lived to see most of his work destroyed.

The thing really to criticize is trashy playing. It was hard to score fine music for trashy films, but one could do such a thing with a little extra effort. Although we could make some excuses for the overworked player of the twenties, we can't excuse today's console-jockey who in an hour and a half persists in using the following five most horrible organ clichés:

(1) the opener using a trill followed by a run up several octaves (*a la Rhapsody in Blue*) to a few wild chords succeeded by a dynamic drop to the first simple bars of a mediocre pop tune.

(2) the use of the Crawford portamento every four bars, sometimes on

loud combinations of stops,

(3) wild, meaningless runs up and down the keyboard during ballads,

(4) buildups from soft to loud and *vice versa* every few cadences, and

(5) endings consisting of protracted loud chords followed by two staccato fillips.

Our jockey becomes specially trashy when he uses inane, insulting, or profane remarks while addressing his audience. It is good to report that he is a rarity. We must call attention to one player on the circuit who calls himself the trashiest of theatre organists, meaning only that he specializes in simple, ragtime, first quarter-of-the-century pop tunes. Those of us who know him are aware that he isn't using the term literally or pejoratively, and that he is reminding us again that we need always to judge language in the light of the spirit and the intelligence with which it is used. □



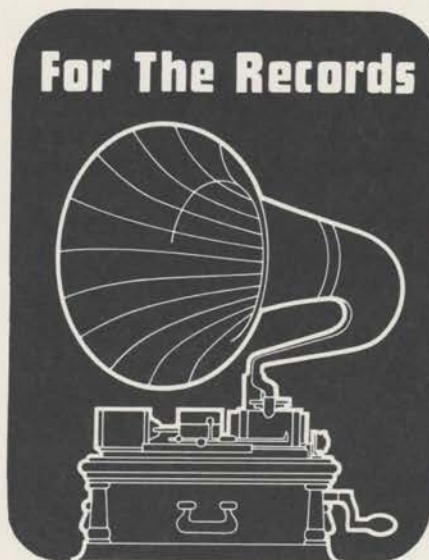
Lowell Ayars.

the most theatrical Kimballs we've heard, either in person or on records. And Lowell takes every opportunity to exploit those qualities. Big hall miking helps with the "I'm sitting in the best seat in the house" illusion.

Lowell Ayars started his career near the close of the silent film era, so he knows all the methods of getting the most from a theatrical instrument. He prefers mostly the mellow, full combination sound to the brassy, punctuated ones but he also uses some intriguing solo combinations. His playing is satisfying rather than startling. While his arrangements are pure theatre organ he has included such recent titles as "Summer of '42," "Time in a Bottle" and "I Wish You Love," tunes which adapt well to theatrical stylings. But it's his 10-minute medley of four tunes from *Showboat* which benefit most from Lowell's stylings.

Lowell is known as a "singing organist" and has included two pleasant vocals, "I Wish You Love" and "They Didn't Believe Me." He pays tribute to much-neglected tunesmith Neil Moret with a medley of "Song of the Wanderer," "I Got a Woman Crazy for Me" and durable "Chloe," still being pursued through the Everglades by a determined suitor.

He knows how to wring a torch song dry, too, as during "I Got a Woman" and "Can't Help Lovin' That Man." The oldies are obviously Lowell's strongest area and he does well by a brass-studded "You're



LOWELL AYARS AT LAST, playing the Dickinson Kimball. DTOS-2001 stereo. \$8.00 postpaid from Dickinson Theatre Organ Society, 1801 Milltown Road, Wilmington, Delaware 19808.

As the jacket notes inform us, Lowell Ayars has performed at more ATOS conventions than any other organist (over the past 15 years), but this is his first grooving. Hence, the album title, the one Lowell's many fans have been waiting for.

The organ, a 3/19 Kimball when in the Philadelphia Boyd Theatre, has been enlarged by 11 well selected, matching ranks. It is one of

Mr. Muri's opinions expressed herein are his own and do not necessarily reflect the policies of ATOS or THE-ATRE ORGAN Magazine.

the Cream in my Coffee" and the most haunting "The Boy Next Door" since George Wright's mid-'50s version. His registration gets a bit ponderous during "Liebesfreud," a tune composer Fritz Kreisler conceived as a violin solo with piano accompaniment, but no more so than other organists who have recorded this concert piece.

Percussions are used sparingly and even then are kept in the background, except during "The Woman in the Shoe," a '20s novelty tune. Recording is top drawer, with emphasis on large auditorium perspective. Grant Whitcomb's jacket notes provide information about the instrument, artist and tunes from a well-informed viewpoint. The review pressing was exceptionally smooth and noise free.

Here's a fine recording of a seasoned artist performing his arrangements of selections well adapted to theatre organ, and played on one of the most satisfying theatre instruments. Understatement is the rule but Lowell's "Old Man River" is as majestic and emphatic a tribute to the big stream as one could hope for.

THANKS FOR THE MEMORY. Don Croom playing the Arden (Calif.) Pizza & Pipes 4/20 Wurlitzer. Upbeat label (stereo). \$5.95 (record, 8-track or Cassette) postpaid from Upbeat Records, 4431 Lockwood Way, Sacramento, Calif. 95821.

When submitting his record for review, Don Croom enclosed a note: "This album, at best, is an introduction to the professional music career from which to grow . . . toward an understanding of orchestration, composition and the performance of music." As Don states, it's an introduction, not the end product; if considered in this light, it offers many enjoyable moments.

Don's working experience adds up to about a year of performing for pizza parlor denizens, although his musical background started at age seven. He's had his schooling so this record has got to reflect the music close to his experience, an album designed to sell over the console to enchanted pizza enthusiasts (besides, the inclusion of "Somewhere My Love" is a dead giveaway). But Don's



Don Croom.

musical values do not stop there. He has turned out a variety program with titles with appeal to many tastes.

The organ is the one originally assembled from two smaller Wurlitzers for the Replica recording studio in Des Plaines, Illinois by Bill Huck in the '50s. From there it went to the home of Dr. Ray Lawson in Montreal, where a few professional releases were made. The Replica studio was a "dead room," but the organ recorded well in the Lawson residence as a theatre organ. It is somewhat less theatrical in the Arden location, probably the penalty of becoming a "pizza organ."

Too often the sound is thick, almost "churchie," and the trem adjustments don't help, except for an attractive Tibia chorus which is heard for less than a minute. From the recording we can't tell whether the organ has a ponderous 8' pedal, but it certainly "sticks out" during several selections. It could be the miking.

Don starts out with a delightful

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potpourri entitled "I Love Kids," during which the tune sleuth will recognize "Pink Panther," "Mickey Mouse March," "Popeye the Sailor-man," "That's All, Folks," "Small World," "Heigh-Ho" and several others of that genre.

"Star Trek" bears some resemblance to the sci-fi program signature but is melodically and harmonically inaccurate. It will not please "Trekkers."

"And I Love Her" coupled with "Yesterday" are a pair of tender Beatles tunes with too much "upper work" in the registration to be classed as tender. Otherwise, well played.

There's plenty of bounce and syncopation applied to "Rock Around the Clock," a welcome '50s "oldie."

"William Tell Overture" (actually the Finale) is more Lone Ranger than Rossini. Don plays all the notes but for an uncritical audience.

"The Hustle" suffers from that obtrusive pedal, plus a few pedal clinkers. Otherwise OK.

"MacArthur Park" starts almost as film score music and graduates to the frenetic. One of Don's best arrangements.

"Duelling Banjos" is a perfect example of "Gebrauchsmusik." It makes sense as used in the film *Deliverance* but minus the plot it doesn't add up to much. Yet Don's performance gives it color.

"12th Street Rag" is heavy with percussions, and good use is made of the Brass voices. It's well played, including the variations, but marred by obtrusive schmears.

"Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head" is a charmer, aided by subtle use of Glock and Chrysoglott near the end.

"Somewhere My Love" introduces a fine sounding Tibia chorus for a few seconds in the verse. And there's a brief counterpointing of the "Nicholas & Alexandra" theme near the end. It helps add new life to this over-recorded potboiler.

"Syncopated Clock" is well played, so is the closer, "Thanks for the Memory" with its diverse tempos and offbeat harmonic treatment.

Next to closing is Ferde Grofe's "On the Trail," one of Don's best. This selection alone places his abilities far above those of the typical "pizza plunker." We'd venture the opinion that he's a comer.

Recording is in closeup perspec-

tive. Jacket notes supply some history of Don Croom and the instrument. Summarizing, it's a promising first try.

CANDI, played on a 2/11 Wurlitzer by Candi Carley. No. MxRC 2001 (stereo). \$6.00 postpaid from Minx Record Co. Box 737, Norwalk, Calif. 90650.

This is the record debut of a young lady we've been watching and listening to for several years, watching because she's a pleasure to look at, listen-to because her music has a very strong appeal. Her repertoire range is wide, from Dixieland to rock, from ballads to classics. Now in her mid '20s, Candi (yes, that's really her name) has been musical since about the age of two. Blind since shortly after birth, she turned to music. Her story was told in the June/July issue of this magazine.

It was inevitable that Candi would turn to the pipe organ. She took a job at the "Great American Wind Machine" (formerly "Pipe and Pizza") in Reseda, Calif. The pizzeria opened in 1969 with the 2/10 Wurlitzer originally installed in the Beverly Theatre, Beverly Hills, but the instrument was not thoroughly reconditioned until current owner Mike Ohman came on the scene. He promptly added a brand new Posthorn.

Candi's record was played on the now 2/11 as reconstituted by Mike, and the transformation changes it



Candi Carley, shown at the flower-decked console during her recent concert at the Los Angeles Wiltern. (Pepic)

from an adequate instrument to a very good one. The balance is excellent and the one small flaw we noted was that all the ranks were not fully in tune with one another on some tunes, a condition only the "true pitchers" will catch, and then it isn't much of a deviation.

Candi soon proves that she is interested in many styles of playing and she is able to perform with great

accuracy, not to mention a delightful flair for catching the essence of each selection. The '20s style selections include "Oh!" (1919), "How Lucky Can You Get?," "I'm Confessin'" (with a hint of Crawford), "I Got Rhythm" and "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans." Candi's jazz stylings are done with all the abandon and freedom of an after hours jam session participant. Her "rides" are

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well constructed, and her orchestration is superb.

Candi reconstructs a swinging 1942 styling of "Things Aren't What They Used to Be" with all the verve and interplay between brass and reeds remembered from those days. Then she goes into a soporific "You Light Up My Life" which would put dollar signs in the eyes of Debbie Boone, not to mention a couple of tears. Other current tunes are "The Candy Man," "The Way We Were" (a beauty) and John Denver's "Sunshine on my Shoulder." She also includes the 1935 tune, "These Foolish Things," a favorite of Wind Machine guzzlers and chompers. Candi's salute to rock is an intense and exuberant "Philadelphia Freedom." In fact, it's wild.

The jacket includes notes about Candi and the music, plus two photos of her. Recording is in closeup perspective and we'd venture a guess that some reverb has been added. Incidentally, the producer of the record was Maria Kumagai, a skilled organist in her own right. Miss Kumagai also taped the music.

There's an exuberance in Candi Carley's arrangements and performance that words can't quite describe. For example she adds little, expressive touches in unexpected places, and she usually avoids using an end-phrase filler or riff a second time, preferring to come up with a new device next time around. Her head is obviously bubbling with musical ideas that demand expression so Candi loses no opportunity. She's the most innovative newcomer to records of the current batch.

HEARTS AND FLOWERS. Robin Richmond playing the 3/19 ex-Paramount/Odeon Wurlitzer, Newcastle. DJM 22073 (stereo). \$7.00 postpaid (surface mail) from Robin Richmond, 16 Bathurst Mews, London W2 25B, England. Checks on US banks okay.

British organist Robin Richmond has become known to US aficionados through his two concert tours in the USA and his previous recordings. US audiences have come to expect British stylings of Robin and he comes through, although he does so using about 99 percent US-originated tunes. His latest release is a



Robin Richmond.

(Stufata)

good example. Actually, it's a continuation of his "The Hollywood Years" release reviewed a year ago, but it isn't as ambitious an undertaking on the part of DJM Records Ltd; the jacket artwork and program notes are minimal compared with those afforded the previous release. And our review copy had been pressed just enough off center to put a slight "wow" in the pitched percussions, and on both sides.

But, if the buyer is blessed with a perfectly centered pressing, this album has much to recommend it. First, there are only three selections played in pure quickstep tempo — "Over my Shoulder," "I'm a Dreamer," and "Toot, Toot Tootsie," the latter with well conceived jazz riffs. Some readers claim that the quickstep thing makes all organists sound alike. If you are one of those, here are 3 tunes by any British organist whose name you fancy.

Robin Richmond is especially strong in the ballad area: "Sweet Mystery of Life," "Memories of You," "Goodnight My Love," "When I Grow Too Old to Dream," "Hearts and Flowers" (yes, that one!) and "Sonny Boy," although that last tune suffers from repeated melody errors. Then there are the novelties; "Redwing," "Stormy Weather" (a ballad with organ-generated storm sounds), "Dance of the Cuckoos (loosely based on the Laurel and Hardy film title theme), "Coppin' Robbers" (the familiar villain theme followed by chase mu-

sic), and a "Blue Horizon" with the inevitable train sounds. Then the dance tunes: "Broadway Melody" and "Carioca," both with a strong beat.

In all it's an interesting show despite small flaws. Incidentally, note that we listed the price by surface mail delivery (you couldn't afford air mail anymore); it takes up to 3 months, so don't get impatient.

The organ is now installed in the Kitchen Brothers motor showroom at Diss, Norfolk. The acoustic environment is good. It's a fine sounding instrument. Jacket notes total 6 lines but there's a good photo of Robin at the console.

MEET JERRY NAGANO, playing the 3/16 Wurlitzer in the San Gabriel (Calif.) Civic Auditorium. Jerri-Co lable, No. JCP-1001 (stereo). \$7.00 postpaid from Jerri-Co productions, 905 Alfred Place, Montebello, Calif. 90640.

Jerry Nagano first caught our ear when he played at the LA chapter's 1973 stanza of its annual *Stars of Tomorrow* show, when he was 16. The way he handled that 4/37 Wiltern Theatre Kimball indicated he was well on his way. This, his first recording, reaffirms the confidence he earned 5 years ago.

The San Gabriel organ is well known to readers of this column, having been recorded in the past by Greg Rister, Gaylord Carter, Helen Dell and George Wright. In brief, it's an excellent recording organ.

Jerry's program has much variety, with a range which includes gospel (disguised as pops), marches, current pops, standards, movie themes, show music, an authentic Japanese pop — even a favorite Italian folk song.

Jerry's overture is a jazzy arrangement of modern hymn tunes, the PTL (video) program theme, with a hint also of "Bringing in the Sheaves." Show tunes include "Aba Daba Honeymoon," "Comedy Tonight" (from *A Funny Thing Happened on the way to the Forum*) and "Everyone Says I Love You" (from the Marx Brothers' *Horsefeathers*). "Bugler's Holiday" is happy music, and "Blaze Away" finds us in the reviewing stand as Jerry's brass band swings by. "Rainy Days and Mon-



Jerry Nagano.

days" is a current pop which Jerry hopes will do for him what it did for The Carpenters — become a "million seller."

To start side 2, Jerry again opens his hymnal and produces a peppy bit of intermission music, "I Never Shall Forget the Day," just right for the popcorn break. He seems to enjoy making hymn tunes sound like something else; even his "Onward Christian Soldiers" has the majesty of a coronation march. But he takes few liberties with "Mattinata." In

his hands it's still an ode to sunrise. "China Night" is the Japanese tune; it has the sound of a Hollywood oriental fantasy.

Our favorite is Jerry's sensitive reading of the 1934 hit, "Stars Fell on Alabama." He plays it as its writer intended, an ode to a beautiful night, and with supernal registration.

Jerry Nagano is a product of modern conceptions of playing, especially in his ever-changing registration. He seems to have no set style, preferring

to approach each title with no preconceptions. He does what his imagination tells him to present the tune in its best light. He has developed an amazing technique. His agility on the pedals gives him the equivalent of a third hand, and he performs without mannerisms.

Recording is good, with just the right balance between hall sound and closeup miking. Ken Kukuk and his ATOS crew had the Wurli in top shape for this session. □

Warren Lubich Performs at Historic Theatre.

In July, Warren Lubich, no stranger to these columns, flew from San Francisco to Boise to play an inspired program on the 2/8 Robert Morton organ in the perfect acoustical environment of the Ada Theatre. The 1100-seat auditorium was a near sell-out.

Warren's prologue extended from the delicate moods of Victor Herbert to the rousing marches of John Philip Sousa; this was followed by a half-hour sing-along. The organist's ability to communicate with his audience

produced a vocal participation seldom experienced.

Next on the program was one of Mack Sennett's comedy shorts, *The Daredevil*, starring Ben Turpin, followed by Buster Keaton in *College* (1927).

Warren's tonal narration was always harmonious with the action on the screen; his well-timed climactic improvisations kept the audience in an almost continuous state of uproar. At the final note a thousand people were instantly on their feet with enthusiastic applause and tribute.

However, Warren must share the success of the program with a dedicated and determined group of public spirited citizens; the Egyptian Foundation (the Ada was originally named the Egyptian) and the Idaho Historic Preservation Council, which were instrumental in having the building officially designated as a National Historic Edifice just prior to its intended demolition by Urban Renewal. The organ was saved by the generosity and efforts of a group of Boise businessmen led by Ron Thurber, a prominent Boise architect. Romaine G. Hon is one of the prime movers in the Boise Chapter of the National Historic Society. Thanks to them, we and future generations will be able to hear the sound of that marvelous instrument.

Just a few days prior to the program, it was discovered that vandals had broken into the theatre and stolen a dozen pipes, and removed several others. However, it was possible to obtain replacements from Twin Falls (100 miles away) in time.

Our thanks to the Ada Theatre management and Warren Lubich for a most memorable evening.

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