

## 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 (postpaid price, ordering address,) if applicable, and a black and white photo of the artist which need not be returned.*

**CHRISTMAS JOY, Frank Cimmino playing the 3/17 Wurlitzer in the Wanaque, New Jersey, Suburbian Restaurant. HMR 1083, stereo. \$7.00 postpaid from HMR Productions, 574 West Court, Scotch Plains, N.J. 07076.**

'Tis the season to think about that Christmas record you want for the coming holidays, or as a present for Aunt Mehitabel, who likes those fine old Christmas chestnuts, perhaps presented in updated versions, with



Frank Cimmino.

(Stufoto)

some newer material thrown in to establish a contrast with the many existing holiday platters.

This collection of Christmas music was recorded at about the same time as the previous Cimmino album we reviewed, *Dining at the Suburbian*.

The instrument is the 3/17 Wurlitzer in the New Jersey restaurant. It has a full sound as recorded in close perspective. Sharp ears will detect that the organ needs a more precise tuning than recorded here but it's not far enough out that the tremos don't cover small deviations.

The tunelist includes some standards associated with the holiday season e.g. "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm," "Winter," and "Winter Wonderland" plus a delightful "Christmas Joy" written by an E.M. Cimmino, who may be a relative. Among the offbeat selections is a T.O. version of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" which comes off very well, including some tricky pedaling.

Remaining selections are the usual Christmas fare: "Jingle Bells," "Ring Merrily Bells," "Adeste Fideles," "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," "Deck the Halls," "O Holy Night," "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," "Silent Night." A tune difficult to pigeonhole is Kountz' "Star of Bethlehem." It has both traditional and pop values as arranged by Frank.

The registration is theatrical with an occasional burst of untrem'd brevity. Frank doesn't monkey very much with traditional harmony, but there's a sparkle and enthusiasm in his playing which does well by the tunes. If there's a criticism it's in the absence of key changes; Frank plays mostly in the keys of C and F. However, if this is a flaw it is largely diluted by the soaring and imaginative progressions which Frank plays between choruses or verses. They are reminiscent of the flights of fancy Dick Leibert used so often during intermission interludes at Radio City Music Hall.

Recording is good; the music is heard as one dining at the Suburbian might hear it. The review pressing was free of surface flaws. One thing this label needs is more revealing jacket information, which for this album runs to nine brief lines. For example, a talented composer such as "E.M. Cimmino" deserves more than a name listing.



Harry Koenig.

**HARRY KOENIG AT THE MIGHTY WURLITZER, played on the DTOC organ in the Senate Theater, Detroit. \$10.00 postpaid from Harry Koenig Cancer Research Foundation, 8101 Milwaukee Ave., Niles, Illinois 60648.**

Get ready for a fine old-fashioned recital in the theatre organ style! At first glance \$10.00 may seem rather steep for a record album. But look at it this way; that \$10.00 is deductible from your next compulsory contribution to the IRS because it is a contribution to an approved charity. So in effect, you get the record free.

Harry Koenig is a remarkable individual. He has been associated with music all his life, as a concert pianist and hotel orchestra leader. And he was also a silent film organist. In 1969 he had a bout with cancer — and won the battle (he's still alive and making music 11 years later). This experience changed the whole focus of his life; from the time of his recovery he decided to fight the blight of cancer in the most effective way — with money for research. First with an album of piano interpretations, now with a record of theatre organ selections. Harry wants it known that every cent of the funds received for his recordings go into cancer research. He deducts nothing for expenses, which are born by him. So, no one can argue with Frank's motives. So, how's his music?

Very good, we are happy to report. The selections are played on the Detroit Theater Organ Club's 4/34



Wurlitzer, one of the finest recording organs, and it was in top condition for the recording session which followed a concert Frank played for DTOC members.

The list of selections is most unusual, in that Harry avoids the "most requested" trivia in favor of more meaningful tunes. Let's examine them individually.

Harry opens with an unfamiliar and charming "Frat March" (no composers are listed) with subtle use made of the organ's brass but without percussions. Next it's a journey to France for a minor mode waltz entitled "Under Paris Skies" followed by "Padam Padam," another continental favorite which includes the verse. Next he presents an original improvisation which sounds like a silent movie intermezzo. After the intro comes a bit which might be dubbed "Inspiration" followed by a neutral theme for plot development, then back to variations on the inspirational theme. Perfect for Wallace Reid, Wesley Barry and Tom Meighan movies!

The next stop is Vienna for a mish-mash labelled "Bruderlein Fein" which includes bits of several Austrian "Volkslieder" including a hint of Strauss. Then to Italy and the tragic clown *Pagliacci* for "Vesti la Giubba." The principal theme from the always charming *Pearl Fishers* follows, then a majestic "Pilgrims' Chorus" but minus the embellishment Richard Wagner wrote into it for the "Venusberg" sequence of the opera *Tannhauser*.

In the Italian vein are a smooth "Ciribiribin" and a plaintive "Come Back to Sorrento." Then to *Showboat* for a romantic "My Bill" followed by a broad "Ol' Man River" in a grandiose style. Then to Norse country for "Strange Music" and "Jalousie." But it's back to the US of A for the closers, "Pennsylvania Polka," which somehow gets involved with Sousa's "Stars 'n Stripes," then a lowdown "St. Louis Blues."

Harry exhibits very few "trade-marks" beyond an occasional downward chromatic fingered glissando. For the most part he honors the songwriters intent. If there is a criticism, it would be limited to the lack of sufficient registration changes one might expect from such a large and varied instrument. This is in part ex-

plained by the brief time scheduled for the recording session, just a few hours for the 16 selections and hardly enough for the organist to become familiar with all the facilities. But this is largely offset by Harry's top-flight shading. His phrasing is outstanding.

It's all old-time theatre organ but in the best tradition of the instrument's silent film days. Recording is good, jacket notes brief but adequate. The review pressing was slightly warped but not enough to cause distortion. In all, it's a good show by an old pro. And the cause is a noble one.

**GEORGE WRIGHT'S ENCORES, VOLUME II, played on the Vaughn residence 5/21 Wurlitzer. DO 1420 stereo \$6.95 (plus \$1.00 postage/handling per order, not per album) by mail from Doric Records, Box 282, Monterey, Calif. 93940.**

This is Doric's third re-issue of a complete Hi-Fi label George Wright album and the first re-issue played on the ex-Chicago Paradise Theatre Organ, then installed in the Robert Vaughn residence in Inglewood, Calif. The instrument, according to numerous Wright fans, was the best-sounding instrument George ever recorded. Indeed, it does have an intimacy not easily attainable in a theatre, and its Tibia is easily one of the finest examples of that tonality.

Selections are "Granada," "Laura," "Passion Flower (Strayhorn)," "I've Got the World on a String," "Orchids in the Moonlight," "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," "Veradero," "April in Paris," "Bahia," "If I Love Again," "Pizzicato Polka," "Under the Double Eagle."

Because readers have got to be well aware of the quality of George's playing, there's no need for a tune-by-tune rundown. His imaginative arrangements, taste and faultless performance were quite evident in the '50s when these tunes were first taped.

As with the previous re-issues of Hi-Fi label originals, the 3-track tapes provided the basic materials for the re-equalizing and re-mastering by Doric technicians. New state of the art techniques have provided a superior product.

A couple of comments are appro-

priate. That piccolo player who shows up whenever George records "The Stars and Stripes Forever," makes a brief but prominent contribution to "Under the Double Eagle" with some embellishing chirps. And the "bird" is missing from "Bahia," although it is referred to in the jacket notes. Apparently, when Doric leased the tapes, they forgot to ask for the services of the slow-speaking mocking bird which originally supplied a "Quiet Village" style commentary over "Bahia." So, this time we won't get the bird, but we won't miss his chatter; the tune stands alone very well.



Fred Bock.

**AMERICA'S 50 FAVORITE HYMNS AND GOSPEL SONGS, VOLUME II, played by Fred Bock on the Whitney Studio 4/34 Robert Morton organ. Two record set. \$8.95 postpaid from Impact Records, 365 Great Circle Rd., Nashville, Tennessee 37228.**

We have reviewed a goodly number of Fred Bock's albums in the past. His pattern does not vary; it's always hymns or gospel tunes presented with full theatre organ registration. As we have said in past reviews, for those unfamiliar with the hymns, it will sound like silent film or radio cue music. Fred plays mostly in pop music style and the entertainment value is high. How he manages to cram more than 50 titles on four sides is Fred's secret. The tunes never sound truncated nor crowded, but the bass must be attenuated some to make room for up to 13 tunes per side.



The instrument is the now rarely recorded Robert Morton organ built up from a 3/14 (with circa seven Wurlitzer ranks) by the former owner of the facility, Lorin Whitney, now retired.



Lorin Whitney.

(Stufoto)

The studio was once the Mecca for all major West Coast recording organists — Don Baker, Eddie Dunstetter, Jesse Crawford, Buddy Cole, Ann Leaf, George Wright (using an alias) and many others; it was then the only studio with a large organ and such extensive and refined recording facilities. In recent years it has been heard from less and less, with the Electric Lemon label's cadaverous "Erik" (actually Verne Langdon) being among the most recent to release solo records played on the instrument.

We'll make no attempt to list all 50 selections, beyond stating that there are more unfamiliar than recognizable ones. Fred's arrangements add greatly to the entertainment value. His registration variety is a delight.

The organ has a character all its own, falling into the "WurliMorton" classification, which, like the late Buddy Cole's studio organ, features the best voices of both brands in a lush blend.

It's a two-record set and at no time does the auditioner reach a saturation point, so varied are the arrangements, moods established and treatments. This set has no jacket notes beyond a few lines about organist Bock, who would have no trouble making it as a pop/theatre organist. Instead, the double jacket features inspirational photos which illustrate the theme of the set.

Recording is good. The review pressings were smooth and free of waver and pops. A good buy. □

**November 28, 29, 30, 1980**

## Chicago Weekender

The Chicago Weekender, hosted by CATOE on November 28, 29 and 30, 1980, will be a fun-filled and exciting Friday, Saturday and Sunday to be enjoyed and remembered.

The ATOS Regional Convention headquarters will be at the Bismarck Hotel in downtown Chicago, at Randolph and La Salle streets. Registration opens Friday, November 28th, at 12 noon.

After a get-acquainted afternoon, you will board buses at the hotel at 7:30 p.m. and depart for the Scottish Rite Cathedral, where the very able Chicago organist Devon Hollingsworth will open the weekend's activities.

Later in the evening you will visit the Oriental Theatre where the artistic Rob Calcaterra will take command of the big 4-manual Wurlitzer. This promises to be a night to remember for it will be the very last time you will see and hear the Oriental "as we know it." Starting in December, the theatre will be divided and the console will be moved to the balcony level. We therefore strongly urge you to join us for this LAST session to hear the Oriental Wurlitzer in all its glory.

Saturday morning, at 10 o'clock, you will be bused to Maine Township North High School to hear and enjoy CATOE's talented Walter Strony perform at CATOE's own 3/10 Wurlitzer.

Saturday afternoon the buses will take you to St. Mary of the Lake Auditorium, in Mundelein, to hear the artistic Lance Luce play the 4-manual Wurlitzer.

Saturday evening we will be back at the Bismarck Hotel, a Chicago landmark in its own right. A cocktail party will begin at 6 p.m. followed by the banquet in the old Palace Theatre at 7:30 p.m. A surprise artist will furnish some excellent musical entertainment.

Sunday morning you will take a leisurely walk to the stately Chicago Theatre. Several members have contributed much time in dressing up the theatre as well as the organ. CATOE hopes everyone will enjoy and cherish this beautiful setting



when the exciting Dennis James will put the big Wurlitzer through her paces and entertain you with a 35 mm silent comedy.

All bus trips will return to the Bismarck Hotel in time for unhurried lunch and dinner occasions.

Room reservations should be made directly with the Bismarck Hotel, 171 W. Randolph St., Chicago, IL 60601. (312) 236-0123. Be sure to tell them you are coming for CATOE's Chicago Weekender so that you will be able to take advantage of the reduced rates which are: One person to a room, \$24 a night; two persons to a room, \$30 per night. Reasonable parking on nearby Wells and La Salle streets.

Convention registration, including bus transportation and banquet is \$75 per person. (There will be no single event tickets.)

Mail registrations to: CATOE, P.O. Box 25, Glenwood, IL 60425.

For further information write: CATOE, 6244 W. Eddy, Chicago, IL 60634, or phone: (312) 282-0037. □