



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 Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.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
P.O. Box 1314
Salinas, Calif. 93902

Dear Sir:

I read, with interest, the article *Of Pros and Bums* by Bill Reeves. I have encountered several people in the past who also played in that key of G flat. One of them was a professional piano player and was holding forth at the Piano Bar at the Robidoux Hotel in St. Joseph, Missouri. He was never ashamed of the fact that he was an "ear" player and was mostly on all the black keys on the keyboard, so I won't mind mentioning his name. He was Jack Jackson.

Whenever I went to St. Joe I usually dropped in to hear Jack Jackson — as he sounded good in his renditions of the pieces. Through conversation with Jack, he discovered that I was an organist. Immediately he became self-conscious of the fact that he was a "G flat faker" as he called himself. I could see his fingers on the keyboard and had already spotted the fact that he seldom was on the white keys.

The main point of this, to ease Mr. Reeves' thoughts, Jack had been in professional music for quite a few years and no one, except another professional keyboard player, knew that he "faked." He always had a

job. On the side, as an admirer of Eddie Peabody, Jack would spend his spare time in his room practicing on a banjo and emulating Eddie Peabody. To practice the Peabody trick of spinning the banjo horizontally, Jack would stand next to his bed so the banjo would drop on the bed when he missed catching it after the spin.

I have encountered two men who played organ, and were G flat players. They sounded quite good. In both these cases they were exploring the possibilities of taking lessons in order to "play right." In both cases I suggested that they should *not* take lessons. They were able to quickly pick up a new piece by ear and make it sound reasonably well. To start them on reading music, in my opinion, would have wrecked what they were doing and spoil the enjoyment they were getting. Neither wished to go into professional music. They only wished to play for their own enjoyment.

Mr. Reeves mentioning the way he observed one organist taking over from the other at the theatre by super-imposing his fingers over the other's fingers (or under as the case may be), brought to mind the numerous times I have done this with my fellow organists at theatres where I worked. It became so much part of the playing in the theatre that we did it almost automatically.

Regarding the organist who quickly picked up what the Pasadena High School band was playing, it does not necessarily follow that the organist was an "ear player." All that was necessary was to catch the melody notes, which quickly indicated the key. Then the organist could chord with the band. Most bands used standard parade marches, so most theatre organists had probably played those marches for the newsreels many times. One then plays from memory. Repetition of pieces is a great way of memorizing.

Sincerely,

Harry J. Jenkins
San Diego, California

Dear Record Reviewer,

You posed a question in your review of *Christmas Joy*, with Frank Cimmino at the Suburban Wurlitzer. Since I have had the privilege of substituting for Frank and am a close friend of the family, I felt that I



Meet "E. M. Cimmino."

would be the likely one to answer that question, "Who is E. M. Cimmino?" Aside from being Frank's mom and my "Aunt Et," she is a very accomplished pianist and composer. "E. M." stands for "Ethel Marie," who is a former church organist and has written four very well-known songs, two of which Frank has recorded. They are: "Christmas Joy," "All Because of Spring," "Summer Fun," and "Blue Notes."

I hope this removes some of the questions that you had about the very talented "E. M. Cimmino."

Ralph Ringstad
Whippany, N.J.

Moving?

Send your change of address to . . .

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