

table recorder is your best bet. Other companies offer similar machines, so shop around, but to get the kind of performance described, be sure the recorder has these minimum specs: Wow and Flutter: no greater than .12%. Frequency response: 40-12,000 c.p.s. (down no more than 3 db at either extreme). Built in condenser mike (as opposed to a dynamic mike). Signal-to-noise ratio: 45-50 db (no Dolby). A large, usable VU meter (approx. 1½" high and 3" wide). Battery life: at least 4 hrs. (usually 4 "D" cells). Price range: \$140-\$190 (list). Also: defeatable automatic level control (uncompressed recordings of music sound better).

That top end of 12,000 c.p.s. may seem a little restricted, but it gives far more openness of sound than you would think. And remember, in a cassette, the tiny 1/8" wide tape is crawling across the heads at less than 2 i.p.s.! Similar stereo units are on the market, but these generally entail the extra purchase of 2 mikes. The total investment can run to about \$400 if you go that route.

In the realm of component cassette decks (non-portable), many makers have models in the \$200 range that are very good performers, but the theatre organ enthusiast may find them lacking for his purposes. If you spot one that looks promising, go to the store with a pipe organ recording with some percussion (cymbals, triangles, etc.) and well-recorded 16's (Tibia, Diaphone, etc.) to check both the highs and response down into the region of 30 c.p.s. Using a pair of loudspeakers with clean, wide-range response, a solid 80-watt amplifier and a good turntable/

cartridge combination, have the salesman record portions of your record on the deck to be tested, using a better-quality cassette. If the recorder has any "noise reduction" circuitry, leave it *off* for both recording and playback. Most of these devices tend to introduce side effects. With the improvements in both machinery and tape in the past few years, these "hiss killers" aren't as necessary as they once were. My personal opinion, generally speaking, is that the less signal processing, the better. Most moderate priced cassette decks have a good high end for the format, but pedal fundamentals don't always get through too well. Listen very carefully before making a decision.

Cassette vs. open reel; which one? It all depends on your demands. Cassettes offer ease of handling, portable models are light to carry around, but because of the smaller size of the heads, guides and tape, along with slower running speed, alignment is more critical than with open reel, and the frequency response and dynamic range are not as wide. Some cassette decks are turning in very impressive wow/flutter figures, but tests using continuous tones indicate that open reel still has the edge in speed stability. Some very expensive cassette decks are now being offered, but you could buy an open reel machine with superior performance and durability for the same price. With open reel, a greater area of tape is running past the heads per second (a function of both wider tape and higher speed), giving that format a better signal-to-noise ratio (which is why you don't see many open reel units with noise reduction circuits). Being larger and generally more robust physically, they tend to keep their "sharp edge" longer with regard to speed stability and frequency response. So if your budget imposes a limit of about \$200, and you need portability, go cassette. If you can spend more and want top performance, you'll probably be more satisfied with open reel. Cassette machines have become quite good, but open reel will remain the preference of professionals and serious amateurs for the foreseeable future.

NEXT: Getting more bass from your loudspeakers . . . without muddying up everything else. □

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 (post-paid price, ordering address,) if applicable, and a black and white photo of the artist which need not be returned.

GEORGE WRIGHT'S SHOW-TIME, played on the San Francisco Fox Theatre 4/36 Wurlitzer. DO 1417 stereo. THE ROARING '20s. Same instrument and organist as above. DO 1418 stereo. Both available by mail from Doric Records, Box 877, Vacaville, Calif. 95696. \$6.50 each postpaid plus \$1.00 postage and handling per order (not per record) in the USA.

Both albums are reissues of considerable historical and musical value. Both were recorded about 20 years ago and released on the Hi-Fi label. That was during a period when the resurgence of interest in the theatre organ was burgeoning rapidly. It was all new, especially the improved recording quality (over the old '78s) of an instrument difficult to capture in grooves. Emory Cook had pioneered on the east coast with his Reg. Foort series played on the Richmond Mosque Wurlitzer. Richard Vaughn was not far behind with his Hi-Fi label. The first George Wright organ release by Hi-Fi created a sensation among enthusiasts. It was played on the 5/21 Wurlitzer

**IN
1982
IT'S
DETROIT!**

from Chicago's Paradise Theatre, which had been installed in the Vaughn California residence, the instrument heard on most of the Hi-Fi/Wright recordings. But for these releases, Vaughn moved his 3-channel equipment to San Francisco's Fox movie palace. The organ there was familiar to Wright, who had played it for special events, previews and spotlight solos during the World War II years.

Showtime selections: "There's No Business Like Show Business," "My Funny Valentine," "The Lady is a Tramp," "Little Girl Blue," "The Man I Love," "Just One of Those Things." *Showboat* selections: "Make Believe," "Bill," "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," "Why Do I Love You," "You Are Love," "Ol' Man River."

Roaring '20s selections: "Charleston," "Song of the Wanderer," "That's A-Plenty," "It Happened in Monterey," "Toot Toot Tootsie Goodbye," "Then I'll be Happy," "You're the Cream in My Coffee," "Mississippi Mud," "You Do Something to Me," "Laugh Clown Laugh," "I Wanna Be Loved by You," "Just a Memory," "Varsity Drag."

The reader may wonder whether he needs the Doric re-issues if he already has his coveted Hi-Fi originals. It isn't a difficult decision. Chances are, the 20-year-old pressings are a bit scratchy by now. But even if they are "mint" there's another set of factors. The state of the transference art (from tape to pressings) has seen much progress over the years. The original tapes were made with an ear to the future in 3-track stereo, rather than the usual 2-track. That made it easier for Doric to remaster and re-equalize the music to take advantage of today's pressing techniques. A comparison on even a "medium-fi" playback will reveal the greater presence in the music on the Doric rereleases.

We can't describe the arrangements and performances as "vintage George," because he sounds about the same today, whether on records or in person. He has consistently maintained a high standard of musicianship over the years and these two discs provide excellent examples of his playing. One thing we noted in reviewing these discs is the difference in time he devotes to rhythm tunes as opposed to ballads. For the jazz

tunes, George says all he wants to usually in two minutes or less. The ballads get more time, three or more minutes. The Fox organ in the hands of this master glitters audibly.

Doric gives much attention to packaging. Hi-Fi rarely provided much information in its jacket notes. Doric supplies detailed lore about George (especially for the *Showtime* album); notes about the music, its writers, registration used; history of the theatre and its organ. All this information is concentrated on the backs of the albums. A uniform design, including a photo of the then Vaughn console, has been adopted for the front cover for the entire series of re-releases.

If the reader enjoys the music of George Wright playing one of the great Wurlitzers, enough said.

THE MIGHTY PIPE ORGAN PLAYS GOLDEN FAVORITES, on 8 records or four 8-track tapes or cassettes, \$32.96 plus applicable state tax and postage (records \$1.55, 8-track tapes \$.86, cassettes \$.63) from Readers Digest, Pleasantville, N.Y. 10570, Attn: Mrs. R. Caggiano.

This collection is indeed a monumental project. The *Digest* has released smaller pipe organ sets previously, notably the selection from George Wright's DOT label releases and before that a set entitled *Organ Memories*. All were well done, the latter featuring prominent organists of the USA and Britain. This new 8-record set may seem costly at first glance, but it breaks down to a little over \$4.00 a record, a very attractive price today, especially considering the calibre of the artists. They are Richard Leibert, William Davies, Billy Nalle, Paul Mickelson, Richard Purvis, Ashley Miller, Don Baker, Bill Thomson and Robin Richmond.

Some of the organists play their music on two instruments, of which eleven are theatre organs and five are romantic classical organs. The pop pipes include the Auditorium Theatre's 4/22 Wurlitzer (Rochester, N.Y.); Strand Theatre Wurlitzer (Plattsburg, N.Y.); Detroit's Senate Theatre 4/34 Wurlitzer; Radio City Music Hall's 4/58 Wurlitzer; San Sylmar (Calif.) "Tower of Beauty" Museum's 4/35 Wurlitzer; Brooklyn Paramount's 4/26 Wurlitzer; Wichi-

**Just a reminder
(since you probably
know this already...)**



THOMAS HAZLETON

He's very versatile, musical and extremely creative.

He plays lots of concerts.

He makes every organ sound better than ever.

Every audience loves him.

(He's also one of the country's most respected and experienced theater organ design/re-design consultants.)

**When is the last time
Tom played a
concert for you?**

exclusively represented by

ROBERT C. BIRNSTIHL

management & consultation services

1337 IRIS CT.
SAN JOSE, CA 95125
(408) 293-6833



ta's 4/38 Century II Wurlitzer; Roaring '20s Wurlitzer (Grand Rapids); Dick Loderhose's Renwick Recording Studio 4/42 Wurlitzer in New York; Cap'n's Galley Wurlitzer in Redwood City, Calif.; Odeon Theatre's 17-rank Compton organ in London. The romantic classical organs heard are the Wanamaker Store organ in Philadelphia; Boston's Symphony Hall Aeolian-Skinner organ; San Francisco's Grace Cathedral organ; organ in St. John the Divine Cathedral in New York; Royal Albert Hall organ (London).

There are 103 titles, too many to list. All are befitting the style of the player and his instrument. Most tunes heard are light classics or standards, some from opera and operetta, show tunes, a few marches (mostly classical) and even one hymn. Most are familiar tunes, long associated with the artist or the instrument. Two of the organists whose playing struck sympathetic chords at first hearing, speaking from the theatre organ viewpoint, were Robin Richmond and Don Baker. Their appeal was immediate to this reviewer. We stress here only the immediacy; others arrived with fine effect perhaps a bit later. In fact, we could not conjure a more representative group of popular pipe organ practitioners. The same cannot be said for the instruments if a cross section of pop pipe organ brands was intended. Outside of the one Compton all of the theatre instruments are Wurlitzers. There are some fine Robert Mortons, Kimballs, Pages, Mollers and other makes available for recordings, in case the *Digest* plans another foray into the organ album world. That comment in no way disparages any of the fine Wurlitzers heard here. It's just that a little more variety would be welcome.

Strict theatre organ aficionados may find a little too much of the "cathedral echos" idiom among the straight organ selections, meaning that the popular tastes which must be catered to do not allow the classical music artists to use their instruments to full classical advantage. The lighter mood in title and style prevails, which results in a number of sound-alike selections. Music to dream by, which isn't bad at all.

Not all of the music is newly recorded; some is left over from pre-

vious releases. For example, the organ played by Billy Nalle in the Plattsburg Strand was moved years ago to a Marietta, Georgia, restaurant. Likewise Dick Loderhose's Renwick Studio organ recorded in New York by Ashley Miller (it includes the 21 original ranks of Jesse Crawford's Times Square Paramount Building Studio organ) will henceforth be heard in the Bay Theatre, Seal Beach, California.

The engineers faced a gigantic task in adjusting the various recording characteristics encountered to a reasonably uniform frequency response, and they have succeeded. Thus we are spared the necessity of constantly adjusting tone controls during playback. We noticed some "white noise" on a couple of the sides, but not enough to affect enjoyment of the music.

There is an ample supply of notes on organists and instruments. The records are attractively packaged. Those who would like a list of selections before buying, can request a brochure from *Readers Digest*.

It's a well produced and elegant set of records and all who participated can be proud of their contributions.

Gaylord Carter, CARTER PLAYS MILLION DOLLAR ECHOES. Available from Film Technology Company, Inc., 6900 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90038. \$8.95 postpaid in USA.

If you wanted to release a sure-fire recording of a spanking new home installation you'd probably do just what Ralph Sargent and Alan Stark have done: call in Gaylord Carter and then hedge all bets with thirty of the best show tunes ever written. This Hollywood-based instrument (dedicated December 27, 1980) is 18 ranks of mostly Wurlitzer, plenty of percussions plus the Jesse Crawford Deagan Vibraharp and a nine foot concert grand piano. Granted, that's considerable hardware to pack into even a large living room, but the recorded results are most satisfactory, if one is not hung up on gobs of natural reverb. "Million Dollar Echoes" does sound like a million — but nary an acoustic echo graces the 35 minutes of organ music.

Gaylord generously stacks up four medleys of tunes by Herbert, Romberg, Friml and Berlin. He is, need-

less to say, on a first name basis with each composer. If the marching toys in Victor's *Toyland* seem wound up a bit too tight, Gaylord quickly settles down to a lovely Vox/Tibia treatment of "Kiss Me Again," letting us know precisely what romantic theatre organ music is all about. The organ's key response didn't seem quite fast enough to catch all the notes in "Italian Street Song," but "Gypsy Love Song" once again demonstrates how sweet music should be played — all honey and no saccharine. "Czardas" and "Romany Life" are done in the best Carter "chase music" tradition. The reviewer's personal favorite on the disc is the magnificent G.C. arrangement of "Ah! Sweet Mystery of Life." Counter melodies are perfect!

For his tribute to Sigmund's *Student Prince* Carter uses the snares judiciously to put a head on the "Drinking Song." One realizes during "Serenade" just how expertly regulated the tremors are, but the tempos get a bit hectic. The "Student March" struts along at a British pace. "Deep in My Heart" is the most fully developed of the Romberg ballads. The few seconds of *sforzando* showed the recording limitations of the installation.

Rudolf Friml favorites introduce the second side. "Chansonette" is, of course, the earlier version of "Donkey Serenade." Be advised that Gaylord's donkeys gallop at the speed of thoroughbreds. "Allah's Holiday" sparkles with the superb percussions of the Sargent/Stark creation. "Indian Love Call" with its Tibias and percussions shimmers like a clear mountain lake. Gorgeous! Small wonder that the four *Vagabond King* tunes are something of an anticlimax.

Thirty-five seconds of Berlin's "No Biz Like Show Biz" was enough, thank you. Of the ballads "Always" is by far the best, although one must admit that "Say It With Music" and "How Deep Is The Ocean?" are pretty tunes. Carter's grand finale "God Bless America" came on like "76 Kate Smiths" — a skipping march tempo.

This is a pleasant record in every department. The tunes and Carter arrangements of same are as comfortable as your favorite slippers. It also serves as a gentle reminder that Gaylord Carter doesn't need flicks to

charm an audience. Though the organ lacks reverb it doesn't lack presence or clarity or richness. Review pressing surfaces were good; jacket notes make good reading, and (ahem) Gaylord, if that really is your picture on the front cover, why have you been *under* the silver screen all these years? Shades of George Brent!

PLUG-IN CORNER

GEORGE WRIGHT: 42nd STREET and OTHER GOODIES, played on the Bob Power custom Rodgers organ. \$8.95 postpaid from Banda Records, Box 392, Oxnard, Calif. 93032

By now it's an old story how Bob Power commissioned the Rodgers Organ Co. to build him an electronic version of the Wurlitzer style 260 theatre organ. How well they succeeded is only partially evident on this platter because the circuitry has been updated considerably over the years, most recently by a gifted electronics engineer named Lee Sundstrom. For this recording, George Wright also got into the act by arriving a couple of days early and working with Lee to achieve the voicing George desired. The result of this cooperation between an organist who knows what he wants and an electronics expert who knows how to get it is little short of phenomenal. The Rodgers system of tone generation must be credited also; it has a versatile design which permits both volume and tonal (quality) scaling,



Bob Power and his custom "style 260" Rodgers. It now has a second Vox and a Brass Saxophone. (Stufoto)



Lee Sundstrom. He put in a year of five-day weeks adjusting and rebuilding tonal facilities, the Tibia five times. Results are illustrated in this album.

(Zimfoto)

which is not possible in many brand's stock models. It should also be mentioned that the original "style 260" design (14 "ranks") has been upped to 16. Sundstrom replaced the original Vox Humana with one of his own design, then added a second "Sundstrom Vox." The two compliment one another beautifully. From the original Rodgers Vox, Lee used the tone generators to fashion a Brass Saxophone. These new voices are heard to advantage in this album.

George Wright has long admired the pioneer Warner Bros. musical movies of the '30s with their Busby Berkeley overhead shots of undulating chorus girls making like a flower pattern. When Bob Power planned this recording, George suggested tunes from those wonderful '30s Warner Bros. musicals which brought instant stardom to vocalist Dick Powell and hooper Ruby Keeler. Despite the album title, tunes are not limited to the original 1933 *42nd Street* but on Side 1 cover several *Gold Diggers* and *Lullabye of Broadway* movies.

Side 1: "42nd Street," "About a Quarter to Nine," "You're Getting to be a Habit with Me," "Shadow Waltz," "Young and Healthy," "We're in the Money," "Lullabye of Broadway," and a reprise of "42nd Street."

Side 2 includes one more by the Harry Warren/Al Dubin team which

wrote all the songs on Side 1 — a bluesy "You Let Me Down." Others are tunes George likes to play: "Swinging Sweethearts," "This is all I Ask," "Bells of St. Mary's" and a Crawford re-creation, "I'm Confessin'."

Special mention must be made of one selection, the 1932 depression chaser, "Let's All Sing Like the Birdies Sing." Words fail to do justice to what George does to "Birdies." Where all the other tunes are played with emphasis on attractive presentation, this one is simply grotesque. The first chorus is straight enough, then the demon in George takes over with a duet between tuned canaries and the pedal Posthorn. After that there's a calliope/merry-go-round with the bass in one key, the treble in another. Of course, George is trying for laughs and this one will generate them.

People who avoid electronic organ records because they don't sound like pipes need have no fear of this one. The versatility in Rodgers circuitry and the genius of Lee Sundstrom, not to mention George Wright's musical acumen, have been combined to provide a fascinating package.

Recording is good. A minimum of reverb has been added by the processors, K M Records. Jacket notes reflect the era of the '30s Warner Bros. musicals. A goodie, as the title states. □

Send in your
Copy Now!
for...

Season's
Greetings

in the
Nov./Dec. Issue of
THEATRE ORGAN

Mail Copy To:
Len Clarke
ATOS Advertising
1839 Weeg Way
Park Ridge, Ill. 60068
PH (312)-692-9399