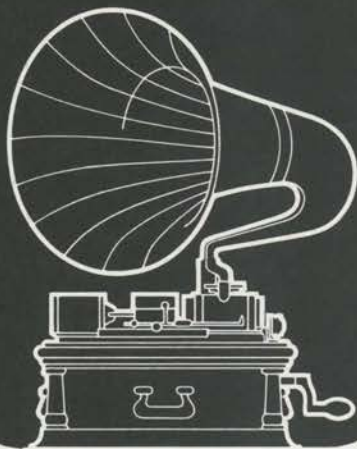


For The Records



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.

CINCINNATI FATS. Richard Hyman playing the Emery Theatre Wurlitzer. OVC-ATOS LP 101 (stereo). \$9.95 plus \$1.00 shipping (Ohioans add 55 cents tax) from OVC Records, Emery Theatre, 1112 Walnut Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45210.

This recording is long overdue. For many years this reviewer has been attempting to interest major organists in recreating those distinctive Waller stylings. The interest was there but, like Jesse Crawford's work, they found the Waller approach deceptively simple. It was left to the innovative Ohio Valley Chapter of ATOS and organist Richard Hyman to take El Toro by his weaponry.

We have been aware of Dick Hyman for many years as a skilled jazz musician. To the best of our knowledge his previous organ recordings have been made on electronics. We never thought of him as a theatre organist. Yet, Fats Waller was also basically a jazz musician who didn't

neglect the electric organ either. Hyman's innate musicianship has enabled him to take full advantage of the facilities of the 3/23 Emery Wurlitzer. That same musical instinct has also caused a great deal of restraint in recreating the Waller registration. Remember that Waller's pipe records were played on the 3-deck Estey church organ in Victor's Camden studio or on a 2/8 Compton in England. Those facilities may have limited his registration but not his musical values. Even when he broadcast the 4/21 Wurlitzer in the N.Y. Times Square Paramount studio over CBS in the late '30s, his registration was conservative; he rarely used a percussion. He seemed to be most interested in ways to add interest to tunes through variations plus his trademark fillers and riffs. Registration seemed to be of secondary importance.

Probably his best recorded pipe organ work was played on the Camden studio Estey. It was a typical Diapason-heavy church organ (Fats called it "the God box") with some strings and flutes on the Swell which were more useful for popular music.

It demanded an ability such as Waller's to adapt his free-form jazz to such limited facilities.

There are very few organists who can play jazz on pipes with the proper panache; Waller was one of the few, even with the handicap of a slow-speaking array of church pipes. Our first experience was his 1927 Victor label "Sugar" with "I Ain't Got Nobody" on the flip side. It became a favorite on first hearing and remains one. There's something about Fats' music which is universal in its appeal, all the better when he plays it on an organ. But he makes his mark even when he gravel-voices such forgettable material as "Your Feet's Too Big."

Let's look at some of the Waller organ style characteristics. His jazz style might be described as "jingling." On the manuals he has a light, often staccato touch. His pedal is usually heavy and his foot seems to linger on each root and fourth or fifth. We don't recall hearing him play tricky or chromatic pedal passages. The bass was a part of the rhythm department, same as when he played piano. His playing sounds



Thomas "Fats" Waller.

(Photo copied by Lodder Photography, Cincinnati)

effortless, but it's not that simple when one tries to analyze and recreate it. Waller was skilled in ballad stylings too, and this album does not neglect them. We lost Waller in 1943 at the age of 39. He was still growing as a musician/composer. One can't help but speculate about the musical goodies we would have enjoyed had Waller lived to the present. So much for history.

In recreating Waller on organ, Dick Hyman faced several problems. One he solved easily; two of the selections are recreations of organ records made by Waller on the studio Estey in 1927. With that wonderful 23-rank Wurlitzer's facilities available, an array of voices Fats never had for recording, should Hyman embellish the original with more lush voices than Fats' registration? Happily for the perhaps small body of purists who remember, Hyman sticks rather closely to the original

spare Waller registration.

All of the music presented is Waller's work. Some is adapted from piano solos while others are organ renditions of Waller songs played by his instrumental group. Here Hyman "magic carpets" his imagination to provide registration of which Waller would approve but which also takes advantage of the rich sounds available on the Emery Wurlitzer. In the jacket notes Hyman states that he hopes Fats would approve his forays into other stylistically related areas. We have no doubt that Waller would be delighted because Hyman has concentrated on recreating the Waller sound rather than inserting Hyman. Not once does Hyman get out of character. He is recreating Waller to the best of his ability. Many have tried to capture the Waller musical charisma, but we have yet to hear anyone come as close as Dick Hy-

man. It's like hearing Fats playing. Let's examine the selections individually.

"Messin' Around with the Blues" recreates Fats' 1927 recording made on the Estey church organ in Victor's Camden studio. While Dick Hyman has kept registration mostly to what Waller had available on the Estey, the tonal richness of the Emery Wurlitzer brightens the picture. The music is bouncy Waller, not the least bluesy.

"Jitterbug Waltz" is one of Fats' few ventures into 3/4 tempo. Originally a piano solo, Hyman adapted it for organ voices with empathy.

"Honeysuckle Rose" comes through as the jazz classic it has become since Fats penned it in 1929. Hyman includes Waller variations and those happy little fillers that characterize Waller's music. Hyman likes re-iterating bells and the Emery's piano.

The first run through of "Ain't Misbehavin'" is in expressive *tempo rubato*, then the bouncy rhythm sets in for a chorus. Next an expressive verse and again a jumping chorus, quite different from the previous one. Waller's pedal bass emphasis is present. It's 5 minutes and 27 seconds well spent.

"Viper's Drag" is a mostly fast novelty tune with allusions to both "St. Louis Blues" and Grieg's "Hall of the Mountain King," themes which Fats worked into his larger picture with easy larceny. Hyman uses the Emery's Posthorn in this one. Even when Fats broadcast from Jesse Crawford's N.Y. Paramount Theatre studio we don't recall his ever using that voice, although it was available on the 4/21 Wurlitzer. Yet, Hyman complements the Waller music with it. He uses a typical Waller heavy pedal bass to balance it.

"Yacht Club Swing" is typical of what Waller was doing with his group in the late '30s. Hyman uses the excellent piano, plus swifty riffs from the organ's brass complement.

"What Did I Do to be So Black and Blue" (1929) comes close to being played as a ballad. As the jacket note writer points out, it projects an unusually serious sentiment about being black in a popular song of that period. Good registration.

Like "Messin' Around," "Hog Maw Stomp" is as exact a recreation



Dick Hyman.

(Photo copied by Lodder Photography, Cincinnati)

of Waller's 1927 Estey record as Dick Hyman can make it. We are happy to report that the result is very close to hearing Fats', spare registration included. It's bouncy Waller jazz played in a happy style. We got out our ancient Victor blackseals of both tunes for comparison. Very favorable, thank you.

"I've Got a Feeling I'm Falling" was one of Waller's biggest hits. The best known record was by Jesse Crawford who crammed a jazz orchestra of sorts into the N.Y. Paramount organ studio and "ooh-hoo'd" a set pattern on the Tibia while the band carried the tune. It was all in strict tempo. The Hyman arrangement is much more introspective and expressive, and the Waller spirit is always present.

The Emery Wurlitzer's piano is heard throughout "Bond Street," part of Fats' *London Suite* (1938). It was originally played on a Compton organ.

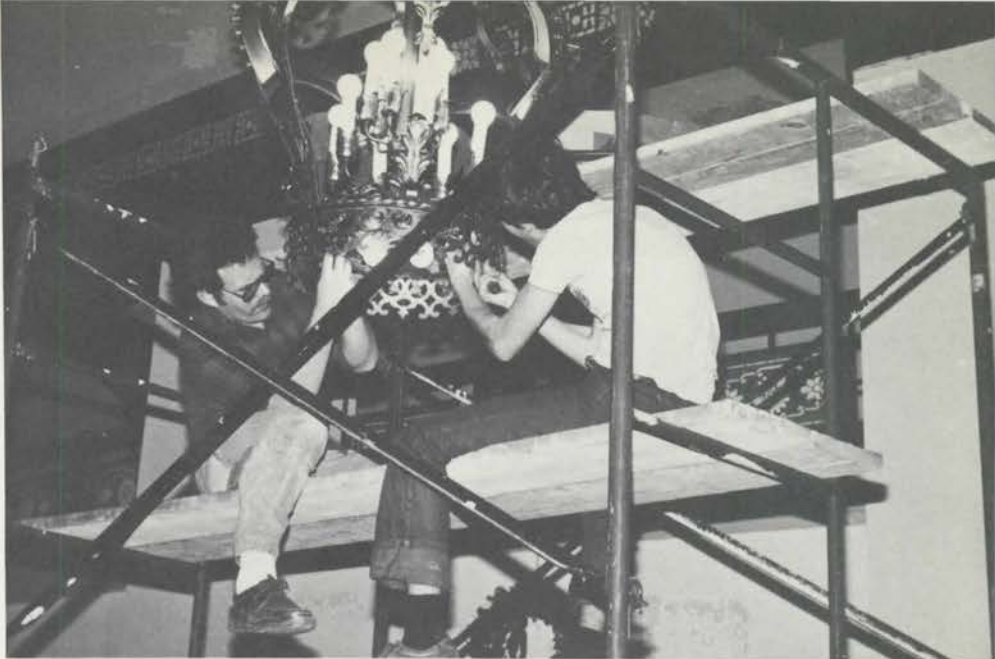
"Squeeze Me" dates back to 1923, a piano solo. Again it's serious Waller, with the rhythm somewhat subdued to accommodate expression. Nice phrasing and instrumentation.

The closer is a sprightly and typical Waller exposition of "Keepin' Out of Mischief Now," played in the rollicking style for which the organist is best remembered. Again the piano is heard to advantage.

The production is first class throughout. Stereo recording captures the Emery Wurlitzer's big sound. The review pressing was smooth and pop-free.

The back of the jacket bears notes about the music, Waller, the organ and Dick Hyman. Best of all is a two page insert by organ aficionado John G. Strader dealing with Waller's early '30s sojourn at radio station WLW, Cincinnati, where along with Herschel Lueke, Gene Perazzo, Arthur Chandler and later Lee Erwin, he played the unforgettable *Moon River* nightly dream music broadcast. The jacket-size insert, with photos of Fats, was designed by another well-established musical name — Heidi James Petach. The organ was in fine condition for the recording and maintenance crew chief, Ev. Pratt, Jr., deserves much credit.

This album is highly recommended. □



Dave Vincent and David Martin hang glass crystal pendants.

The Redford Theatre's Chandeliers

by Harold Bellamy

In the January/February issue of *THEATRE ORGAN*, an article by George Winters of Motor City titled "Chapter Owned" described the overall operation of the Redford Theatre. George also made reference to the continuing restoration of the theatre to its original oriental motif. This effort, in the hands of our volunteers, is a slow explorative process, as little of the original decor is documented. It is necessary to strip paint or remove building material to establish what once existed. There are years of work left, so the effort will still be in progress when the ATOS conventioners converge on Detroit.

The large amount of restoration was necessitated by prejudicial attitudes prevalent during World War

II. Apparently the management of the theatre, reacting to anti-Oriental sentiment, chose to eliminate as much of the oriental decor as possible. All of the surfaces decorated with colorful patterns were painted over with solid colors; the outer lobby walls were paneled and the ceiling covered with acoustical tile; the partition separating the inner lobby from the auditorium was encased with Formica sheeting; heavy drapes covered the ornamental grille work on the organ chambers and all of the oriental light fixtures were replaced with modern lighting. This last item is the subject of this article. By a stroke of good fortune, we were able to replace the two inner lobby clusters of cylindrical light tubes which could be described as Danish mod-