

# CINEMA ORGAN NEWS FROM BRITAIN



by  
Ian  
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Although Norman Barfield wrote about the rebirth of the Barry Christie, I must mention that it was a great moment to be there and to hear and see the great Doreen Chadwick, Len Rawle and the other two organists rise up playing one of the truly great theatre organs of the U.K. Probably the finest of its make, brilliantly installed by Les Rawle and crew in a most delightful cinema-like hall, it is an understage job just as though it had been designed that way. Without a doubt, this is one transplant that actually has the organ sounding better than it did in the Regal Edmonton in London. There the poor organ spoke through the right side of the proscenium arch from over large chambers, and some of the pipework was never heard to advantage — but now — wowee! The reeds, strong point of Christie organs, really do get their chance!

Lew Williams, one of your finest players

and a great "Torch" exponent, was able to pull off a "Torch Triple" by playing three of the beautiful organs on which Sidney Torch made many of his brilliant recordings. The State Kilburn, on April 12, saw Williams bring about some of the choicest registration I have heard on this famous organ. Again, Les Rawle had done magic with the regulation of the pipework and tremors. Lew then played the former Regal Kingston 3/12 Wurlitzer, played by Torch during his days on the organ-mad Union Circuit, now in the Music Museum at Brentford in West London; here, again, this organ sounds out better in this old church building which houses the museum than it did lost up in the roof of the large Regal. April 15 saw Lew play the Edmonton Christie now at Barry in South Wales. All that was missing, as I told Lew, was being able to play the Marble Arch Regal 4/37 Christie —

The late Reginald Porter-Brown at the theatre console of the dual-purpose Compton in the Guildhall, Southampton, England, which reportedly celebrated 50 years of thrilling musical magic.



that wonderful one is in storage in Cornwall, sadly still not put together.

By the very nature of the theatre organ scene these days, organs come and go, some changing hands for the better and some that just can't find new owners. The Decca Studio Wurlitzer is one of the lucky ones. A mere 2/5, it was one of the most recorded theatre organs of all time, and not just solos, by even more did it appear on dance band records in the palmy thirties and accompanying singers like Gracie Fields and Vera Lynn. With the death of Bob Freeman of Ormsby in north-east England, this delightful little gem has been purchased by John Hattersley and will be installed in Scotland — not a land ever well-equipped with theatre organs, even in the heyday.

Our Channel Islands, which are nearer the coast of France than England, had just two organs, both Comptons — one in the Regal Guernsey and one in the Forum Jersey. The Forum Jersey organ is now out of its cinema and is to be reinstalled in the new Rotunda Multi-purpose Sports Hall at Fort Regent. So, at least that's another one saved.

As 1937 was a boom year for theatre organ installations in the U.K., there will be some celebrations this year. The fabulous dual-purpose Compton of the Guildhall Southampton celebrated with a special week of events, and part of that was centered on the great masterpiece itself. Thomas Trotter, a brilliant young organist, was heard by millions playing on the radio using one of the two four-manual consoles, a classic style "push-on-push-off" illuminated button affair and a four-manual theatre horseshoe console. Doreen Chadwick, Byron Jones and the brilliant William Davies played. Richard Smithers was also featured (he is manager of the building), a former ABC star known on the circuit in the 1950s as Tony Fenton, his "nom de console."

Gladly I can report that more of your best players will be able to get more dates to play over here making the trip worth their while. Playing one concert is completely useless and doesn't serve any artist well. The cost of travel to the U.K. is very high, but now that we have so many venues, there are lots of organs where concerts are given regularly.

Sadly, we have lost four organists recently: Joseph Seal, most famous and popular; Harold Stringer, also a long-serving ABC Circuit organist; Harold Meredith, a former Granada organist, and the "Doyen" of our classic organists, the world famous Sir George Thalben-Ball. Sir George is perhaps best known for winning a gold disc for his 1927 version of "Oh, For The Wings of A Dove," with master Ernest Lough, recorded on the Temple Church London organ, one of the all-time greats. George was Knighted in 1982. I believe that four Knights of the organ drew the specifications for the "Royal" organ of Westminster Abbey in 1937 — that year, again! And, NO, they did not include an illuminated console that changed colour either!

On the recording front, a recent release is one of the finest LPs to come from our country by a gifted youngster, Simon Gledhill, playing the gorgeous three-manual Compton



Simon Gledhill at the console of the splendid Compton of Ossett Town Hall in Yorkshire.

of Ossett Town Hall, Yorkshire. "The Spirit of Youth" is on the NTOT label. It's a stunner; the playing is brilliant and the recording and organ faultless. Gledhill's technique is amazing, and he really gets the best from any organ I have heard him play. By far, the best

recording to come out in a long time — I highly recommend this. Write to NTOT Records, 137 Towngate, Ossett, West Yorkshire, England WF5 0PN. The price is five pounds, but you might best inquire as to postage.

On the Turners Record label of Merry-Go-

Round fame at Northampton, with its brilliant 3/19 Wurlitzer, their sparkling young star, the very popular Nicholas Martin, has made what I think is his best LP, "Just For You." These are available from Organ Literature or direct from Turners Musical-Merry-Go-Round, Wooton, Northampton NN4 0HU, England. Again, check for price and postage.

Did you know that John Compton brought out a pipeless theatre organ in 1935? Well, he did, and very nice they were with 12 large, disc-type generators, the theatre version was called Theatrone and the church version called Electrone. One of the theatre organs was installed in the Rex Cinema Aberdare in South Wales and played by Doreen Chadwick when she was a teenager. Until fairly recently it stayed quiet, but now enthusiast D. R. John of Neath, Wales, has purchased it and restored it to playing order, and he told me that Walford James came over to try it. Doreen Chadwick told me that she followed Walford at the Rex Aberdare and had not seen him since about 1939, so she was delighted to share the Barry concert with him.

One of the first ever Welsh language feature movies, *Coming Up Roses*, is released. It is a story about a group of people who try to keep a 1930s cinema going — guess what cinema it's about — yes, the Rex Aberdare!

All the best. □

## ORGAN-IZING POPULAR MUSIC

by  
**AL HERMANN**



The foundation of all arranging techniques is a knowledge and understanding of Keyboard Harmony. I am sure that all of you who play popular songs on the organ are familiar with the construction of the necessary basic chords, so I will skip over all that and explain three other kinds: altered, extended, and substitute chords.

The basic Triad consists of the 1st, 3rd and 5th tones of a scale. Raising or lowering any note of a chord by means of accidentals makes it an altered chord. Technically, a minor chord can be an altered chord in a major key and a major chord can be altered in a minor key. An augmented chord is an altered chord except when it is formed on a whole tone scale.

Any chord can be extended by adding other scale tones. Major chords can be extended by adding the 6th, major 7th or 9th. The 6th tone of a major scale is always one whole tone

above the 5th. The major 7th is one-half tone below the octave of the root. The 9th is actually the 2nd note of the scale.

In order to make use of these chords, it is necessary to know how each altered note or added note changes the SOUND of a chord. Experiment at the keyboard. Play all the common chords in various positions and listen to the sound produced by changing or adding the notes described above.

For additional explanation and musical examples, see Lesson 54 in *ORGAN-izing Popular Music*, distributed by Columbia Pictures Publications. □

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