

## Letters To The Editor

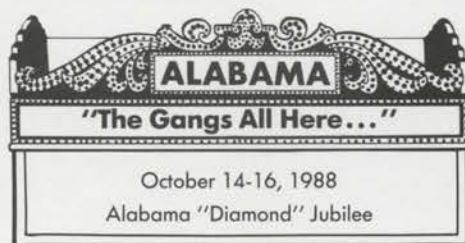
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3. Classical organs. We are ATOS, not AGO. Have we forgotten what the "T" in our club's initials is for? Classical organs and artists are neither rare or endangered and they have their own organization for furthering their goals. Even in this reputed dusty "hick cow town" where I live there is rarely a week goes by that reputable classical organists do not present concerts somewhere around town. ATOS should not spend its time, money, and energies promoting what is in the domain of AGO. One classical concert per ATOS convention ought to be it. After all, that's about the quota for theatre organ programs at AGO conventions.

4. Costs/Accommodations: Some attendees have big bucks and are used to paying princely sums for fancy hotel rooms we scarcely have time to enjoy, but a lot of us don't. Conventions should be set up and priced to attract as many ATOS members as possible. Why not make arrangements with several hotels located close to the main headquarters hotel so members can select from a wide variety of accommodations and room prices.

5. Jam Sessions: This is undoubtedly our worst convention weakness and this goes for regional conventions as well. These used to be one of the best, most enjoyable parts of conventions for the artists and the listeners both. In recent years they have turned into more mini-concerts without the "you cattle hurry up and get on them buses" aspect. Having an artist play at these jam sessions who is going to do a concert, or who has already given one, is both tacky and dumb. The purpose of these jam sessions years ago was to give attendees a chance to hear artists from other areas whom they would not otherwise hear during the convention, and to give younger lesser known talent a chance to showcase their talent. The only kind thing I can say about our jam sessions in recent years is that as a result of hearing certain much ballyhoo'd organists at the jam sessions I didn't bother wasting my time and money when they came around on concert tours. And could we have a jam session at some place other than a pizza parlor sometime — please??

Yours for a better ATOS,  
Dan Story  
Valley of the Sun Chapter



## THEATRE ORGAN NEWS

### FROM AUSTRALIA

The long weekend of April 22-25 saw the Australian TOSA National Convention held in the nation's capital, Canberra. It was a "first" for them. The main activities centered around the delightful old Albert Hall where the Canberra ACT division's 3/9 Compton is installed.

Friday evening saw the Convention off to a flying star with the registration, dinner and Cabaret Capers. This embraced a series of musical items by the Canberra Repertory and finished with Melbourne organist David Johnson accompanying the 1927 Australian classic silent *Kid Stakes*.

The next morning, conventioners embarked on a Sight and Sound tour with a recital at the Duntroon Military College Chapel and another on the magnificent Carrillon which is situated on a small island in the very picturesque Lake Burley Griffin. In the evening it was time for the main event — Tony O'Brien from Detroit to play the Compton. Tony used a synthesizer and rhythm unit plus visual effects. He presented a range of items from "Ave Maria," with the Viol Celeste carrying the melody on the pedals, to a rousing presentation of "America" with organ, synthesizer and rhythm unit. It was meant to be a concert with a difference — and it was.

The following day, well-known Sydney organist Cliff Bingham, with pianist John Crawford on Rodgers organ and grand piano, provided excellent entertainment. They were joined by the Woden Valley Youth Choir (Woden is a Canberra suburb) in an interesting range of songs. Opinion was that this event was the highlight of this year's Convention.

The final day, Monday, was also Anzac Day. This is the day when Australia remembers and honours its sons and daughters who made the supreme sacrifice in both World Wars, Korea and Vietnam. Following this there was an Accent on Youth programme for young organists from various parts of Australia. Tony O'Brien conducted a workshop and answered questions on the use of the synthesizer with the organ. Open console followed allowing the brave conventioners to try their hands (and feet) on the Campton. Although the Convention had officially finished, Tony O'Brien treated about 150 remaining conventioners to an hour of classical delight on the local Uniting Church 3/42 pipe organ.

### The Dendy in Brighton

The re-opening of the 3/15 Style 260 Wurlitzer on April 17 was the climax following four years of renovation by a dedicated group guided by Bruce Hester. The former Dendy in Brighton (now excitingly titled Brighton Twin Cinema) where the organ has been re-installed has been greatly reduced in size to about 450 seats. The former stalls area is gone, and the old circle area now extends down to the screen. In keeping with current cheap and soul-less styling, there are bare, brick walls covered with curtains, no proscenium or stage and a flat, acoustical tile ceiling. The console is sitting on a moveable platform which rides out from behind curtains at the right hand

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BRUCE ARDLEY



A peek at the pipes in the renovated Wurlitzer at the Brighton Twin Cinema Melbourne.



side of the screen into the auditorium — a far cry from when the console used to rise at the magnificent and futuristic Capitol Theatre, Melbourne, and following that, for many years at the Dendy.

Five local organists were chosen to preside at the console for this special occasion. Before hearing the organ, however, there was shown a ten-minute film hosted by Bruce Hester, showing the innards of this great Wurlitzer and enlightening those in the audience who may have thought that a super-size speaker sat behind the curtains. Tony Fenelon commenced the proceedings in his usual deft manner. He was followed by John Atwell and David Johnson, also console veterans, who provided equally enjoyable performances. Representing the young organists, Terezia Kalkbrennen and Kah Kit Young displayed their talents.

Interest in the re-opening of this instrument was strong, and to accommodate all those who had pre-booked, the concert was staged on the Sunday morning with a repeat in the afternoon. The organ still retains some of the old Dendy sounds that we had become accustomed to hearing, but, sadly, the magnitude of curtaining and the acoustic tile ceiling have robbed the auditorium of even the slightest reverberation.

An attractive souvenir book of the opening of this organ can be ordered from Eric Wicks, 19 Beatty Street, Ivanhoe. 3079. Please forward the U.S. equivalent of Australian \$12. This covers cost of the book, postage and negotiation of your cheque.

### St. Peters Wurlitzer

This year marks the 60th birthday of the 3/15 Wurlitzer formerly installed in Adelaide, South Australia's magnificent Regent Theatre. Re-installed in the Memorial Hall of St. Peters College, it was nearly destroyed in a devastating fire several years back. Subsequently, the pipework was vandalised and some of it stolen. All missing pipework has been replaced and well-known Adelaide organbuilder George Stephens is repairing and renovating in preparation for the opening at St. Peters. The St. Peters hall has been rebuilt thoughtfully to provide ideal conditions for orchestral performances and, of course, Wurlitzer concerts.

The opening of this organ, together with the opening of the former Sydney Capital Theatre 3/15 Wurlitzer now in the final stages of its installation in the Orion Centre Campsie, will provide an exciting second half for 1988.

### Other News ...

There appears to be plenty of activity in all states. Your correspondent recently travelled from Melbourne to the beautiful island state of Tasmania to present a most successful silent movie program using the 3/8 Wurlitzer installed in the Collegiate College, Hobart. This Wurlitzer is probably the world's most southerly theatre organ installation.

Recently, the Veteran Car Clubs from around Australia converged on Canberra for their annual convention. Melbourne organist David Johnson travelled to the convention to provide a silent movie show to a delighted and very large audience. If only the theatre organ followers could get themselves as enthusiastic as the lovers of the Veteran Cars do, we would have a dramatic rise in attendance at our various events. ■

In Melbourne, the TOSA Committee had a worrying few weeks recently when the Village Cinema North at Reservoir was placed on the market. It seemed we would be suddenly faced with the removal of the Society's 2/9 Blakett and Howden theatre organ. The cinema has been going through lean times for quite some time, and the chain controlling the building decided to dispose of it. A complex of eight cinemas was recently opened within two miles distance and this has not improved things. The long time manager of the theatre has involved himself in the acquisition of this neighbourhood house from the chain. He is very pro-organ, so we hope that both theatre and organ will remain into the future. The organ is kept in mint condition by long-time TOSA member Stan Coath and his group.

In April, TOSA Melbourne was approached by Television Channel 10 wishing to present the activities of the Society in a three-minute segment called "Mal's Melbourne." This is an hourly presentation in prime time each evening featuring the news and other current events. The video featured the organ at the Village Cinema at Reservoir and showed well-known veteran Melbourne organist Cyril Pearl bringing the console up prior to a "Ladies' Day" movie which is a weekly event at this venue. The video then moved to the TOSA workshops where the 3/10 Compton is being restored. Finally returning to the Village Cinema North, it showed the organ console descending at the finish of interval. I was surprised by the number of people not connected with TOSA who told me that they had seen this short. It provided plenty of excellent publicity for the cause. ■



ATOS Australian correspondent Bruce Ardley played a successful silent movie showing at Collegiate College Hall Hobart Tasmania 3/8 Wurlitzer.



Renovated and reopened - the handsome console of the Brighton Twin Cinema Melbourne (ex-Dendy) Wurlitzer 3/15.