

RECORD REVIEWS

Organist At Play, John Ledwon at the Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ in his home at Canoga Park, California. Stereo ST 7700, Monaural M 7700. Alpha Records, 5965 West Boulevard, Los Angeles, California.

Side 1 | Waiting for the Robert E. Lee, Indian Love Call, Granada, Dancing Tambourine, Dream, Under Paris Skies.

Side 2 | I Could Have Danced All Night, Around The World, Jealousie, Sentimental Journey, When Day Is Done.

John Ledwon, the organist, is somewhat of an infant prodigy, having started studying organ at the age of 11, and five months later made his debut at a convention in San Francisco. Since that time he has continued his study of the organ, playing for many organizations in the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas. He is still a young man now attending San Fernando Valley State College where he is majoring in music.

For one so young he has had quite a career, playing various types of organs from Radio City Music Hall to Disneyland, and the USS Franklin Roosevelt while in the harbor at San Francisco.

According to the program notes, the Wurlitzer Theatre pipe organ on which this recording was made was originally in the Lyceum Theatre in Duluth, Minnesota, where John Ledwon's mother used to listen to its music as a youngster. Like many other organs, it was removed with the organ going to Minneapolis and its console to Phoenix, Arizona. The console which now controls this organ was originally in a Watertown, New York, Theatre and had 3 manuals and 11 ranks.

It was moved to Syracuse, then rebuilt by the Wurlitzer factory to 13 ranks for the San Francisco World's Fair of 1939. It was then sold to enthusiasts in Los Angeles who in turn sold the console to the same person who had the Lyceum Wurlitzer in his home in Minneapolis.

After a few years he sold the complete organ to the Ledwons in Los Angeles, who have installed it in a large room adjoining their home. The program notes also state that all sounds were recorded on the Wurlitzer pipe organ and its piano, except for two notes that were taken from a Hammond.

The opening number, "Robert E. Lee", is gimmicked with a lot of different effects such as, an ocean-going liner's whistle. This reviewer had never heard a whistle like this on a Wurlitzer or a Hammond. There is some double speed overlay recording in this first number used for effects. This is a good opener, full of life. Next is

"Indian Love Call", which shows good sensitivity for registration, and is somewhat reminiscent of Jesse Crawford. The third number, "Granada", uses the piano very effectively, the fourth number, "Dancing Tambourine", also uses the piano, but to this reviewer it did not quite seem to sparkle. The fifth number, "Dream", has a very nice introduction, rather ethereal in character, and then goes into a very smooth rendition. The piano is once again used effectively. The last number on this side, "Under Paris Skies", starts out full with the piano and includes a double speed effect.

Side two starts with a good opener, "I Could Have Danced All Night", presented in a very lively tempo. This very quickly goes into "Around The World" where quite a use is made of single stops. The full organ sound is excellent. Again the piano is used. The third number, "Jealousie", features the Chrysoglott in the opening and again uses the piano. The counter-melodies used are very good, however, to this reviewer's ears, the finish was a little weak. The fourth number, "Sentimental Journey", makes use of the train effect. The last number on this side, "When Day Is Done" has rather an easy style, with no particular build-up, but slides right into the finish.

To this reviewer, John Ledwon certainly has the sensitivity for registration and the technique for playing, and we believe that a couple more records will produce some marked changes in his overall style. We would suggest that you do not miss buying this one as it is well worth while for listening.

Technically, the recording is very good. We note that a Telefunken 251 and an Altec 21-B microphone were used. It is our opinion that the Altec microphone lends itself to organ recording. This reviewer's particular copy was not the best, there being some distortion, which we suspect is in the mastering and not in the original recording. The engineer apparently left the dynamics completely to the organist as there is no indication of change in levels that usually denotes a 'knob-twisting engineer'.

Perhaps this reviewer is a purist, as we find it hard to account for the use of double speed or overlay effects. The Wurlitzer, or any other theatre pipe organ, has all the necessary effects that any organist should need to turn out an effective record. This we realize is a view not shared by all persons.

Editor's Note: The jacket lists the POSTHORN, THEATRE ORGAN, and THEATRE ORGAN REVIEW, with

their addresses, as publications dealing exclusively with theatre pipe organs. Also listed is the AMERICAN ORGANIST, which runs occasional theatre pipe organ articles. This is a very nice gesture on the part of Ledwon and Alpha Records. Many thanks.

The Al Ringling Theatre Pipe Organ featuring Wayne Chapman. Cuca Record K-8080 STEREO, K-8080 MONO. R. L. P. Co., 233, 3rd Street, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

The Golden Voiced Barton Pipe Organ in the Al Ringling Theatre in Baraboo, Wisconsin is brought to life by Wayne Chapman in this new recording pressed by RCA for Cuca Records. This record is available from the above address on a mail order basis.

Wayne Chapman plays Give My Regards To Broadway, Hey Look Me Over, 18th Century Drawing Room, Toot Toot Tootsie, Yellow Bird and other favorites in a very rollicking style using a variety of effects in each of his selections. If you like the big sound of an organ in a large auditorium this record has it. We suspect that the mikes were placed pretty far back in the auditorium thereby losing some of the definition that this reviewer likes to hear. The jacket tells us that the recording was taped in the theatre where the balanced acoustics provide full and natural sound, and the instrument is heard as if one were sitting in one of the red plush seats in the theatre, and that the three-manual Golden Voiced Barton was installed in the theatre in 1928, replacing the original Wurlitzer, and was designed to add background music and sound effects for silent movies.

WORLD PREMIER, Norm Nelson at the Gulbransen Rialto Theatre Organ

Here we have a new release on the Rialto label, very well recorded and showing off the Gulbransen Transistor organ to good advantage. The Tibias, Tuba and Percussion effects are excellent.

Nelson displays considerable skill and a true 'theatre organ' style as he presents a program of standards which includes All The Things You Are, Anything Goes, If I Had You, Lize, Please Don't Talk About Me, Roses Of Picardy, Willow Weep For Me, Is It True What They Say About Dixie, and Lida Rose. This reviewer particularly liked the treatment given the two latter numbers.

One of our pet peeves is record jackets. This one, for a change, is tastily done and informative. The front depicts a theatre facade, one sheet and all. The reverse tells us that Norm Nelson has been engaged in the music field for nearly 25 years. His credits including radio, TV, private clubs, lodges plus arranging for organ. Columbia is credited with the recording and pressing, but the disc is apparently not available in local music stores. The address given in the jacket is Rialto Records, Box 20, Hinsdale, Illinois.

If you include electronic organ recordings in your collection, we heartily recommend this album.