

A RECORD REVIEW

by Ben M. Hall

BILLY! Fabulous Billy Nalle Improvises on the Wurlitzer Pipes - Mirrosonic Records - RS 1016 (Stereo), RM 1016 (Mono).

How do you pronounce an exclamation point? Ever since *Oklahoma!* came on the scene in 1943, the problem has been with us. Now here comes Billy (!) Nalle's new record, and I think I have the answer: to all of your organ-wise friends, say, "Go to the nearest record shop and buy a copy of *Billy!*" If this command is given in a suitably exclamatory manner, the pesky exclamation point takes care of itself.

Now for a qualification or two. Perhaps *Billy!* won't please all of your friends. Listeners who like to wallow in the marshmallow murmurings of *Laura* and *Fascination* performed on sobbing strings and sighing tibias will find it too highly seasoned for their tastes; nor will it go down too well with the lemme-hear-the-melody - and-to-heck-with-the-technique set. When Billy improvises, he does things that nobody else ever thought of doing to a Wurlitzer. His harmonies are complex, and though he is always scrupulously fair to the composer, his melodic lines are miracles of ornate musical embroidery. Billy just can't - or won't - play it straight, and there lies the secret of his private brand of pipe organ playing.

It has been this reviewer's privilege to know Billy Nalle ever since one post-midnight at the New York Paramount in 1957 when he was practicing for his first recording, Victor's *Swingin' Pipe Organ* (LPM 1521). That night, after the serious part of the session was over, Billy sat at the awesome gold console of the great Mother Wurlitzer and noodled for us. In the course of his noodling he demonstrated his penchant for thematic cross-breeding by playing what we still refer to as *You're the Cream in My Tulips* - the chorus of *Cream* decorated with the release from *Tulips* in a way that not only evoked both the period and mood of both songs, but made us wonder why De Sylva, Brown and Henderson had not collaborated with Burke and Dubin in the first place. Billy can also rip off a nifty version of *Tiptoe Thru the Coffee With Me*.

Now, seven years later, Billy has made a new record. This time there is no dubbed-in bongo-beating sideman to get in the way of the organ music, as on the first Victor record; just Billy and the Wurlitzer. The organ he plays is the beautifully-installed instrument in the home of Dick Weber in Amsterdam, N.Y. Originally built in 1926 (No. 1196) as a 3/17 for the North Park Theatre in Buffalo, it has been restored and enlarged to

22 ranks by Weber, his brother Bob, and Roger Davis, former Radio City Musical Hall organ technician. Billy makes full use of the organ's resources, and the results are uniquely Nalle.

Some Highlights

Entertainment launches side one with a J. Arthur Rank gong crash, zips into a real roaring-up-out-of-the-pit number that enlists the help of everything from the bird whistle to sizzle cymbal before the slam-bang finale. *Misty*, the Errol Garner standard, gets the Nalle treatment with way-out harmonies and some snappy English Post Horn riffs. *Arturo Ricardo* is a Nalle original; with its bouncy Latin beat and tasty touches of percussion, it seems that Billy is saying a musical hello to the one and only Ann Leaf. *All the Things You Are* is a surprise. It begins with a very J.S. Bach-ish three-voice counterpoint that makes the Weber Wurlitzer sound like Weingarten. The tremulants enter with a lovely string and flute chorus, then back to Bach for the ending - a fantasia on a theme by Jerome Kern. *Midnight Sun*, an icily eerie opus by Lionel Hampton, picks up the Hamp beat after the opening chorus and gets kicked along by Billy's flawless pedal work. It finishes with some wild brass progressions and a final plaintive chord, and leaves you wanting more.

There is more - a whole second side. Since more comment at this point would be redundant, I'll merely list the titles, and let you explore for yourself. Side two comprises *Sophisticated Lady*, *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*, *Honky Tonk Rocket*, *True Love*, and *The Man That Got Away*.

Billy Nalle is a musician's musician who can do things both technically and

melodically that will amaze you. This record will bear many playings, each one filled with new discoveries. But don't take my word for it. You must hear *Billy!* Exclamation point.

BRITISH RECORD

George Blackmore, one of England's outstanding theatre organists, has recorded a new platter for Music Hall Productions on the Gaumont State Theatre Wurlitzer, a four manual, 16 rank instrument. Titled "A State Occasion," the record will please every theatre organ fan - selections range from "Latin Lady" to "America Marches."

Distributed by Music Hall, this record is Stereo 5004 and may be ordered from the Music Hall Organ Record Club, 15 Church Street, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, England.

IF YOU WANT TO RECEIVE 'THEATRE ORGAN'

Please keep us advised of your correct address. The Post Office DOES NOT forward Second Class Mail.

SHERIDAN WURLITZER TO ATOE MEMBER

Fred Kruse, an ATOE member of Elgin, Illinois, is currently installing in his home the four manual, 17-rank Wurlitzer pipe organ that was formerly in the Sheridan Theatre. The pipe chamber is located at one end of the living room and extends from the roof of the house to a level of a foot or so below the basement floor (over 32 feet).

A.T.O.E. FINANCIAL REPORT 1963

CASH BALANCE 1/1/63		\$ 3,692.99
RECEIPTS:		
1962 DUES	\$ 1.00	
1963 DUES	9,579.45	
1964 DUES	70.50	
BACK ISSUES SOLD	389.38	
FOX BOOKS SOLD	42.01	
ADVERTISING INCOME	1,798.00	
VALLEY OF THE SUN CHARTER	5.00	
OREGON CHAPTER CHARTER	5.00	11,890.34
		15,583.33
DISBURSEMENTS:		
PRINTING MAGAZINES	6,359.26	
DECALS	159.04	
TELEPHONE & POSTAGE	1,288.91	
OFFICE SUPPLIES & EXPENSES	398.02	
I.B.M.	193.16	
1964 MEMBERSHIP CARDS	84.66	
ADVERTISING & ENTERTAINMENT	79.73	
BOOKKEEPER	600.00	
INSURANCE - ANNUAL	110.30	
1963 ANNUAL MEETING, BISMARCK	880.68	
TRAVELING	759.74	
ADVANCE TO NORTHERN CALIF. CHAPTER	200.00	11,113.50
CASH BALANCE 12/31/63		\$ 4,469.83