



Letters to the Editor concerning all aspects of the theatre organ hobby are encouraged. Send them to the editor concerned. Unless it's stated clearly on the letter "not for publication," the editors feel free to reproduce it, in whole or part.

*Address: P.O. Box 1314
Salinas, Calif. 93901*

Dear Sir,

May I say how greatly I have enjoyed the series of articles "Homage to Robert Hope-Jones" in recent issues. These have been prepared by Stevens Irwin with obvious great admiration and enthusiasm for the Hope-Jones cause.

With regard to organ-action, no doubt Wurlitzer adopted quite naturally the standard Hope-Jones type. This was unquestionably, in my view, a very wise decision at that time by the Wurlitzer Company. However, in view of the very large number of small Wurlitzers that they subsequently built of only three and four ranks, and solely for the accompaniment of silent pictures, it would appear that for these small organs a much cheaper action of the direct-electric type similar to the type developed by the late John Compton would have sufficed. This would have afforded a reduction in price of

the finished instrument.

I do not question that for the larger Wurlitzers used for solo presentation, broadcasting and recording, the Hope-Jones action was essential. I am convinced for instance, that only a Hope-Jones Wurlitzer would have met the requirements of Ernest Broadbent, Reginald Dixon, Horace Finch and Watson Holmes at the Blackpool Ballrooms.

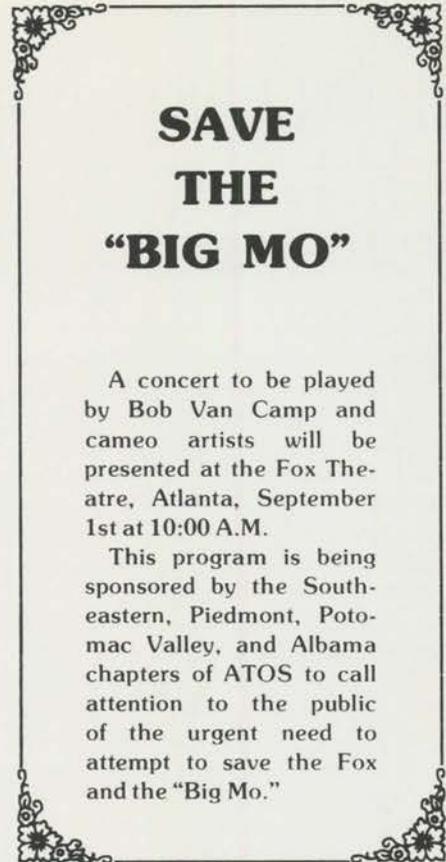
Your sincerely
Tom Burgess
Lancashire, England

Dear Sir,

A most unusual happening is the reason for my writing to you. A Mr. Kenneth Smith of Livingston, N.J., an organ builder who served his apprenticeship with me and now continues to service what he helped manufacture in the Beach Organ Co. Factory in Newark, N.J., mailed me a copy of your Dec. 1973 THEATRE ORGAN. As you know in this issue you published a very excellent article on Hope-Jones, of Elmira, N.Y.

I have no desire to write more in connection with Mr. Irwin's article and I will only state that I am the Earle Beach mentioned on page 24. The Hope-Jones Organ Co. "came to town" just as I was graduating from the Elmira Free Academy. I applied for work and got it as reed voicer helper to James Nuttall. I personally prepared the pipe work for all the Ocean Grove Organ as well as to have the tuning and care of this famous organ for its first 46 years of summer existence.

Reading the names of individuals is reviving my memory to "old times." The name John Colton is a local boy who wanted work and I was



SAVE THE "BIG MO"

A concert to be played by Bob Van Camp and cameo artists will be presented at the Fox Theatre, Atlanta, September 1st at 10:00 A.M.

This program is being sponsored by the Southeastern, Piedmont, Potomac Valley, and Alabama chapters of ATOS to call attention to the public of the urgent need to attempt to save the Fox and the "Big Mo."

assigned to keep him busy. He and Dave Marr later formed their own organ company up in New York State and was known as Marr and Colton. I have completely lost track of most of these individuals including Clarence Reynolds the Ocean Grove organist and Tali Essen Morgan the Ocean Grove musical director. All I'll say is that your article revived a lot of fond memories and if I can help you in answering any further details please don't hesitate.

Sincerely yours,
E.J. Beach
Lititz, Pa.

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Mr. Editor,

With regard to "The End of An Era at the Isthmus" (THEATRE ORGAN, June '74), it's a pity the writer failed to credit the people who initiated the idea of a pipe organ in the Panama Hilton "El Bombarde" bar. All of this information was covered in the February 1963 *POSTHORN* shortly after the installation was completed. The idea was conceived by hotelman John Doyle, who enlisted organist Leroy Lewis and organ technician Ted Campbell. The organ they purchased was the 3/27 Wurlitzer from the Atlantic City Warners' theatre, which was moved to Panama and installed in the Hilton by Campbell and Lewis, who was the first of a distinguished list of organists who played at the Hilton; among them were Pepe Bustamente, Lyn Larsen and Bill Coffman. In closing down such a musical landmark it would seem reasonable to at least mention the original organ location and the names of those who made the installation a reality. You can do better than you did for that story.

David Cornthwaite
Albany, N.Y.

Agreed. Here's a photo of Leroy Lewis at the 3/27 console during his engagement.

Editor

Organ Underscores Vocalists

SHOW BOAT

by Hal Steiner

Betty Mason was somewhat panicked when Ralph Kelley approached her with an almost overwhelming request: nearby Schoolcraft College wanted to stage *Show Boat*. Kelley stated that the school couldn't afford an orchestra to accompany singers recruited from the student body, and the Liberal Arts building had no organ to sub for an orchestra. Therefore, would Betty tape the entire score on the Mason's 3/10 studio organ to provide an accompaniment for the singers? The entire score?

Betty gulped and consulted husband Al Mason; it was a mighty large order. The score ran over 100 pages, but she agreed to try it.

About that time Rex Koury breezed into Detroit to play a concert for the Motor City Chapter and stopped by to visit the Masons. He found Betty struggling with the registration. Rex looked over the score; not too difficult. Would Betty want him to record as much of it as he had time for, before his plane departed after his

concert? She saw the value of having a skilled professional for an accompanist and asked Rex to take over.

Immediately following his concert, and still dressed in his western outfit (the theme of the show), Rex was rushed to the Mason home. The Wurlitzer, installed in underground chambers, was perking nicely and Rex jumped onto the bench, signaled for the recording to be started, and began on page one.

The music continued for many pages but all too soon time ran out and the job was unfinished. Rex had to catch the plane for Reno and home. Reluctantly, the organ was turned off and Rex got ready to leave for the airport. Then Al Mason looked outside and saw falling snow. With a gleam in his eye, Al phoned the airport and was told that the airport was "snowed in."

With more than a little glee, the trio returned to the music room on a lower level, turned on the organ blower and continued the tape recording, to the last page, thus providing the college with the musical accompaniment for their *Show Boat* production.

But, the story doesn't end there. In their haste to get the music on tape, two pages were turned at once and Rex Koury, sight reading the score, didn't notice it. But the vocalist who was assigned that song did, immediately. What to do?

Luckily, the performance date was postponed, so there was time. A bit later Dennis James came to Detroit for a concert and he came to the Mason home and did the touch up work on the tape.

The Schoolcraft College production was staged in May, 1974 and there were many favorable comments made about the organ accompaniment. There were six performances and three were sellouts.

Of course there was an ulterior motive involved: the college has a 3/9 Kimball organ in storage for eventual installation in a campus building. It has been in storage for a long time. Perhaps the *Show Boat* performance might kindle a flame. □



Leroy Lewis at the El Bombarde room 3/27 console in 1963.