

Thursday, July 17, 1980



Manny Harmon and his Orchestra have the worst seats in the house for the Republican National Convention. (Staff photo by Dick Kelley)

Band 'wakes up' GOP delegates

By TOM LONERGAN

Only 35 persons received the special credential "entertainer" at this week's Republican National Convention in Joe Louis Arena. Yet most got the worst seats in the house.

"I can't see the rostrum," convention band conductor Manny Harmon said after Monday's opening convention session.

"They put the damn cameras so high, I can't see a thing," Harmon, from Los Angeles, and the 30-piece band were directly behind the giant scaffolding supporting the all-important television cameras.

BUT HARMON is used to such place-

ment. The Detroit convention was his sixth for the Republicans. And except at Kansas City in 1976, the band was put behind some large obstruction.

Prior to and between speeches, delegates' ears were kept occupied by the band, most of whose members were from the Detroit area and recruited by John Trudell.

One band member described the selections as "occasional greeting cards." The selections included rock, big band medleys and selections from Glen Miller.

"Peppy music to wake them up," was the way Harmon described it. "I've got close to two tons of music here," he said.

In the spaces of the convention shows, Harmon said the Republicans' choice for convention music has changed little.

"They like the peppy stuff... like to keep it alive," he said.

At the conclusion of Monday's first session, one of the numbers was "Glory, Glory Hallelujah" (refrain line of "Battle Hymn of the Republic"). Many Detroiters, however, probably recognized it as the same music for the union anthem, "Solidarity Forever."

"That's just a song we picked," said Harmon. "We didn't pick it on the basis that it happened to be a union song."

A MUST for the band members is mastering the state songs played to in-

troduce each of the speakers.

"It's all written out for you. All you have to do is play it," said one band member.

"It's kind of strange," said saxophone player Ernie Rodgers of Detroit. "We're playing it as we go."

This evening, the introduction number for Ronald Reagan's address to the convention will be, "I Love You, California," with record-faithful tonal qualities, knocked out 10 tunes.

Larry's brother Les with whom the band was started in the early '50s is now retired.

Bands' sounds: sweet to jazz

By JIM WINDELL

review

It was billed as a Jazz Jamboree, but with Lionel Hampton pulling out and Larry Elgart plugged in, Meadow Brook Music Festival on Friday night wasn't a mini-jazz festival as much as a big band conclave.

Backstage after the show featuring the bands of Elgart, Woody Herman and Buddy Rich, Meadow Brook Festival's managing director Stuart Hyde took a rising from a Woody Herman trumpet player for substituting the sweet dance band of Elgart for Hampton.

But at least the bands were presented in the right order, as the music progressed from sweet to swing to hot jazz.

Elgart, rarely heard in these parts, provided an interesting hors d'oeuvre. The patented Elgart sound, with record-faithful tonal qualities, knocked out 10 tunes.

Larry's brother Les with whom the band was started in the early '50s is now retired.

A HIGHLIGHT of the Larry Elgart portion of the program was his attractive, slinky vocalist Patty Dunn. She is an excellent band singer who has picked up bits and pieces of some of the best female singers around, notably Nancy Wilson, Diana Ross and Ursula Dudziak, and combined these impressive styles.

She has the sensitivity that a good many band singers lack, and, for this evening, the introduction number for Ronald Reagan's address to the convention will be, "I Love You, California," with record-faithful tonal qualities, knocked out 10 tunes.

Dunn also has a uniquely musical scatting style that helped to close the Elgart set on a strong blues and jazz note, showing that the alto sax man could return to his jazz roots and belt out a song when he desired.

The middle 45 minutes was filled

with the swing of Woody Herman and his Thundering Young Herd. Herman's program was a replay of most of his concerts of the last several years with vintage Herman like "Woodchopper's Ball," "Four Brothers" and "Early Autumn" from a Woody Herman trumpet player for substituting the sweet dance band of Elgart for Hampton.

Anyone who hadn't seen the Herman band in six months or so may have searched the various sections looking for a familiar face besides Woody's. The turnover, because of the grueling nature of the big band business, is tremendous.

ONE-NIGHT STANDS 48 weeks of the year means that a lot of young musicians come and go, using it as a training ground. During the last two weeks alone, more than eight musicians have fled the Herman band for what they expect to be greener pastures.

With such defections, it's a wonder the band sounded as good as it did on such songs as Faure's "Pavane" or the usual roof-raiser, Copeland's "Fanfare for the Common Man."

Newcomer Tim Burke handled the piccolo trumpet solo in "Pavane" and Mike Brignoli, who replaced longtime baritone sax ace Gary Smulyn just a short time ago, acquitted himself well throughout the Herman set.

Buddy Rich's 15-piece band has added some new musicians lately. In the trumpet section, taking lead duties was former Count Basie

(Continued on Page 2)

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