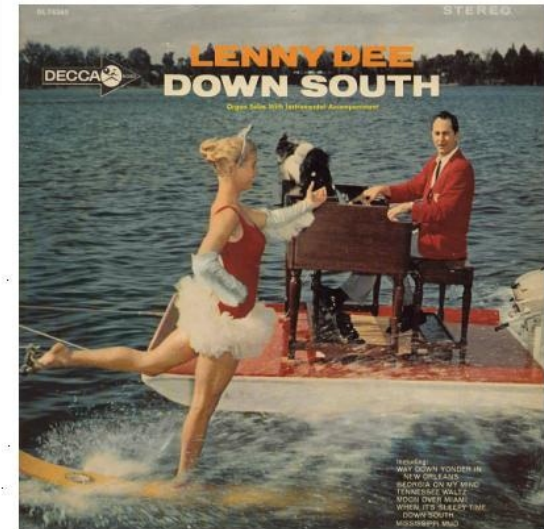


FLORIDIAN

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1999 ■ THE TIMES

Health problems and changing times aren't enough to keep lounge organist **LENNY DEE** down. He rises again and again on the wings of his talent and new audiences.



Lenny Dee Down South is just one of more than 50 albums the organist has made.



Times photo — LISA DeJONG

At 76 years old, Lenny Dee, lounge act extraordinaire, is in the midst of a 22-city tour for the Hammond Organ company. In January he's got a gig with Royal Cruise Line.

L O U N G E L A Z A R U S

By GINA VIVINETTO
Times Pop Music Critic

Lenny Dee wants his fans to know one thing: He's not dead. Not even close. Sure, there was the thing in September when the 76-year-old lounge organist was rushed to the hospital with a nasty case of cellulitis. Seems Dee picked up some bad bacteria from a public hot tub.

A hot tub?

"I've got arthritis," Dee explains.

Then there was the prostate cancer scare four years ago. An operation took care of that, but left Dee in a funk.

"I'm an 18-karat manic depressive," Dee says, his voice a gravelly, two-pack-a-day baritone. "Comes with the territory." Two years ago, Dee says, he was at an especially low point. He had lost about a million bucks through bad investments. Depressed, hospitalized and medicated, Dee says he found God. And happiness.

Now Dee is eager to get back to playing gigs on his beloved Hammond B 3000, the one he almost sold through a classified ad.

"Lazarus has risen," Dee jokes.

For those not up on lounge music, Dee is The King. Check out the recently published *Exotiquarium* (St. Martins, \$24.95)



Courtesy of Lenny Dee

It was hot and happening in Miami in 1958 and Lenny Dee was there. So was Marlene Dietrich.

a book celebrating "Album Art from the Space Age." It features vintage album covers by after-dinner music greats such as Juan Garcia Esquivel, Yma Sumac and Henry Mancini.

Who wrote the book's foreword? Lenny Dee. "Organ Lounge Master."

Check out MusicHound's *Lounge: The Essential Music Guide*. It lists Dee's many accomplishments: more than 50 albums on the Decca/MCA label with titles like *Dee-Lightful*, *Dee-Lirious*, *Dee-Most!* The smash hit *Plantation Boogie* in 1955.

Please see **LENNY DEE 4D**

Lenny Dee from 1D

Later, instrumental versions of Leo Sayer dance tunes. MusicHound's entry finishes: "Dee was last seen running a restaurant in St. Petersburg, Fla."

Well, the dinner club's closed, but Dee's still here. He remembers friends like Lawrence Welk dropping by the restaurant. "I used to call him the Dick Clark of the Stone Age," Dee says of Welk. "But what a classy guy."

Dee still cracks jokes during his act. How could he not? The humor, he says, comes naturally. "A gift from God." Fans guffaw at the jokes, which border on the risqué.

"Not nasty," Dee clarifies. "Double entendre. Top of the line."

Dee is also celebrating the British release of his new double album *Golden Organ Memories*, which features Dee's interpretations of standards such as *Girl From Ipanema*, *Moon River* and *Rhapsody In Blue*. Dee loves the album. "It's dynamite, isn't it?"

A 22-city concert tour for the Hammond Organ company is keeping him busy, and he's got a gig in

January on the Royal Cruise Line. But Dee says he'd like to play the local circuit again. Perhaps two nights a week. Hotels, maybe. Or upscale clubs. But not, Dee says, the

Savvy local club owners, take note: Dee is the real deal. He's got the ivory-tickling chops, the loungey lingo. The double entendre. All he needs is a mic and a little space for the Hammond.

smarmy bars. "I've done my time as a lounge lizard."

Does Dee realize the lounge sound is very popular with young martini-swilling, Sinatra-quoting neo-swingers these days? That young kids today, too, are looking for a ring-a-ding time?

"Er, no," Dee says, interested.

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ivory-tickling chops, the loungey lingo. The double entendre. All he needs is a mic and a little space for the Hammond.

At 76, the man they called "Mr. Entertainment" is still rip-roarin' to play. "Age is not something that matters," Dee says. "Unless you're cheese."

And just look at the guy. He'd blend right in with today's youth. Dee, with armfuls of muddy tattoos dating back to his WWII Navy days, also wears a gold earring in his left ear. Dee's no dinosaur. He can remember names, dates and any tune. "I've got a memory like a rabbit romance," Dee jokes. "Quick."

He's also famous for being the one guy in lounge music who constantly evolved. Take, for instance, his mid-1970s reworking of the disco hit *Rock Your Baby*.

Perhaps he has plans to tackle contemporary hits? Maybe a rap tune?

"Oh no. I can't handle that," Dee says, laughing. "That's not my bag."



Lenny Dee's *Golden Organ Memories* is available through the Good Music Company. Call (800) 538-4200.