

# CONSTANT IS THE WORD FOR STUDY

by JOE BIVIANO

Every once in a while I find it is necessary to more or less throw a flare in the form of a few well-meant hints if not actual sarcastic digs about the *constant* study of the accordion. In writing this, I naturally have in mind my own pupils, but what is true of them is also true of thousands who are not.

When the autumn comes around each year, I find that most everyone comes back to work with a few bad habits that they acquired during their summer vacations. And, worse than that, they often cling grimly to the summer schedule — practicing about half an hour a day. The serious study of any musical instrument means at least three hours work daily. When I tell this to some young hopefuls, they look at me as if I had suddenly gone mad.

Another thing, the pupil who has advanced to the extent that he or she has passed the period of crude fundamentals (I mean the scales and arpeggios) seems to think that those studies can be let alone, if not actually forgotten. Such is not the case, however. It is the constant practising of those scales and forms of fundamental studies alone that make it possible to develop a good clean and fast technique. These studies should be gone through every day, in three or four different keys. This helps to limber up the fingers and at the same time it develops the finger muscles.

Then there are some students who feel that they can go through these studies without the help of a teacher. This is usually fatal, for the correct



position of the hand on an instrument must be watched expertly. The most common disease a pupil develops thru working by himself, is the tightening of his hand muscles, and having a stiff wrist. And believe me if you want good results you've got to have a well relaxed hand!

Once this "disease" has a good hold on a pupil, he begins to wonder why he cannot play anything clean and correct, so he decides to give the teacher a break and go to him. By then the teacher has twice as difficult a job on his hands, for he must first undo the damage that has been done.

Now a few "digs" for the pupil who comes in and says, "I only want you to teach me to play some popular songs and solos, because I've been through all the fundamental studies by myself, and know all my scales, etc."

I always ask them to play these studies that they have been through by themselves, and in nearly every case a pretty discouraging situation is revealed. The teacher's first job is to make the pupil realize the faults he has developed, for he has got to have the proper fundamental background, both musically and physically (as far as the hands are concerned) to be able to go into professional work.

So, all you future Magnantes of the accordion, get your nose to the grindstone and do some real honest-to-goodness wood shedding. If this bit of conversation has given you a useful slant on study, let me know, and maybe I can help further.