

TWO TON BAKER, A RIGHT JOLLY PIANO PUNCHER

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Maker of Peppy Music

Is Lazy at Home

BY ANTON REMENIH

Producers call him the One Man Show. Radio announcers introduce him as the Behemoth of the Keyboards. But thousands of W-G-N-Mutual listeners from coast to coast know him best as Two Ton Baker, the Music Maker.

Richard Evans Baker, piano and song stylist, is a big man. He weighs close to 350 pounds, wears a size 18 collar, and his tailor uses a special tape to record his girth. Weight distribution on the jolly piano puncher is such that his favorite theater in Roseland, where he lives, has removed an armrest between two seats to accommodate him.

One Of The Happiest

But if Baker is one of the biggest entertainers in the nation, he is also one of the best of his type and one of the happiest.

"The only thing I've ever wanted to do in this world," he said, "is play the piano and sing on the radio. This isn't work, it's play—and I'm getting paid for it!"

That Two Ton likes what he is doing is obvious. He rides the keyboard, slapping and kicking the piano with all the whoop and holler of a cowpuncher breaking in a wild horse. When Baker digs his spurs, the studio quivers. There is a standing rule in W-G-N studio 6 that the big man confine his cutups to the piano. No jigs.

"Laziest Guy I Know"

This super-abundance of energy is restricted to his work, however. In his home, Two Ton, according to his pert 117 pound wife, Ruth, is "one enormous hulk of relaxation and good humor." Baker puts it another way.

"I'm the laziest guy I know," he admits. "I bought a car in which I don't have to shift gear."

If there is any suggestion of hustle around the house when he

Radio's Music Maker



Two Ton Baker, the One Man Show, or the Behemoth of the Keyboard. By whatever name, he is one of radio's most popular piano stylists. Two Ton Baker the Music Maker is heard five days a week on W-G-N and the Mutual network.

returns from a stint at the studio, Baker tells his family to "relax and be happy." Consequently, Mrs. Baker arranges her housework so all is finished before her husband returns.

Two Ton's pride and joy are his two children, Richard, 10, whom he refers to affectionately on the air as Jughead, and Deborah Lynn, 2 1/2, dubbed Flutterbug.

Eats One Meal A Day

He may be found almost any day making like an oversize St. Bernard dog on the floor, giving a ride to Deborah or wrestling with Richard. That constitutes his exercise. He eats only one real meal a day, consisting usually of broiled meats and salads.

Much of his time is spent listening to recordings by Duke Ellington, whom he admires, knows personally, and considers his musical "teacher." Two Ton owns virtually every record the Duke has out.

Despite his piano skill, Baker never took a music lesson. To this day (he's 32), he can't read more than the top line of a piano score. A master of improvisation, he plays by ear. His mental

library is so stuffed with tunes it is almost impossible to stump him.

Plays Piano At 2 1/2

Baker, who weighed almost 13 pounds at birth, was a piano prodigy. At 2 1/2 he startled his family by playing Yankee Doodle with two hands (he was told) on the piano. At 4, he accompanied his mother, a semi-professional singer, at community gatherings in the Halsted-Van Buren sts. area.

Two Ton attended Morton and Fenger High schools and periodically interrupted book learning to play two or three day engagements.

After school days, Baker played night spots with a 12 piece band, traveled with a road show in the south and east, and occasionally picked up solo chores as a combination master of ceremonies, singer, and piano player. In 1938 he struck out for himself and toured the night club circuits. A year later he became a disc jockey on WJJD. He came to W-G-N five years ago and now plays about 15 quarter-hour shows a week.

"Happy Day To You"

The key to Two Ton's phi-

losophy on life is found, he contends, in his opening line, "Happy day to you, friends."

"I like to think my radio show helps make people a little more friendly," he said. "The world is full of petty stings. I hope my monkeyshines and songs make people forget the bars for a little while."

Baker, whose calm unruffled disposition is a constant source of amazement to his wife, is worried about nothing except an unforeseen change in his present routine.

"If I ever have to go to work," he confessed, "I don't know what I'd do. I probably would lose a lot of weight, not from exercise but from unhappiness."

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