

FIRST

PIZZA ORGAN BUILT

by Douglas Marion

As is now well known, theatre organs have reached new popularity on the West Coast installed in pizza restaurants. The trend was started within the past decade by the first such instrument installed in San Lorenzo, one of the many suburbs in the east San Francisco Bay area. Since that time, a continuing number have been placed in pizza restaurants, ranging from 2 to 4 manuals and from 6 to 20 ranks. Most of the entrepreneurs have been organ buffs themselves. That is not to deny the fact that the tremendous outlay of money was spent in the since confirmed belief that the expenditure would return a profit.

As more were installed, organs became more and more scarce. As an example, several interested pizza operators are seriously considering the purchase of a 4 manual Wurlitzer located in South Africa! It was in this used organ sellers market condition that the Northern California representatives of the Wicks Organ Company, Judd Walton and Bob Jacobus, were approached by the representatives of a large chain of pizza places to discuss new organs for their "stores", as they refer to them. They were asked to design a new orchestral organ expressly for use in this environment, as they were convinced that a new instrument could be acquired for at least no more money, if not less,

than a completely rehabilitated theatre organ.

From this has resulted a new orchestral organ installed in the Red Vest Pizza, in Monterey, California, with installation being completed on February 1, 1973, the date prescribed in the contract. The organ was built in 90 days! It is indeed the first organ ever built that has been expressly designed to meet the marketing requirements of a pizza restaurant.

The Wicks Organ Company has been building organs for over 60 years.

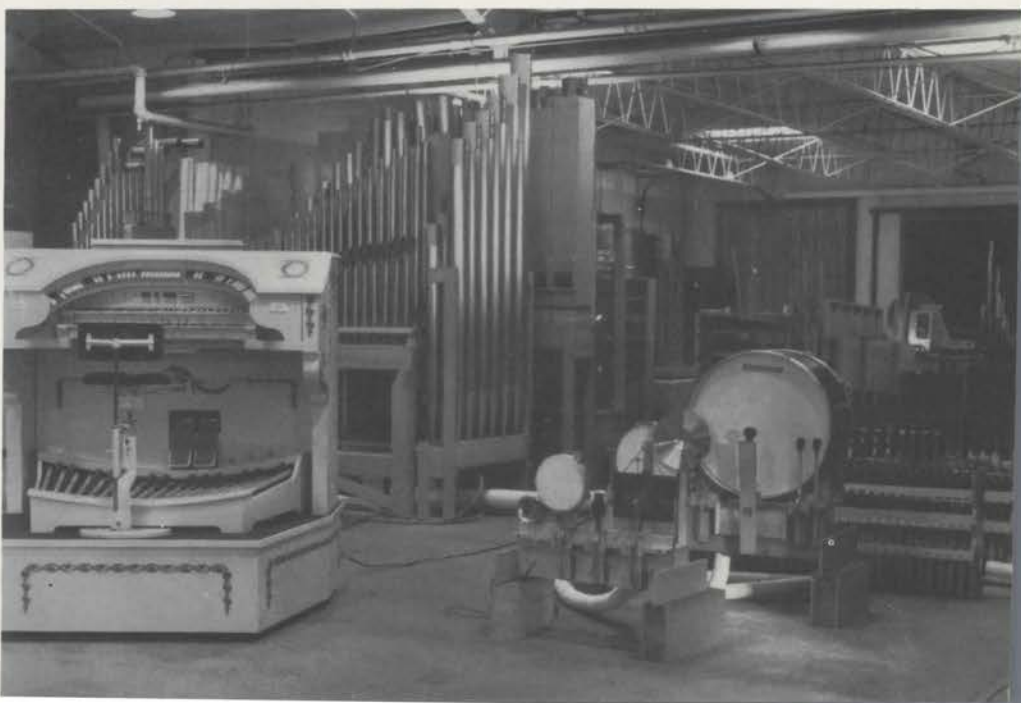
During the years when theatre organs were marketable, the company produced many of these instruments, while continuing to build church organs as their major production. Many of the craftsmen then working for the company are still employed. Hence it was on the basis of this experience and understanding of the orchestral organ concept that the contract was undertaken.

The Red Vest Pizza installation finds 8 ranks installed at the rear of the room with the percussions and



Console of the 2/8 Wicks — the first ever built specifically for a pizza house.

The new organ after its final checkout at the Wicks factory before installation in the Red Vest.



ANALYSIS

8' English Horn — 61 Pipes
16' Trompette — 73 Pipes
8' Diaphonic Diapason — 73 Pipes
16' Tibia Clausa — 97 Pipes
8' Gamba — 73 Pipes
8' Gamba Celeste T.C. — 49 Pipes
8' Concert Flute — 85 Pipes
8' Kinura — 61 Pipes
Marimba (double G to G3) — 49 Notes
Xylophone (single C to C3) — 37 Notes
Glockenspiel (tenor G to C3) — 30 Notes
Bass Drum
Cymbal (sizzle)
Snare Drum
Tambourine
Castanets
Siren
Fire Gong (reiterating)
Steam Boat Whistle

traps ranged along each side of the room at ceiling level. The Swell Chamber is equipped with plate glass swell shades which provide interest and visibility as well as volume control. It was first determined that certain voices would have greater utility in this environment than that found in theatres. Dropped from the specification, therefore, were the "usual Vox Humana" and the softly intonated Chrysoglott. In their place was inserted a throaty voiced Kinura and a Marimba Harp respectively. An English Horn was included in addition to the Trumpet for the bright brassy reed sound. Scales were made quite large for an instrument of eight ranks, very similar to those used by Wurlitzer on the organs they built for the English market. The Marimba Harp, Xylophone and Glockenspiel have a light installed for each note which lights up when the note is played. On-off switches for the lighting system are installed on the console.

The entire instrument and its placement has followed the principle laid down by the purchaser — "MVI" — Maximum Visual Impact! The Console is of Wicks design, with a horseshoe shaped single bolster with stops engraved from the Wurlitzer Templates owned by Max Mogensen of HESCO, Inc., Hagerstown, Maryland.* It is finished in Ivory with gold bas-relief designs on the top, front, sides and back. The combination system is the Capture Combination type, with five pistons for the Pedal, Accompaniment and Solo as well as five Master Pistons. The Console and its equipment was also built with "MVI"!

The manager of the "store" is Mr. Steve Paul who has been very enthu-

siastic throughout the entire period. His reports on the increasing business since the installation have proven the viability of the company's decision to acquire the organ. Steve formerly had an orchestra well known throughout the San Francisco Bay area as he was frequently broadcast by the local radio stations. Bud Taylor has been engaged to play for the patrons, many who have become "regulars" since he opened the instrument.

General Manager Peter Decker is enthusiastic about the results produced for the company by the organ entertainment at the Red Vest. He is convinced that the purchase of the new instrument was a wise decision — the contract not only provided for the organ but includes ten years service as well as Wicks ten year warranty which includes parts and labor.

It has been a thrill for the many guests to sit at the console of a brand new theatre type organ for "a go". This is not the first orchestral organ built by Wicks in recent years — it is the fourth. The first was that built for Oral Roberts Auditorium (now in a Chicago residence), the second was a Home Show demonstration organ

(now in a Chicago area restaurant), and the third is in Mr. Harvey Hemingway's residence near Milwaukee, Wisconsin.*

"The entire project has been a real challenge", Walton stated when asked. "Bob and I had the opportunity of a lifetime to design a valid orchestral instrument for this specific purpose", he continued, "and the result is extremely satisfying". "It was necessary to consider uppermost the use to which the organ must succeed, designed on orchestral sound principles, but not necessarily as a theatre organ". "We believe it marks the beginning of a new era in the orchestral organ field", Walton continued. "With electronic instruments priced up to \$40,000.00, many are coming to realize that the real article can be had, that it presents a much better investment by retaining its value through a much longer trouble free life span, and that an orchestral organ can now be acquired at a cost approximating that for an older theatre organ completely restored by professionals!" □

*(See "Wurlitzer Template Discovery" August 1970 issue of THEATRE ORGAN)

CONVENTION FEATURE . . .



The former Oriental Theatre Wurlitzer organ, now enlarged to 34 ranks. The instrument is now installed in the Organ Grinder Restaurant in Portland and is one of the organs to be featured at the ATOS convention next month. — (Claude Neuffer Photo)