

Seeing pipes in an electronic organ factory is just about as strange as seeing plastic flowers in a greenhouse. But at the Rodgers Organ Company of Hillsboro, Oregon, pipes are very much a part of what you see. And pipes are helping the builder of electronic organs show amazing growth of late. The success is due to the company's recent introduction of the Rodgers Classic Series, with Pipes; a line of two and three manual classic specifications blending the wonder of electronics with the magic of pipes.

One reporter asked if Rodgers was admitting that pipes are better than electronics. "We're in the music business," says John Hoekstra, Rodgers' Chief Executive Officer. "Pipes have always been our standard of comparison for both our classic and theatre organs. Pipes were around a long time before electronics, and we're interested in preserving the rich heritage of the 'King of Instruments.' Whatever we can do to make better music, we do. With electronics, with pipes, and now with our entirely new generation of organ sound, The Classic Series, With Pipes."

Gary Kibble, Director of Marketing, puts it this way: "I got my training on pipes, but have played electronic organs all my life. I could never understand all the argument between pipes and electronics. One has helped the other. For example, refinement of Rodgers organs could only have been made possible by our having real classic and theatre pipe organs to listen to. And to learn from. On the other hand," Kibble added, "look at the improvements pipe organs have gained as a direct result of electronics. Some important contributions that come to mind immediately are solid-state organ consoles, unification switching and computer memory combination actions. Also electronic supplements, such as 32' pedal voices, have expanded the tonal capabilities of pipe organs. Who has room for pipes that stand 32 feet in the air?"

When it comes to talking about how much room pipe organs take, Kibble knows. The first successful combination of the new Rodgers series of instruments with pipes was installed in the Kibble's Portland, Oregon home. "The 32' Bourdon

# RODGERS ADDING HOMEGROWN PIPES

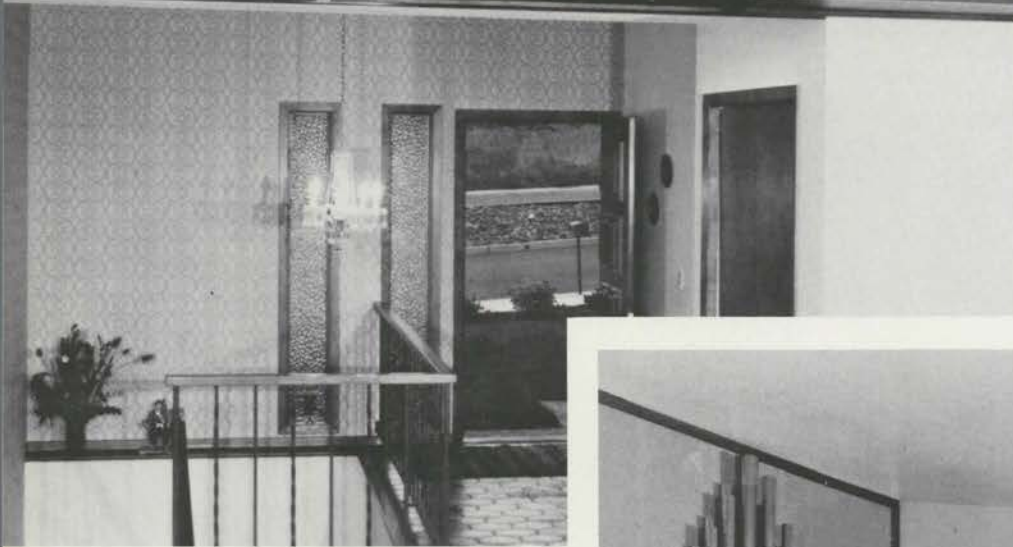
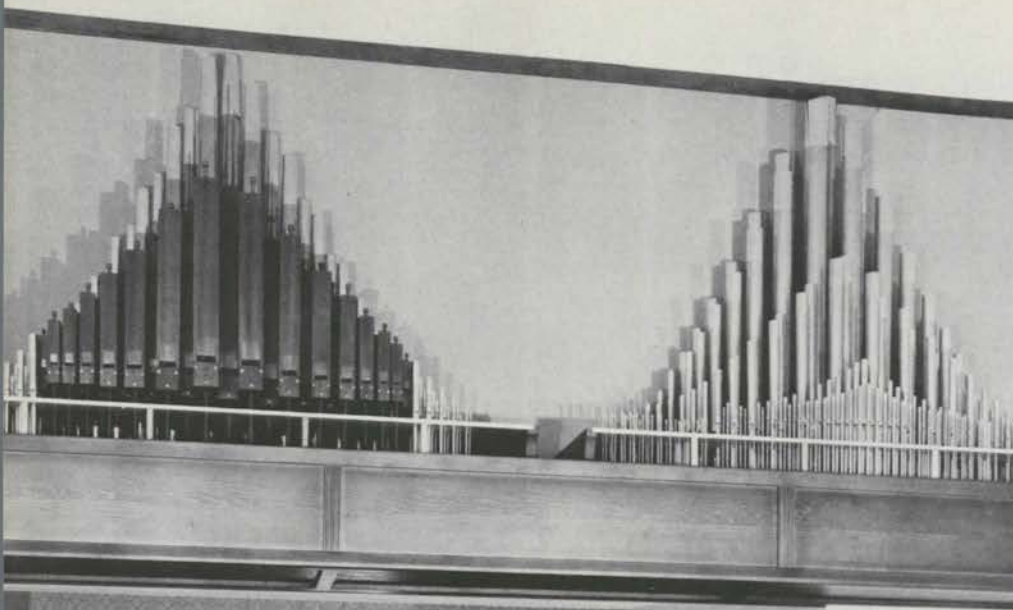
by James A. Walls

Pipes sprouting in an electronic organ factory! Allan Harrah was instrumental in Rodgers' first successful link-up of pipes and electronics back when Rodgers was combining pipes imported from Italy's Ruffatti Organ Co. Harrah helped design the electronic circuit which makes it possible, at the turn of a knob, to tune all electronic circuits a little sharp or a little flat to match pitches to the small pitch variations which changing weather, temperature and climate cause among pipes. Rodgers also builds the chests for their new venture with pipes. Chests are built from Honduras mahogany.

(Henry Ngan Photo)







voices are pipe powered. The Swell and Pedal Divisions are electronic, although pipe voices may be coupled to the Pedals. Great and Positiv Divisions are unenclosed. "I enjoy seeing the faces of organists who sit down to our instrument," commented the youngish Rodgers Marketing Director. "Many organists come programmed not to like it. That's easy to understand. I must admit, it must be heard and played to be believed!" said Kibble.

This whole business of pipes and electronics getting together got started in 1971 when Rodgers became the exclusive United States representative for Fratelli Ruffatti, pipe organ builders of Padua, Italy. In turn Ruffatti represented Rodgers' line of instruments in Italy.

The evolution of pipes to transistors, then to pipes and transistors together, has become a revelation — a new opening up of the market place that promises exciting results for the fast growing Oregon company. Rodgers logged slightly over one million dollars worth of orders

▲ Pipework for the Rodgers installation in the Gary Kibble home. Wooden pipes are handcrafted from solid walnut by pipemakers in the Rodgers Hillsboro plant. At present, metal pipe requirements are farmed out to reliable pipe manufacturers. Principal pipes are on low pressure, unnicked for open-toed voicing, for what is described as "optimum speech articulation." Rodgers has no plans, so far, for adopting tracker action.

▶ The console in the Gary Kibble home is equipped with computer combination action. The floating Positiv (left) is one of two pipe-powered divisions which complement the electronic voices. The console is constructed of walnut hardwood veneers. Note the non-parallel surface (ceiling) which helps avoid "standing wave" distortion.

literally moves our foundation," says Mrs. Kibble. "The neighbors leave their windows open whenever famous organists visit our home. They say they enjoy getting free concerts."

The organ in the Kibble residence was easily accommodated without tearing the house down. Celeste ranks and some color voices are completely electronic. The Great Division and floating Positiv include pipes. The combination is remarkable. Of 14 voices on the Great, 8 are pipes. Seven of the positiv's 8





for the new electronic/pipe series at a recent dealer showing in Chicago. "And that was only the beginning," commented company Sales Manager, Thod Madsen, "One dealer has already ordered his third instrument since November."

But is it easy to overcome some of the apparent incompatibilities of pipes and transistors? Company Tonal Director, Allan Van Zoeren, replies emphatically, yes! "Quite frankly, before joining Rodgers, I wouldn't touch an electronic organ with a ten foot pole! I thought they all belonged in nightclubs. Pipes and only pipes are what I would associate myself with." Said Van Zoeren.

Then came Carnegie Hall. Rodgers approached Van Zoeren, a noted voicer of some of America's most prestigious pipe organs, to see if he would voice their five-manual organ for New York's famous Carnegie Hall. Van Zoeren accepted, but now admits he took the voicing job in deference to Carnegie Hall. "I wanted the organ they installed to be the finest possible," Van Zoeren stated. "I was startled that electronics could be so convincing. I accepted the position as Tonal Director for Rodgers, moved from New York to Oregon, and am happier than I've been in my whole life."

Immediately upon Van Zoeren's arrival in Oregon, he began working out design ideas with Allen Harrah, Manager of Rodgers' Custom Division. Harrah had been instrumental in earlier successes combining Rodgers electronics with Ruffatti pipes, and worked closely with Rodgers engineers to provide a console control that could instantly tune the electronics to match the pipes (a major consideration that had not been addressed in earlier attempts to combine electronics with pipes by other organ builders).

Having a tonal director who thoroughly understands pipe organs, and engineers who know electronics, this combination has taken off like a duck to water. "WE realize that we're all trying to create an artistic entity that makes beautiful music," says Van Zoeren. And making beautiful music is not a bad thing for any organ company to be doing.

*The preceding story was written for THEATRE ORGAN by James A. Walls who does promotional writing*

*for the Rodgers Organ Co. While Rodgers' pipe effort is currently applied only to classic models, considering the company's leading position in the electronic theatre organ field, we ask: can the swell box with a wind-powered Tibia and Vox to supplement electronic theatre organs be far behind? An inside source says the possibility is being considered.* □



Allan Van Zoeren, Rodgers' Tonal Director, "adjusted" to electronic sound sources after helping with Rodgers' Carnegie Hall installation. To date, the firm has no plans for an all-pipe organ.

*(Henry Ngan Photo)*

This veteran pipemaker works on a wooden flute pipe in Rodgers 67,000 square-foot Hillsboro facility, working according to Aeolian-Skinner pipe scales which Rodgers purchased from the defunct Boston builder in 1974. We'll wager this man could turn out a mean Tibia Clausa.

*(Henry Ngan Photo)*



## VOX POPS



Conducted by Stu Green

*Readers are encouraged to submit interesting sidelights on the organ hobby (exclusive of chapter news items) material they believe will be of general interest about local organ activities and installations and the people who work at the hobby. We know "there's VOX POPS in them there chapters" and it only requires a 9c postcard to get it to VOX POPS Editor, Box 3564, Granada Hills, California 91344. If the contributor can afford a 13c stamp, why not include a black and white photo which need not be returned.*

While 1977 conventioners are in Chicago and have an idle evening, they might drop over to the Bismarck Hotel, about three or four blocks from the Palmer House, and listen to the refreshing organ music of Barbara Sellers, daughter of Preston and Edna Sellers, two of Chicago's well-known theatre organists of the big era. Barbara has been gaining a steady following at the Bismarck thru her musicianship and sparkling personality.



Sandy Fleet informs us of further changes in the Reginald Foort Moller in the renamed "Spaghetti and Pizza Pavilion" (formerly "Organ Power Pizza No. 2"). It will be recalled that the Pacific Beach installation was enlarged by the addition of an unenclosed Trompette en Chamade, 12 tuned pedal Kettledrums and a six-rank (style D) Wurlitzer located in a separate rear chamber which was playable from either the Moller console or its own 2-decker. Also, the