



## The Voice of Fresno's Pizza and Pipes

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In March of 1977, Bob Breuer opened his new Pizza and Pipes Restaurant in Fresno, California, and hundreds of curious Fresnans filled the building on opening night. At 5:30, 24-year-old Don Croom took his position at the console, and the 23-rank Wurlitzer roared to life.

In the years since, the restaurant has proven to be a huge success, with little advertising having been necessary. The news has spread primarily by word-of-mouth. And it's been encouraging to see large numbers of young people in the audiences respond enthusiastically to their first exposure to a theatre organ... even when the sound of Bach comes rolling out of the chambers.

The interior of the 368-seat facility is attractively finished in dark woods, contrasted with red wallpaper on the upper-half of the walls. Dozens of framed photographs of silent and talkie stars line the lower portion of the side walls. Several rows of small, clear lights highlight the edges of the balcony and its supporting columns, as well as the perimeters of the pipe chamber windows facing the street.

Opus 585, originally an 18-rank 260 special, has had an interesting history. It was first installed in Shea's Hippodrome Theatre in Buffalo, New York, in 1922. The most famous person to play it on a regular basis was none other than Albert Hays Malotte, best known for setting "The Lord's Prayer" to music. The

organ remained in the theatre until May, 1957, when it was purchased by Harold Logan of Niagara Falls, Ontario, and installed in his residence. The chambers were located in a large basement, with the organ speaking into the living room where the console was situated. In 1974, Logan sold the organ to Bob Breuer. Breuer's original plans were to use an existing building for his restaurant, but the lengthy search proved to be a dead end, so he decided to

build a new structure, designed from the ground up to house and showcase the organ. Finally, in 1976, a site near a busy intersection was located and the project began to take shape.

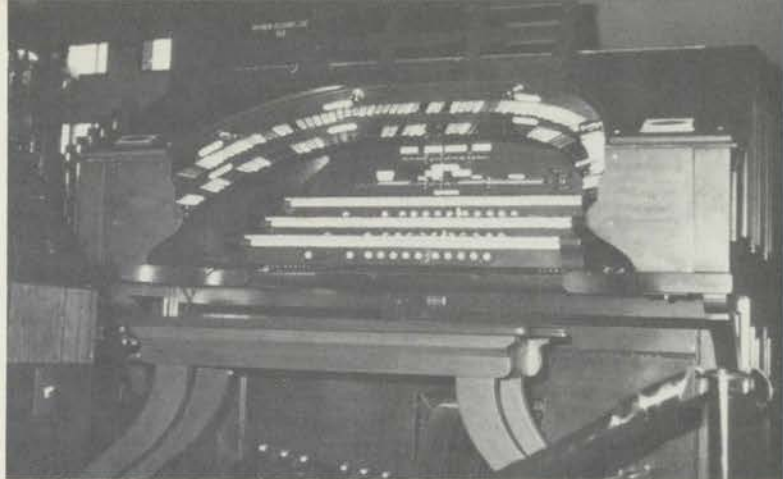
The organ is installed in long and fairly shallow chambers which occupy most of the front wall, except for the building's main entrance, which separates them. The 23 ranks of pipes and percussions are placed as follows:

Visible from the street are the 16' Post Horn and the 8' Tibia offset (on the left) and the large-scale Diapason offset and 16' Tuba offset (on the right). The relay and blower rooms are above the front entrance, behind the sign.





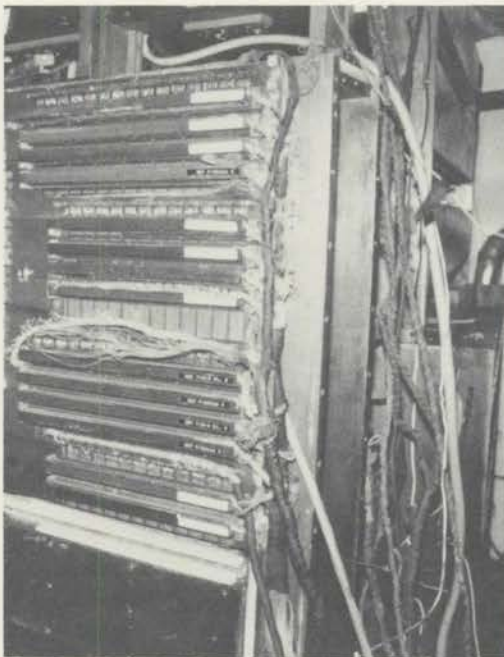
Solo chamber as viewed from the dining area. The Brass Sax is on the left and the Trumpet on the right.



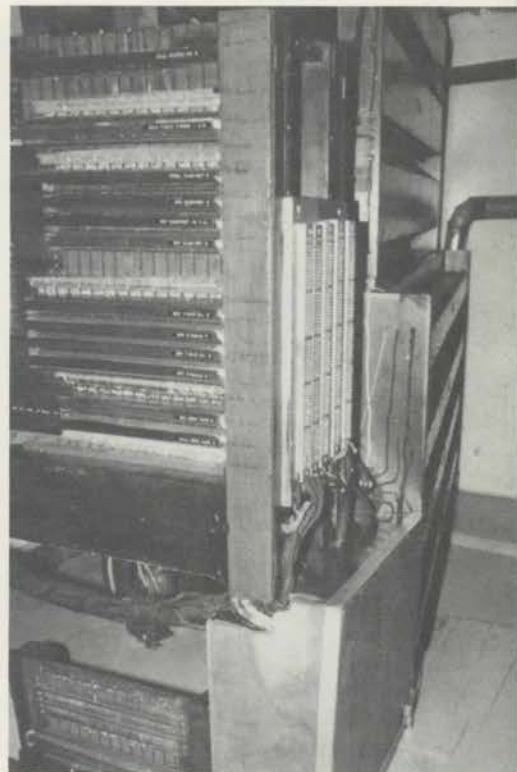
Improvements have been made to the Wurlitzer console by technician Tom Delay.



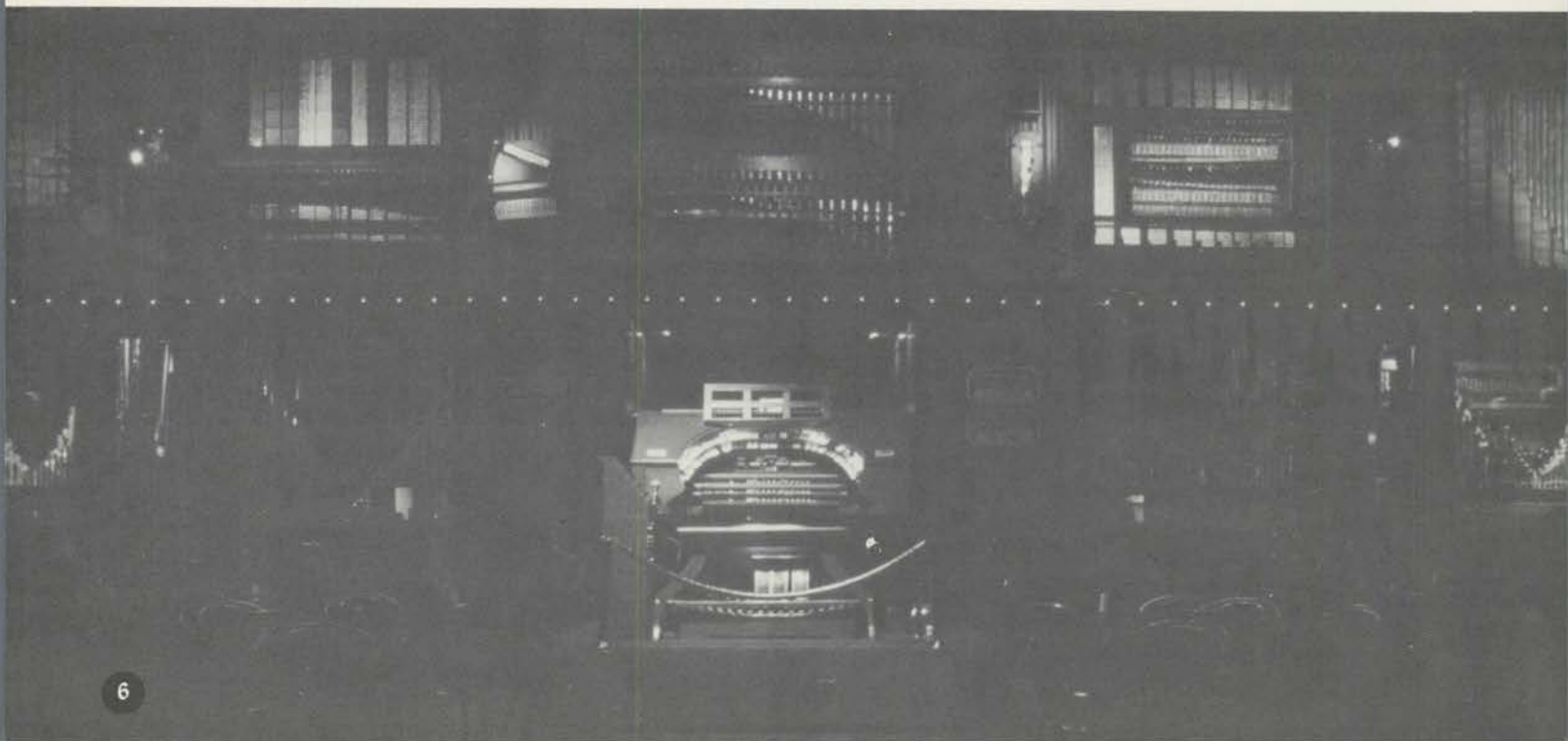
Extensive revamping of the relay and switches was a tedious job for Tom Delay.



Before (left) and after (right) photos of the switchstack show evidence of the careful attention given to this installation.



Below: The dining area at Fresno Pizza and Pipes. The main chamber is on the left and the solo chamber on the right. The relay room is directly behind the Marimba, at the center of the picture, above the front entrance to the restaurant.



**Main Chamber (left)**

Tuba Horn 16'-8'  
 Diaphonic Diapason 16'-8'  
 Tibia Clausa 8'-4'

**(Robert Morton)**

Flute 16'-8'-4'-2'  
 Viol d' Orchestre 8'-4'-2'  
 Viol Celeste 8'-4'  
 Salicional 8'-4'  
 Voix Celeste 8'-4'  
 Quintadena 8'  
 Clarinet 8'  
 Vox Humana 8'

Siren

Auto horn ("ooh-gah")

**Solo Chamber (right)**

Post Horn 16'-8'  
 Brass Trumpet 8'  
 Brass Saxophone 8'  
 Tuba 8'

**(Robert Morton)**

Tibia Clausa 16'-8'-4'-2'  
 Open Diapason 8'-4'  
 Solo String 8'  
 Krumet 8'  
 Oboe Horn 8'  
 Orchestral Oboe 8'  
 Kinura 8'  
 Harmonic Flute 4'

(Removed. To be replaced with  
 8'-4' Horn Diapason)

Glockenspiel

Sleigh Bells (tuned)

**Unenclosed (in dining area)**

Marimba

Xylophone

Chimes

Chrysoglott (w/Vibraharp)

Piano (w/Mandolin attachment)

Toy counter

The wooden Diaphone extended to 32 feet, but the lowest octave wasn't removed from the theatre. The Krumet was added by the factory after the organ was installed in the theatre. The Post Horn is a composite of three different makes. The top third is Morton, the middle Kimball, and the 16-foot "Grossophone" portion is Wurlitzer.

As with many of the newer pipe organ-equipped pizza parlors, the size of the chamber windows is quite generous, allowing patrons a complete view of everything inside, including wind lines, reservoirs and tremulants. As a result, a frequent (and amusing) sight is that of a two-foot high toddler wobbling up to the glass to watch the reservoirs work up and down.

The organ more than adequately fills the room and the ensemble sound is very assertive with the swell



Don Croom plays nightly, Wednesday through Saturday, at Pizza and Pipes.

shades open. When all of the brass in the solo chamber is included, sound pressure levels in the middle of the dining area can exceed 90 db.

One interesting feature of the installation is the placement of the relay and blower rooms. They are housed in the shake-shingled structure that protrudes from the front of the building and supports the Pizza and Pipes sign. The first of its two levels is reached by climbing a metal ladder located in the solo chamber. Inside this second story room, which is directly over the main entrance, are the relays. Access to the blower room in the top level is through a hatch in the ceiling of the relay room. The 15 hp Spencer Orgoblo was placed on this third story level to isolate it as much as possible from

Dick Cencibaugh plays for a Tuesday evening crowd at the Fresno restaurant.



the listening area. It delivers 3,000 cubic feet of wind per minute at 15 inches of pressure.

Although a considerable amount of work was done on the Wurlitzer prior to its move to Fresno, a number of things still required attention and replacement. Technician Tom Delay has spent a great deal of time improving the instrument mechanically as well as tonally. It sounds noticeably better today than it did on opening night.

Don Croom, who plays Wednesday through Saturday nights, has shown considerable skill in extracting sounds from the theatre organ that do justice to contemporary material. And he does just as well with a standard like "Misty." His musical ability and easy-going personality have earned him a sizeable following, and he has just released his second recording.

From Sunday through Tuesday nights, a no less personable and talented Dick Cencibaugh presides at the console. Dick's involvement with the theatre organ goes back to high school days. Equally adept at playing classics and standards, he played intermissions at the Fresno Warner Theatre's 4/14 Morton during the 60s. One of his teachers was Richard Purvis.

In observing the crowds at Pizza and Pipes, it's amazing to note the broad range of demographics covered. On any night, you might see a pipe-smoking college professor sitting at a table across from a young cowboy type who's wearing boots and a fancy western design on his shirt. Teenage boys bring their girlfriends in for a pizza, and the music is provided by the Mighty Wurlitzer instead of the Rolling Stones. A group of Pakistani students attending Fresno State University comes in for dinner, then sits and listens attentively for almost an hour.

In the past few years, several new restaurants with theatre organs have opened, and all of them have done much to generate interest in the theatre organ. Fresno's Pizza and Pipes has been an effective vehicle in its own right. And while all businesses exist to make money, the pipe organ restaurant's secondary function of exposing the general public to an incredible musical instrument is something you can't put a price on. □