

THE ELECTRONIC ORGAN CORNER . . . Douglas Marion

No one contends that the electronic organ is an ideal substitute for the "Mighty Wurlitzer" but nearly everyone will agree that the average home is better suited to the self-contained electronic than to the myriad pipes of the ideal instrument.

ACCORDING TO THE Encyclopaedia Britannica, an electronic device does not qualify for use of the name, *organ*. Just to make sure that its position is entirely clear, it goes on to state that use of the term 'pipe' is actually redundant, since *pipe* is already inferred. So there you have it on good authority that there is no such thing as an electronic organ. But if words are the medium for the exchange of ideas, surely we can use the term without fear of being misunderstood. However, to be understood is not always an advantage.

Still, to many minds, the idea of an organ is epitomized in the name Wurlitzer. And nowhere in that idea is *electronic* implied. In fact, it may well imply exclusion of it. Whether or not we like it, the electronic organ is with us . . . and to stay. One can thrill to the magnificent grandeur of the giant redwood and still appreciate the simple beauty of a gardenia. So, also, one need not love the Mighty Wurlitzer any the less because he gets a measure of pleasure from an electronic device. These little beasts in the dining alcove have stimulated a wave of interest in organs and organists that otherwise never might have occurred. Just the fact that *organ* was a chosen part of their generic name is indicative of the trend. These instruments were intended to sound like an organ. How closely they achieve this is a measure of how truly they deserve to possess the term.

That THE TIBIA would ever embrace a department devoted to Electronic Organs may have been a great fear to some of us. To others it has seemed inevitable. Let us therefore, take electronic organs for what they are, rather than to damn them for what they are not. Souls aren't bringing much on the open market right now, and even if one could sell his, it seems unlikely that he could get the Paramount Theatre Organ in exchange. Then, too, there would be that little item of talent which is required to bring an organ to life. It seems that some of us are going to have to be satisfied with something less . . . quite a bit less, to be sure!

We've seen some truly great names shift over to electronic organs under the pounding of economic waves and dwindling organ use. Recently, the widespread application of high fidelity sound in the home, the familiarity with the thumping of electronic bass, and the availability of truly great pipe-organ recordings have turned the listeners' ears again to the greatest musical instrument within the history of mankind . . . the Theatre Organ.

One need not recite the history of the electronic organ to prove its steady course toward the theatre organ sound. Nor need one read the names of the stop tablets to know that the ultimate goal of any present manufacturer would be to imitate these musical titans successfully.

Thousands, perhaps many more, of otherwise too-old-to-learn adults have purchased electronic organs. They are practicing regularly and learning something about the entertainment value of such an instrument. They, for the most part, listen to pipe-organ records and try to imitate them. For such is the versatility of the electronic circuit.

It is hoped that THE TIBIA may become the

magazine of popular organists, whether they be traditional theatre organ devotees or following the course of the electronic organ. We should like to provide a point of exchange of ideas for all those whose interests lie in this direction. Perhaps we can help to increase the interest of those who are still in the looking stage. We may be able to provide additional inspiration to those more advanced. We hope that some will graduate to the pipe organ itself. Above all, let us not embark on the sea of controversy where no port is safe even in calm weather.

Given one of the finest of available electronic organs, a lot of expression is possible. It cannot be played exactly like a pipe organ . . . should not, anyway. But strictly in its own right, it probably often exceeds the ability of its player. With a point for dissemination we might even build up the pool of popular knowledge of electronic organs, beneficial to the players and makers as well. The do-it-yourself fans need a corner in print also. With some of the parts and kits now on the market, all one needs to do is to add solder and stir . . . with a soldering iron, of course.

In beginning, one must be guided by what he thinks is the current trend. He may have strong convictions and be wrong. But it is felt that the vast numbers of electronic organs in use must be an indication of a strong desire for organ-type tone and music. So, if those who are interested will write in and tell us what they think, we shall be happy to try to pick out the general ideas and pattern our column along lines which will give the most in pleasure and information. It is our resolute intention to avoid any type of discussion as to relative merits or shortcomings which tend to hurt or criticize adversely. We want this to be a constructive project, one which will stimulate and encourage others. Please do not withhold criticism of the column itself, however. We need to know how you would like to have THE TIBIA present its Electronic Organ Department.

TO OUR READERS

We are extremely anxious to obtain the kind of articles and features that you, the readers, like. Because of the many divergent factors which have characterized our beginning, we do not have a good file upon which to sample opinion. True, we do have some wonderful letters telling us your feelings on certain specific articles or statements by our writers. But your real desires are not adequately expressed in volume. So, if you like certain of the regular features, won't you please drop us a line and tell us? And, as there surely must be, the features or subjects which have not yet gotten into THE TIBIA and which would especially please you or your friends, may appear in print if you take the trouble to inform us. The editorial staff can serve you best if it knows your wishes. A postcard will do; a letter would be received most gratefully. We don't want to urge you unduly, but . . . please do it now!

The Editor