

HOME ORGAN FESTIVAL On The West Coast

San Francisco—Sept. 26 — The annual Home Organ Festival, staged by the Pacific Council for Organ Clubs, closed its five day run at Hoberg's Resort (100 miles North of San Francisco) tonight, after breaking a number of records. All agreed that it was the biggest and best electronic organ show in the Festival's six year history.

The Festival, billed by its PCOC sponsor as "the Greatest Organ Show on Earth," drew over 1000 organ fans to this remote forest resort for a post-season exhibition and demonstration of the latest developments in electronic organs with emphasis on those suitable for home use from both the financial and physical viewpoints.

Eleven manufacturers, representing the top builders of tube and transistor organs in the USA, exhibited more than forty instruments both in improvised showrooms (normally summer cottages) for the public to view and try in closeup, and also in concert with 20 top professional organists providing the talent. It was generally conceded that Don Baker, playing for Conn, was the "Dean of Organists" at the five day event. Don is best remembered for his 13 years at the console of the New York Paramount theatre organ in New York.

Hammond, Baldwin, Kimball, Magnavox, Thomas, Wurlitzer, Rodgers, Gulbransen and Lowrey — eleven, in all, as compared with eight last year.

The trend in new models continues to favor the console Style and tonal concept established by the Hope-Jones-invented theatre pipe organ of more than a half century ago. Of eleven consoles set up in the concert hall at the start of the show, eight were of the familiar "horseshoe" design with the curved stop rail identified with the theatre pipe organ of yesteryear. Voicing, too, indicated that nearly all the electronic instrument makers had discovered the theatre organ to varying degrees. This was indicated by the increased emphasis on voices imitative of orchestral instruments, even human voices. Although the throbbing, throaty Tibia flute has been imitated for many years, less common voice names such as Kinura, Vox Humana, Diaphone, Oboe Horn and Tuba Mirabilis appeared more frequently on the new models.

The Home Organ Festival serves a number of purposes. It permits the manufacturer and dealer to demonstrate his newest innovations to a captive audience of organ-oriented listeners, an audience which has nearly doubled since the 1964 Festival. Because all the major makes are demonstrated the Festival affords the prospective buyer an opportunity to compare the various makes and models, nearly side by side. To the lover of pop, or entertainment organ music it's the chance to absorb better than ten hours of sharps, flats and naturals played daily on his favorite instrument — either by himself (in the showrooms) or by top concert artists in the 700 seat auditorium. During the five days the music started shortly after 9:00 AM daily and continued on until 3:00 AM the following morning, the latter hour being the agreed-on "cutoff" time to allow for sleep.

Innovations were many, a few on the silly side. Some builders have gone overboard for the "toy counter" effects which the theatre organist needed to cue silent films. Therefore, such currently unnecessary but amusing gadgets as auto horns, door bells, gongs and fire sirens came as standard equipment on some models, ready for the reincarnation of silent films. On the plus side is the Rodgers new Tibia tremulant which provides a deep, throbbing trem but (for the first time) with no moving parts involved. Gulbransen's improved speakers tend to sharpen the string voices and even permit improvising a bright reed voice. A radically different Hammond console provides much improved imitative voices. All builders have improved percussions, with the better ones now being in the "additive" class.

A common complaint directed at newcomers to the theatre model field was that the stop keys on their models were misplaced on stop rails. Some builders were still locating their lower manual stop keys on the right side of the horseshoe and the upper manual stops at the left, proper for church organs but the exact reverse of theatre organ practice. However, they were in the minority. Gulbransen, Conn and Rodgers have always placed their stop keys correctly for theatre instruments.

Suffering total de-emphasis was the once popular "chord organ," now being phased out by most builders. While not actually organ equipment, a new development in low frequency, non-bulky loudspeakers was demonstrated by Alladin Electronics. The parlor model speaker has a bottom range which extends down to 15 cycles, according to its inventor, and could do much to extend the pedal bass range of the organ in a box smaller than a short Leslie speaker.

Dewey Cagle and Kay Chenoweth, who head the Festival Committee of the PCOC, were looking with some alarm to

next year. With housing facilities short to accommodate even the 1000 who attended this year, the prospects for next year point to a serious housing shortage if the attendance continues to climb as it has in the past. However, a move to change the locale to a place with greater accommodation facilities near a large population center was tabled. All agreed that the sylvan surroundings, the absence of distractions and the opportunity to absorb clean country air more than offset any physical shortcomings.

The Pacific Council for Organ Clubs is an amalgamation of local organ clubs covering the entire Bay Area of Northern California.

Notes on

BUDDY COLE'S "WURLIMORTON"

North Hollywood — While making an inventory of the ranks in the late Buddy Cole's theatre organ installation, veteran organ specialist Henry Pope discovered that the instrument has 26 ranks of speaking pipes, one rank less than the number given on record jackets. He counted several times but each time he came up with 17 ranks of Wurlitzer (the entire Los Angeles United Artists theatre organ) and 9 ranks of Robert Morton (from the once 13 rank instrument which graced the garage of Buddy's former home for many years).



Console of the late Buddy Cole's "Wurlimorton".

Returning to the 3-manual United Artists console, Pope checked for some evidence of misleading labelling in the completely unified and well-coupled rows of stopkeys and manuals, but the result was the same; a total of 26 pipe ranks. The count, of course, is exclusive of the Chrysoglott, Xylophone, Marimba-Harp and Orchestral Bells—Glockenspiel) as well as the full complement of drums, traps and other percussions installed in the 3-chamber instrument.

theatre organ