

organics:

BY REGAN BULL

Using The Organ And Organ Sounds in

You probably have noticed "the sound" from time to time on radio and TV. Check your CD jackets and you'll see plenty of credits. Once again bands are touring with 325 lb pieces of furniture that smell like an old house and have the name HAMMOND stamped in front. Why? Quite simply, it's "the sound."

There is passion and depth in the organ's tonal character as an instrument. It responds to the talents of highly skilled players, but also remains accessible to those with limited musical skills. In worship settings it's an especially influential instrument due to its ability to draw the emotion out of the player and the listener. With this in mind here are a couple of practical thoughts:

Experiment With Drawbar Settings

Be mindful that the drawbar registrations you choose will set the background color. A full setting of 888888888 might be fine during a celebratory chorus but ruinous during delicate ministry – where a Gospel 008000000 is more appropriate. Experiment.

Playing Style

Playing less is often best, and Hammond is no different. Let the resonant harmonics of the Hammond and the swirling motion of the Leslie carry you. Twenty-four years after my first lesson I'm still relying on the basics. A simple block chord. A single note held for an entire measure.

Using a Leslie cabinet is an art in itself, and is every bit as important as the notes you play. Listen to recordings where Hammond is present. Note when the player switches speeds and the effect it has upon the music.

Maintenance

The average Hammond-Leslie combo will be at least 35 years old and will have electrical components that have outlived their expected usefulness. Even a Hammond that's played skillfully will sound distasteful if there are technical issues hampering it. Find a trained Hammond tech with excellent references. The average player/hobbyist cannot perform in-depth work of this nature and it's best left to experienced hands and ears.

Budget Ideas

Those on limited budgets can search for other Hammond models like A100, CV, C3 and even the smaller spinets like M3 and L100 series. All are readily found for thousands less than the famous B3, and all can provide you with "the sound" when coupled with a Leslie.

There are over 100 Leslie models to choose from. Not all were designed to give that classic knife-edge wail, so investigate your choices carefully before you buy. In general a Hammond player wants a Leslie with a bass rotor and those familiar treble horns spinning up top. Common models are 122, 147, 142, 145, 251 - to name just a few.

There are also a handful of 61 - note synth boards currently on the market that are solely designed to mimic a Hammond. Less weight and real drawbars too.

Making Do With What You Have

OK – let's say the only tool you have at your disposal on Sunday is your trusty Korg M1, and you'd like to utilize whatever organ patches reside inside. Can you still get "the sound"? Well, you can get close, but it's pretty hard to authentically imitate all that goes on in a Hammond-Leslie combo. It does take more effort and playing skill on your part, but don't let it stop you from trying.

Some factory presets require a little tweaking in order to wrest a more respectable organ sound from them. A real Hammond does not put out frequencies higher than around 6 kHz. Most presets exceed this upper limit and should be addressed as needed.

Disabling the onboard reverb is usually a good idea. Some chorus effects can be finessed to simulate a Leslie on slow and fast speeds but be sure to examine its presence in the total band mix to ensure that it sounds good there, too.

A keyboard volume pedal is an absolute must. The expression pedal on



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a Hammond can go from zero output to full tilt boogie in about 60 degrees of travel. Effective organ playing milks this dynamic range for all its worth and you can't control it well enough with just your left hand and the master volume slider on a synth.

Most synth organ patches work easily in the context of energetic celebration songs. I've had limited success using them during gentler legato pieces, mainly because my playing style relies heavily on a slowly stirring Leslie. Your mileage may vary here though.



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Regan is a worship leader, keyboard player and organ aficionado at the Cambridge Vineyard in Ontario, Canada. He has played keyboard on a number of Vineyard Music recordings, including *Healing In Your Wings and Winds of Worship® #15 – Live From Canada.* He and his wife Tammy live with their three children in Cambridge.

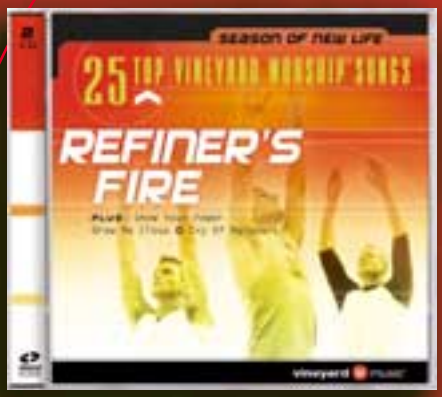
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