

Frequently Asked Questions About The Organ

Q: What is it?

A: It is a Fairground Organ, or 'Fair Organ'.

Q: What does it do?

A: It plays music!

This is how music was played in the days before electronic recording and amplification.

Its primary use was at the fairground to accompany the rides. In Holland they are still played in the streets. They are called 'Street Organs'.

Q: Where was it made?

A: In England by the Dean Organ Company from Bristol.

It has been decorated in a traditional style to give it a more 'Continental' look.

Q: How old is it?

A: Not as old as it looks. It was made in 1982.

Its traditional decoration makes it look older!

Q: Where is the organ based?

A: In Manchester.

Q: Were organs ever run from steam?

A: In the early days, organs would have been powered by a small steam engine. But there was a steam whistle organ called a 'Calliope', primarily used on American Steamboats, which could be heard for miles!

Q: Are organs sometimes referred to as a 'Hurdy-Gurdy'?

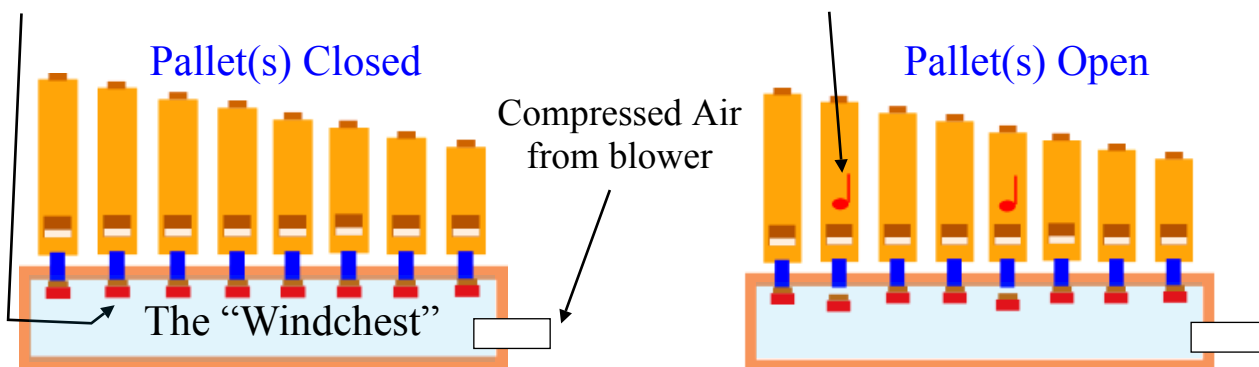
A: No. A Hurdy-Gurdy is a string instrument played on a small keyboard, with a rotating crank that vibrates the strings.

More Frequently Asked Questions...

Q: How does it work?

A: It uses compressed air to blow through tuned pipes.

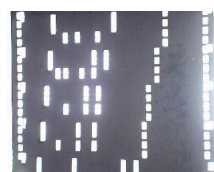
The airway to each pipe is blocked by a wooden 'pallet' until the pipe is required to 'speak'.



The pallet is moved by a small air pouch, called an 'Air Motor', which is connected via an air pressure detection mechanism to the holes ('ports') in a 'keyframe' where a punched cardboard 'book' of music is placed. Each hole in the cardboard corresponds to one musical note. When a hole in the card passes over a port, the air pressure at the port changes. This operates the pressure detector, which in turn plays the corresponding pipe.



Music Book



This type of action is called 'Keyless', because it uses air pressure to 'read' the music from the book.

Some organs use a 'Keyed' system where small metal fingers, or 'Keys' rise through the holes in the music book to play the organ. This requires a much heavier type of cardboard.

In addition to the keyframe, this organ is also able to play electronically via small electromagnets which open and close the ports instead of the cardboard book.