

Play It Again, Gaviman! . . . a recording review of outdoor mechanical music

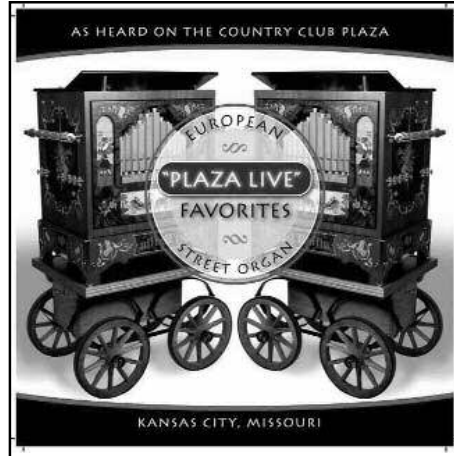
Plaza Live — CD

In my original compact disk review I noted the very limited library of American small mechanical organ compact disk recordings made to professional standards. Therefore, I am very pleased to be able to review a notable exception to this statement; namely, Gordie Davidson's Compact Disk titled "Plaza Live."

This recording meets all of the goals I set in my original article for reviewing small mechanical organs. First, the recording is of obvious high professional standard. Second, the primary instrument, a Raffin 20\78 although quite popular in Europe is the only such organ presently resident in the United States. Twenty-two of the 26 pieces on the CD are played on this organ with the remaining four played on his Raffin 20\40z reed organ. This combination coupled with the selection of music that ranges from classical to popular by several well-known arrangers presents a wide variety of interpretive style. And third, the recording may be obtained directly from Gordie by the means given at the end of this review.

Before presenting Gordie Davidson's background and beginning my review of "Plaza Live" I must, in the words of today's discourse, in the interest of full disclosure and transparency, state that he is a very close friend. From the time of our meeting at an AMICA Heart of America organ rally several years ago, where he was playing his Pell 45er, he has offered his unqualified friendship and support in my organ grinding activities. His interest, enthusiasm and persuasion are greatly responsible for me undertaking and completing the building of my Roy Norman 31er street organ. All of us need a friend like Gordie; and, all our organizations could use more members like him.

Gordie developed his interest in Street Organ grinding during two tours with the U.S. Army stationed in Hanau and Berlin Germany. He was a career officer and retired with the rank of Major. His musical interest goes back further than his military service however and he was a member of his University's band while in college. His first Street Organ was a Pell 45er which he purchased through Angelo Rulli, and he was seen with that organ at many AMICA Heart of America and MBSI Mid-Am rallies for several years. A little over a year ago he disposed of that instrument and in July 2001 took delivery of his Raffin 20\78 from Joseph Raffin while visiting Uberlingen,



Germany. The principal reason for the popularity of this instrument throughout Europe is the clean, unique and rich sound it displays. This is unquestionably the result of the installation of a rank of eleven 16' Clarinet pipes that are arguably the best sounding pipes made by the Raffin organization. The organ also has the usual 20er compliment of bass, accompaniment, concert flutes, celeste flutes violins and wood piccolos and in this particular case a stop of eleven 2-2/3' metal flutes.

The production of this CD rests in large part on the numerous requests Gordie has had during his public appearances for an audiotape or CD of him playing his organ. For the past eight years he has been an active participant in the "Plaza Live" weekly music series held at Kansas City's famous Country Club Plaza. Currently he is also appearing every Saturday at Kansas City's Union Station Science City's Circus Magicus exhibition through January 3, 2003. Circus Magicus is a traveling exhibit created by Circus Musee de la Civilization of Quebec with the participation of the well-known Cirque du Soleil performing group. Gordie may be found in the foyer leading to the exhibition enriching the environment with the "Happiest Music on Earth."

Gordie's musical interest and taste may be best described as eclectic. He invariably selects what appears to be the best in the musical styles and arrangements for his public appearances and this has carried over resulting in a CD composed of pieces drawn from a variety of sources. For example: The play list of 26 pieces ranges from *Lucille* and *City of New Orleans* arranged by Stephen Simpson to *Baroque Sampler* arranged by Edi Hofmann of Germany and Melvyn Wrights *Savoy American Medley* and *Radetsky March*. There are 13 pieces of

conventional 20-note German street organ music arranged by Joseph Raffin and a variety of several more by Melvyn Wright and Stephen Simpson.

This CD is an important addition to one's collection of organ music and I recommend it for several reasons. First, it presents an instrument heretofore not widely heard in the United States. In doing so it demonstrates the most versatile 20-note organ being constructed today. Second, it demonstrates the work of many of today's popular arrangers for the 20-note scale and toward this end each is intentionally identified on the back of the CD case. Additionally this CD would be of great value to anyone contemplating the purchase of an organ featuring the Raffin 20 scale and denotes the differences between pipe and reed organs.



Gordie Davidson playing the Raffin 20\78 on Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, MO.

The disk comes in the standard jewel case but unfortunately contains no information about Gordie and his activities. This article should take care of that lack. You can purchase the CD directly from Gordie by contacting him via telephone (913-250-0923) or by email:

(gordie@monkeyorgan.com).

He accepts both VISA and Master Card. He also has a web page at: <http://www.monkeyorgan.com>.

Tom Griffith