

Crank Organ Digest - An Interactive Series - Part I

Grinding For Success—Looking Like a Professional

Gordie Davidson

SO you spent thousands on a street organ and now desire to do more than just crank in your living room or at rallies. Why not crank for real money? The truth is you can be a money-making grounds attraction with a little bit of planning, effort and expense. Yes, the old adage that you must spend money to make money applies here as well. I will attempt to share some of my lessons Learned from the past 13 years of grinding street organs in and around the Greater Kansas City Area. Keep in mind that there are many successful folks in this hobby utilizing different formulas for success. My thoughts are suggestive only and certainly not definitive.

There is one common thread for success however, that sets the professionals (pro) apart from the amateurs. Simply put, the pros look, sound, and conduct themselves in a professional manner. Each of these domains will be examined in a series of Grinding for Success articles beginning with this issue—“Looking Like a Pro.” As an interactive series for COAA, I intend to post supplemental images and videos on my web site at www.gordiedavidson.com.



Figure 1. Presentation with a German appearance. Ted Guillaum wears not only the hat, suspenders and shirt but also the bundhosen to complement the German organ and appropriate cart.



Figure 2. European grinders often dress the part of a pro at local rallies.

Looking like a professional is of paramount importance (Figures 1-3, 5). As with any physical appearance consideration, the first impression is the only impression. Start with the instrument itself. Does it look expensive and serve as a living example of a finely built European crank organ? I crank a Raffin 20/78 koncert street organ positioned on a genuine Raffin cart. This instrument turns heads with both its sound and quality craftsmanship. There are others of similar beauty and craftsmanship. Make sure your cart is authentic looking and reflects a similar degree of craftsmanship as the organ itself. Ask yourself—do I look like a pro or an amateur? Is my cart funky or homemade looking? The organ itself with cart is the primary attraction followed closely by its sound. I'll address sound and music in a future article.



Figure 3. Cynthia Craig presents not only a Victorian theme with her outfit but also with the antique cart for the organ.

Looking good yourself is nearly as important as the instrument. Decide what era or theme you desire to represent and purchase a professional looking wardrobe. If uncertain, the German look always works and is easy to attain. Spend what it takes for a complete out-

fit—do not go cheap and do not mix and match. Blue jeans and sneakers worn with a Bavarian hat and shirt do not show well—again pro versus amateur appearance. (Figure 4). I lean towards the formal look and frequently wear my now retired army mess blue or white uniform (Figure 5). I also have a tuxedo like T-shirt to wear in extreme heat supplemented with white gloves. Rally vests, mostly red with dozens of medals and collector pins belong at rallies only; these are not indicative of a pro. Avoid cheap, theatrical hats—pay the price for a quality built hat that fits. Finding clothes is not difficult now that we have the internet. For German style clothing, I recommend corduroy bundhosen (knickers) over lederhosen



Figure 4. A Bavarian hat and shirt, but alas, with ordinary pants is not a pro look.

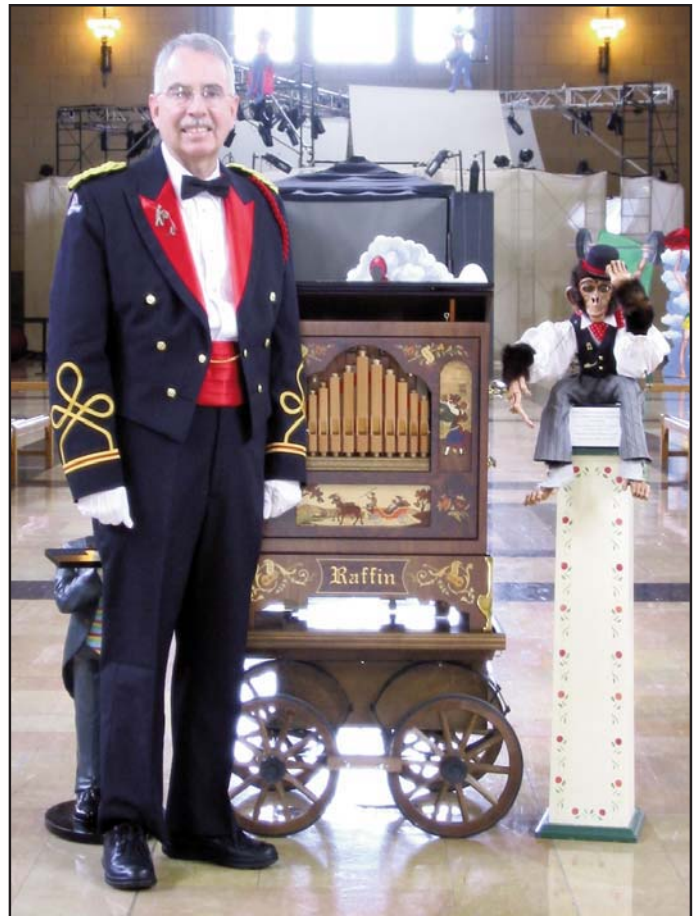


Figure 5. The author in his retired army mess blue uniform and a Raffin 20/78 koncert street organ—a “professional look.”

(leather shorts) for comfort and pricing. I have found quality shirts at formal wear stores and specialty ethnic shops. Many folks have found treasures at used clothing outlets such as the Salvation Army thrift stores. Pictures provide far more detail than this narrative. I have included several images with this article to visually suggest ways to look Like a Pro. Posted on my web site are many more images, to include Europeans. Please visit www.gordiedavidson.com.

Online clothing vendors:

- *German Clothing - www.ernstlicht.com
- *Military Clothing - www.marlowwhite.com

(Note: anyone can wear the basic dress clothing less military rank, insignia and awards. Bottom line—do not impersonate. If you're near a military base; thrift shops are a treasure cove for used mess uniforms.)

Next Issue: *Grinding for Success—Your Routine (Tips and Tricks)*.

Gordie Davidson is a retired army engineer officer currently working as a defense contractor at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. His interest in mechanical music began in 1981 with his assignment to the Berlin Brigade. He has performed professionally in and around the Greater Kansas City Area since 1995. He and his wife Sue, reside in Lansing, Kansas. His web site can be found at www.streetorgangrinder.com. For feedback and correspondence, please use gordiedavidson@gmail.com.