

OrganFax.co.uk Spotlight

PAUL CARMAN



Readers of the Organfax News Page will no doubt have read some of the features on this well-known personality of the organ and keyboard world and his commercial enterprises. However, away from the 'trade' side of the organ world, Paul remains one of the most talented performers in the UK – this article will hopefully lift the lid on this man and his very wide world of music!

I first met Paul in late 1995, just before departing for a twelve month theatre organ residency in New Zealand. At that time, I had undertaken a couple of years on the road with the Orla range of organs and with my departure from the UK, Paul was about to embark on a relationship with the Italian manufacturer which would see him become very

much the face of the company on these shores – not to mention as far afield as Australia and New Zealand itself!

Paul was born on 24th September 1962 in Leicester and his musical journey began playing at the age of 12 when his father purchased the first family organ a Hammond VS350. Paul was offered 6 free lessons and so it all began. At 14 Paul took first prize in a Midland Arts festival beating many semi pro players. Music was not his only passion and as a keen footballer he achieved the dizzy heights of a trial for Leicester City on the same day as school friend Gary Lineker. Paul decided there was more potential in music on the basis that only the chosen few make it in football. Seemed like a good decision at the time!

Upon leaving Grammar school at 18 having gained 3 A levels Paul decided upon a career in music and he took up a position at a local music store.

By the age of 20 Paul was appointed demonstrator for Godwin organs followed by a move to another Italian manufacturer Gem. An ambition of Paul's was always

to work for Yamaha and that was fulfilled when at 22, Paul joined Yamaha as a demonstrator working alongside Glyn Madden. Paul went on to become a regional manager for Yamaha until he left to form his own software company Keysoft.

It was whilst working on software that Paul made acquaintance with the Orla Organ Company with whom he has worked until the current day. Paul works closely with fellow Orla personality Paul Wise of Elmswell Organ Store in Suffolk. Both work closely with the company and are heavily involved with the research, design and development side of the very popular organ range – which has just heralded the arrival of the stunning new Grande Theatre as we go to press. The new organs are brimming with state of the art samples of instruments including some of the sought-after tones of the Tower Ballroom Wurlitzer! As ever, the Italians never disappoint with the traditional organ tones and the drawbars bring forth an all-embracing tone, which would be sure to impress any love of tone wheel instruments.

Having managed a successful music shop in his Leicestershire hometown of Hinckley, Paul has now relinquished this commitment in favour of a more 'mobile' day-to-day work strategy. That said, he still retains a studio there and finds time to teach over 30 pupils per week on both organ and keyboard. It is with his academic abilities in mind that Paul recently created a brand new tuition Website for aspiring organ and keyboard students. Located at www.keyplay4u.co.uk, visitors can subscribe to an excellent course of on-line lessons, hints, tips and professional pointers that are nothing short of invaluable. What makes this new site so revolutionary is the fact that it gives the student the possibility to replay the lesson segments over and over again, as opposed to a traditional lesson situation where everything happens in one 'appointment' with no chance of being able to watch or listen to demonstrations from the teacher until the following weeks visit. The internet offers a 'virtual' lesson in real time (24/7) and although one may perhaps argue that it lacks the 'personal' side, at least there is no fear of any intimidation etc – which is surely the cause of so many players losing both confidence and enjoyment from their hobby. As well as the on line lessons Paul and fellow organist Mike Hall have just released a new range of teaching DVD's aimed at passing on the 'Tricks of the Trade' to the home player in an

easy to understand way (see the organfax news archive for more details).

Paul is probably best known around the country and abroad as a prolific concert artiste. His varied repertoire and easy-listening style is a firm favourite with so many music lovers and his programme typically covers all genres from march and swing time, through to some of the greatest love songs as well as movie themes and traditional organ favourites to boot. Music aside, Paul must surely take credit for being one of the most friendly and humorous entertainers on the circuit. His softly spoken tones and unrivalled wit is often punctuated by his inimitable touches of 'self criticism' over the microphone – which, although said with tongue in cheek, always evokes a sea of laughter from the crowd. Once again, Carman could 'go it alone' as a comedian in his own right!



The final string to his bow must be his talented singing voice. Paul is no stranger to the world of cabaret and to this effect performs countless shows up and down the UK playing keyboard and guitar as well as singing. Once again, his versatility comes to the fore here with a wide ranging repertoire of songs ranging from hit's of the 60's to those of the 90's. The demographics of the audience here are vastly different of those in the more 'familiar' organ scene and can only serve to illustrate the diverse skill base that Carman draws upon – surely the man for every musical situation.

As we go to press, Paul will shortly be appearing as both a star performer and also product specialist at the Blackpool Keyboard Cavalcade event, where he will be on hand to demonstrate the wonderful tones and facilities of the new Orla organ.

In short, a thoroughly nice guy and a delight to spend an evening with – albeit as an audience member, pupil or as we so often do, someone to prop the bar up with! The 'Sound Of Italy' and much, much more.....

Chris Powell, May 2009
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