

Title:

Accordions Are Enjoying a Resurgence in Popularity

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Summary:

Making appearances in productions ranging from those of Cirque du Soleil to albums from top name rock stars, the accordion's unique sound is getting some well-deserved attention.

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Article Body:

Although the mainstream music world has often relegated accordions to second-class status, squeezeboxes are once again coming into their own. Making appearances in productions ranging from those of Cirque du Soleil to albums from top name rock stars, the accordion's unique sound is getting some well-deserved attention.

Although most people can conjure up a mental picture of an accordian, many do not realize that there are several different kinds of accordions, developed over the years for specific musical genres. As free reed instruments, the opening and closing of an accordion's bellows (or squeezebox) causes the air to flow over the reeds, which makes the sound. An accordion also has buttons, or both buttons and a keyboard. These serve to direct the airflow to certain reeds and not others, thereby controlling the tones played.

Some accordions have one row of buttons; some have two rows of buttons; and still others have three rows. Accordions with one row of buttons include the Hohner Concertina and the Hohner Ariette. The latter is often used for playing Cajun, Quebecois, Zydeco, and Irish folk music. These buttons typically play the diatonic scale, with each button able to play two notes: one when the bellows is squeezed in and another when it is spread apart. An accordian with one row of buttons is often tuned for the type of music being played. For example, certain reeds may be filled in order to produce the sounds typically associated with Cajun music. The Hohner Ariette, for instance, has ten treble buttons, two bass buttons, four sets of treble reeds, and three sets of bass reeds.

A two-row button accordion typically has 21 treble buttons, eight bass/chord

buttons, and two sets of treble reeds. Such an accordian is available in key combinations like GC, AD, CF, and DG. A three-row button accordion, such as the Hohner Corona, has 31 treble buttons and two sets of treble reeds. The third row of keys means that the key combinations differ from those of a two-button accordion, and might be, for example, GCF, FBbEb, EAD, and ADG.

A piano accordion is fully chromatic instrument with a varying number of piano keys, depending on the size of the instrument. From the gold standard Gola piano accordion to the Hohnica piano accordion for the budget minded, there truly is a piano accordion for everyone.

One of the most beautiful aspects of accordions is that they can't be completely mass-produced and assembled. Like other fine musical instruments, the handmade components (in the case of accordions, most notably the reeds) are what give the instrument its unique sound.

There's no doubt that the accordian has traveled far from its stereotypical uses as an instrument for polkas. From Cajun and Zydeco to Klezmer and Classical music, from Lawrence Welk to Sheryl Crow, accordions are here to stay.