

# What Does The U.S. Public Think Of Organs? NAEKM's New Study Offers Some Answers

The organ market has been a source of puzzlement and discomfort over the past four years. In spite of vast improvements across the board in product quality and value, industry shipments have declined from a high of 222,000 units in 1977 to 101,000 in 1982. This severe decline has raised far more questions than answers. Was the decline due to economic recession . . . high interest rates . . . demographic shifts . . . faulty industry marketing practices . . . some combination of the all of the above . . . none of the above . . . some unthought-of factors?

Obviously, there is never any one answer to such a complex problem. Nevertheless, in an attempt to shed some light on the situation, the National Association of Electronic Keyboard Manufacturers, with the assistance of NAMM, commissioned an extensive consumer research study. Using 15,000 households as an initial sample group, the NAEKM study sought to analyze and quantify every conceivable aspect of consumer attitudes towards organs.

Market research is a useful tool, much akin to a road map. Like a map, research can be valuable in guiding one through the terrain of given market. By the same token, neither a map nor market research is capable of capturing and revealing every subtle nuance of a reality. In addition, both are subject to significant inaccuracies.

This qualification is not meant to discredit the excellent work of the NAEKM but rather to put any and all research in its proper perspective. Market research can provide useful benchmarks that facilitate marketing decisions.

It is important to remember, however, the findings are only benchmarks. With that in mind, we present some of the findings of NAEKM's research. (A comprehensive report on the study will appear in the November issue of *Music Trades*.)

Good news for the organ business and the entire music industry can be found in the fact that 52% of the population seem to consider music participation an extremely worthwhile and valuable pursuit. Of the remaining 48%, 30% are considered "passive," or indifferent to music, while only 18% are classified as against music.

From all indications, Country & Western Music is far and away America's most popular music form. It is

also worth noting that Country & Western's popularity cuts across all demographic segments. Unfortunately for the organ business, most non-owners of organs consider home organs unsuitable for Country & Western. Not surprisingly, Religious and Gospel music was considered the most appropriate music for an organ.

Among those individuals who expressed a passing interest in purchasing an organ, few said that price reductions, low cost financing, or free lessons would have a major effect on the decision to buy. However, this same group indicated that some type of trial rental program would be a major inducement to try an organ.

Many have cited lack of dealer education programs as a major reason for the decline of the organ business. Yet, surprisingly enough, 63% of all organ owners claimed that they had satisfactorily learned to play their organ using only owners manuals and E-Z play music.

When asked where they would like to purchase an organ, 86% of those interested in an organ responded "a music store." Only 8% said they would purchase at a mall store. In follow-up questionnaires, the reason cited for preferring music stores over mall stores was the availability of lessons and service.

On the positive side, 37% of portable keyboard owners expressed a strong desire to trade up to a better instrument.

On the subject of brand awareness, research findings are disconcerting for advocates of national consumer campaigns. While nearly 90% of the adult U.S. population claims to have seen some type of organ advertisement, whether on T.V., in newspapers, or on radio, 2/3 of that 90% were incapable of remembering any specific organ brands.

One of the major negatives associated with organs is the fact that they tend to be large pieces of furniture. It's ironic that an even bulkier product, like a grand piano, enjoys such universal desirability.

This is just a sampling of the intriguing findings uncovered in NAEKM's 200-page-plus report. Given its definitive nature, the report will unquestionably have a major influence on the marketing decisions of manufacturers and retailers alike. Our next issue will carefully detail the findings in their entirety.

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