

# Orchestron



Pat Moraz, keyboard master of YES, is ecstatic about his new Orchestron. In addition to 30 synthesizer sounds, the instrument has separate discs for organ, choir, cello; any instrument that Moraz wants to be able to play.

## Moraz gets first crack at original

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Pat Moraz of the YES rock group whisked into St. Petersburg Wednesday to take a final look at the instrument he's going to introduce to the world.

The Orchestron, the only keyboard instrument ever made that can give the sound of 12 instruments at one time, is ready for Moraz's demonstrations in London and Switzerland this month, where he will play it for the first time.

Dave Van Koevering, who invented the polyphonic Orchestron that uses laser beams on discs, instead of tapes, to produce sound, started building this model to Moraz's specifications six months ago.

"I was interested in the Orchestron straight away because of its technology," says Moraz. "Now we're able to build different sounds and play continuous polyphonic chords without raising our fingers. You have to be a composer to write for it but that shouldn't be a barrier; the technology is so advanced it allows musicians to play several instruments simultaneously."

Even the most sophisticated Moog and Arp synthesizers are still monophonic, meaning they can produce the sound of only one instrument at a time, a note at a time. The Orchestron's three keyboards, however, currently reproduce the exact sound of a pipe organ, choir, violin, cello, French horn, Hammond organ, and saxophone, either all together or in any desired mix. And these are the only sound discs that Van Koevering has made so far; he will be making more for every sound Moraz wants.

Although the Orchestron can produce 12 instrument sounds at a time, only six can be controlled separately, so "for all practical purposes, six are played at a time," says one of the engineers.

"We could have sold many of these Orchestrons at the Chicago Music Trade Show in June," says Van Koevering, "but we're not making any more (of the three keyboard models) until Moraz has done his tour and his new album. We expect both to break sales records because of this instrument." He picked Moraz to be the first musician to demonstrate the Orchestron worldwide because "with his composing skill, our marketing job was done," Van Koevering says.

Moraz is obviously excited about the finished instrument and the impact he feels it will have on the music world. Although he had seen the Orchestron twice while it was being built, Wednesday was his first sight of the finished product. As soon as he came in the room he broke into a grin and hugged the instrument, examining it all over with the delight that comes from knowing you finally own something few people have ever seen.

YES's concert schedule in the U.S. with Moraz at the Orchestron hasn't been set definitely yet.

"After our tour in February, starting with Australia and going through Europe — and we're very big in the Soviet Union — we may do an eight week tour in the U.S. in the summer," he says, "But I want to keep this instrument in Europe exclusively and use an upgraded version in the U.S."

With the Orchestron's six instrument capability and 30 standard Moog synthesizer sounds as well, such as drums, guitar and reed instruments, it seems at first that the rest of YES might be left twiddling their thumbs. Not so, says Moraz.

"My two hands and two feet will never replace our 10 hands and 10 feet," he says.

Moraz's new album, on which the Orchestron will be only "one of the main features," is a solo venture, with accompaniment not by YES but by assorted British and American musicians. Andy Newmark, drummer for three years for Sly and the Family Stone, will be one of the drum-





The Orchestron's top keyboard controls synthesizer sounds; its lower two play not only notes but entire chords, which synthesizers cannot do, of up to 12 instruments at a time.

Scene Photos By GEORGE TRABANT

mers; Jeff Berlin will play base, Raymond Gomez guitar and John MacBurnie will be one of the main vocalists.

"Now that I have this machine, do I need an orchestra? I don't know!" says Moraz, grinning. The name of his album is still secret.

His first demonstration on the Orchestron may be at the Reading Festival in England on Aug. 23, but "the staging hasn't been defined and our equipment is quite large, so I can't guarantee it," he says. But he will definitely perform in Geneva, Switzerland on Aug. 25 for a local TV show. "I owe it to them, being Swiss," he says.

Moraz's composing and keyboard playing talent also may be used to demonstrate Moog's first polyphonic synthesizer, for which there's a prototype although none have been produced yet. The difference between the Moog version and the Orchestron is that while the Orchestron plays the exact sound of an instrument from a sound track, synthesizers never reach an exact reproduction.

"We have technology that no other manufacturer is into," says Van Koevering. "They don't want to make what they've already got obsolete."

Van Koevering was up until 3 a.m. with one of Moraz's engineers, teaching him how to fix the instrument and replace any of its modular parts if necessary. Moraz, who wants to buy many more of the instruments from Van Koevering to sell, wants to show that it can be played even by people who are not expert keyboard musicians like himself.

"My intention for the future is to write a piece of music that every YES man plays on keyboard, because we want to show that you don't have to be a keyboard man to play one of these," he says. "And I won't be the only one composing. If Jon (Anderson, YES's vocalist) gets an Orchestron to play, he'll compose for it; everyone composes and arranges and throws in ideas in YES — it's very democratic."

Moraz left for South America Wednesday afternoon to work with some Brazilian drummers on one of the tracks for his new album. From there he goes to London, arriving August 13 to pick up the Orchestron, which is being shipped in a case big enough for a Volkswagen. Moraz wants to start experimenting and recording with the instrument right away.

"I haven't had the chance to get into it enough yet to see what can be done, completely," he says. "But I know I like it. I mean, just look at it!"



Dan Van Koevering (left) thinks Moraz's upcoming solo album and world tour with YES will break sales records because of the Orchestron. Van Koevering has made only one of these models, and will wait for Moraz to complete his tour before making any more.