

...and a few more reasons why you'd be better off with the simplicity of the Watkins "Midi Partner" Accordion Expander!

Well, first of all, I must admit that we do get enquiries like "Have you got any "Partners" in stock at the moment?" as if we have some clandestine supplier in China or Italy who have designed this piece of equipment and sell them to us when we want some. So I have to explain that it is my own invention, engendered by about 20 years of futile endeavour with the difficult old Roland RA 50 and the Yamaha what'sit and the redoubtable Technics AC30

I had nose dived into that situation in the same way in which I have been known to criticise my fellow accordionists for their headlong departure from the true accordion into the ghastly "Organ Accordions" of the late 50's.

Impressive as they were, they came with makers' promises of, "Here's our new boon to the accordion. And you can like it or lump it." So I lumped it over the 20 years, and realised I was merely apeing the 1950's syndrome with knobs on.

So I set about making an expander for the Accordionist . . . Hence "The Partner" Made here, assembled here, sold only from here!

And here is a CD to promote it. I just *know* you'll all start on me now to go for a big recording deal with Sony or E.M.I. and get a couple of golds and become one of those nouveau millionaires. But that's only money after all. Rather play me accordion than have a mansion and a Merc.

1. "Caroline" Waltz
2. "Mary" Waltz"
3. "Traditional Irish Medley."
4. "Maypole" Polka
5. "Nocturne in Eb" Chopin
6. "Scottish Medley"
7. "Jolly Jester" Polka
8. Display of Bass sounds.

Thanks to accordion composing wizard Robert Goad for "Jolly Jester" and those Scottish and Irish masters who penned their lovely traditional airs.

To Chopin, my apologies, but best I could do with his lovely Nocturne in Eb. I'll keep trying like I always do.

All the others I composed myself to save having to pay Royalties. If you want the sheet music of any of them they are available through June's "Accordion Aid" plus others aided by Jack Emblow and Harry Hussey.

Now, so that I don't have to do any soul searching in the future, I have to admit that the way I have demonstrated the "Partner" is not necessarily how I would play it on any engagement. My brief was to demonstrate the sounds which emanate from very

high class samples which have been further manipulated by our electronic designer Dick Straker who, despite non accordionism, has a flair for further enhancement of all the sampled sounds available, and who can be coerced into stepping outside the transgression lines when asked to produce some of the multiple, unusual sounds which finish up (in many cases noticeably better in accordion compatibility) than the units from those massive Expander manufacturers of the world whose disadvantage is their inability to 'think' accordion and "love" the accordion. My qualification is that I score on both these points and leave them gasping in my wake.

Oft times in their company I have gifted them a few bars of Bel Viso - or even more statuesquely "Blaze Away" and, believe me, I rarely miss them passing their grins to their associates. Who cares!

The up side is, I now have a machine you don't have to be a qualified electronic graduate or expert to operate.

When I don my Accordion and trap my left hand under an enormous leather strap which itself is big enough and malleable enough to deservedly whack those 5 row players who keep on at me I realise that I lose that hand for expander operations.

So how do I control masses of knobs, sliders and switches? I play a "Partner" - and now you can listen to the slick, effortless changes from flute to piano, piano to Strings etc. How you hear it on my CD is what I can do leaving all that clever electronic stuff aside and allowing me to concentrate on my accordion playing.

Not only do I have control over the left hand and right hand sound combinations, but I have instant control over the volumes of each section of the compounded sound sections to present a properly *balanced* sound.

And a balanced sound is what we all aspire to.

What do you think the musicians in those massive orchestras seek above all?

Sound Balance - that's what. It's why they lean so heavily on their Conductors with their magic wands.

I always recall Robert Plant - lead singer of the Led Zeppelin band, when I demonstrated one of my new, earth shaking, powerful P.A. systems. He finished his first number, and, I mean, those Guitar players, Jimmy Page and all them, they're all playing loud enough and wild enough to stress the foundations, but Robert, in his search for the ultimate, detected (to my eternal discredit) a flaw in the sound balance I was producing. And I had to agree, he knew what he was talking about - despite him coming from

Birmingham, and, I mean, did I ever tell you about *them*? Don't worry about it - tell you when I see you.

But his whole singing future depended on this total *balance* thing and his helpful words have stayed with me to this day. So, when I produce a new design I carry all those lessons with me. That's why our "Partner" makes it possible for you to have a perfect "Sound balance".

I have never known the "Partner" give anybody stress - just about an hour with the brief instruction sheet and you can operate it completely - leaving you to concentrate on your accordion playing, which is intensive enough in itself.

The drums on the "Partner" are manual - that is, they play on the Fundamental and Counter basses and the chord buttons with Kick Drum, open and closed Hi Hat and snare drum - You can hear me playing them on the CD.

When you need to expressively *move* the tempo a little - and so as not to be completely robotic with auto drums, they will obey you rather than you them.

If you *must* have automatic drums via a Roland RA90, a Ketron or an Orla or similar you can plug that into the "Partner" and have controllable sound from both of them playing together. Easy.

Optional foot control switches are available with the 'Partner' - you can make it sit up and beg with these, and very useful if you like changing sounds frequently.

The "Partner" is renowned for its Bass sounds, and is particularly popular in Scotland. You can hear why with the specified Bass selections on the CD - especially its ability to present the traditional Scottish accompaniment with Acoustic Bass coupled with the bass of Grand Piano - just for the touch of one switch.

You will also hear the difference with the special "Partner" one touch switch - which gives a Bass "Turnover" and converts the tuning to simulate the deep beauty of the old Acoustic Bass.

If in the North remember to phone our friend and Scottish agent Jimmy Shand Jnr. (01337828452). Just remember that he 'er, plays a 5 row, Though, as you know, I've always harboured a great respect for them and always contended that they are great instruments.

Jimmy has our Partners in stock for trial etc. Price of "Partner" is £445 Optional pedals set of four £68. And remember, this brilliant little unit is purchased with a 7 days return approval period.

Bell me. 020 8 679 5575.