

AIO

Online Technical Resource

Austin chest problems and solutions

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Common problems with the Austin chest:

1. Dead notes. Other than the obvious electrical problems, there are a few possible causes of dead notes.

A. The clearance between the valve "jack" and the stop action roller bar is critical. If the "jack" is too far away the pipe will not play. If it is too close it will cipher. Adjustment is very easy and is done by bending the "jack" wire.

B. On very rare occasions, the primary exhaust ports become clogged, usually by a spider nest.

C. In older consoles (over 40 years), the key contacts may become dirty and need cleaning.

D. Our unit actions are often mounted upside down. When this is so, there is a spring holding the armature in the off position. Once in a while this spring will cause a dead note. Removal is an adequate cure. If the note begins chirping on start-up the spring may be put back in and weakened slightly, so the note will still play and the chirping will stop.

2. Ciphers.

A. See "A" above for valve clearance.

B. Once an organ has settled in from installation, ciphers are quite rare. Austins are no exception. A piece of dirt, as always, is the most common culprit. Enter the wind chamber, find the offending valve, and brush the dirt away- simplicity.

C. If a small fleck of dirt lodges behind an armature the "action" will be partially exhausted. This can be easily determined by watching while the wind is on. Simply remove the brass hold- down and brush any dirt off of the exhaust ports.

3. Intermittent problems. There are very few common problems with the Austin system that cannot be cured by simple observation and common sense. As with any mechanism, craftsman- like work is the most important ingredient in a solution.

Recommended periodic maintenance: There is no more than any other type of pipe organ, and in fact, in some cases less.

3. Restoration Techniques:

A. The Austin system is completely modular. Additions or any other tonal changes can be made by removal or modifications of the "pipe bars". The procedure is relatively simple with a little instruction, and should not daunt any

competent technician.

B. Organs built before 1920 were built with a somewhat different E-P action. This older system can be converted to our standard, modern action. Again, the process is not difficult, and with some instruction, and the right parts, will take about two days.

C. In organs built before 1940 the rubbercloth membrane between the pipe bars may become brittle and seep air. We have found that painting the rubbercloth with PVC-e glue is an excellent cure.

D. Airboxes built before 1960 were built with expansion joints covered with rubbercloth. The wall pieces and chests were joined with leather and half round molding strips. When these organs begin to leak (usually after forty to sixty years), the leather should be scraped out and replaced with high quality cloth tape. The rubbercloth joints should simply be taped over. This taping technique cannot be used between the pipe bars.

E. Re-leathering is a simple affair. All action parts are removable, and are simply replaced by new, factory supplied parts.

F. Regulators (bellows) can be removed if they are the exterior type. Those mounted to airbox walls are always done in place. The technique is best learned by watching an experienced technician but can be explained with some care to a journeyman. We recommend that only hide glue be used for re-leathering regulators.

Suppliers of material: Austin Organs Inc. manufactures all unique parts. There are no other sources.

All common materials are purchased from suppliers to the pipe organ trade.