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# Organbuilder vs Pipe Organ Builder

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*By Arthur E. Schlueter, Jr.*

While reviewing the many search words that people use while researching builders of pipe organs, it came to my attention that there needs to be some clarification and re-definition of terminologies being used. Therefore I submit the following definitions:

**Organ:** A musical instrument played from a keyboard, or keyboards, whose sound may be generated from reeds, wind-blown pipes, electronic digitally sampled technology, or analog technology. (Note: this term is also used in the medical and health fields to refer to parts of the body.)

**Pipe Organ:** A musical instrument with keyboard(s) whose sound is generated from wind-blown pipes.

**Pipe Organ Builder:** A professional or artisan who designs, engineers, builds, constructs and installs a custom-built, distinctive musical instrument incorporating wind-blown pipes that are played from a keyboard, or keyboards.

**Organbuilder (or Organ Builder):** The manufacturer of any type of musical instrument with keyboards whose sound may be generated from reeds, wind-blown pipes, electronic digitally sampled technology, or analog technology.

For centuries firms and individuals that build pipe organs have used the term "Organbuilder" to define their profession. This definition was somewhat accurate, as an organ at that point was either a reed organ or a pipe organ, both of which used air to generate the sound. This term was sufficient up to the advent of the electric organ (Hammond organ) which was introduced in the 1930's, and the subsequent analog, digital and electronic organs.

The problem today is that the term "organbuilder" no longer identifies a particular type of organ, and could refer to the builder of any number of musical instruments which generate music from keyboards, whose construction technologies, methods, standards and considerations vary tremendously. In reality, the majority of organs currently being built are electronic organs, and many electronic instrument manufacturers refer to their work as "organbuilding."

Therefore, companies and individuals who utilize wind-blown pipes as the primary sound source in their organs should be differentiated by being identified as "Pipe Organ Builders."