“A Brief, Comprehensive History of the Cordovox and other electronic accordions”

By Fabio G. Giotta

Many technical and musical geniuses poured their hearts and souls in to the design and production of these amazing instruments whose electronic technology originated in the late 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s; the Ages of Technology, Space and Jet Travel. The acoustic accordion technology (typically 15,000 parts in a full size instrument) spans from roughly 1900 through the age of its electronic counterparts.

This article endeavors to correct some of the rampant inaccuracies and invalid opinions about the Cordovox and other electronic accordions found on the World Wide Web, including some of the statements posted at Google Answers, and errant statements by some Ebay sellers and non-accordion oriented retailers, including musical instrument shops. Herein, I opine and make a combination of declarations, observations, and well-educated guesses based on my own personal experience with these instruments, continuing interaction with accordion industry experts such as:

Gordon Piatanesi (Colombo & Sons Accordions-San Francisco, CA),

Joe Petosa (Petosa Accordions-Seattle, WA),

The curators of the Museo Internazionale Della Fisarmonica-Castelfidardo, Italia (International Museum of the Accordion), including Paolo Brandoni (Brandoni & Sons Accordions-General Accordion Co.), Fabio Petromilli (Comune of Castelfidardo), Beniamino Bugiolacchi-Museum President, and their colleagues

Maestro Gervasio Marcosignori, concert accordionist, arranger, recording artist, and former Director of Instrument Development for Farfisa S.p.A.

Organ electronics experts such as *Dave Matthews, *David Trouse, *David Tonelli and *Peter Miller, and study of written, official documents such as books, brochures, advertisements, owner’s guides, service manuals, and historical accounts, inlcluding the following: The Golden Age of the Accordion--Flynn/Davison/Chavez, Super VI Scandalli…Una Fisarmonica Nella Storia--Jercog, and Per Una Storia Della Farfisa--Strologo.

This is a work in progress that is updated and revised at every opportunity. Version Seven B, September 26, 2012

BACKGROUND:

The Cordovox line of electronic accordions was imported and marketed by Chicago Musical Instrument Co. which was also the parent company of Lowrey Organ Co., among other American musical instrument makers such as Fender, Gibson, Epiphone, Maestro and others. "CMI" was one of the oldest large musical instrument firms in the USA. Around the time of the fourth generation Cordovox, the ownership changed to another family member (perhaps Bill Lehman, son-in-law of company President/Founder M.H. Berlin) and CMI became Norlin Music, Inc.

Scandalli accordions…"Fratelli Scandalli"

Silvio Scandalli and his brothers Enrico and Dante co-founded their "basement" firm in 1900 in Camerano, Italy, sometimes referred to as "ditta Scandalli". These revolutionary instruments are often (rightfully) the standard by which all other accordions are judged. Scandalli invented and patented hundreds of mechanisms that were exclusive to his accordions, such as "strapless" bellows closure, and a two switch mechanism that generated 5 different registers with "window" register indicators on the side (top) of the instrument, seen only by the player. The attention to detail, materials, design, workmanship and level of refinement seen in their Super VI accordion as well as the pre-WW2 top of the line Scandalli instruments such as the 4/5 hand-made reed model 142R are unsurpassed to this day! The Soprani family firms (Paolo Soprani, Settimio Soprani) in Castelfidardo and Scandalli in nearby Camerano would make this small area the accordion capital of the World, forever overshadowing Mariano Dallape's accordion firm and others further North in the once competing "accordion city" of Stradella, Italy.

The companies of Scandalli, Settimio Soprani (Settimio was the younger brother and former partner of Paolo Soprani, the Father of the Italian accordion in Castelfidardo) and Frontalini (this company withdrew from the merger after 1 year or so) merged in 1946 to form FARFISA (Fabbriche Riunite Fisarmoniche Italiane, translated: United Italian Accordion Factories), which would go on to pioneer reed organs (air/mechanical type: Microrgan, Pianorgan, etc) and later (++about 1-2 years after the development of the 1st generation Cordovox) designing the World's first reedless, transistorized accordion, the Transicord, in the early 1960's. It used only organ electronics-no reeds, yet used its accordion bellows as a volume and sustain/legato control (this concept has been used in 21st century digitial-reedless accordions such as the Petosa Millenium, the best and most accurate sounding, reedless, digital-sample based accordion to date, and was also used, to a lesser degree, in the Iorio Accorganette).

Based on the Transicord, the follow-up was the introduction of the famous "Compact" and "Compact Duo" combo organs which would launch Farfisa as one of the World's premier organ makers and one of the largest Musical Instrument companies in the World. Celebrated classical accordionist/virtuoso Gervasio Marcosignori joined Farfisa in 1947 as exclusive demonstration artist for the firm (and recording artist for Farfisa's record label), soon becoming Director of Instrument Development (accordions, organs). His first technical involvement was with the development of Silvio Scandalli's perennial masterpiece: the Super VI model, first built in 1948, advertised in firm brochures commencing circa 1951-52.

++At the time, young Marcosignori was told by Chief Operations Officer Paolo Settimio Soprani (grandson of Settimio Soprani) that, were he to take on this ambitious project, he should focus on making the Super VI an accordion that could not be beaten by any competitor, like an indisputable championship-winning Ferrari race car meant only for the race track ((and to worry about production issues and other pedestrian concerns later))….++per Gervasio Marcosignori in August, 2012. Marcosignori's colleague, classical accordion music composer Gianfelice Fugaza joined the firm in 1956 as technical consultant and composed many works that would be recorded for the Farfisa record label and published under Farfisa's music publishing arm (renamed "Berben" by new owner Maestro Bio Boccosi circa 1956). Both Marcosignori and Fugaza were centrally involved in the Transicord project.

CORDOVOX: Roots and Pedigree

The first 3 generations of Cordovox outfits/sets were made by Farfisa (Scandalli acoustic accordion section and organ tabs), and Lowrey Organ Co. (outboard organ tone generator, amplifier, pedal, cables, etc). Some of the patented designs for the electronics were licensed from the Iorio Accordion Co. of New York (designed by Al Iorio, grandson of founder Augusto Iorio, who immigrated to New York City from Castelfidardo, Italy). Well-later, Iorio became known as the Syn-Cordion Musical Instrument Corp.

++Gervasio Marcosignori was sent by Farfisa to Chicago to visit the Lowrey Organ Co. and its engineers to develop the Cordovox CG-2/CG-3. The Cordovox organ section was based on the Lowrey "Holiday Deluxe" model spinet organ introduced in 1961, a follow-up to the original "Holiday" model of 1957. The tone generator was reconfigured to fit in a portable cabinet, and the amplifier was of an entirely new design in a second, portable cabinet, needed to make the instrument self-contained, like an electronic organ. Farfisa would later send the accordions to Lowrey for U.S. distribution of the Cordovox outfits, while CMI would send tone generators and amplifiers to Farfisa for European distribution. Lowrey actually had an organ engineer

originally from Castelfidardo by the name of Gastone Baroncini who would perform minor pre-delivery repairs, adjustments, tuning of the organ, and even minor repairs and adjustments to the accordion itself.

The first generation Cordovox is clearly Marcosignori's "darling".

++Maestro Marcosignori was also a great fan of what would become a Cordovox exclusive feature for quite some time: the "Glide" control, actuated by a switch in the upper right side of the instrument's volume pedal (an exclusive Lowrey innovation introduced in 1956). When the player moved his foot to the indicated area on the pedal, the organ would suspend any vibrato and sustain while bending the instrument's organ pitch ½ step downward for emphasis. Releasing the slight pressure on the glide control let pitch, sustain and vibrato (if actuated) return to normal in an instant. (Tastefully used, this feature could be used to great amazement to mimic the Hawaiian Guitar, among other instruments or ensembles). Inexpensive and simple to include, the Maestro could not imagine why this feature was not routinely incorporated by (future) competitors (such as Elka) for many years, if at all.

++Marcosignori returned to Chicago as deomonstrator for the World debut of the Cordovox, which took place in a large hall. The Chicago audience, which included CMI founder M.H. Berlin (Note: Marcosignori was taken with the fact that, at the time, CMI owned guitar-giant Gibson), was flabbergasted at the variety, complexity and completeness of the sounds produced from this relatively small instrument. "With only five organ tabs, the instrument produced all these magical sounds". Marcosignori was also taken with the quality and integrity of the Cordovox's "piano" sound: "we added the neon lamps to the tone generator to produce the proper "sustain" (one lamp per voice tab, per note). Marcosignori enjoyed touring the U.S.A. to demonstrate the new, revolutionary Cordovox, and especially enjoyed his stays in San Francisco.

All early Cordovox accordions were fairly well-balanced, not overly heavy for their category, and used 3 reeds for the right-hand keyboard and 4 for the left. Right Hand: LMH configuration, that is, Low-Medium-High; the premium model with the Bassoon and Clarinet reeds in the tone chamber and the Piccolo outside the chamber. The standard version accordion, later to be referred to as the Super IV, would carry the lower outfit model number of the generation (example: CG-2 of the CG-2/CG-3 series), had no tone chamber, and used standard Scandalli reeds. It had a noticeably smaller body, a differently shaped organ tab control panel, a bass keyboard with black keys on a white background, and was slightly lighter in weight than the premium model accordion. Though there was nothing super or exceptional about it, the CG-2 outfit's "standard" accordion was a solid, service-able instrument and was generally in sonic character with the premium version accordion, the Super V. It outsold the more expensive Super V by a healthy margin, and today's marketplace of examples and

audio recordings illustrates this fact.

The premium version accordion (Super V) with double tone chamber, hand-made reeds, and white bass keys on a black background panel would carry the higher outfit model number of the series (example: CG-3). The electronics used with both the standard and premium accordions were identical; only the outfit model number changed to designate which of the two accordions came with the outfit. The CG-2/ CG-3 outfits offered only dry tuning in the accordions. Subsequent generations (CG-4 and forward), in addition to the standard/dry tuned accordions, would also offer musette-tuned versions (example: CG-4M/CG-5M) using two clarinet reeds tuned differently to achieve the Musette sound and eliminating the Piccolo reed (LMM configuration, that is, Low-Medium-Medium).

The premium accordions for the first three series also carried a special nameplate near an added, arched inset or recess in the nameplate section on the front of the instrument: “Super V”, and were slightly larger and differently shaped because of the tone-chamber. The Super V designation defines this special Cordovox model as a junior version of Scandalli’s World-standard, the acoustic accordion model “Super VI”. The Super V is a junior version because, among other differences, the Super V uses 3 reeds for the right-hand and 4 for the left, while the Super VI uses 4/5 respectively. It is important to note that the reed blocks for both these models are identical, save for the Super VI’s emblazoned marking: “SCANDALLI CONCERT INSTRUMENTS”. ++The Super VI and Super V accordions were made in a separate, purpose-built, small facility (“Special Instruments”) at the front of the original Scandalli factory grounds using exclusive craftsmen, parts and materials. For example, Scandalli carefully and meticulously aged their own, top-choice woods such as mahogany, maple, walnut, and beech for 10-15 years, and used the most select Goatskin chamois for the reed leathers, along with Swedish Blue Steel for the hand-made reeds.

The importance of the World debut of the electronic accordion with the Cordovox CG-2/CG-3 circa 1960/1961 led me to closely examine the internal components of my Super V accordion; I became almost certain it was made right along side the Super VI rather than in the main Scandalli factory, though it is possible the electronics may have been produced and/or installed in the main factory or perhaps at Farfisa’s then new, large multi-instrument factory at Aspio Terme. ++Maestro Marcosignori confirmed this undocumented fact about the Super VI/Super V combination production line during a meeting at the Museo Internazionale Della Fisarmonica-Castelfidardo in August, 2012, declaring to me: (….other than by knowing what you know and doing what you did… ”How is anyone supposed to figure it out?”

Not incidentally, CMI used the USA’s foremost “Hollywood Dreamboat”, razzamatazz, TV and recording star accordionist, Dick Contino, to advertise the original Cordovox in magazines. Contino had previously been advertising CMI’s imported

Settimio Soprani accordions. His first “endorsement” was for magazine advertisements for Excelsior Accordions in the late 1940’s. Contino would later become a long-time, faithful Petosa Artist, which he remains to this day. He continues to perform around the USA on his Petosa Artist Model. ++Because Farfisa did not have much in the way of in-house resources for advertising the Cordovox across Europe, they took one of the early ads with Contino and simply pasted Marcosignori’s face over Contino’s!

With each successive generation, the organ control panels on the Cordovox accordions would expand and change to accommodate a growing number of “voices”, effects and other controls. From the beginning, the control panels were well configured and thought-out, and in the case of the Cordovox, usually sported color-coded, grouped sections of organ tabs for easy and fast on-the-fly identification (some of the 2nd and perhaps 3rd generation instruments had tabs were predominantly white, following the 1st generation tabs). The same was true for the Farfisa electronic accordion models, whose tabs were always color-coded and grouped by “family”.

First generation Cordovox- circa 1960-62: CG-2/CG-3

This was the only generation with the legendary, vacuum tube organ electronics, a two row firing cable, and accordion reeds dry tuned only; no musette tuning was yet available. Vacuum tube organ tone generators and amplifiers have been long-hailed as having the best tonal qualities, and Lowrey was known for its superior, substantive and highly distinguished organ sound, which became part of the 1st generation Cordovox. Given the proper respect required by tube electronics, these outfits were extremely reliable and easy to repair, even by the user-even on the job!

The CG-2/CG-3 amplifier used 2 full-range 12” Jensen Special Design speakers that put out an indefatigueable, deceivingly large, warm sounding 35 watts rms.

The optional, compact Cordovox CL-10 tone cabinet, a Leslie-clone, was available as a third electronic component/cabinet (“Leslie” type amplifier: a Doppler effect/gyroscopic type speaker system that creates a huge vibrato (ala Wurlitzer theatre organ) that is flung around the room by its motorized rotor speaker system, invented by Don Leslie in 1937 and closely associated with Hammond organs).

Later marketed as the “Electra” outfit, the CG-2 would continue to be offered contemporaneously with the 2nd generation Cordovox outfits.

There are also a few Cordovox amplifier and tone generator cabinets of an earlier, simpler (sans-silhouette) external design, sometimes referred to as a CG-1 outfit. Along with a prototype Cordovox accordion with a different, 1960’s Scandalli type block-letter font and unique, smaller organ control panel that was never seen

other than in advertisements, the “CG-1” cabinets are seen in early magazine ads with Dick Contino.

++Recently, Maestro Marcosignori was contacted by an Eastern European accordionist who still played his severely crippled 1st generation Cordovox and was seeking repair assistance. The Maestro enlisted the help of a local (Castelfidardo area) organ technician who, with some minor repairs that included a few new vacuum tubes, had the instrument running at 100% yet again. The accordionist was in 7th Heaven with the renewed, full functionality of his vintage Cordovox, now about 50 years old! Some of us are fiercely loyal to our early Cordovox outfits; my two CG-3/ Super V outfits are scheduled for full restoration during the next two years.

Second generation: circa 1967: CG-4/CG-5

This generation used the CAG-1, a solid-state combination tone generator/ amplifier in a single cabinet which had a solid-state amplifier rated at 85 watts rms and the best sounding speaker complement of its category: two 3” tweeters, a 9” x 14” midrange, and a 15” woofer that occasionally vibrated electronic components loose and knocked the instrument out of tune, though it generally held together well and sounded great. A three row firing cable and solid-state electronics became standard from this point forward. The accordion cables for the first three generations were custom made by Bell Laboratories. The CG-4/CG-5 accordions carried an updated design and offered more organ tabs (“voices”) than the previous generation, including keyboard Percussion, Wow-Wow, and 2 organ stop “Presets” (pre-combined voice tabs). The CG-4 standard version accordion was now referred to as the “Super IV”, though it had no “super” characteristics and was not marked as such. The new transistorized Lowrey organ section used in this series had an exceptionally sweet, smooth, and well-rounded sound for its solid-state category. The Super V accordion still carried its unusual inset/recess on the front of the instrument.

The newer, larger Cordovox CL-20 Leslie-type amplifier was available as a third electronic component/cabinet, probably manufactured by Fender, which marketed its own, similar Vibratone “Leslie clone”. It was rumored that this model was more “effective” than the smaller, original CL-10 model.

Third generation: circa 1971: CG-6/CG-7

The new outfits reverted to a tone generator and circa 200 watt peak power amplifier in separate cabinets (the CXG and CXA, respectively). At this time, the Super V accordion was again revised and somewhat awkwardly moved its Super V

nameplate in to the active center-grill area on the front, thus now making it awkwardly surrounded by the grill. Its characteristic, extended "arch" recess/inset on the front of the instrument remained unaltered. The organ tab control panel remained largely the same as that of the 2nd generation.

To summarize:

All these outfits offered two acoustic accordion choices; the lower number outfit designation (ex: CG-4 in the CG-4/CG-5 series) is the standard accordion model (no tone chamber, standard reeds, slightly smaller body, bass keyboard with black keys on white background). Any Cordovox accordion carrying the Super V designation has a double tone chamber and hand-made reeds, with white bass keys on a black background panel.

The fourth generation Cordovox accordions (circa 1974)

CMI's new ownership under the new name of Norlin Music Inc. brought the 4th generation outfits to market. The CRD-A 210, 241, 251 accordions were made by Excelsior, using their medium quality reeds. These instruments were monstrous in size and bloated in appearance, didn't sound nearly as good as the Scandalli instruments, and were quite undependable. The 251 was the full-organ section + tone-chamber version (the tone chamber made its musette register sound lifeless). The updated electronic components in the tone generator, and especially those in the accordion, didn't hold-up well, and the organ's tone was a bit harsh and slightly out-of-character with the previous Lowrey electronics. It is important to note that some of the newly added components used were made by the "newer" Japanese electronics firms of the 70's rather than by American electronics companies such as ITT.

During the 3 years of ownership of my Cordovox 241M, I never finished a musical engagement with the outfit fully operating!!! This series spelled the beginning of the end for Cordovox. This generation still used the same generator and amp and cabinet configuration as the CG-6/CG-7. The organ tabs on the accordion's organ tab control panel protruded further outward than those of the Scandalli units and were so noisy they could be heard through the amplifier. Moreover, they felt "clunky" and did not pivot (turn on and off) easily compared to the early Cordovox units. In all fairness, I must say that I found the CRD-A-210 with its downsized organ section and hand made reeds to be decent and service-able, though considered a "junior" to the 241/251 organ section. Like the Farfisa Transivox, it had its organ tone generator built-in to the accordion and used a small metal cabinet (well smaller than a shoebox) for the power supply, which also housed the volume pedal. The hand-made reeds were only slightly better quality than this series' standard reeds.

The 241 and 251 models came with an outboard volume pedal. Starting with the 1st generation, the accordion's firing cable had been made by Bell Laboratories (except for the 210) and was connected to the tone generator. As always, the accordions themselves contained only a small part of the organ electronics.

The last Cordovox model produced was the CRD-A 2000. Little is known about this model, and it seems to be almost non-existent on today's market. My educated guess is that this model ushered the Cordovox line in to the synthesizer era, and that this model was meant to compete with the Farfisa Syntaccordion.

Myths about the Cordovox:

There is no such Cordovox electronic accordion outfit model as a CG-10, Super VI, Super VII or Cordovox Moog, though CMI distributed both Cordovox outfits and Moog synthesizers and combo organs, combining them in the brochures used during the late Cordovox/Norlin Music era when some Cordovox CDX series keyboards were produced. In collaboration with Moog, some Cordovox synthesizers may have incorporated certain Moog features. Finally, the only Cordovox Leslie-type tone cabinets produced were the CL-10 and CL-20.

Farfisa in the 1970's

In 1974, to compete with the fourth generation Cordovox, Farfisa launched the Transivox series models which paralleled the early Cordovox-Scandalli accordions but utilized a full-compliment, updated, miniaturized tone generator on hinged panels installed in the accordion, behind the right hand keyboard. The only piece needed besides the accordion was the small Farfisa ATX power supply and volume pedal, and an amplifier of your choice. There was much less to carry, but the accordion was heavy and the generator access door behind the right hand keyboard could make for a somewhat uncomfortable fit against the player's chest during use. The Transivox TX-1 had Bass and Chord "Brushes" (as Rhythm/Percussion) and a full complement of organ tabs, but no presets. In addition, Farfisa included the Lowrey "Glide" feature and added vibrato and sustain features as part of the pedal actuated glide package, controlled by a 3 position knob. The updated TX-2 with "retro" style chrome piping on the sound grille (originating from the 1939 Scandalli 142R accordion) deleted the Brushes and added Wha-Wha (same as Wow-Wow on the Cordovox), along with a few other, minor changes. The TX-2 electronics later became available with a tone-chamber in a hand-made reed version accordion: the Super Transivox. Along with

the TX-1, Farfisa also introduced it's Leslie-type amplifiers: the solid-state RSC-180 (Rotating Sound Cabinet with a modern, coaxial bass/midrange driver and a separate tweeter, all using a single rotor), followed by the larger, tube-amplified, RSC-350 circa 1976 (with three discrete speakers and twin rotors). The RSC-180 sounded unusually sweet and smooth for a solid-state amplifier, was well designed and built, dependable, and easy to service. ++Gervasio Marcosignori was the lead in the Transivox and Syntaccordion projects, and is quite proud of the end-result of both these projects. The Syntaccordion would be his last electronic accordion project for Farfisa.

Later in this decade, with the dawn of analog synthesizers looming, Farfisa introduced the Syntaccordion series. The organ tab layout and coloring changed substantially, presets were added, and the beginning of player programmability arrived. Many of these survive today, though I am not familiar with the timbral characteristics of this instrument or the details of its operation.

Both the Lowrey and Farfisa organ sections produced exquisite tones with superior timbre, with the Lowrey organs generally exhibiting the "fuller" sound of the two (Flute section), while the Farfisa generally had a somewhat sweeter sound. The Cordovox Bass section, specifically the 8' bass, sounded extraordinarily realistic, like a bass violin (upright bass), and the Transivox mimicked this bass sound very, very closely.

Of the "pure" electronic organ based accordions where the player would flip organ tabs/stops on the fly ala Wurlitzer theatre organ, with few or no presets (pre-synthesizer era), the first three generations of the Cordovox and the Farfisa Transivox TX-1, TX-2 and Super Transivox were outstanding acoustic and electronic instruments; the ultimate incarnations of the electronic accordion that pioneered the class. I rate them as Grade A; the highest grade achievable per the original general grading standards of my youth.

Grade B instruments

Circa 1979, Elka (an Italian organ and accordion company founded in the 1960's) entered the mix by manufacturing their Elkavox electronic accordion, and it sister instrument, the Iorio Accorgan, marketed by Iorio Accordions of New York City/ Syn-Cordion Musical Instrument Corp. Elka manufactured the complete instrument for their Elkavox line and for the Iorio Accorgan line. These accordions were bulky and somewhat awkward looking, similar to the Cordovox 200 series. Both the accordion and organ sections were well-more than decent in quality and were quite service-able, but the organ tab control panels were not configured as well and the instruments did not sound as good as their Lowrey/Farfisa/Scandalli counterparts. The "A" (if there

was one) through F and H series Iorio Accorgans' white and black, undersized organ tabs used a small font, were more difficult to identify and find, and did not pivot (turn on and off) as easily as those of the early Cordovox and Farfisa units. Perhaps the most popular series, the "E", widely illustrated this problem. This situation was temporarily improved with the introduction of the G series, but reverted with the H series. Elka was later purchased by General Electronics, also known as GEM/Galanti Accordions, which would later indirectly enter the electronic and digital, classic organ market in the U.S.A. as Ahlborn-Galanti. Like many accordion companies trying to make a permanent transition to musical electronics, GEM would later be dissolved.

The Elka tone generator, power supply and pedal were housed in one small, rectangular cabinet that lies flat on the ground, approx. 28" long x 19" wide x 9" high. The organ sounds were bold, dark and somewhat rough; they did not "sing" out as well and were not as refined as those of the Cordovox or Farfisa units. Finally, the organ bass these instruments produced sounded much more like that of their 1980's Keyboard contemporaries: unrealistic, relatively harsh, boomy and bottom-heavy, most of which can be partly remedied with a good equalizer, thus, the lower grade of B. However, like the pre-Excelsior era Cordovox and Farfisa units, Elka 77, 83 model electronics (same as Iorio Accorgan G and H series) did seem to be quite dependable and service-able. The Elka 77/Accorgan G was the last model considered to be a "pure" electronic accordion. The H series Accorgan with its small, stand-up generator (about 2' x 1 ½') introduced the synthesizer to this line, as Farfisa had done earlier with the Syntaccordion.

Petosa's Approach to the Electronic Accordion:

Famed Italian-American firm Petosa Accordions of Seattle, Washington borrowed the Elka 77/Iorio G Series electronics (arguably the best voice tab combination and organ control tab layout of all Elka pure-electronic, pre-synthesizer organ sections), adding it to their own, custom-made accordion platform; thus came the Petosa Series II. Like the early Cordovox, the handsome looking Series II offered a standard version accordion as well as a premium version with tone-chamber and hand-made reeds. <u>The limitations of the organ electronics, not the accordion, keep this instrument's overall rating from being higher than a solid Grade B+.</u> Like all of Petosa's exquisite quality, Italian made/in-house finished accordions, which very closely mimic their in-house, fully hand-made instruments, the Series II and Series III accordions were made by Zero-Sette in Castelfidardo. Some of the strong points typical of Petosa were incorporated in to the Series II and Series III: very good overall build, agile/properly sprung keyboard, good weight balance when played, quality assembly, materials and finish. The Series III incorporated the Elka 83/Iorio Accorgan H series electronics which had progressed substantially toward the synthesizer class. As

part of founder Carlo Petosa's tradition since 1922, Petosa produced in-house, hand-made accordions until a few years ago. Today, I dare say that Petosa likely sports more highly-accomplished, long-time, documented artists than many major accordion brands combined. There are scores of loyal "Petosa Artists" like Dick Contino, and +Anthony Galla-Rini.

Grade C instruments?.....

Other contemporaries of the early Cordovox with much less technical, audible and visual verve and integrity…..
the Bell Duovox: the Programmer model, probably their entry to the synthesizer era, very similar to the awkward Elkavox, was distributed by Bell Accordions of New Jersey and New York. Another was the Hohner Electravox, a vanilla-flavored, garden-variety everyday Chevrolet-grade electronic accordion.

Allegedly, one of the men who was thoroughly involved with the development of the Cordovox for CMI left the firm and went to Bell Accordions to initiate the Duovox project. The Duovox consisted of a Crucianelli accordion section with Crumar organ electronics. Crumar was founded by Castefidardo veteran accordion producer Crucianelli in 1971 as the firm's electronics arm; it closed in 1986. The Crumar brand was purchased by the firm "Bg's S.r.L" in 2008; a company which produces keyboards and related components and accessories. Little else is known about the obscure Duovox, but Bell enjoyed a solid, if not nationwide reputation for their American-made, acoustic accordions. Neither of these electronic accordions enjoyed the popularity of the any of the other manufacturers' models above.

Author's Biography:
My earliest experience with a Cordovox was with San Francisco Bay Area accordionist Val Valente and his CG-2, used for rehearsals, concerts and my first recording session (2 vocals) at major West Coast studio "Golden State Recorders" in San Francisco in 1968, at age 5 1/2. My first playing experience with a Cordovox was an impromptu New Year's Eve performance of an Italian waltz on my accordion teacher's Cordovox CG-5M "Super V" in 1971 - a 3 minute performance that changed my life, cementing my destiny as an accompanist, soloist, band leader, collector, restorer and perpetual student of the accordion. Broadly categorized, I have owned 8 electronic accordions since 1974, and still own some of these: a Farfisa Transivox TX-1, a Farfisa TX-2/ Super Transivox, a Cordovox CRD-A 241M, two Cordovox CG-3/Super V outfits with extra components, a Petosa Millenium and a Petosa Series II. In addition, I currently own Scandalli, Excelsior, Petosa, Galanti, and Fratelli Vaccari acoustic instruments in

full playable condition, and two keepsakes: a Sonola, and a Carmen (Hohner). I plan to purchase another Super Transivox to replace the one stolen from me, and perhaps a Cordovox CG-5M.

I credit two Italian immigrants, Michele Corino (accordion, formerly with "Orchestra Angelini" and Cetra Records) and Nick Sfarzo (guitar, father & "early" teacher of accordionists Angelo Sfarzo, an Excelsior Artist, and Ron Sfarzo) for the bulk of my early musical/instrumental study. My instrumental repertory has covered Opera to Jazz, Country & Western to Show Tunes, Italian and other European Folk and semi-classical material, American Standards and even Oldies Rock and Roll (specifically on the Cordovox). I am also an operatically trained vocalist, but now specialize in Great American Songbook, Show Tunes and Italian. My behind-the- scenes experience includes that of record producer and recording engineer. I am also the youngest member of the Giotta Family, (based in San Francisco, CA) which founded the first Espresso coffee house on America's West Coast in 1956: Caffe Trieste (now a growing retail chain with wholesale and online distribution under the direction of my sister and myself.) My father, founder "Papa Gianni Giotta", together with my brother Gianfranco, established what continues to be the longest running musical show in San Francisco, the Caffe Trieste Saturday Concert. Under my direction, our show covers a wide range of repertory, and the band is replete with two accordions. The family also operates a large recording studio (Trieste Recording Studios), has produced record albums and videos under the TRIESTE RECORDS label, and has made thousands of appearances in all types of media, film and on concert stages since 1953.

*Experts, from page one:

Dave Matthews: independent organ repairman for Bob Berry's World of Organs-Santa Clara, CA, last based in Fresno, CA as Organ Repair Service. Dave worked on my 1956 Allen S-12-S Rondo organ and was extremely knowledgeable of Allen, Thomas, Lowrey and other organs. After my introduction of the Cordovox to him, he became an expert with my CG-3 outfits. Dear Dave passed-on suddenly in the mid 1990's.

David Trouse: Road tour audio engineer for major, veteran rock and roll acts, digital and analog keyboard repairman associated with Zone Music in Cotati, CA, home of the famous Cotati Accordion Festival.

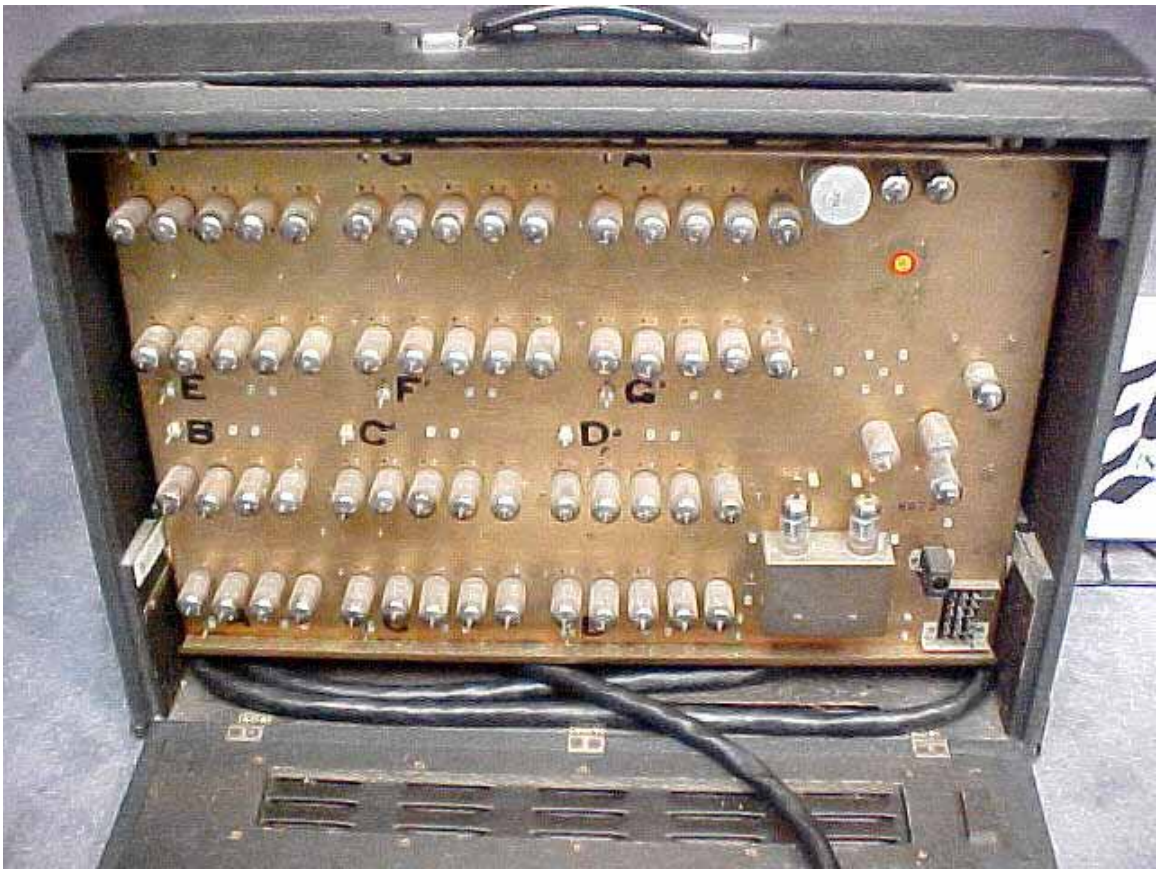
David Tonelli: Former senior electronics teacher at College for Recording Arts-San Francisco and recording engineer at Golden State Recorders/Sonic Arts Corp.-San

Francisco, among other S.F. Bay Area studios. Tonelli personally built, operates and broadcasts from vacuum-tube driven KRKD-FM…Jazz 103 in Oakland, CA and repairs, rebuilds and restores musical instrument electronics, microphones and analog and digital audio equipment (both consumer and professional, antique, vintage and modern) as Aquarius Audio Service - Oakland, CA.

Peter Miller: Former junior electronics teacher at College For Recording Arts and a contemporary of David Tonelli at the College, founder of CAE Sound in San Mateo, CA. As a certified service technician for dozens of manufacturers, rebuilds and repairs electronic keyboard instruments of all vintages both analog and digital, and associated amplifiers, including Leslie-type. Loudspeaker restoration, professional and consumer audio component repair, inventor and marketer of specialty musical instrument accessories. He has earned 2 gold records for his work on two Arista Record's Grateful Dead albums and counts among his long-time clients The Grateful Dead, Huey Lewis, The Doobie Brothers, and others.

The Cordovox logo uses the same font style as Farfisa's "Compact" and "Compact Duo" combo organs…..not a coincidence.

CG-2 outfit The CG-2 was later marketed as the “Electra” contemporaneously with the CG-4/CG-5)



CG-2/CG-3 tone generator

1st generation Cordovox Super V accordion (CG-2/CG-3)

Cordovox CG-2-standard version accordion (Super IV)

CG-2/CG-3 amplifier and tone generator, with optional CL-10 “leslie” at right. Cordovox nameplate was pasted in to this photo.

ABOVE:
Last Super V accordion-CG-7 outfit

CAG-1 combination tone generator/amplifier, for CG-4/CG-5 outfits

CXA amplifier for CG-6/CG-7, also used with 200 series

CXG tone generator, used with CG-6/CG-7 outfits and 200 series

CXG control panel (CG-6/CG-7, 200 series)


Above: Cordovox CL-20 “leslie”, for use with 2nd generation outfits and forward

CG-4 accordion: organ tabs

Farfisa Transicord (first model)

Farfisa Transicord De Luxe (with Percussion, etc)

Farfisa Transivox TX-1

Farfisa TX-2 version-chromatic/button type (also known as the TX-5)

Farfisa Transivox outfit

Farfisa TX-2/Super Transivox

1939 Scandalli 142R

Scandalli Super VI (third grill style, 1960's nameplate style)

Farfisa RSC-180 Rotating Sound Cabinet

Farfisa RSC-350 Rotating Sound Cabinet

Iorio Accorgan F series

Iorio Accorgan G Series

Iorio Accorgan H series

Very early model Iorio Accorgan with rocker-type organ control tabs

Elkavox 77 (same as Iorio Accorgan G series)

Petosa Series II

Petosa Series II with stones and engraving

Bell DuoVox Programmer


Bell DuoVox (probably a contemporary of the Cordovox 2nd and 3rd generations)