

To Rebuild, or Not Rebuild; That Is The Question

When you have a pneumatic player of some kind and don't really know if it needs restoring or just fixing, then this article might give you something to consider. I really don't have an axe to grind because I have plenty of business. So I can give you guidelines to follow and add to your own good common sense and financial situation at this time.

There are basically 4 kinds of player (band organs, reproducers, etc.) owners.

1. Instruments that your family has owned. (Sentimental and intrinsic value)
2. Instruments you purchased to restore
3. Instruments you inherited or were given
4. Instruments you happened upon and have little or nothing invested in.

The first basic rule of good sense about these things is, THEY ARE VALUABLE. It doesn't matter what you happen to have invested in them. Lots of people will promise you lots of things, like, "Invest in this option and it will double your money." But we know those rarely pan out. However, when one invests in antiques and has them restored, not only can they and their family enjoy them, but they don't "wear out." They simply decay over great amounts of time, when rebuilt correctly and conscientiously. That requires longer than they will have on this earth. So they are not gambling, in this sense. For once, they are investing in something that THEY control. But it depends on how well and original they are restored, as to how valuable they are.

Intrinsic value means, ideally, value that is recognized in all situations, generations, and by all cultures. Your player pianos are NOT recognized as valuable by the "*drug culture*," but then again, that is a misnomer. There is no such thing as a "*drug culture*." There is however, anti-cultural elements, to whom nothing is valuable. So:

The second basic rule of good sense about investing is this: VALUE is relative to QUALITY, and Quality is determined relatively. The old saying, "There is no substitute for quality," is true, but part of quality is *novelty*, ie. ideas that have stood the test of time and still intrigue. (Stuff can stand the test of time, but it's fascination has to accompany it, or it isn't valuable).

I have a Kit Cat clock on my wall that wags it's tail and the eyes move back and forth. It is plastic, but it is really kitsch and fun to watch. It was a gift, but I promise-- the next guy that offers me \$200 for it takes it home. Still, I would miss it like crazy. I love that little clock. That's what I call "intrinsic value." It is valuable because it is novelty (they came out in the 50's as kitchen clocks). Not everybody wants one. That's good-- not bad. For some wrong reason though, pneumatic players may still be valued by some according to their general consensus of how many people in society consider them valuable. That's like determining the worth of the Mona Lisa by a hand count at a bingo parlor. Who cares? Collectors who know better also know their market. Just as you would not try to sell marijuana at a classic car action, neither would you try to buy a player piano from a marijuana dealer. And by the same token, many erstwhile original classic car owners still try to sell them in the Thrifty Nickel. They will give them away.

