

- Whereas a typical synthesizer creates digital sound waves from scratch, the ITO utilizes sonic information and other data recorded from 34 different pipe organs across the country.

- The ITO comes apart and is transported in 32 cases. Altogether, the machine weighs 19,000 pounds and is hauled around the country in its own 53-foot truck.

- The organ is heard through a total of 68 speakers, including 12 subwoofers, giving it a range of sound that's both broad and powerful.

- Two identical 68-channel sound systems are kept in the United States and Europe, allowing for international touring.

- The ITO produces an incredibly wide range of sound—as low as 12 Hz at its lowest, well below the 20 Hz that marks the last reaches of most people's hearing. Meaning that you feel these sounds in your chest even more than you hear them in your head.

- The ITO has five keyboard manuals and is played with both hands and both feet.

The Wizard of the Wurlitzer

Cameron Carpenter brings his one-of-a-kind electronic touring organ to San Francisco.

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



IT TAKES 12 HOURS, four workers, and a dedicated engineer to unload, set up, and calibrate. It can be sonically tailored to any acoustic environment. In basically every way, it more closely resembles a spaceship cockpit than a musical instrument. It's 36-year-old Cameron Carpenter's International Touring Organ (ITO), the mesmerizing machine upon which the enfant terrible of the classical music world will play for four nights this month at SFJazz. In advance of the instrument's appearance, we took a look under the hood of this marvel of musical machinery. FEB. 8-11, SFJAZZ.COM —IAN A. STEWART