



Mapex buys into birch big time with the M Birch series

called Flex-Tech, and don't require springs or hinges. Instead the springy footboard acts as both the spring *and* hinge, and requires far fewer moving parts than your standard kicker.

Trick took the fast track a couple years back with the introduction of its now-celebrated throw-off, and today ups the ante with its distinctive machined alloy bass drum pedal. We only saw a prototype, but it was impressive. The yet-unnamed pedal features an internal spring that works on compression rather than expansion, and its resistance can be adjusted in the blink of an eye by dropping a higher- or lower-gauge spring into the internal chamber. Trick also updated the now patented GS007 throw off so that it features three different cam positions that lock into place without backing out. So you can easily change from a tight snare sound to a loose one in a single click.

LOVEABLE UNDERDOGS. We enjoy coming across a compelling new hardware thingy welded together by some unsuspecting soul in a garage somewhere, who somehow found some real estate on the crowded NAMM show floor. Our favorite this year was Phat Foot, a sleek 18" strip o' steel that hooks one foot of your throne to a piece of Velcro affixed to the underside of your bass drum pedal. It's a totally effective way to prevent bass drum slippage on a slick playing surface, and can be fitted to a hi-hat, to boot.

We ran into yet another nifty doodad at the Safehoop booth, where the company showed off its new S-Hoop bent steel hoop. Closer to a triple-flanged hoop than a die-cast, without actually being either, the S-Hoop features a lip that bends over and slightly in toward the head to protect the bearing edge. It's hard to say if your edges need this much protection, but it was a cool idea, and coolest counts.

HARDWARE TRENDS, ANYONE? We saw a proliferation of new throw-offs from companies like Dunnett's swiveling R Class piston model, Paiste/Ocheltree (a prototype), Puresound (likewise), and even the illustrious Pearl, whose Reference Series strainer and butt plate combo offers an array of locking systems unlike anything on the planet. All this commotion comes, no doubt, in reaction to the unprecedented success of the Nickleworks Piston Strainer over the past few years. In a similar fashion, Puresound ignited the snare wire market years ago, which apparently caught the attention of Pearl, whose new Ultrasound wires come in three configurations for distinctly different sounds, yet hit a comfy price point below other custom wire makers.

— Andy Doerschuk

TECHNOLOGY

Boy, I'm glad that I don't own a company that makes clarinets, because the center of the musical universe seemed to be in software, computers, MIDI, and recording gear. You'll see more about this gear in future issues.

SOFTWARE TRENDS. The line between software library and soft synth is starting to blur. It's all about ease of use and getting the sounds into the machines faster to make music with less reliance on programming. Just launch the software, load in the sound library of your choice, and you're ready to rock.

Spectrasonics' Stylus RMX is now shipping and the demos were always packed. This real-time groove module was one of the show's big hits. New sound libraries, the S.A.G.E. Xpander series, are devoted to increasing the audio materials that can be used inside of Stylus RMX. IK Multimedia was also showing its Sonik Capsules packages for its SampleTank 2.1 soft sampler. →

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Several new soundware packages debuted at NAMM and the trend is "bigger is better." EastWest showed off its Colossus package (running on a Muse Research Receptor) with 32GB of virtual instrument power. But, that ain't nuttin. The folks that brought you dfh Superior are about to release their Vintage and Custom collection with a full 45GB of drum samples. On a somewhat smaller scale, Projectsam's "True Strike 1" orchestral percussion library will ship in both a starter edition (5GB of samples) and a professional version (18GB). It covers 51 different instruments recorded in a concert hall with three microphone placements.

ELECTRONIC DRUM SETS. Roland and Yamaha both introduced new high-end kits at last year's NAMM. This year, we saw new releases of entry-level electronic kits with some of the more advanced technologies trickling down from above. Roland's TD-3V kit includes a mesh-head snare drum pad. Yamaha's DTXpress III has a new "groove check" feature that gates out your sound if you don't play in the pocket. Yamaha also highlighted their new website devoted to DTX drummers. Hart Dynamics showed a new trigger-to-MIDI interface that connects directly into your computer. It has 32 channels, a two-millisecond delay time, and the ability to draw your own trigger recognition curves. How cool is that? Pintech had a number of new kits on display, including an acoustic/electronic kit with all-wood shells and mesh heads.

SOFTWARE DRUM MACHINES. The Glaresoft folks who developed the iDrum software told us that the program was originally targeted for Apple's Garage Band. Now that it has taken on a more advanced approach, it's at home in just about any software environment.

Submersible Music's Drumcore software includes grooves from several outstanding drummers such as Alan White, Zoro, Sly Dunbar, and Michael Shrieve. Drumcore lets you manipulate both loops and single strokes to build up drum tracks using the process of your choice.

M-Audio's software partners were up to some new tricks. Wizoo software showed Latigo and Darbuka, their virtual percussionists. Latigo features nearly a gigabyte of Latin percussion loops and one-shots played by Clay Ostwald, Edwin Bonilla, and Oblin Burgos; while Darbuka contains two gigs of Arabic and Middle Eastern grooves performed by Suat Borazan and Mohamed Zaki. For live use, the patterns, variations, fills, solos, and mutes can all be triggered via MIDI notes. While not exactly a drum machine, new REX file players from e-lab include Obsession (hip-hop loops), Foundation (old school hip-hop), and Perfection (house style loops).

OTHER COOL STUFF. Muse Research demonstrated the Receptor (a stand-alone plug-in player) with a drumKAT that ran the DFH Superior and BFD packages. The Receptor is stable, fast, simple to use, and built for the road. Beyerdynamic showed a new suite of microphones called the Opus Series. Designed exclusively for the drum set, they are available as single units and in a variety of pre-packed configurations.

— Norman Weinberg

STICKS

Vic Firth set forth a new standard with Collectible Series drumsticks. Although they're not really made for playing, the sticks feature wraparound designs from colleges, universities, and music artists, and can be used as fundraiser items. As far as playable sticks go, Stanton

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Brilliance