



You'll notice that the title of our report says "best of." In fact, there were so many exciting new toys at NAMM that it was hard to choose what to squeeze in. For everything that didn't fit into these pages, everything that did, and links to video product demos, see our online NAMM report at www.keyboardmag.com.



Our indefatigable MySpace and YouTube editor, Robbie Gennet, shot tons of amazing video at NAMM of artists performing such as Stevie Wonder, Lisa Harriton of the Smashing Pumpkins, Tony Monaco, Ryan Ahern, Tara Busch, Valdez Brantley, and jam monster Arlan Schierbaum. Check it out at www.YouTube.com/keyboardmag1.

Along with our colleagues at *EQ*, *Guitar Player*, and *Bass Player* magazines, we madly shot photos and video on the NAMM show floor, then uploaded 'em on the spot from cell phones and WiFi hot spots. Check out the results at livefrom.musicplayer.com.

(shown, \$1,099). It's both a moving-fader control surface and an audio interface, and actually has a lot of I/O: 8 analog ins (2 on XLR combo jacks; 6 on balanced 1/4"



TRS), MIDI ports in and out, and built-in talkback.

We also got to check out the new **DM5 Pro Drum Kit** (\$999), which includes the time-tested DM5 sound module, five pads, and "Surge" electronic cymbals that look and feel like acoustic ones. You can go a lot higher-end with electronic drums, but this rig offers so much power and great feel for so little money that we recommend trying it even if your price range is higher — you might decide it's all you need.

APPLIED ACOUSTICS

www.applied-acoustics.com

Strum Acoustic GS-1 (\$229) is a highly sophisticated software instrument that uses state-of-the-art physical modeling to emulate the sound of an acoustic guitar. Both steel and nylon strings are represented, as are guitaristic voicing and strumming techniques. It's capable of analyzing chords played on a keyboard and "guitar-izing" them with an auto-strum algorithm. Compatible with both Mac and Windows in VST, AU, and RTAS formats, it also has a standalone mode.



ARTURIA

www.arturia.com

At last year's NAMM, we got our first look at Origin, a tabletop sound module that uses internal DSP chips to run included versions of all Arturia soft synths and has a ton of realtime controls and modulation options. For example, you could combine oscillators from the Jupiter-8V with Moog Modular filters. There's also a 32-step, analog-style sequencer that you program with knobs. "Are you gonna do a keyboard version?" we probed. Arturia's Vanessa Giraudet only grinned silently, and this year, we found out what she was smiling about. The aesthetics and ergonomics of the **Origin Keyboard** (\$3,499) knocked our socks off. The

fit and finish are super-tight. The keys feel great. Aftersustain response is smooth and even. The ribbon controller rocks. The flip-up control panel and overall design are simply striking. Not since the Synclavier was new has an electronic keyboard oozed with this much status-symbol appeal... and the Origin costs a lot less!

BEHRINGER

www.behringer.com

Keyboard players often use powered monitor/PA speakers as keyboard amps, and Behringer's new offerings caught our attention for their punchy sound and rugged construction. The **B412DSP** (\$589.99 each) is a two-way speaker with a 12" woofer, 600W of power in total, and a built-in mixer with two mic/line inputs. What held our attention, though, was that these ordinary-looking powered wedges take a page from high-end concert systems — they convert the incoming signal to 24-bit digital so that an internal processor can control the crossover and correct for phase and EQ issues. The **B415DSP** (\$739.99 each) does the same, only with a 15" woofer.



BLUE MICS

www.bluemic.com

For podcasting, making internet phone calls, or even singing in a quick vocal track while on the road, the **Snowflake** USB mic (\$79) is bus-powered, folds up along with its cable into a slick, self-contained little case, and is class-compliant: No driver is needed on Mac and PC — you just plug and play.

BIG FISH AUDIO

www.bigfishaudio.com

Big Fish may well be the most prolific loopware house on the planet, and they also distribute Ueberschall's soft instruments in the U.S. The latter feature "Liquid" and "Elastik" technologies from Celemony's Melodyne time- and pitch-shifting software. Just a handful of the spankin' new loops and construction kits from Big Fish themselves includes **Straight Outta NYC** (East coast-style hip-hop, \$69.95), **Plush** (smooth R&B, \$129.95), **Kontrol Freaks 2** (urban library from producer Soul-G, \$99.95), **Retro Cool** ('60s and '70s spy-movie loungecore, \$99.95), **Funk City 2** (classic old-school funk à la James Brown and Tower of Power, \$69.95), and **Aquashy Electro House and Breaks** (acclaimed dance producers Aquashy and Loopmasters, \$49.95). Moving from urban and dance categories into territory you don't see just any loopware company cover are titles such as **Latin Jazz by Peter Michael Escovedo** (\$99.95), **Nu Metal City 2** (\$99.95), and even the Indian cinema-inspired **Bollywood Grooves** (\$149.95). Just as we went to press, they released **Bone Crushing Drums** (\$99.95 in Apple Loops/REX/WAV; \$149.95 in Pro Tools session and OMF formats), a punk and garage rock collection.



We also got a sneak peek at **Joe** (\$499), a cardioid condenser mic that features a similar capsule to BLUE's higher-end Dragonfly. A cool design aspect is that you plug the mic cable into the base of the integrated mic clip, and the mic body itself "floats," making it easier to position.