



**Article: Notes from NAMM 2008
by Rick Paul - 22nd January 2008 -**



If you're interested in what is new in the world of musical instruments, music software, audio hardware geared toward musical applications, and just about anything else related to music products, [the NAMM show](#) is the place to go once each year. The only problem is that, unless you happen to work for a company that is directly involved in making or selling music products, or certain related types of companies, you probably can't get in. NAMM, which historically stood for the National Association of Music Merchants, but which now simply goes by NAMM, is the International Music Products Association, and there are [strict requirements](#) to become a member. If you don't work for one of these companies, and aren't a member of the press, you'll have to get friendly with one of the companies to see if they will give you one of their visitor passes.

If you are lucky enough to get in for the first time, be prepared to be amazed. We're talking about an entire convention center packed full of exhibitors -- the official tally was 1,559 companies displaying products. Oh, and I hope you like crowds, because this year's show drew over 88,000 people over the course of its four days.

The NAMM Show 2008 began Thursday, January 17th and ended Sunday, January 20th. I attended the show on opening day with an eye toward catching up on the latest developments from vendors who provide products directly applicable to the Cakewalk SONAR users who comprise the majority of our readership. Most of the developments I will cover below will also be applicable to users of other DAWs.



Cakewalk News

I might normally have been inclined to make my first stop the [Cakewalk](#) booth, going straight to the source for news of SONAR developments. However, as I arrived on the tradeshow floor just as doors were opening, with vendors still making last minute adjustments to their setups, I decide I'd go catch another vendor I knew had a very busy schedule to see if I could catch him before his appointments began. I lucked out, and we talked for a bit about his new product, then he asked what I thought about the latest news on Cakewalk. Since I'd missed the morning's *NAMM Show Daily* paper in my rush to get through traffic, lines, and crowds, I hadn't heard that news, but I figured it must be big if I was being asked about it in another booth first thing in the morning. And it was.



It turns out the biggest news about Cakewalk at this NAMM Show wasn't a new product announcement. Rather it was that Roland Corporation is expanding its investment in Cakewalk to become the major shareholder. While Cakewalk will continue to be run as a separate company, the level of cooperation on mutually beneficial projects is likely to increase, and Cakewalk's branding of new products will change to "Cakewalk by Roland".

Back in the Cakewalk booth, I had the opportunity to speak with Cakewalk's founder and CEO, Greg Hendershott, and their Director of Public Relations, Steve Thomas, about this new development. Both were highly positive with respect to the enhanced investment, and viewed it as an evolution of the existing, long-term relationships the two companies have shared. Roland had already become the exclusive distributor of Cakewalk products outside the USA and Canada, and there had already been a number of joint product and marketing (e.g. product bundling) developments. The [Roland press release](#) on the additional investment quotes Roland Corporation president, Hidekazu Tanaka, indicating that both companies, "have enjoyed a marked increase in sales and market share," due to the relationship. Hendershott hinted of future, exciting joint project developments, but wasn't ready to provide any specifics at this time.



On the new product front, Cakewalk announced the immediate availability of a Minimoog Tribute Expansion Pack for users of their Rapture and Rapture LE softsynths. This includes all [SONAR 7](#) users, since Rapture LE is included in SONAR 7. Created by music technology guru, musician, and sound designer Craig Anderton this expansion pack starts with sampled waveforms taken from Anderton's personal Minimoog instrument. Instead of building yet another Minimoog clone product, though, Anderton took the Moog-based samples as a starting point for adapting those sounds to new contexts, using the advanced programming capabilities that are unique to Rapture. The result is more of a "tribute" than an "emulation" or "clone". Of course, there are some of the classic Minimoog sounds included, as well. A portion of the profits from this package will be donated to the Bob Moog Foundation, which is dedicated to archiving and preserving Dr. Moog's research. List price for the package is \$49.95.

Cakewalk also announced updates to it's Dimension Pro and Rapture softsynths. The Dimension Pro 1.3 update provides Mac OS X Leopard (10.5) and Universal Binary compatibility. The Rapture 1.1.1 update also introduces Mac OS X Leopard support. Both updates will be available in late January and will be free to registered users of the respective products.

While announced earlier this month, Cakewalk was also highlighting the SONAR 7.0.2 update, a free bug fix plus new features update for SONAR 7 users, along with new support for the Euphonix EuCon control surface as a separate, but still free, download. The new features in SONAR 7.0.2 are geared toward enhancing the new integrated

Step Sequencer. The Cakewalk booth was also hosting numerous product demonstrations, mini seminars, and panel discussions, many of which were broadcast to SONAR users worldwide via the web.

Other Company News

Given I only had about 6 hours to spend on a tradeshow floor packed with over fifteen hundred exhibitors, there wasn't even a prayer of my being able to see everything that was new. Even when I limited my list of companies to visit to those with products that could have some reasonably direct connection to SONAR, the list was far longer than I'd be able to get to in a day.

As such, the list of companies I will cover here is extremely limited. I gave first priority to companies whose products CakewalkNet has covered in the past, or with whom we have had dialogue over time, be it through their supplying their press releases through our news section, inquiries about possible product reviews, or whatever. I also added a few companies I was particularly curious about, and visited as many as I could during the time I had. While I visited quite a number of companies besides the ones I will mention here, I am limiting my coverage here to those who made new product announcements applicable to SONAR users either at the NAMM Show or in reasonably close proximity to it.

Here are my quick notes on what's new with the companies that I visited. Listings are in alphabetical order:

Applied Acoustics Systems

[AAS](#) introduced and demonstrated Strum Acoustic GS-1, their acoustic guitar plug-in synthesizer. AAS bills Strum Acoustic as a keyboardist's acoustic guitar for those situations when a real guitarist is not available and traditional sampled guitars just don't do the trick. Unlike most other virtual guitar instruments, Strum is physically modeled, not sampled. You play the chords you want, then Strum figures out how to voice them for the guitar. Strumming is available via automatic detection based on your playing or via strumming keys or MIDI loops. Multiple types of acoustic guitars characteristics are available and variable, providing the possibility of going from nylon to steel strings, country rock to finger-style classical, and more. Built-in multi-effects are available, including equalizer, chorus, and reverb. Suggested list price is \$229, with availability expected in late March or April.

Art Vista

[Art Vista](#) announced and displayed their Malmsjö GVI, and new, enhanced version of their popular Malmsjö Grand Piano. The Malmsjö GVI has been given a significant overhaul, geared largely toward providing continuous dynamic range through use of the DEF (Dynamic Expression Filter) technology provided by Tascam's Giga software. The basic idea is use a combination of sampling and modeling to avoid the stair-stepping dynamics that occur in most sampled pianos. The Malmsjö GVI also includes keyboard response curves to optimize the instrument's response to many popular MIDI keyboard controllers. The Malmsjö GVI has a suggested retail price of \$199, and is expected to ship later this month.

Arturia

[Arturia](#) was demonstrating its new Analog Factory Experience, which combines their Analog Factory 2.0 software with a 32-key, velocity-sensitive keyboard optimized to work with the software, but also usable as a universal MIDI controller. On the software side, you've



got 3,500 analog synth sounds with presets selected from the Arturia V Collection synths (Minimoog V, [Moog Modular V](#), CS-80V, [ARP2600 V](#), Prophet V, Prophet VS, and [Jupiter 8V](#)), all powered by Arturia's TAE (True Analog Emulation) engine. A Smart Preset Manager allows filtering the presets by instrument, type (e.g. pad, lead, etc.), or characteristics -- a helpful notion when you're dealing with 3,500 sounds. The most essential parameters for personalizing the presets can be edited, and this is where adding the hardware side of the Analog Factory Experience comes in. The hardware, which was produced by CME, has been optimized for directly controlling the software, both for playing, in the same sense that analog synths of old allowed one control to tweak one parameter, and for navigating through the software without needing to resort to using a computer keyboard or mouse. The package also includes an aluminum case for the keyboard. Suggested list price is \$349, with availability expected in February.

East West

If there were a prize given for the most press releases at the NAMM show by a software instrument developer, I believe [EastWest](#) would win by a long shot. Their press pack included thirteen separate announcements. Let's hit some of the highlights.

Quantum Leap Forbidden Planet is a new sample-based synth collection of more than 1,000 cutting edge presets geared toward being combined, morphed, processed, and modulated. Forbidden Planet is geared toward film, television, and game composers, as well as anyone else who needs creative sound design capabilities where the results need to jump out of your speakers. The sampled sounds are analog waves, modulators, and filters recorded through vintage gear, but the true power of the instrument lies in its potential for manipulating the sounds via a raft of filters, modulators, and effects. Q-Fusion convolution technology allows combining and morphing sounds, Riptide is a wave sequencer, and Q-Space allows controlling the three-dimensional audio image. Pricing and availability are yet to be announced.

Quantum Leap Goliath expands upon the Quantum Leap Colossus collection with a further 8 GB of new content, including the full collection of sounds from the EastWest/PMI Bösendorfer 290 Piano collection. Goliath also uses EastWest's new PLAY sample engine, providing access to 64-bit support, among other enhancements. Goliath includes more than 180 high quality instruments and more than 600 patches including everything from drums, bass, guitars, and keyboards, to brass section and orchestral instruments, to ethnic instruments and synthesizers, to choirs. Goliath is expected to ship at the end of January with an MSRP of \$596 for the full product and \$149 for an upgrade from Colossus.

While EastWest's newer products utilize their PLAY sample engine, EastWest has a large line of older products available based on the Native Instruments KOMPAKT sample engine. Now EastWest is offering the EastWest/Quantum Leap Complete Composers Collection to bundle all these products together with a KOMPAKT player or for users who already have NI's KONTAKT sampler. Products bundled into this massive 130 GB sample library include [EWQL Symphonic Orchestra](#) Gold Complete, EWQL Symphonic Choirs, QL Colossus, QL Ra, QL Stormdrum, EW Percussive Adventures 2, and EW/PM Bösendorfer 290. The EW/QL Complete Composers Collection retails for \$1,195, with availability at the end of January.

Other new EastWest products I noticed being demonstrated at NAMM included EastWest/Quantum Leap Pianos, Quantum Leap SD2 - The Next Generation (i.e. of Stormdrum), and Fab Four Virtual Instrument, all of which are either newly shipping or scheduled to ship at the end of this month. All of these products use EastWest's new PLAY sample engine.

EastWest also announced their popular EastWest/Quantum Leap Symphonic Orchestra is being beefed up with the PLAY sample engine. The PLAY engine includes built-in network control to allow loading instruments on multiple computers to be managed by the host computer running your DAW. This should be particularly useful for the large orchestral simulations that EWQL/SO makes possible. For users with massive needs who don't want to use multiple computers, EastWest, in conjunction with VisionDAW, a custom builder of high performance computers for professional composers, also introduced what they are calling the world's most powerful sample playback system, the VisionDAW 8-Core Xeon Server-Class Workstation. This powerful system, which includes 1 terabyte of data

storage and 48 GB of RAM, among other features, allows the entire PLAY-powered version of EWQL/SO to be loaded on a single computer for the first time.

With all of this, and a few more that I've skipped for brevity, I have to wonder: Do Doug Rogers and the rest of the crew at EastWest ever sleep?

FXpansion

[FXpansion's](#) BFD2 acoustic drum production workstation wasn't technically new at NAMM. It began shipping about a month prior to the show and was announced at AES back in October. It's the first I'd seen it, though, so I'm guessing it may be new to many of our readers, as well. BFD2 includes 55 GB of rare, vintage, boutique, and classic multi-miked drum kits, all recorded at AIR Studios in London. Perhaps the most noticeable change on quick glance is the dramatic overhaul of the BFD2 user interface compared to the [original BFD](#). Of course, there are new sounds, and drum kits can now be configured with up to 32 pieces. Enhancements to the mixer include sidechaining, subgrouping, and built-in, analog-modeled effects. Improved kit and preset management, along with kit and mix presets created by experienced engineers, make it quicker to get going if you'd rather concentrate on your music than configuring kits and mixing multiple mic perspectives. There is a library of over 5,000 grooves, covering a wide range of styles, and grooves can now be auditioned in sync with your host sequencer. The Groove Librarian has been enhanced with a grid-style editor. Other improvements include a reworked engine for better performance and quicker startup speed, user import of stereo multi-velocity layer samples, multiple audio outputs and built-in multi-channel audio export, and much more. List price is \$399, with a \$199 upgrade price for BFD 1.5 users.

Garritan

[Garritan Libraries'](#) long-awaited Authorized Steinway Virtual Model D Piano has finally arrived, and is now in the manufacturing cycle. Gary Garritan himself gave me a quick look at the product packaging, which is in a hardbound binder that looks as classy as the Steinway name suggests. Of course, the big news, and why this sampled piano has been so eagerly awaited, is that this is the only virtual grand piano to earn Steinway's approval, endorsement, and name. The product captures a Model D Concert grand handpicked by Steinway & Sons and recorded from several perspectives in a concert hall noted for its sound. The bullet list of features includes various listener perspectives, sustain and sympathetic resonance, a variety of temperaments, proportional pedaling, and multi-stage releases. The real question on my mind, though, was, "how does it play and sound?" I knew I wouldn't have anywhere near enough time to really get into the instrument at NAMM, but I did have the opportunity to sit down at a Yamaha S90 ES keyboard and play the Virtual Model D for a few minutes. Trying a variety of styles, including some classically influenced material, a bit of funk, and even some rock and roll, I have to say it felt good -- like a piano should -- and responded to my playing just as I would expect. It's hard to say much beyond that given both the short amount of time I had to play it, and that I was using a controller that has a significantly more piano-like feel than my own 88-key controller (a Roland Rhodes MK-80). Thus, further thoughts will have to wait for a full product review (most likely coming in late February or March). The product will have Professional (\$399), Standard (\$199), and Basic (\$99) versions, with the main differences between them being the number of listener perspectives that are included. The Basic version is a single perspective, light version, which will also be available for download.

Garritan was also talking up their new ARIA Sample Engine, which makes its first product appearance as the audio engine in the Virtual Model D Piano. ARIA is a 64-bit sampler and synthesis engine developed in conjunction with audio and DSP software developer, Plogue Art et Technologie Inc. Gary Garritan explained that the motivation for developing their own sampling engine came from wanting to include instrument features that were impossible or impractical to implement with the KONTAKT engine they'd been using in earlier Garritan products. One example mentioned was the proportional pedaling capability in the new piano. Highlights of ARIA include a lightweight engine geared toward stability and efficiency, an open format (ARIA's default instrument file format is SFZ, with Sound Font support also available, and the prospect of adding additional format support in the future), a modular architecture, strong customizability, several types of custom processing for advanced capabilities (e.g. convolution for instrument body resonances and acoustic spaces), multi-platform support, and what Garritan calls "Graceful Copy Protection" for anyone who has ever been frustrated by dongles or challenge/response mechanisms.

It turns out that Garritan also announced a new Virtual Pipe Organs collection also based on the ARIA Sample Engine, at NAMM. Somehow, though, I missed seeing it, or even hearing about it, at the show. The general details are that the product will provide samples from seven different pipe organs from various periods. The product's features include a variety of stops for each organ with the ability to combine and mix stops, swellbox, crescendo and tremolo effects; adjustable mechanical noises; adjustable velocity curves; adjustable polyphony; a variety of historical tunings/temperaments; and more. The package is expected to list for \$199 with Spring 2008 availability.

Gvox

SONAR users looking for a dedicated notation program may be interested to know that Encore, from [Gvox](#), is back with what G-Vox is billing as Encore's biggest upgrade in 10 years, Encore 5. Past Encore users, of which I am one, may cynically view this as the only meaningful Encore upgrade in 10 years, though there was actually a minor update quite a number of years back that brought, for example, Windows XP compatibility to the Encore 4.x product.

I spoke in some depth with Gvox CEO, Richard Hotchkiss about the past, present, and future of Encore and Gvox. While Encore 5 brings a number of enhancements over Encore 4.5, such as compatibility with orchestral sample libraries, the ability to import and export data using Music XML, handwritten style fonts, and other new features, there is a hidden improvement that is perhaps the most important one of all. The internals of the code have been extensively rewritten and modularized to make it much easier to move forward with new features without breaking old ones, thus providing not only a more stable product now, but also a much greater potential for future enhancements.

Why should anyone care after so many years? Ask a past Encore user who's grudgingly switched to another program, and you'll likely get a nostalgic earful. The gist is of that is likely to be along the lines that there is a tradeoff between power, in terms of program and notational features, and efficiency, in terms of being able to compose and notate parts quickly. Somehow Encore simply seemed to get that tradeoff right, and became a favorite of film and television composers for that reason.

Encore 5 is available now for the Mac. It will be available within 60 days for Windows (all versions from Windows 98 to Windows Vista). List price is \$399.99, and upgrades, including competitive upgrades, are available at \$129.99.

IK Multimedia

[IK Multimedia](#) announced that their StompIO stage-oriented foot controller and audio interface for AmpliTube is now shipping. StompIO provides full control over "Powered by AmpliTube" plug-ins. Five of these are included in the StompIO package, including AmpliTube 2, AmpliTube Jimi Hendrix, Ampeg SVX, AmpliTube Metal (only for previously registered AmpliTube 2 users), and AmpliTube 2 Live. StompIO has the feeling of a traditional hardware floor processor, with no need to look at the computer screen or use a mouse since all the information and control capabilities needed are provided on the StompIO hardware itself. Also shipping with StompIO is AmpliTube X-Gear, a software shell-host that allows mixing and matching models from all Powered by AmpliTube products in a single interface. StompIO lists for \$1,049.

IK's NAMM booth was also highlighting their recently announced ARC (Advanced Room Correction) System. ARC is intended to improve the accuracy of any studio monitoring system, including the effects of the room, by taking the effects of the monitors and room into account then correcting for them to provide a flat response. ARC includes a measurement microphone, measurement software, and a correction plug-in. The idea is to take multiple measurements of reference material being played in your room, have the ARC measurement software analyze the results, then use the correction plug-in to flatten out the response characteristics while monitoring your mixes so you are hearing them more accurately. The correction plug-in is turned off just prior to mixing down. The ARC System lists for \$699.

Native Instruments

[Native Instruments](#) announced KORE Player, a free software instrument intended for playing NI's new line of KORE SOUNDPACK libraries. The KORE PLAYER is based on the same six integrated sound engines underlying NI's KORE 2, combining the sonic capabilities of [Absynth](#), FM8, Guitar Rig, Kontakt, Massive, and Reaktor under one roof. The KORE Player includes KORE-style preset browsing, with sound categorization based on musical attributes. More than just a preset sound player, KORE Player allows tweaking and automating the sound through pre-assigned parameter knobs, be it in real time via mapping to a hardware MIDI controller or under sequencer control. KORE PLAYER also features the "sound variations" technology introduced with KORE 2, with seamless morphing between up to eight different versions of a sound. The KORE Player will be available for free download in March.

NI also announced four new KORE SOUNDPACKS. These include MASSIVE Expansion Vol. 1, Best of ABSYNTH, Pop Drums, and KONTAKT Sax & Brass. Availability is expected for March 2008 with a list price of \$79 for Pop Drums and \$59 each for the other three.

PSP Audioware

[PSP Audioware](#) was showing a full range of their plug-ins, including the recently released PSP Xenon mastering limiter. They also pre-announced a new plug-in, PSP N20 (pronounced "en two oh") -- "N" as in "Nitro", PSP's multimode filter plug-in. Unfortunately hardware problems with PSP's PC display prevented them from demonstrating PSP N20 the day I attended the show (like most PSP plug-ins, N20 is being developed first under Windows, then will be ported to the Mac). However, they did clue me in on a few highlights, including an engine that has been rewritten for speed, modulators, a step sequencer, and a redesigned graphical user interface. Availability and pricing are still to be determined, but the product will be entering beta test shortly.



Spectrasonics



[Spectrasonics](#) announced and demonstrated Omnisphere, their new flagship virtual instrument featuring a brand new synthesis engine and a huge library of "psychoacoustic" sounds. Judging from the audience size and interest level at Spectrasonics founder Eric Persing's nearly non-stop demonstrations of Omnisphere, Omnisphere may also qualify as one of the most eagerly anticipated virtual instrument announcements of the show.

The Omnisphere name may suggest that it is an updated version of Spectrasonics' well-regarded [Atmosphere Dream Synth Module](#). In fact, Omnisphere will include enhanced versions of the entire Atmosphere sound library, and an upgrade path will be provided for Atmosphere users. However, in the same way [Spectrasonics Stylus RMX](#) was far more than an updated version of their Stylus Groove Module, Omnisphere is much more than an Atmosphere 2.0.

To start, Omnisphere is the first instrument to use Spectrasonics' new STEAM Engine technology, the core technology that will be used as the basis of all future Spectrasonics performance instruments just as Spectrasonics' S.A.G.E. technology is used for groove-based instruments like Stylus RMX. Virtual instruments based on the STEAM Engine offer development possibilities such as a variety of hybrid synthesis and control capabilities

including hi-resolution streaming sample playback, integrated effects, variable waveshape synthesis, granular synthesis, FM synthesis, polyphonic ring modulation, timbre shifting, and Spectrasonics new Flex-Mod modulation routing system, all of which are employed by Omnisphere.

Additionally, Omnisphere's core sound library is 10-times the size of Atmosphere's library. It will feature many new sounds created with several brand new types of sampling, including unique "psychoacoustic" sounds and sound sources created with a new Composite Morphing Technique (CMT) that morphs the harmonic characteristics of one instrument onto another. A section of the Omnisphere core library will also be devoted to representing the best of Spectrasonics' award-winning sample libraries.

Stylus RMX users will be interested to know that Omnisphere's arpeggiators will include Groove Lock integration with RMX, allowing Omnisphere's arpeggiator patterns to groove with the feel of RMX drum loops. Other features of Omnisphere include Live Mode for transitionless patch switching, Stack mode for performance mapping, and integrated, modulatable FX Racks.

Omnisphere is due to be released on September 15th, with a list price of \$499. Upgrade price for Atmosphere users will be announced at a later time. In the interim, Spectrasonics will periodically be releasing new video demonstrations to provide deeper insights into Omnisphere's capabilities. At the time of this writing, the first of these video demos was already available, with the second due shortly.

SSL

[SSL](#) introduced the Duende Mini, a more affordable (\$799 list price) version of their Duende DSP processor housed in a compact half-rack desktop format. The Duende Mini provides a DSP engine based on SSL's C Series digital mixing console and comes standard with 16 channels (upgradeable to 32 channels) of DSP processing. Connectivity is via FireWire, with power from an external power supply unit or the FireWire bus. The Duende EQ & Dynamics Channel plug-in is included.

Submersible Music

[Submersible Music](#) announced KitCore (\$49 list) and KitCore Deluxe (\$99 list) drum module and MIDI loop libraries. Both include multiple drum kits from well-known drummers with tones recorded "in the style" of the music they are meant to play. Both include a library of MIDI loops. The kits and loops are based on Submersible's [DrumCore](#) product line. KitCore includes a basic selection of kits and over 400 MIDI drum files, with the idea that users can add kit- and style-based KitPack expansion packs, starting at \$10 apiece, to augment the basics as needed. KitCore Deluxe includes all the MIDI drum kits found in DrumCore Deluxe -- that's over 100 kits -- and over 3,000 MIDI files. The KitCore products allow mixing and matching kit components via an interface with 48 pads. The idea is to combine the quality sounds and playing of DrumCore with the flexibility of a MIDI-based solution.

Synthogy

[Synthogy](#) introduced Ivory Upright Pianos, a collection of four high-quality sampled upright pianos. These include a modern Yamaha U5 upright, a 1914 vintage A.M. Hume upright, a 1915 Packard "honky-tonk barroom" upright, and an early 1900's "tack piano". The collection features over 50 GB of samples with up to 10 velocity layers. The Ivory piano engine is included, and users who already have other Synthogy Ivory pianos will be happy to know that the Ivory Upright Pianos integrate into the common interface for easy switching between pianos. The product lists for \$299, with availability slated for March 2008.

Toontrack

The 2008 NAMM Show was Toontrack's first show with their own booth, and they were highlighting Superior Drummer 2.0 (S2.0 for short). S2.0 is dubbed "The New York Studio Legacy Series" due to its content's being

recorded in several well-respected New York City studios, including the legendary Hit Factory, which was literally being torn down while the S2.0 sessions were being recorded. S2.0 features a complete overhaul of the original [dfh Superior](#) engine, optimizations for use with electronic drum controllers, more effective use of sample layers, and significantly improved loading times. It will include custom MIDI loops accessed through Toontrack's new customized MIDI engine and arranger, EZplayer Pro, which provides a groove library management facility similar to Toontrack's [EZ drummer](#). Speaking of EZ drummer, S2.0 will provide the ability to read and combine all dfh Superior and EZ drummer sound libraries via its kit construction windows. S2.0 also features a new internal mixer with bussing capabilities and built-in effects provided by [Sonalksis](#). List price is \$349, with a \$129 upgrade price from dfh Superior or dfh Superior Custom & Vintage and a \$249 crossgrade price from dfh EZ drummer. Availability is planned for Spring 2008.

Toontrack also announced a new direction in the form of the Toontrack Software Tools (TST) line. The TST line will include Toontrack products that are related to the use of the EZ and Superior sampler lines, but which are not samplers. Products in this line already include EZplayer Free, Toontrack's free MIDI groove librarian and drum note mapper, and Toontrack Solo, their host software. In Spring 2008, two new TST products will be released. These include Drumtracker, a new audio-to-MIDI converter for replacing drum sounds, and EZplayer Pro, the upgraded version of EZplayer Free. EZplayer Pro will be available both as a standalone product and as the MIDI engine for S2.0. The general idea of the TST line is that users often want to mix and match their own components. The modular architecture of the TST components is geared toward facilitating that and toward making it easier to provide new functionality in the future.

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