

Ravenscroft Model 220 Debuting @ 2012 NAMM Show

The next star to appear at the 2012 NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) show may not be a celebrated musician who is tickling the ivories - it may be the piano itself.

The Anaheim venue will enjoy in one of its exhibits the use of a \$235,000 hand crafted piano which was constructed in Scottsdale, Arizona by one of the world's few custom piano makers. The Ravenscroft Piano is one of a handful made to date by master builder Michael Spreeman of Spreeman Piano Innovations, LLC.

The Model 220 7'3" concert piano required nearly 1,000 hours of labor to create. "Most high-end grand pianos are constructed in less than 300 hours in a factory environment," says Spreeman. The piano's various woods and parts are imported from around the world and crafted by hand in Spreeman's Scottsdale studio. Many of the metal parts are titanium and polished stainless steel rather than less expensive metals.

Spreeman decided to create his own line of instruments after spending years preparing performance instruments for artists and rebuilding high-end pianos. The idea came when jazz musician and composer Bob Ravenscroft commissioned Spreeman to redesign and rebuild a grand piano 22 years ago to specifically cater to Bob's free jazz style. Spreeman started his new company in 2004, naming the pianos in honor of Ravenscroft based on that project. Currently there are two models being produced: a 9' Model 275 and a 7'3" Model 220.

Bob Ravenscroft describes the new pianos as the finest he's ever performed on. "People who hear the Ravenscroft will hear the kind of sounds other pianos don't produce," he says. "They may not know the technical names for those sounds, but they will feel it in their soul."

"Although our sound is very clean and pure, it's also multidimensional, a hybrid, if you will," Spreeman says. "There is a vast array of complex harmonics that can be heard, sensed, and felt. My goal is to facilitate an emotional connection between the piano, the pianist, and the music to a level that they merge and become one. It's from this space that an artist can express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions through the instrument. We, the audience, experience the piano from an audio perspective, but the artist has to make a mechanical interface through the keys and action of the piano. We strive to make this interface as invisible as humanly possible.

"One example of this is our actions. They are individually CAD optimized to each piano before they are ever assembled," Spreeman adds. "Then each key is weighed off to 1/100th of a gram in the computer which results in a real world tolerance of 1/10 of gram. Most factories work with a 3 gram tolerance, therefore our approach has an enormous impact on the evenness of the touch from note to note."

For Spreeman, quality is more important than quantity when running his business. "Most companies today are striving to see how they can build more units, how they can build them for less money, and how they can build them faster," he says. "This type of business model has led to a rapid decline of quality in American industry. Tell me, when was the last time you heard someone from another country say that they wanted to buy an American product because it is the highest quality available? It's sad. My goal is to present the very finest instruments that we possibly can to the world, regardless of how many we can make in a year or how we could have saved thousands by purchasing lesser quality materials."



A custom Ravenscroft Model 275 is the official piano of Tempe Center for the Arts in Arizona.



Michael Spreman, RPT is the creator of the custom Ravenscroft Pianos.

RAVENSCROFT
PIANOS

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