

A look at the best of Summer NAMM

Posted by Daniel East on Jul 19, 2006 at 4:05pm

The 2006 Summer NAMM show sputtered along as one of the lightest shows in terms of the attendance of actual buyers, but the show was not without some highlights.

In what would have to be called more of a networking event between the vendors in attendance versus a major purchasing show for the manufacturers and dealers of the region, Austin, Texas was home to this year's Summer NAMM (according to their website, "The International Music Products Association's name, NAMM, comes from the acronym "National Association of Music Merchants," but the long form of the name is no longer used.") conference.

It was actually a great opportunity for time to actually sit with several manufacturers without the overwhelming noise and pressure usually found at these events. I was also very impressed by some outstanding new and/or independent vendors in attendance who really should get some attention. I do hope to follow up with a more in-depth review of the appropriate products in upcoming reports (Hello, Sony? Hi.).

With this smaller show, there were some Mac-specific, "designed with a Mac" and just general products that were truly unique and of excellent quality. Here is the MacsimumNews Top 10 (** MacsimumAwards for NAMM???) from Summer NAMM 2006:

10: [Ableton Live 6 from M-Audio](#)

Composition and Performance Software for Mac/PC

9: [Samson C03U USB microphone](#)

A wider response pattern than its sibling C01U, Samson has a nice new USB mic offering for the budget-conscious.

- Large-diaphragm condenser with USB digital output
- Compatible with any computer based Digital Audio Workstation
- Switch able supercardioid, omni and figure-8 pickup patterns
- Extremely detailed sound reproduction ideal for recording vocals, acoustic instruments. and just about any other sound source


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- High-quality A/D converter with 16-bit/48kHz sampling rate
- Software drivers for Mac and PC provide additional features like programmable gain, LED input metering, low-cut filter, and phase

8: [Sennheiser MX90 VC earphones](#)

This earphone offers an interesting dual-level design that allows the earphone to be slightly braced against the exterior of the ear so that the product can be rotated for comfort.

- Specially tuned damping system ensures detailed sound reproduction
- High-quality materials accentuate the unique design
- Innovative holding design (Twist-to-fit system) ensures best-possible fit
- Ear adapter set and rubber buds for individually matching different ears
- Volume control and carrying case included

7: [RKS Guitars](#)

Inventive construction that employs interchangeable resonator shells with a core instrument that provides an interesting look and feel. Definitely futuristic, clearly creative and nicely constructed instruments.



6: [Stage Ninja cabling and production solutions](#)

Lighting, cabling, storage and power products that are well designed with an excellent knowledge of their applications.

Stage Ninja Instrument Cable

- High-tension retracting/locking device instantly winds cord back into casing.
- Ultra-durable cable housing
- Protective cord sleeves
- Super-grip textured handle
- Super high-quality instrument cable
- Available in 20', 35', and 50' lengths

5: [Peaceland Guitar Rings](#)

Glass, brass and stainless slide guitar and bass rings that allow the performer to drop in and out of slide playing without the need to pick up or drop the actual slide. Incredibly innovative and clever from inventor, James Musser.

4: [ToadWorks pedal effects](#)

With witty names like "Mr. Ed," "Meat," "Mr. Squishy" and "Li'l Leo," these great sounding products have a funky look, solid feel and a nice crew of people behind them.

3: [Knucklehead Strings](#)

From what has to be the best comic relief of the show, combined with wonderfully kind and knowledgeable staff (special thanks to Sheridan and Dallan Smith for their

[music samplers from iTunes](#)

[Power Support introduces iPod nano Splash Case](#)

[SpongeBob SquarePants Diner Dash comes to the Mac](#)

[AJA showcasing KONA 3 v2 card at SIGGRAPH 2006](#)

[OWC offers 'add your own' SATA kit](#)

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great demos and clever designs), Knucklehead products offer something interesting in the string department—hexagon core designs and what sounded to my ears like a more pronounced attack without the bite of some other conventional designs. It was their trailer park-loving marketing that got me to grin, but it was the sound that made me smile.

2: Hornets Drum Sticks

Incredibly well thought out designs with an appreciation for both form and function, Hornets sticks provide a more precise attack, focused targeting and an innovative flare in the tapering of the stick that relieves tension in the tendons of the player's hands. The sticks sport an excellent wood-ball tip for precision at any angle and rich colors on the grips that do not impede the feel in any way unlike some other "dipped" sticks. Add to that their bee-like O-ring washers in the base and drummers will rejoice when they hear the definition and articulation in their own playing from these.



And the winner is....

1: Sony PCM-D1 Portable Digital Recorder

Reporters, bands, sound samplers, concert/live performance and much more are all more than appropriate applications for this stunningly well designed product. A modern retro-techno blend of aesthetics make this excellent sounding audio recording look great as well. The built-in condenser microphones, solid design and cross-platform compatibility and relative ease-of-use make this the standout product at the NAMM show for Summer 2006.

- ° 96K-24 bit recording capability
- ° 4GB internal flash memory
- ° Removable Memory Stick Pro high-speed storage
- ° USB 2.0 port for Macintosh and Windows/PC

With a huge range of new products anticipated for the upcoming Audio Engineers Society (AES) conference in October, Winter NAMM in January and, of course, Macworld Expo in January, the pro-audio and musical instrument markets anticipate a very productive season. Sometimes, and as I've reported in the past, a quieter show can allow for better demos, in depth interviews and a better understanding of the contents of each booth. I was not disappointed and am grateful to all of the vendors, both listed and unlisted here, who took the time to talk with me.



geoff Says:

Umm, The Sony PCM-D1 has been out for sometime. It is not a 2006 Summer NAMM exclusive.

Posted on July 19, 2006

geoff Says:

Ableton Live 6 is developed by Ableton, not M-Audio. M-Audio has an arrangement to market Ableton products, but it is not exclusive.

Posted on July 19, 2006

Molly Says:

I think it is just products at the show, not necessarily new to the show. It doesn't say "new products" anywhere that I can see, geoff. Don't matter to me how you call these products - I want them both!

Posted on July 19, 2006

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Posted on July 25, 2006

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