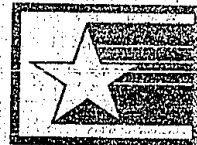


# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100

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## Tickle those ivories

### New synthesizer reproduces concert-hall sound



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

John Shykin, marketing director for Kurzweil Music Systems (left), explains memory capabilities of the Kurzweil 250 synthesizer to onlookers, during a demonstration at Arnold Williams Music in Canton. The revolutionary synthesizer is designed for professional musicians.

By Victoria Diaz  
special writer

**T**HE SOUND of a piano fills the room. Then, a string section of a large orchestra can be heard and, finally, a chorus of human voices.

This is not a concert hall, however, and there is no piano, orchestra or chorus in sight. Instead, in this meeting room at Arnold Williams Music in Canton, one recent day, a musician has been able to bring forth these authentic sounds by "playing" a small, digital synthesizer called the Kurzweil 250.

The fact that the Kurzweil 250 does the piano is wonderful, because it makes a portable instrument out of something like a grand piano," said Kurzweil Music Systems Marketing Director John Shykin, seated at the keyboard. "But the important thing is, you can get just about any sound imaginable."

"The sounds start out as actual recordings of the real instrument," he said. "We go into the studio and record all the notes on a piano, for

instance. Then, we put it through a computer process that digitizes them, turns them into numbers — and that's stored in chips in back of the panel on the synthesizer. The prototype we have here only has about five or six different sounds on it, but it's capable of doing hundreds."

**THE SYNTHESIZER**, which weighs about 100 pounds and retails for \$10,718, is programmable and can also be used to generate new sounds electronically, print out musical notation and edit arrangements, Shykin said. It's 88-note keyboard is fully polyphonic, enabling a musician to play up to 12 notes at one time.

Marketed through 25 dealers in the U.S., Arnold Williams is the only dealer in Michigan offering the Kurzweil 250.

"It's a limited-distribution product because its price is over \$10,000," Shykin said. "It's very much aimed at the professional musician."

Even so, Shykin said, Kurzweil's projected run of just over 1,000 instruments for 1984, their first year of

manufacture, is already sold out to dealers.

The synthesizer, first introduced at last summer's National Association of Music Merchandise show in Chicago, was hailed by musicians and computer authorities as "unprecedented" and "revolutionary." Noted synthesizer expert Robert Moog, commenting at the time, said he believed the 250 has "complete realism" and "complete accuracy of control."

**RAYMOND KURZWEL**, president of Kurzweil Music Systems Inc. (based in Waltham, Mass.) and inventor of the 250, has said that the synthesizer is expected "to be a boon for the performing musician needing both versatility and a superior, easily transportable piano, and an essential tool for the composer or arranger."

Kurzweil, 36, also invented the Kurzweil Reading Machine. Developed in the mid-'70s, the machine uses artificial intelligence to scan and recognize any printed text for the blind. According to Shykin, Kurzweil was encouraged by blind musician Stevie Wonder, who had bought one of

the reading machines, to develop the musical applications of the system. The Kurzweil 250 is the result of that development, he said.

"This is definitely going to have an impact on the music world," said John Williams, vice president of Williams Music. "It's something musicians have been wanting for years and something they've often been promised. But they've always been disappointed because there's really been nothing close to the sound of an acoustic piano until now."

At a recent clinic demonstration for local musicians at Williams Music, the general consensus of opinion among those hearing the 250 for the first time was "Wow!" Williams said.

**THE 250** really does sound like an acoustic piano," he added. Williams Music has bought 15 of the musical synthesizers and has received orders for five of those.

Williams expects to have the Kurzweil 250 on display at the store in about four weeks. Average delivery time is approximately six months after an order is placed.

## Alvin and Chipmunks star in musical adventure

The Chipmunks star for the first time on stage in a new musical adventure "Alvin and the Chipmunks and the Magic Camera," opening Friday, May 4, for 16 performances through Sunday, May 13, at Cobo Theatre in downtown Detroit.

Tickets at \$8 and \$7 are available at the Joe Louis Arena Box Office and all Ticket World outlets in advance. Tickets will be available at Cobo Box Off-

ice at showtime only. For further information, call 567-6000.

Co-starring with the TV and recording stars — Alvin, Simon and Theodore — are David Seville and the Magic Camera, which takes the Chipmunks through wild adventures using more than 20 production numbers.

The two-hour family show features the Chip-

munks doing such hit songs as "Staying Alive," "Beat It," "Grease" and "9 to 5." In the musical extravaganza, the Chipmunks defeat the Evil Shutterbug, who attempts to steal the Magic Camera and spoil the Chipmunks' travels.

## theater

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