Fabulous FURNITURE 2002

PIANOS

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GRANDS AND QUALITY

Accomplished players, on the other hand, ought to be leaning toward making a long-term purchase – buying the best quality piano they can afford, said Tkac.

Grand pianos immediately come to mind when looking for quality in terms of materials, construction and tone.

"And, in general, the rule that grands are better in terms of quality is true," said Tkac.

However, quality is a relative term when looking at price.

For example, a Schimmel upright priced $12,700 would cost about $40,000 in a grand piano with equal tone quality, Tkac said. In general, grand pianos are about three-and-a-half times more expensive than verticals of the same quality, he said.

It's true grand pianos, which range in size from 5 feet for a baby grand to more than 9 feet for a concert grand, have unparalleled aesthetic appeal.

"That can be a pull," said Tkac.

And many shoppers are looking to buy a home accent, as well as an instrument.

"Aesthetically, it goes in their house," said Brown at Piano Nation. "These big houses that are going up all over the place, many have music rooms that need a piano."

And if you can't play a note and lack the desire to learn, you're not alone. One of the biggest sellers in the piano industry is the player piano, which unlike its counterpart from yesteryear operates unassisted on computer technology.

"It's a huge trend," said Brown. "Everybody wants one, but because of budget, not everybody gets one."

Vertical player pianos start at $8,000. Player grands cost $12,000 and up.

The good news: Homeowners who aren't ready to make that kind of investment can buy a piano and add the player technology at a later date.

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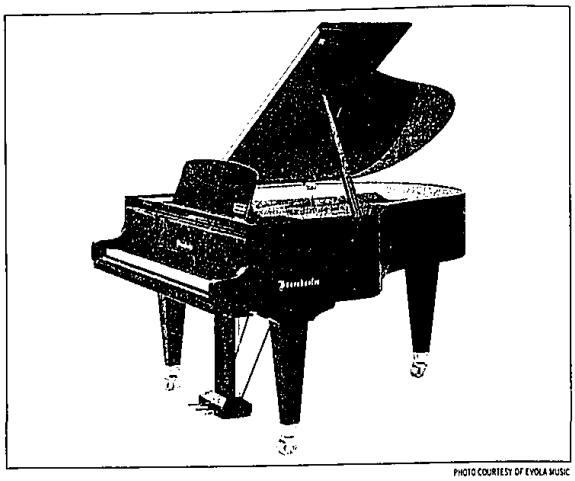

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The Bosendorfer 170 is priced $79,180 at Evola Music, which has stores in Bloomfield Hills, Canton and Utica.

PIANO SHOPPING RESOURCES

Piano manufacturer Web sites enable consumers to obtain specific product information, pre-shop and do comparison shopping at home. Some sites also contain general information about buying a piano. Here's a list of the major manufacturers' Web sites:

- Baldwin, www.baldwinpiano.com
- Bosendorfer, www.boesendorfer.com
- Estonia, www.estoniapiano.com
- Kawai, www.kawaius.com
- Mason & Hamlin, www.masonhamlin.com
- Schimmel, www.schimmel-piano.de/
- Steinway & Sons, www.steinway.com
- Yamaha, www.yamaha.co.jp/english/product/piano/home.html
- Weber, www.weberpiano.com

The Piano Technicians Guild is another excellent resource for consumers. Its Web site contains a list of piano manufacturers (with direct links to corresponding Web sites). There's also a link to a list of written resources for piano buyers.

If you're buying a used piano or would like an independent source for help in buying a new piano, you can hire a registered piano technician through the guild.

- The Web site is at www.ptg.org with a link to the Detroit-Windsor Chapter.
- The local chapter can be contacted directly by calling (248) 524-4713.
- For more information about Larry Fine's *The Piano Book* and consumer services, visit www.pianobook.com.

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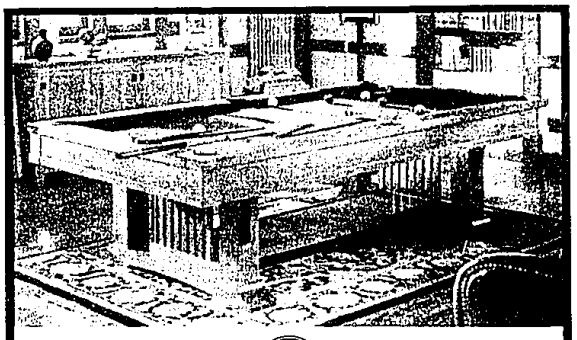
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