

Pianos find way in and out of Reeder's store

By **NANCY BLOCK**
Columnist

When you walk into James Reeder Piano Sales you will see a selection of pianos, not only upright but grand pianos as well. "We specialize in Steinways," says owner James Reeder, "and handle Kawai from Japan and Yung Chang.

There is also a handsome white 5-foot 10-inch Schimmell grand piano with a Christmas special price tag of \$9,875. "It's reduced several thousand dollars," says Jim.

The showroom also boasts several uprights, keyboards, two digital piano models, and an organ. The back portion of the showroom houses used pianos. All expertly reconditioned or restored.

And speaking of restoration, this makes up a major portion of Reeder's business. The workshop is in a separate building behind the store located on South Clinton Street in Grand Ledge.

Presently there are several old grand pianos in various stages of restoration. "When we start the restoration," says Jim, "we remove everything, all that remains is the case and the plate."

The exterior is refinished. "Not just refinished," says Jim, "but really redone, all the old finish is removed and broken pieces repaired or replaced." This part is very labor intensive according to Jim and, depending on the size and intricacy of the model, it takes four to six months to complete the restoration.

A new spruce sound board is fitted in to replace the old. "Sound boards are always made of spruce, because its close cell structure is more resonant and it is very strong." Most of the other interior structural piano parts are made from maple.

"These older pre-World War I pianos," says Jim, "are well worth restoring." The United States was the world's piano developer and manufacturer at the turn of the century. His shop has just finished restoring a handsome 103-year, 9-foot concert Steinway grand piano soon to be sent to Arizona. It is valued in excess of \$35,000.

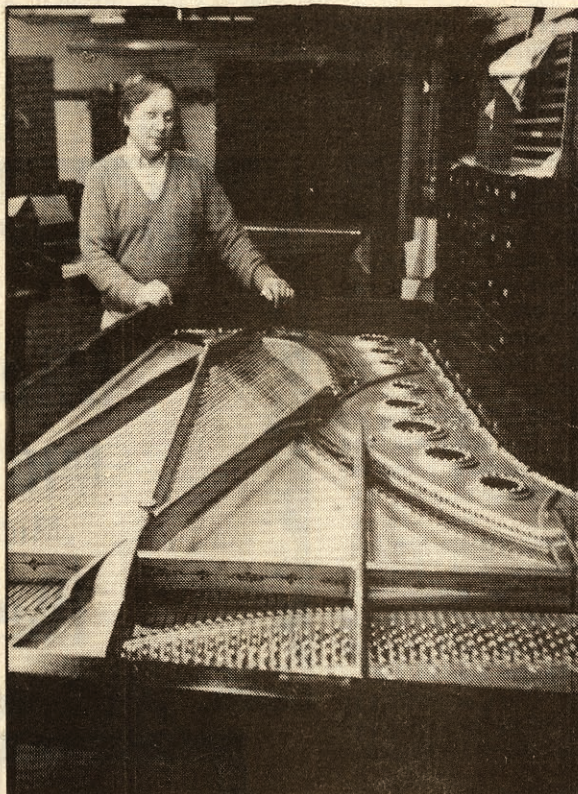
"No two pianos are alike," says Jim, "each has its own particular per-

sonality and sound." And although they may be the same size, from the same manufacturer, and made in the same wood, each piano still has its own characteristics.

Piano tuning is another of James Reeder's specialties, and he tunes many concert pianos in the area and works in the various music schools such as Interlocken and Blue Lake. "I've tuned pianos in almost every private college in the state, he says, "and most of the public ones, too!"

Reeder majored in music in college and worked in a piano store in Washington, D.C. He returned to his home town of Grand Ledge in 1966 and started his business first in his home and then in the former church building site where it is now located.

He is an accomplished pianist and when you talk to him about his business his eyes light up when he



THAT'S A BIG PIANO — Jim Reeder looks over a Weber piano being rebuilt for sale. The 1890's antique measures eight feet, 10 inches from front to back. Photo by Bonnie Powell



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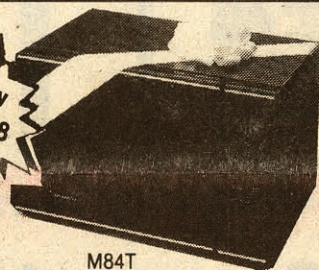
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(Continued from page 7)

speaks of the restorations his business has accomplished. "We do 30 to 40 per year," he says.

"They are marvelous, and a good investment. Plus you have actually purchased a piece of history." Good pianos, according to Jim, are still made the way they were a hundred years ago, almost entirely by hand, "that's why a new Steinway grand sells for over \$20,000 depending on size." The Japanese and Korean imports retail for around \$18,000.

"Many people are purchasing the digital pianos," he says. "They retail for around \$2,500 and have base and rythym sounds that may be used." They're nice, according to Jim, but not the same as an old-fashioned, real piano.

James Reeder Piano Sales, formerly known as Michigan Piano is open

Monday and Tuesday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Fridays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m.; closed Saturdays.

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