



# KAWAI



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In the small world we live in, we can find another amazing story of a piano builder. Koichi Kawai was neighbor to the reed-organ builder and watchmaker, Torakusu Yamaha. Yamaha recognized Kawai's intelligence and enthusiasm and took him in as an apprentice in the late 1800s. They, along with a team of other skilled craftsman, designed and introduced the first Japanese built piano in 1902. Yamaha passed away in 1916 and the company took on new management. This did not sit right with Kawai and he decided to leave the company Yamaha had started and went off with a group of other craftsman to found the Kawai Musical Instrument Research Laboratory in Hamamatsu, Japan in 1927.

In 1928, KMIRL had produced its first grand piano. Like Yamaha, it was Kawai's dream to build the world's finest piano. After its first success and intention to move forward as a piano manufacturer, the company was renamed to Kawai Musical Instruments Manufacturing Company. By 1935, KMIMC was producing 75 upright and 10 grand pianos per month. In 1953, Koichi Kawai became the first musical instrument builder to receive the prestigious *Blue Ribbon Medal* from the Emperor of Japan.



Koichi Kawai passed away in 1955 leaving his company in the capable hands of his son Shigeru Kawai. Within a few months, S. Kawai had decided that to promote and increase piano sales, the public must be educated in music, and so he formed a network of Kawai music schools. Needing qualified teachers to teach at the schools, Kawai next built the Kawai Academy of Music whose purpose it was to mold knowledgeable teachers to promote the highest quality of music education at the Kawai music schools.

In the 1960's, Kawai built its first electric organ. Soon after, it opened another manufacturing plant in Maisaka. To promote the highest quality of piano maintenance, Kawai founded the Kawai Piano Technical Center in 1961, with the given mission to produce the best piano technicians available. In 1963 Kawai America was born.

Throughout the 1960s-1980s, Kawai experimented with new materials such as ABS composites and aluminum in their piano actions. By 1978, Kawai had built its 1,000,000<sup>th</sup> piano, having celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary the year before.

In 1985, Shigeru Kawai was awarded the *Blue Ribbon Medal* for his outstanding pianos. He later passed the presidency of the company on to his son, Hirotaka Kawai in 1989, three years after starting Kawai digital piano production. American piano production of Kawai began in 1995 after opening the first factory on US soil in Lincolnton, NC. Five years later, the Shigeru Kawai piano line started production with the intent to push the standard and improve further on the quality of the instruments produced by Kawai.

To this day, Kawai Musical Instruments continues to make great strides in piano innovation and design and to win awards in excellence for its product.

\*all photos from [kawaius.com](http://kawaius.com)

### Some Kawai artists:

Alfa  
David Arnay  
Barry Baker  
Michael Beardon  
Matt Falker  
Yuko Maruyama  
Bobby Lyle  
Rae Ann Perez  
David Nevue  
Nichole Nordeman