

1001 Switch Nights: Tales from the Collection

-ThereminGoat, 07/11/2021

Hey all, it's really good to be back. While those of you who normally tune in every other week for my long-winded review articles won't have noticed much of a change, I can attest that a lot has personally changed over the course of the last two weeks since the last article was posted. At the end of July, roughly a week or so ago, I packed up everything I owned and could fit into the Goatmobile and moved from Ohio to Minnesota on account of me starting graduate school at the University of Minnesota in the fall. Now given that the Goatmobile is not a large SUV, I've spent many an hour over the past few weeks in IKEA, Target, and nearly every grocery store in Minneapolis putting together some semblance of a living quarters in the meantime. However, as of the time of publishing this, I'm nearly entirely there in terms of setup and will be perfectly back on track to posting these articles every other week.

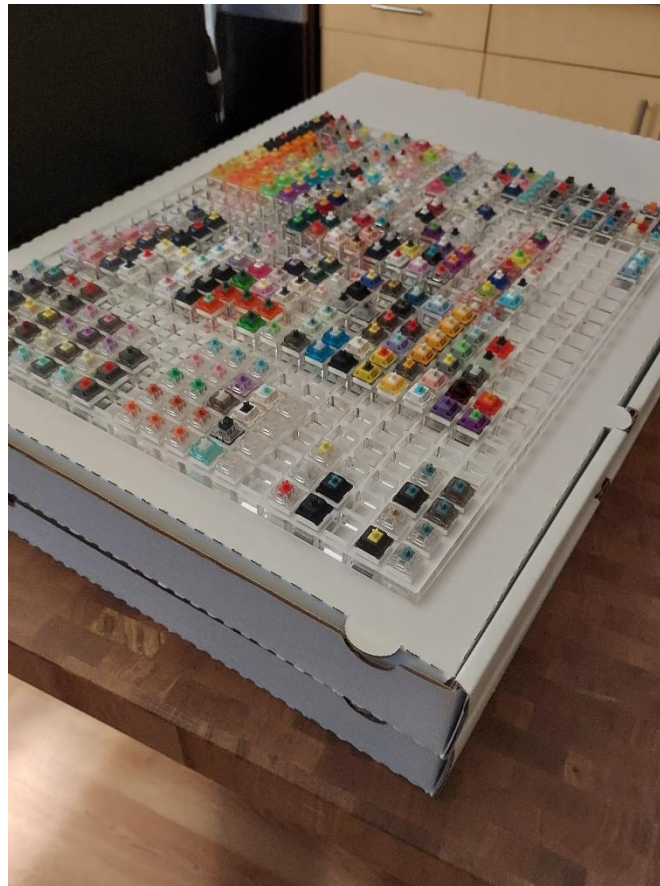


Figure 1: In case you were wondering what the secret is to moving testers like these long distances: sheet pizza boxes.

Moving on to a more professional set of updates, though, I am excited to share that there are two updates with respect to affiliates and/or sponsors of the website that benefit both you and me. First, the affiliate code for KeebCats UK is now changed and I will be receiving a slight kickback if you buy your lube and switch accessories from them, so you should definitely be doing that. (Don't worry, there is still a discount code for you too, I promise.) Secondly, in order to firmly dispel the rumors that I am actually British given my current lineup of affiliates with KeebCats, Mechbox, and proto[Typist] all being located in the UK, I am excited to say that I am officially now sponsored by MKUltra in the US! Having been around a bit longer than many people realize, MKUltra fills a lot of voids that other vendors don't quite

hit with case foam, low profile and Kailh Choc-compatible keycaps, and an ever-growing line of switches. So go check them out right now using code 'GOAT' for 5% off your order to not only support them but also my continued ramblings here.



Figure 2: You can't lie to yourself; it is one of the most interesting logos in the entire community...

Now having pulled update notes from both personal and professional ends of my life, I am going to straddle that divide with this slightly different than normal article. In very exciting and relatively quiet news, I passed 1000 unique switches in my collection as of a week or two ago. Needless to say, this is something that both I and pretty much everyone I knew never thought would happen when I had first set out collecting, let alone only within the short amount of time I've been collecting relative to some of the longer-running folks in this hobby. With this unbelievable milestone behind me, though, I couldn't help but shake the feeling that I should write an article to talk a bit more about the switches behind the website as I feel like I get more questions about my collection from fans than I ever do the website itself. So, without much more fanfare about it, let's take a look at some of the collection, its fascinating history, and answers to questions that I get asked all the time.

Where It All Got Started

While I am a bit hazy as to the exact timeline of the earliest parts of the collection before I really started considering myself a collector, my first switch tester came I ever received came in the form of a 63-switch tester from KBDfans around the middle of 2018. At the time, I was working an overnight desk job at Ohio State during my sophomore year of undergraduate studies and I recall opening the tester while working the front desk. I then proceeded to spend literally the last half of my shift trying out each and every switch on it, and even making the people working with me pick out their favorites as if they had a clue what I was going on about.



Figure 3: Back in my day they didn't even have the fancy labeled caps. They only had clear, see-through DSA ones like this.

Once that night of enthusiasm had worn off though, I recall sitting in class the next day and thinking: “I’m sure 63 switches is pretty much all of them out there, so I guess I should go about getting ahold of the rest of them.” However, around mid-2018 when I first got this tester, switches were not produced in the same fashion as they are today. Instead of seemingly round the clock releases of new, colorful switches, we would be lucky to see even one or two new releases a month. Pre-dating the earliest custom color switch groupbuys in Gateron Tangerine V1s and Novelias, I struck out pretty half-assedly on r/mechmarket to try and find the rest of the switches I was missing. In the months following that, I picked up a few random switches here and there with the only real notable lot coming by way of a user by the name of u/Ailurion.

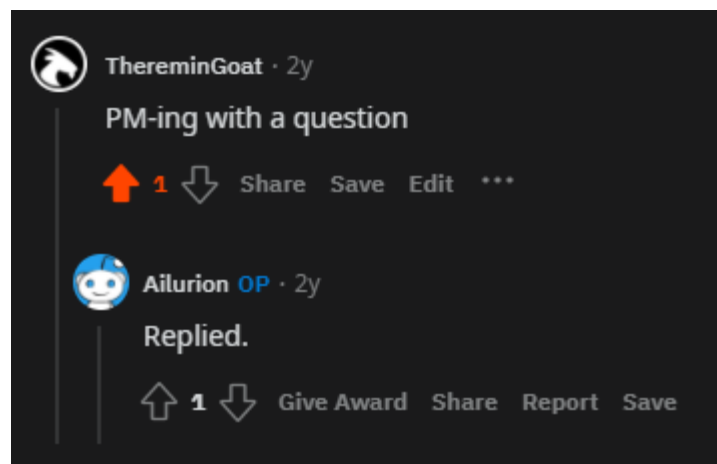


Figure 4: If only we had known this was the beginning of the end.

Quite late in 2018, Ailurion had posted a fairly sizable collection of Alps SKCL, SKCM, and various other vintage switch brands in a lot for sale on mechmarket. Not knowing a single thing about what I was getting into, I gladly scooped it up from him for \$80 shipped mostly excited that I picked up such a ‘large portion’ of the ones I had left to get. To this day, in fact, this has constituted a large backbone of my vintage Alps collection and nearly completed it from the start. Shortly after that, I came in contact with another switch collector by the name of Satanarchist, who is now known as James of Alchemist Keyboards. After having reached out to him on a whim based on a five-month-old post in which he had talked about a bulk bag of ‘clone’ switches from China, we soon started talking on Discord and exchanging switches around the beginning of 2019. Two and a half years later I don’t think he nor I would have imagined that we would still be as close friends as we are today, nor do I think we could have imagined how far this collection would have come.



Figure 5: Just the latest of James' designs headed towards groupbuy soon – the AKB Aella.

Even with my introductory history laid out in all its slippery-sloped glory, I do often get many people still wanting to ask me though...

So Why Collecting Switches?

To really properly dig into this question, I’m going to break it up into two distinct parts to help explain just how messed up I really am internally. Looking first at the ‘collecting’ end of things, collecting is actually something that I refer to as being “in my blood.” Literally every person in my family as well as most of my friends and ex-partners have been collectors of *something* in one form or another. In previous parts of my own life, I’ve collected Football cards, Magic the Gathering, and helped people around me collect vintage postcards, stamps, vinyl, Hot Wheels cars, and tons of other stuff. So, in that regard, I’ve always found collecting to be a natural thing to take part in and at the time that I had decided to collect switches I wasn’t collecting anything else other than student debt and an alcohol tolerance.



Figure 6: If you're not a Black/Green player then you're doing MTG wrong, for your information.

As for the ‘switches’ half of this question, I think it’s actually surprisingly more nuanced than I think people would initially imagine. Within the context of keyboards, I find switches to truly be the heart and soul of a board, and often one of the most defining features of what truly makes my builds. Though sinking deeper into this psychology armchair, ever since I was a kid (ha), I’ve been rather fascinated with both excessively large numbers as well as variation. Having actually considered pure mathematics as a potential career path well before I decided on Chemical Engineering, I always found a deep fascination with topics like set theory that really struck a particularly deep chord within me. So, when this general fascination in groupings and combinatorics was introduced to arguably the most interchangeable and variable part of any mechanical keyboard, it was hard for me to turn away. While I don’t think I could have anticipated that switches would have gotten *this* insanely variable as they have in recent months, I did find myself in earlier days wondering how many different ways we could ever see a switch come about. And this, in part, is why I make an emphasis on my excitement when I see completely brand-new things in switches that I have yet to see in the previous thousand or so iterations that I’ve looked at.

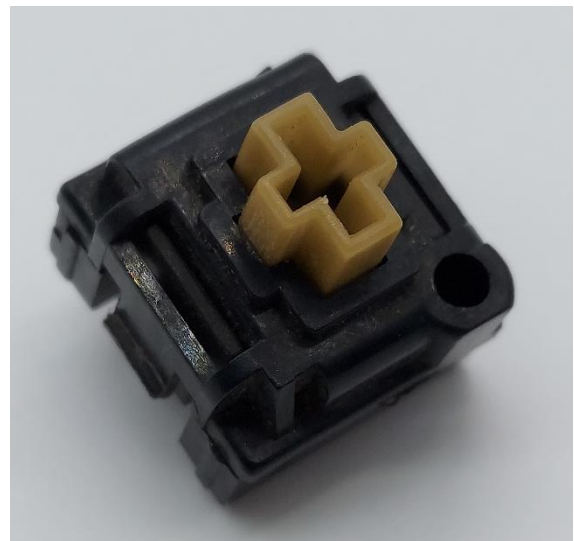


Figure 7: I don't think I could have imagined something as wacky as the SMK Inverse Cross Mount though.

Given that relatively handwavy explanation of what happens when you’re dropped a couple of times as a child, one of the more common questions I often get though is...

What *Exactly* Do You Collect?

Many people would look at the size of my collection and incorrectly assume that I collect pretty much anything mechanical keyboard switch related. Wait, that last sentence is a typo; It should say 'correctly' assume instead of incorrectly. While I do in fact limit my collection to 'mechanical keyboard switches', that is an incredibly large category when you consider both vintage and modern stuff alike. Primarily, my collection is focused on collecting modern, MX style switches with some extraneous vintage stuff such as my Alps SKCL/SKCM collection and various Hi-Tek 725 'Space Invader' switches. Even though I would like to expand my vintage collection a bit more here in the future, I simply have gotten caught up with the sheer volume of modern releases as of late to put any sort of dedicated time into vintage switches.

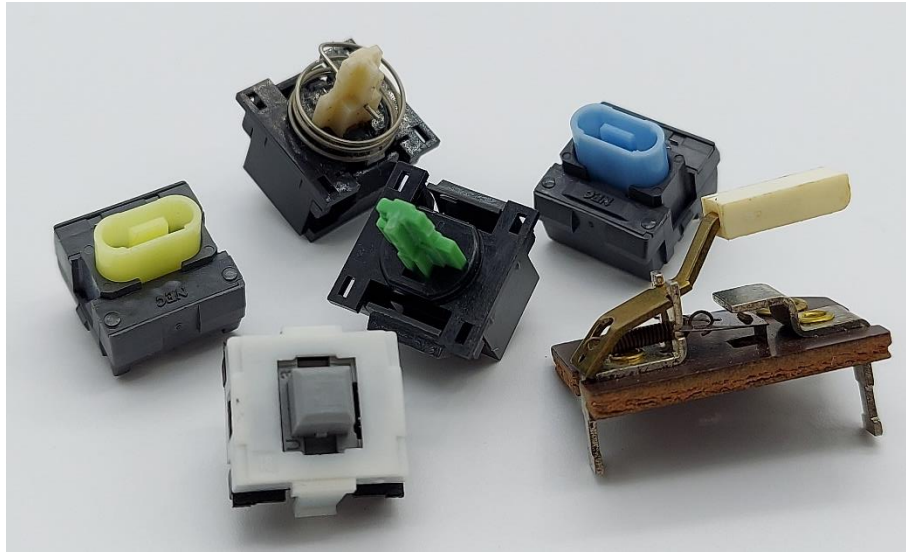


Figure 8: Small gathering of some of my vintage switches including a 1950's Cherry plate spring, some SKCC Alps, a RAFI Hall Effect, and two NEC Ovals.

Within the rather large MX style subset of my collection though, I do have a particular fascination with collecting prototypes of switches when the chances arise for me to do such. Funny enough, I had not actually considered doing this at all until decently far into collecting when I had come across Emir's Linjar switch prototype which came as a 3 Pin single switch whereas the release versions came only in 5 Pin variants. Since this first introduction to prototypes, I've become fascinated with them as both unique collector's items as well as an interesting benchmarks in the development of some of the switches that we've all come to know and love. As a result of this fascination, I've been more than lucky in picking up pre-release prototypes of extremely influential switches to the overall history of mechanical keyboard switches such as KBDfans T1s as well as Invyr Pandas.



Figure 9: 3 Prototypes of switches from the collection including (L-R) KBDfans T1, Naevy V1.5, and Silent Alpacas.

In addition to the prototypes, and in a much more obtainable for the average person fashion, I also often get asked if everything I collect is ‘stock’ or simply a giant pile of frankenswitches that I’ve thrown together myself. While I often tell people that I only collect ‘stock’ or ‘as sold’ switches, I actually do have a small number of frankenswitches in my collection that I deem as important and/or historically worthy enough to include. Aside the obvious set of Holy Pandas that I aim to make out of all Panda switches, which come in both True and Clear stemmed variants, I have some of the original Gatistotle switches as well as Gazzew’s ‘Black Ice’ switches, which feature vintage MX Black stems in Outemu ICE housings. Outside of these switches though, save one exception which I mention below, I don’t often seek out frankenswitches to add to the collection and thus I still have yet to collect Zykos or any of the other “popular” frankenswitches people seem to reference often. I’m sure in time I will eventually get around to adding them once they become historically significant enough to me, and/or I stop being so lazy.

However, much like with anything in a collection of this size, I do have a singular particular exception to my frankenswitch rule and for good reason. Relatively early on in my collecting career, sometime around 200-300 switches in, I came across a mechmarket post from a user by the name of u/eugenez90 who was selling a Duck Jetfire with “Hiroseal” switches. Given that custom switches, as well as wild frankenswitch combinations, were quite rare at the time, I picked these up at a price tag of \$6 per switch. “Hiroseals” are Hirose Orange stems in Zealios housings with a 63.5g. gold plated SPRiT spring, TX film, and a custom blend of two different lubricants used by eugenez90. At the time these were simply the most ridiculous combination of switch components that I thought I would ever come across, and since then it has stayed in my collection as a testament to why I don’t collect every single new frankenswitch that somebody comes up with. (They are quite smooth though...)



Figure 10: One such frankenswitch in the collection that simply doesn't get enough love anymore from the community - the Gatistotle.

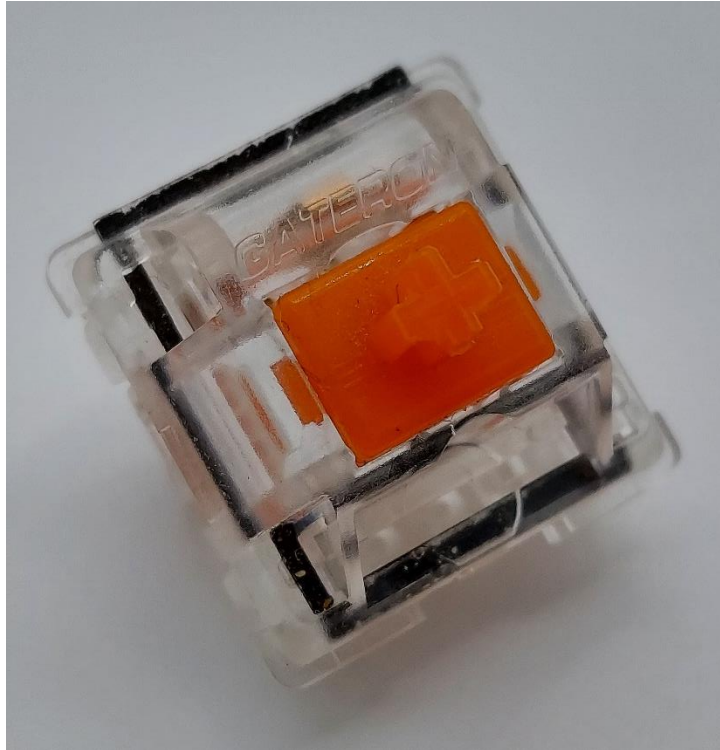


Figure 9: Behold: the "Hiroseal" in all of its expensive, over the top glory!

Though, with well over 1000 switches now and quite seemingly no chance of slowing down in the near future, I also do quite often get asked...

Where Do You Get All of Your Switches?

Unsurprisingly, the quick and dirty answer to this question I get all the time is 'everywhere'. I can't think of a general platform you would buy switches from – both domestic and abroad – that I've not gotten at least one switch from at this point, and the list of countries I've imported switches from is even somehow longer than that one. One of the things that I've come to appreciate about the hobby broadly over my time collecting is the ability to connect with people no matter how large nor small they are. As a result of my quest to collect every switch out there, you could pick pretty much any vendor, streamer, or big name you recognize and I've likely talked with them about switches, and especially so if they happen to have one that I'm in need of. While I do still pick up switches here or there on my own terms, this network that I've grown with people has effectively reduced a lot of my own workload in finding new switches out there, and has even turned me on to new and exciting brands I wouldn't otherwise know about.

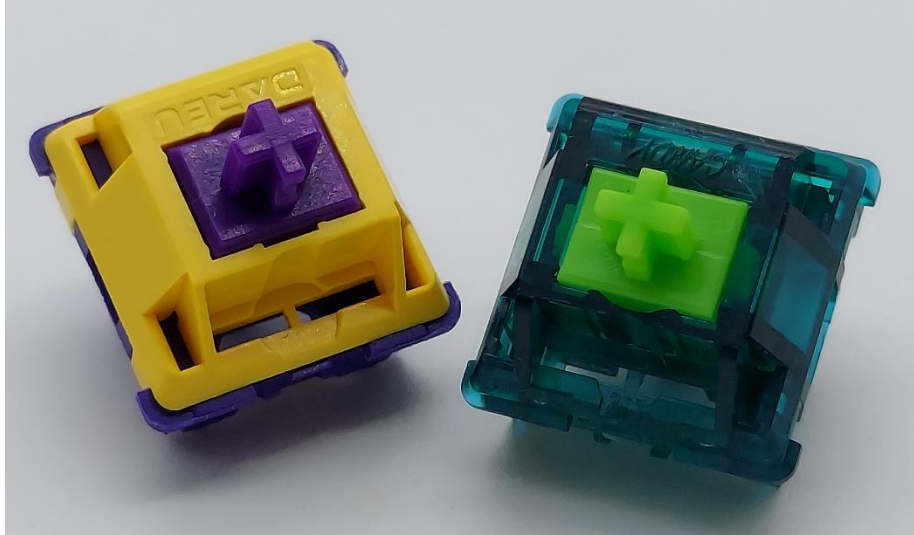


Figure 10: Interesting little sneak peek of a mailday flex coming soon to my social media...

Speaking more to the network of people that I've built over the past few years though, my recognition of them is more public than one may initially recognize. While I obviously can shill out for my affiliates and sponsors in Mechbox UK, KeebCats, proto[Typist], and now MKUltra, there is a long line of vendors, Patreon donators, and individuals behind them that have contributed substantially both to my physical collection as well as my general knowledge about switches and are listed on the 'About' page of my website. Please do not be fooled though, as this isn't in any way shape or form an exhaustive list. If I were to name drop every single person I've interacted with about switches in this hobby line by line, it would dwarf any article I've put out to date and I wouldn't know what to do with it. Aside the fact that I'd shy away from such as I wouldn't be sure how to inflect my normal fourth-wall breaking humor into it, I have been brought to this position in my collection and website as a result of the community at large, and there's no way I could possibly thank all of you for such.

So, with having bought from nearly everywhere and talking to seemingly everyone, people often do like to ask...

Are There Switches You *Don't* Have?

Funny enough, alongside the previous questions I've referenced that I get asked all of the time, this is also one of those that gets asked shortly after all of those ones. My collection has always had weird gaps in it with respect to switches that I am missing, and the rationale for why each of these small gaps form is entirely unique to each situation. One shining example of one of these gaps comes in the form of my three out of four TTC Orange switches which were released well before I even started collecting. While I have both linears and the clicky version, I've been missing the tactile one for quite close to two years now simply because I accidentally bought a second clicky one thinking that that was what I was missing. Rest assured I do have the fourth and final one coming, but it has been probably the longest standing 'normal' gap in my collection out of the few here and there that exist.



Figure 11: Literally my internal monologue for the last two years every time I see them on my tester.

More recently, however, the ability to get ahold of all switches upon release is becoming more and more strained even with my expansive aforementioned network of people helping me out. Domestically, the biggest struggle comes in the form of Novelkeys' special switches for boards like the RandomFrankP, Olivia, and Oblivion themed NK65 boards. While I hope that I am able to come across these someday in the future for the collection, they do constitute my biggest desire in the US currently. Abroad, Europe has slightly less challenging struggles in the form of the Keebwerk V2 and Mekanisk Ultramarine switches, though the difficulty in obtaining those pales in comparison to China at large. Given the largely exclusive and often QQ-based sales of switches in China, I'm certain there are dozens of switches that have been released over there in the previous months that I'm not even aware of, let alone have had a chance at getting.



Figure 12: Why do you have to do this to me Mike? They're so pretty.

Regardless of all of the difficulties in getting ahold of these switches, as well as the amount of work I'll have to put in to expand my vintage side of my collection, I am confident that it's more a matter of 'when' than 'if' when it comes to getting ahold of these switches.

Onto Specific Switches

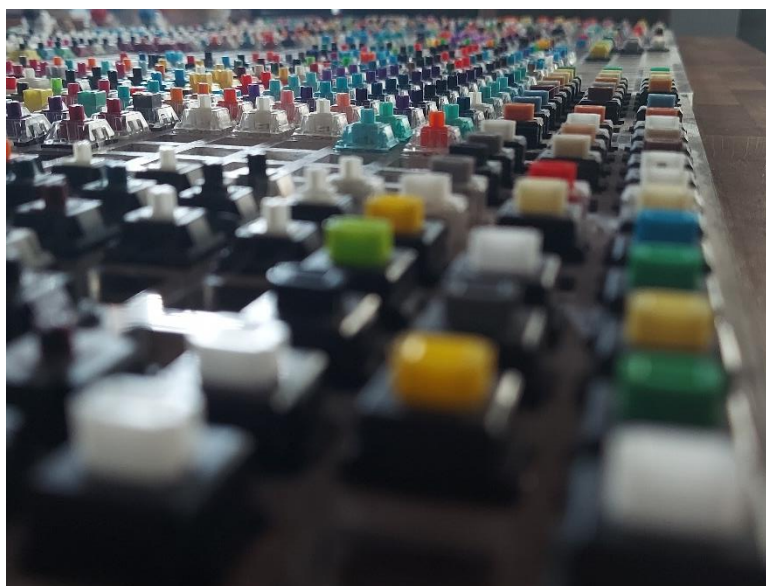


Figure 13: At least one of these. Maybe more, but at least one.

While I could sit and broadly wane on my history in this hobby for days, given that this article is focusing on the collection at hand specifically, I figured I should probably go a little bit in depth on specific switches of note and answer some specific questions I get asked all the time. Probably the most common one I get asked by literally everyone I ever meet is...

Do You Have a Favorite Switch?

No.

About as flatly as I can put it, there's not a shot that I could possibly have an overall favorite switch after having tried as many as I have. Usually when this is asked in a more casual setting, I have people qualify this question with more phrases such as "favorite switch *to collect*" or "favorite Vintage MX style switch" so that I am able to answer it. While I don't want to lock myself into a singular answer by way of written word on this one, some of my favorite switches to point out after this question include:

KBDFans T1 Prototypes

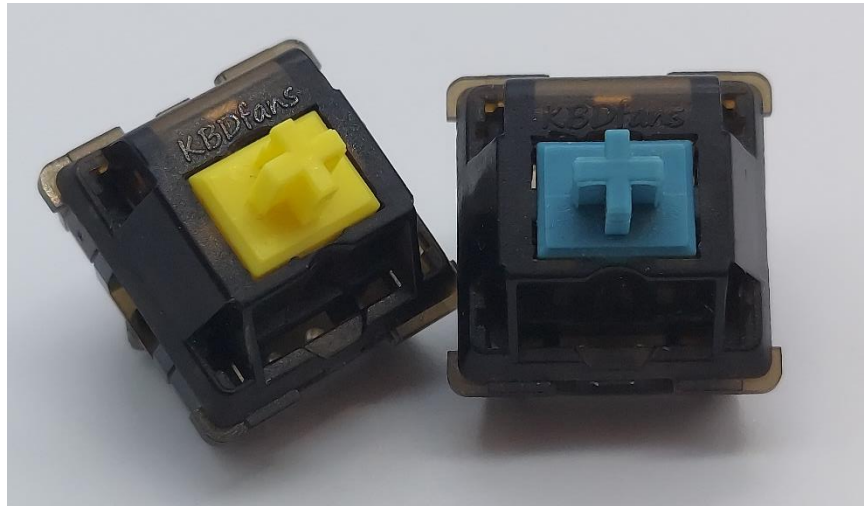


Figure 14: KBDFans T1 prototypes in darker housings with Yellow and release-Teal colored stems.

Even though I've already mentioned these once in this article already above, these hold a special place in my heart for more than a few reasons. First of all, these switches are the prototypes for arguably the most important switch of the last few years of the hobby, as without the introduction of the T1s and Durock/JWK, I doubt the switch scene would have grown to the size it is today. Secondly, and much more self-centeredly, these were one of the focal points of my 'Stealios Controversy' document that was not only one of the first articles I ever wrote, but what propelled me into writing reviews and eventually establishing the website as it stands today. If it weren't for these specific switches, I honestly can't say whether I nor switches would be in the position we are today.

Zilent 'Cloudy' Variant

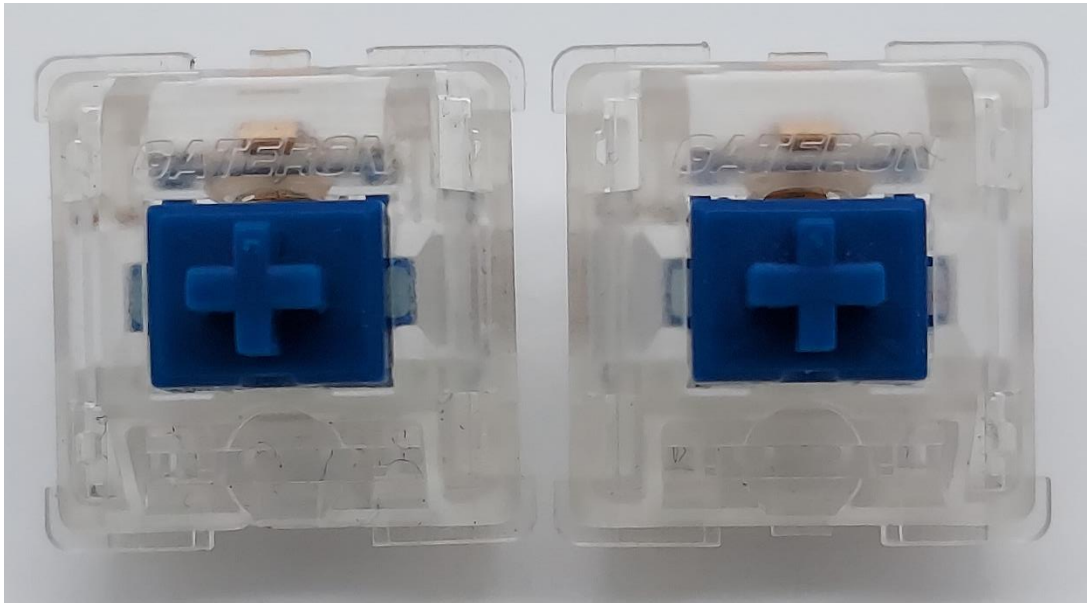


Figure 15: Normal Zilent switch (Left) versus cloudy Zilent switch (Right).

While not strictly an official release of the many switches that Zeal has put out over the years, this cloudier version of a first run Zilent is particularly interesting to me as it highlights a subtle point about the manufacturing of these switches. As you may have seen me reference in previous reviews, mold sprue marks often have small cylinders of plastic attached to them via the injection molding process that are clipped off and removed prior to becoming a finalized product. Normally, these sprues are discarded as plastic waste though according to someone quite familiar with the switch manufacturing process that I've talked to, when sprues of clear or translucent plastic are ground up and reused after extraction once through the process, it can lead to a clouding of the final switch produced. Thus, this would immediately indicate that the process used by Gateron in producing Zeal switches those years ago was less than stellar in using reground sprues.

Now, to not make this a one-sided accusation, Zeal has claimed this is a result of a mold needing repolished after many rounds of injection usage and *not* a result of the manufacturer using previously spent plastic over again. Even though I may never particularly know the absolute truth as to why these switches are the way that they are, it does provide a rather subtle yet impactful look into how some of the first truly 'custom' mechanical keyboard switches could have been produced. For that reason, alone, I find it incredibly fascinating as a collection piece and am glad I stumbled across it.

Alps SKCM Neon Green

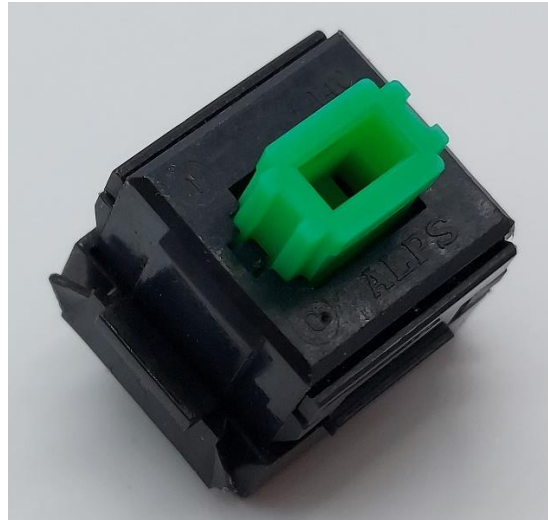


Figure 16: Alps SKCM Neon Green (Bamboo Variant).

Even though I do have many switches that may seem ‘famous’ or ‘important’ to all of you as a function of my articles or your relationship to them, it’s not all that common that I have a switch come to me that strikes me as famous per se. My Alps SKCM Neon Green, on the other hand, happens to come from the exact surplus lot photographed on the Deskthority page for those switches. While this may seem a bit odd to you that I would classify this as something “famous”, I spent many an hour reading about switches on DT when I first started in the hobby, and I can recall having seen the image of this switch dozens of times over before actually owning such. So even though it did take two months of back-and-forth emailing with the original owner of these switches to get one, in a way this Neon Green is important to me as it was something I quite literally aspired to own one day and was actually able to.

Okay, so if you don’t have a favorite switch, then...

What’s the Most You’ve Ever Paid for a Switch?



Figure 17: Given that I don’t have photos of me practically at all, this is the most I’ve ever spent on a single photo, I think.

\$36. The most I ever distinctly paid for a singular switch came down to the purchasing of my Cherry Nixdorf White, which was priced at that amount simply because the original owner bought his for that amount when he had first gotten it. Surprisingly, a lot of the more rare switches that I have picked up such as my Striped Amber Alp, complete set of Alps Locks, and interesting Vintage MX switches have all come in ‘lots’ for a single price rather than an itemized, line by line price. While I have definitely spent way more than \$36 on certain lots of switches during my time collecting, this is the one time that I spent that much on a singular switch. That is not to say, though, that there are not switches currently out there that I wouldn’t pay well above this mark in order to get my hands on though. (I’ll leave the answer as to which specific ones for another day.)

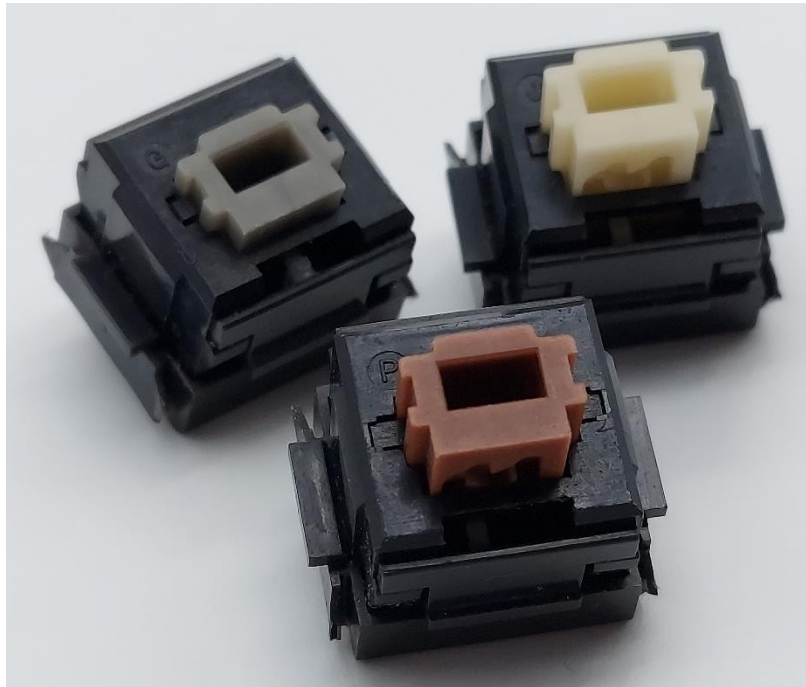


Figure 18: All 3 Alps Lock variants.

Okay, Goat, but I can’t afford that so tell me how I can flex on people...

What is Your Most Rare* Switch?

In case you were wondering, the asterisk is there because I could easily default to pointing at any of my prototype switches as my “rarest” switch given that there are less than a handful in existence for many of them. I think it would also be disingenuous to go ahead and point to switches like my Striped Amber Alp, Nixie White, Neon Green Alp, etc. as the answer to this question as they are simply hard for everyone to come by, collector or otherwise. So, in order to give a bit of a more approachable twist to this question, let me talk about some of the more common yet still rare things I’ve picked up in the last 1000 switches:

Full Set of Stealios



Figure 19: All 4 Stealios switches. Or are they actually just Zealios...?

For those of you who were not in the hobby a few years back, as well as those of you who've not read my Stealios Controversy article, 'Stealios' were fake, Durock/JWK made switches that looked and functioned nearly identically to the purple, tactile Zealios switches offered by Zeal. Offered primarily through KBDFans until the drama blew up, many people were left completely caught off guard by the announcement of these switches being fake and weren't able to pick up any prior to them being removed. Luckily, through lots of searching and conversations, I was able to pick up a set of all four originally offered Stealios, with one in each weight.

OG Invyr/Holy Panda

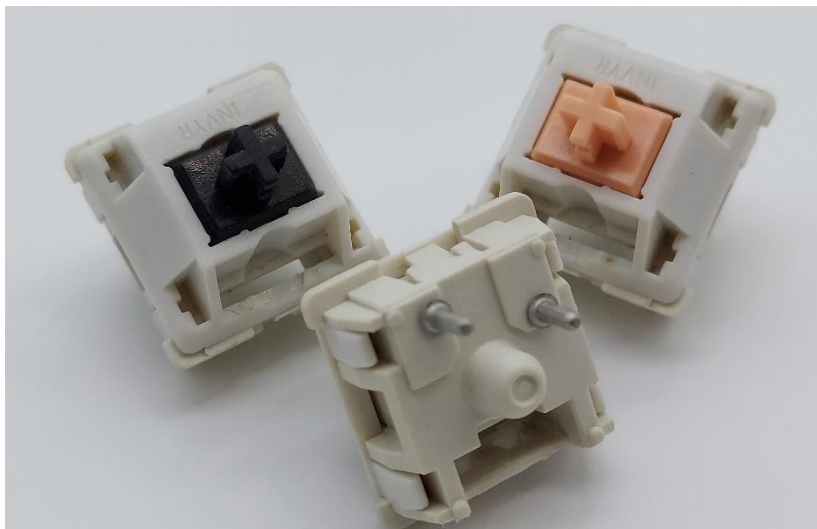


Figure 20: OG Invyr Panda and Holy Panda featuring their classic pin condom look.

While this concept, again, may seem foreign to a lot of the newer audiences reading it, once upon a time there was actually only one switch with the “Panda” name – Invyr Pandas. Having only ran once with a relatively limited market prior to the introduction of the GSUS Pandas, Drop’s acquisition of the switch, and many countless attempts at emulating it since, true ‘OG’ Pandas are quite rare to come across in this day and age. One of the more interesting things that denotes them from some of their more modern counterparts are their incredibly thick PCB mounting pins, which are often referred to as “pin condoms” given that they are effectively just metal pieces which slide over the traditional mounting pins.

Hirose Clear ‘HCP’ Variant



Figure 21: Cherry Hirose Clear and HCP Hirose Clear switches.
(Contrast increased to show nameplate design.)

Often touted as “ultra-rare” vintage switches, Hirose Cherry MX switches come in a variety of colors well beyond what most people know about. While even those are a bit too rare for me to own one, the two most common colors people encounter in the wild are the Hirose Orange and Hirose Clear switches. What many people don’t know, though, is that there’s a rare variant of the Hirose Clear switches which don’t feature the ‘CHERRY’ nameplate, but rather ‘HCP’. While the exact details of surrounding this uncommon variant are a bit fuzzy to the best of my knowledge, I believe these top housings come from some of the first pressings of Hirose Clears and thus came around before Cherry nameplates were officially used.

Gateron KS-1 Set



Figure 22: Gateron KS-1 Red, Black, Brown, and Blue in all-black housings.

Surprisingly, something as common as a set of red, brown, black, and blue switches could actually be among the more rare sets that I've picked up over the years of collecting. First introduced around 2014-2015, Gateron KS-1 switches were the first MX style switches that Gateron produced for release, and were likely designed immediately following the end of Cherry's MX style patent in 2014. Given that the hobby simply didn't exist to the same extent then as it does today, a proper set of KS-1 switches have only been documented a handful of times prior online, making these fairly common switches by 2014 standard but increasingly rare by the year.

Okay, so maybe that was too much flexing. What about just like pieces of switches?...

Do You Collect Other Switch Parts?

Interestingly enough, while fairly few and far between, I do actually have some switch components such as top housings, stems, and even one spring in particular that I have picked up over my time collecting that I've deemed worth holding onto. However, because collecting things like springs, or more recently aftermarket stems could be an entire job on its own, I keep these around for historical value but don't actually count them towards the collection total.

Cherry Red Prototype Housing



Figure 23: Yet another shot of my red prototype housing because I think it's neat.

While I have flexed this before once or twice on social media, as well as in my '25 Switch Facts You May Not Know' article, this is by far one of my favorite switch related pieces I've picked up over the last few years of collecting. All Cherry internal prototypes that they test are made with red-colored housings in order to prevent them from accidentally getting mixed with final product or released, and to date the only way that you can easily get ahold of them is by having "a close personal relationship with a Cherry employee". Even though I've tried super hard by spoofing my Tinder profile to Auerbach in der Oberpfalz, Germany, I've only been able to come across this one by connection with another collector in the hobby who so graciously was willing to sell me one.

Invyr Panda 3D Printed Housing Prototype

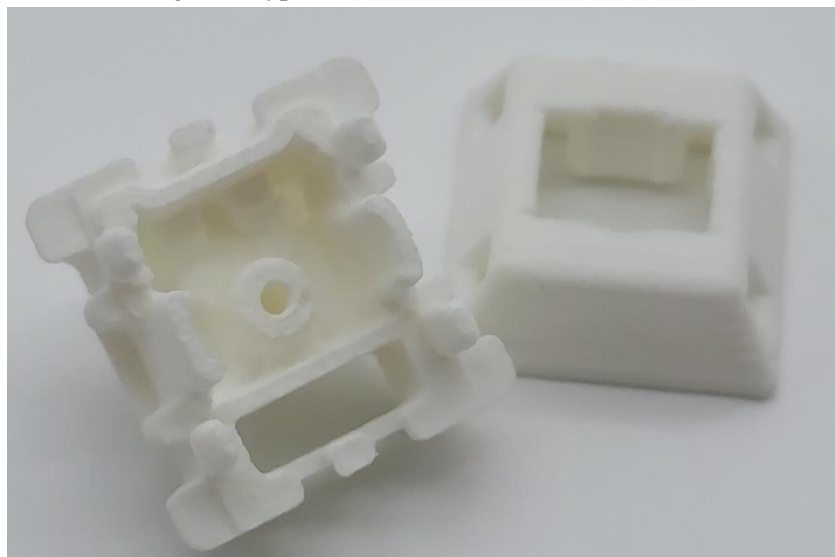


Figure 24: 3D Printed Invyr V2 housing attempt.

Coming from Invyr himself, one of the other cool housings that I've been able to get my hands on is a 3D printed attempt at a housing for Invyr Pandas. While it is quite obvious from the photo itself that this simply wouldn't work at a mass produced or even individualized scale, it is incredibly interesting to see some of the earliest design attempts at the Invyr Panda V2 which never actually made it to the sale stage. This is truly one of the coolest pieces to show off to people who get to see my collection in person at meetups, and especially those who are huge Holy Panda fans.

Invyr UHMWPE Stem Prototypes

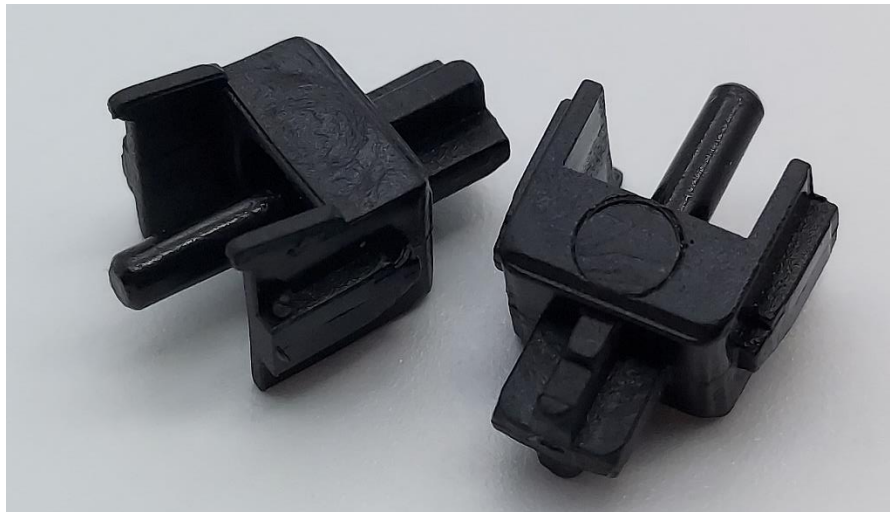


Figure 25: Invyr UHMWPE stem first mold prototypes in black.

With the initial hype around aftermarket UHMWPE stems having died down some time since their initial release back in early 2020, the Invyr ones are still easily recognizable by many people in community new and old alike. In addition to getting my hands on the very first release of what was then the first truly-aftermarket, standalone stem offering for MX style switches, I was also gifted a couple of the first mold prototypes of these stems from Invyr himself. Much like with Cherry's red prototype housings, these are distinguishable from the release ones in that they come in a completely black, opaque colorway.

1.2 Kg Spring

Even though I've been quite close to Mechbox UK as a result of them having been my longest running sponsor on this website, I have actually been tied to them pretty much since the beginning of my collection. In fact, one of the first lots of modern switches I ever got for my collection came as a gift someone had bought me from Mechbox, which included this very interesting 1200g. spring. While I don't believe he stocks these particular ones anymore, I can say this is definitely an experience everyone must try in a switch at some point if they ever get the chance to. A spring this heavy not only removes the thought of pretravel in a switch, but completely obliterates all tactility a switch has, and makes bottoming out a mere dream for even the most gorilla-handed typist.

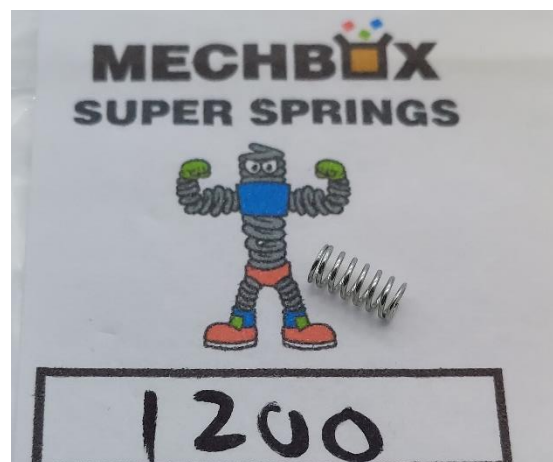


Figure 26: For when you start liking your finger bones too much.

And with the most common questions out of the way, I figured I'd give one last section up to talking about...

Weird Collection Stories

After collecting over 1000 switches over several years of time, some of my switches have funny stories or interesting histories attached to them beyond just what the marketing labels read about them. Even though this section is by no means comprehensive as to all of the interesting personal stories I have about my collection, I figured it would be a fun to get to share a couple of them with you all as they have come about as an intersection of the community and the collection over the years. Perhaps if there is enough demand about this section, I may take another posting date in the future to dig into more funny stories in the future.

The Traveling Nixie

Having been born and raised in Ohio prior to my move to Minnesota just a week or so ago, I've not exactly traveled much in my life. My Cherry 'Nixie' Black though, on the other hand, has made a round trip to Europe and back, and even got a chauffeuring back to my place. Not many people can say that they've done quite the same with their keyboards, much less a switch.



Figure 27: This piece of shit could have at least racked up some free airline miles on its trip, but it didn't.

Back when I had first become interested in prototype switches, one of the first chances I ever came across getting one was through a trade with the original owner, in which I would trade my Nixie Black for the prototype switch, one to one. Knowing that Nixies weren't exactly the rarest thing in the world, I figured it wouldn't be an issue trying to secure one again and thus decided to agree to the deal. Packaging up one of my rarest switches at the time into a nice box, I shipped it out to a specific spot in Europe... where it got lost. After having not only received the prototype switch myself, but also waiting two long months, I had basically figured that the Nixie Black had been lost to the great postal void.

Sticking to my word, though, I managed to get ahold of another Nixie Black from a third owner in Europe that I effectively paid to be sent to the prototype owner, just to make sure that he got his switch and that I wasn't cheating him out of our deal. Nearly a month after that second switch was sent to the prototype owner, both Nixies arrived in customs for pickup. However, for some unknown reason this

individual decided that he didn't feel like helping me out and returning my first Nixie back to me because it would have incurred something like \$5 US to get it out of customs. (This is why I've been intentionally vague about who this person is.) So, this Nixie then sat unclaimed in this country's foreign customs for another few months until it was ultimately sent back to me in the U.S.



Figure 28: Where on Earth is my damn Nixie at?

After having been bounced nearly around the globe at this point, my Nixie Black was finally returned back to the U.S. and to the original address I had sent it from. However, in yet another twist of fate, this address was one that I had moved from sometime in the last 6 months of my Nixie's absence and even though I had now lived about 35 minutes away, my original landlord refused to forward it on to me. So, not wanting to lose out on both a good story as well as my only Nixie I had a chance at getting at the time, I drove the entire 35-minute drive just to pick up my Nixie and bring it home. 6 Months in time, probably about \$50 total in shipping and gas, and many swear words later, I can say that my Nixie Black is officially the most seasoned traveler out of everything I own.

Hiney's Novelkeys Cream

With my collection list up and available underneath the 'About' tab of my website, it's easy to scroll through it and see that the vast majority of my switches have come to me from vendors, collectors, or other people somewhere in between those two groups over the past few years. As funny as it may seem though, one of the first switches that I was ever given by anybody came from none other than Hineybush. And before you ask, yes, the same one who designed the HBCP, TKL One, and what feels like every PCB in your dream endgame boards.

As you can blurrily see above, the small box that I had brought to my very first meetup at Cleveland, Ohio in 2018 consisted of the random assortment of vintage switches that I had picked up from Ailurion, whom I mentioned earlier in this article. As I was walking around the meetup, Hiney actually had a small tester of the first-round production attempt of the new Novelkeys Cream switches,

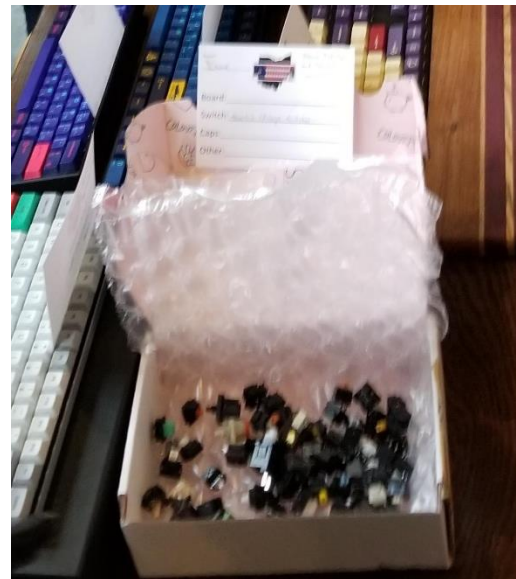


Figure 29: Who brings keyboards to a keyboard meetup anyhow?

something which weren't even available to the public. Of course, I was fascinated by these and probably talked to him for a couple of minutes about them, but that was about the extent of my interaction with him at the meetup about them. The only other thing I recall from our conversation was him showing off his thin PCBs which he stopped using as a coaster only to bend it an uncomfortable amount before placing it back under his drink.

Flash forward to later that night after having driven home from the meetup, I reopened my box to mess around with the switches again and found a single Novelkeys Cream tossed in there amidst the other prototype switches. Having reached out to Hiney to thank him for this, assuming this one of his that he gave to me for the collection, he effectively digitally shrugged and repeated something akin to "Huh, guess I did throw one in there." While I think this quite well sums up my general vibe from everyone's favorite laid back PCB designer, it really does speak volumes to me about the community and the support I've had from them since quite literally the beginning.

Final Conclusions

Here we are. As of the posting of this article I've not only crossed the 1000 switch mark, but stand at 1031 unique switches and counting. While I couldn't show you quite all of them because of NDAs, nor could I tell you about all of them because the switches I'm writing this on have a 50 million stroke lifetime, I enjoyed getting to show you all a little peek behind the curtain into what makes this so exciting for me. Even though the content and shitty attempts at grammar are what you all have come to know and appreciate me for, the switches are truly what have made it exciting for me day in and out. By extension, not only this article but the website as a whole stands as a way that I can share my passion and excitement about switches to the community at large. After all, this collection was built by the community and so it should be shared with the community as extensively as possible.

So, while I do try and thank people whenever I get the chance, and many of you may find it somewhat excessive given that its in a written format, I do genuinely want to thank you all for helping me get to 1000 switches, for reading the content I toss up on this website, and for continuing to let me carve out a little space in this hobby. Being able to document everything I can about switches for this long has been an incredibly rewarding process, and it makes me feel good to know that I can at least prevent this small subsection of the community from disappearing as it all continues to evolve and expand. To wrap up this article and sentiment, I figured I would leave you with a quote from a friend by the name of Beaker, who has long been a source of such inspirational quotes over my time knowing him in the community.

"We all make our own edifice. Someday, it will be admired and respected though maybe it won't. But leaving a trave is also critical - *it proves we were alive.*"

Sponsors/Affiliates

Mechbox.co.uk

- A wonderful UK based operation which sells singles to switches that I've used above in my comparisons for collectors and the curious alike. Matt has gone out of his way to help me build out big parts of my collection, and buying something using this link supports him as well as my content!

KeebCats UK

- A switch peripheral company based out of the UK which sells everything switch adjacent you could ask for, they've been a huge help recently with my film and lube supply for personal builds, and they want to extend that help to you too. **Use code 'GOAT' for 10% off your order when you check them out!**

Proto[Typist] Keyboards

- An all-things keyboard vendor based out of the UK, proto[Typist] is a regular stocker of everything from switches to the latest keyboard and keycap groupbuys. While I've bought things from the many times in the past, they also are a sponsor of my work and allow me to get some of the great switches I write about!

MKUltra Corporation

- We may have stolen a few government secrets to get this one together. MKUltra is a US vendor that truly fills all the gaps other vendors simply don't offer and is continuing to expand their switch and switch related peripherals by the day. **Use code 'GOAT' for 5% off your order when you check them out!**

Further Reading

KBDFans 63 Slot Switch Tester

Link: <https://kdbfans.com/products/kdbfans-super-switthes-tester-60-switches-all-in-one>

Wayback: <https://web.archive.org/web/20210301100220/https://kdbfans.com/products/kdbfans-super-switthes-tester-60-switches-all-in-one>

Original u/Ailurion Mechmarket Sale

Link:

https://www.reddit.com/r/mechmarket/comments/9nxt74/uspa_h_tada68_kit_80_novelias_oblivion_mods/

Wayback:

https://web.archive.org/web/20210711025403/https://www.reddit.com/r/mechmarket/comments/9nxt74/uspa_h_tada68_kit_80_novelias_oblivion_mods/

u/eugenez90's Hiroseal Jetfire Sale

Link:

https://www.reddit.com/r/mechmarket/comments/b2y481/sgh_duck_jetfire_w_hiroseal_orange_hirose_orange/

Wayback:

https://web.archive.org/web/20210711025443/https://www.reddit.com/r/mechmarket/comments/b2y481/sgh_duck_jetfire_w_hiroseal_orange_hirose_orange/

Alps SKCM Green Deskthority Page

Link: https://deskthority.net/wiki/Alps_SKCM_Green

Wayback: https://web.archive.org/web/20210711025623/https://deskthority.net/wiki/Alps_SKCM_Green

Ohio Mechanical Keyboard Meetup Photos 2018

Link: <https://imgur.com/gallery/mOLMd57>

Wayback: <https://web.archive.org/web/20210711025723/https://imgur.com/gallery/mOLMd57>