

T1 Switches, Durock, and the Stealios Controversy

-ThereminGoat (12/27/2019)

Over the past year, the keyboard community at large has seen countless changes and controversies, as it does it every year. However, unlike years past and previous incidents surrounding Zeal switches, (I'm looking at you winkeyless.kr), the rise of Durock and the Stealio controversy has been among the lengthiest and most convoluted dramas in recent memory. Starting my switch collection very near the start of this controversy, I was extremely lucky to have been closely attached to it and in the loop at nearly every step I discuss below in this document. However, as time has progressed, I've found that many new people entering the hobby, or even old veterans who don't follow switches so closely have been caught not remembering the full details of the Durock and Stealio controversy due to its convoluted nature. Thus, this document aims to be the complete accounting of the Durock during 2019 and all its associated controversies.

The Introduction of T1 Switches

Shortly into January of 2019, the scene surrounding switches in the keyboard community, and specifically tactile ones, was in a relatively large upheaval. Recently, in December of 2018, the release of the GSUS Panda, which contained its own fair share of backlash and drama, had thrown the 'tactile foodchain' of switches into chaos, as OG Holy Panda switches began to plummet in value on the secondary market, dropping from their lofty \$5 per switch cost that they once sat at. [1] Amidst this controversy, as well as the soon to be released YOK Panda switches, a new competitor popped onto the stage in the form of the KBDFans T1 switch.

Appearing sometime in early January on the KBDFans website, 'Transparent T1' switches were being sold at a price of \$5.50 per 10 pieces and featured a clear top and bottom housing as well as a dark teal stem. These pieces were described on the original sales page as having a spring with a 67g bottoming out force and were lauded as a cheaper alternative to the OG Holy Panda Switch. In fact, the original sales page even went so far as to say that "T1 and HP feel 95% identical, with only sound being slightly different." As well, it had mentioned that these pieces had been under R&D since September and had had prototypes made with several pictures comparing the stems and switch components to that of the OG Holy Pandas.

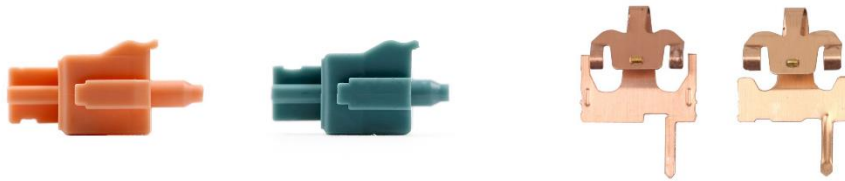


Figure 1: Pictures from the original KBDFans sales page comparing OG Holy Panda parts (Left) to T1 parts (Right). [2]

As per the original groupbuy numbers, the initial switch count to be produced was set at 12,000 pieces with a very short lived groupbuy run on KBDFans' website for 4,000 of the Transparent T1s, and the other 8,000 to make an appearance on Novelkeys' website within the coming months. After four hours' time, the initial sale on KBDFans closed with all 4,000 switches being filled in orders. At this time, it was said that Novelkeys would receive their allotment in early to mid-February. [3] However,

upon receipt of the KBDFans stock Transparent T1s, many eastern customers had begun complaining that there were issues with roughly 30% of switches received having issues with chattering on out-of-the-box usage. This criticism was swiftly heard and dealt with, as the 8000 pieces that were to be sent to Novelkeys were ordered to be returned to KBDFans without opening and subsequently to the manufacturing plant in order for minor production changes to be made to eliminate these issues. The improved Transparent T1 switches finally made their debut on Novelkeys in late March. [4]

The initial release of the T1 switches saw a fair amount of acclaim throughout the mechanical keyboard community. [5] In an early review of three sample pieces from KBDFans, Jae of Topclack stated that they were in fact “90-95% of a Zeal V2 switch and not a true HP clone”, very much living up to the claims that were made on the original sales page. [6] Quickly after the completion of the sale for the KBDFans’ stock Transparent T1s, a sale went up on KBDFans for ‘T1 Night’ switches, which featured the same mechanical workings as the Transparent T1s, but boasted a smoky black housing, which at the time had only been seen in Gateron Ink switches. Obviously happy with how the previous sale had performed, the T1 Night groupbuy was set up with a 40,000 switch maximum. However, the fulfillment of these orders and sales of the T1 Night switches were abruptly stunted by the introduction of the ‘Stealio controversy’.

The Stealio Controversy

Around May of 2019, the now-dubbed ‘Stealio’ controversy rocked the keyboard community and rapidly (and permanently) changed the upward trajectory of the KBDFans T1 switch line. ‘Stealio’, a term believed to be first coined by u/AceRecon, refers to fake Tealios V2 and Fake Zealios V2 switches that were being manufactured by a manufacturer other than Gateron and being sold under the guise of genuine Zeal material. [7] While there were some initial rumblings prior to the large announcement that was made on Reddit, the scandal busted out to the community at large when u/ZealPC submitted a public service announcement for these pieces, also claiming that fake stabilizers were being made in addition to fake versions of their flagship switches.

The fake Zeal V2 switches, which will be referred to in the rest of this document collectively as ‘Stealios’, were impressively similar to the V2 switches that were being produced by Gateron. While there were some more finely deterministic details, such as the branding of the nameplate which bore an extreme similarity to the naked eye, the most common characteristics which were used in distinguishing the fake switches from the authentic ones were a slight difference in stem color, a difference in the threading of the springs, and a slight difference in manufacturing of the PCB mount legs on the bottom housings. The color difference in stems, while not noticeable separately, became more obvious when comparing the Stealios to genuine Zealios V2 switches. (Figure 2, below) The springs, which were also gold plated like Zealios V2 switches, could be distinguished from real ones as they had 3 closely packed loops at each end of the spring, rather than 2 like the genuine pieces. Additionally, the fake springs had a higher thread per inch count than the real springs. (Figure 3, Page 3) Finally, the base of the PCB mount legs on the bottom housings of Stealios featured a smooth, polished ring around the base of the leg which showed a difference in machining that was not present on genuine Zealios V2 switches.



Figure 2: Stealio (Left) and Tealio V2 (Right). (Credit to u/basecase01) [8]

As previously stated, the u/ZealPC public service announcement was the first big revelation of this Stealio issue to the community at large. [9] In the initial announcement, Zeal made the direct claim that “KBDFans has been selling fake Tealios...for more than 6 months.” Following up with this accusation, Zeal expanded upon their initial rationale for this belief, citing that KBDFans was selling more stock than they had acquired from Zeal in their previous orders. This rationale was then solidified by Zeal as after having searched through the Chinese market, which still is notorious for its disregard of Intellectual Property laws, Zeal claimed they attained samples of the Stealios in April of 2019. Zeal then closed out the public service announcement by directing people to the defining characteristics of Stealios, which fell in line with the previous paragraph and above pictures, as well as a list of authorized Zeal product vendors.

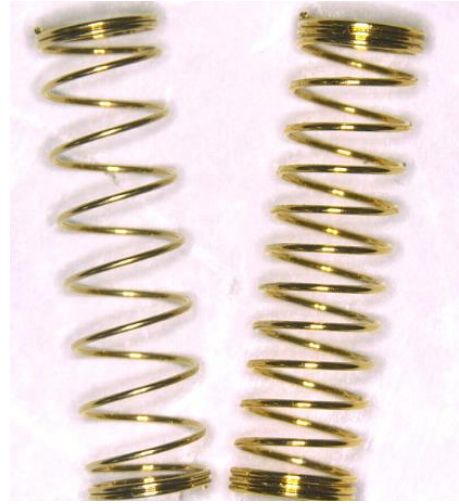


Figure 3: Tealio Spring (Left) and Stealio Spring (Right) (Credit to u/basecase01) [8]

The response from KBDFans was rather quick, and in a post titled ‘Apologize to everyone’, Wei, one of the primary owners of KBDFans, attempted to set the record straight. [10] In this apology post, Wei vaguely claimed that they had made a mistake and bought “some Tealios switches from another source” and that “They were a bit cheaper...”, though never expanded upon these claims in further detail. Attempting to make this right, he claimed that he then immediately attempted to contact both Gateron and Zeal in order to resolve this obvious issue. Finally, Wei closed out the apology by offering refunds on all Zeal switches from KBDFans from the previous year worth of sales (May 1st 2018 – May 1st 2019). At the same time as the posting of this apology, the T1 switch sales page on KBDFans was removed and the 40,000 T1 Night switch groupbuy was halted in its tracks. As well, the interest check being conducted on the KBDFans Koala switch, a KBDFans branded, T1 offshoot that died with the Stealio controversy, ended just as abruptly. (In order to see the other T1 switches that died with the initial drama release, checkout the ‘Graveyard Addendum’ at the end.)

After the killing of the T1 Night and Koala’s sale page, there were no more large scale drama discussions that were waged, and the controversy surrounding the Stealios settled back down to a simmer until later in August. A few months after the initial drama had gone quiet, a ZFrontier post was made, and subsequently quickly translated into a Reddit post, that further added to the backstory of the drama. [11,12] Since I do not read Chinese in any form, I was drawn to the translation done by “a friend of” u/Michael_Kevin717. This initial translation introduced the presence of two new characters involved in the Stealio controversy – Li and Tsai. Li, who was the original author of the ZFrontier post, claimed to not only be the creator of the T1 switch, and the operator of an unnamed micro switch factory, but also claimed to be one of the original cofounders of Gateron, with over 20 years of experience in the design of switches. Tsai was a former colleague of Li, who originally worked in sales at Gateron around the same time that Li worked there. At the time of the writing, according to Li, Tsai no longer worked for Gateron and was under a 2 year ‘non-disclosure agreement’ type contract. However, the translation that was done was not the best, and some debate was waged over its accuracy by several members of the community. A month later, in fact, u/LilliedHart posted an updated translation of the original ZFrontier post, claiming to be a much more accurate translation. [13] Again, differing to my lack of Chinese understanding, I took to reading both sources in order to make this document. Heavily relying on the format of the TLDR created by u/ListenBeforeSpeaking in the LilliedHart translation, the drama as per this ZFrontier post could be summarized in steps as:

1. Li was a co-founder of ‘Gaderon’ and worked in the switch development and design department at the same time that Tsai was working in sales.
2. Li was ousted by his other, unnamed co-founder using contract trickery by changing the company name to ‘Gateron’. At some point after this, Tsai left sales and was placed under an NDA like hold for two years.
3. Li started up his own microswitch factory, which we now know (and is explained in the proof section below) as JWK, the Durock factory. Li designed the T1 switch as a close approximation of Zeal and Holy Panda switches due to their popularity.
4. Tsai, believing that he has found a loophole in the NDA contract, buys top housings from Gateron, rather than whole switches, and assembles them with “other stems and parts” to sell on his own. These would go on to be the Stealios switches.
5. Knowing that Tsai and Li have some form of prior business connection, and not taking kindly to Li’s competition, Gateron knowingly sells top housings to Tealios V2 pieces to Tsai.
6. The “other stems and parts” bought by Tsai are acquired from Li.
7. Tsai then begins selling these pieces, made of Gateron branded parts, as well as Li’s parts, to KBDFans under the guise of genuine Tealios V2 switches, which are then sold to the public.
8. Drama explodes here.
9. KBDFans blames Tsai, who in desperation, turns to help from Li, claiming that he needs proof of innocence in the form of Li’s production molds to prevent from going to prison. Li agrees to sell these to Tsai at a 200-300% markup. (This rationale does not make sense and is not further explained.)
10. Gateron confiscates the molds and claims they were Gateron property all along, effectively attempting to decimate Li’s production.
11. Li continues to produce Durock Shenzhen products with his few remaining molds and posts the aforementioned ZFrontier post to make clear to the world that this is Tsai and Gateron’s faults.

To date, no further discussion post from the parties involved has been made to further clarify or build upon the understanding of the events listed by Li, above. However, some proof has been collected by me in the way of switches over the course of this drama which does not necessarily make Li’s telling of the events seem wholly truthful.

Controversy Switches and Proof

Shortly after the initial peak of the controversy had hit, a friend of mine and fellow collector by the name of u/christokal approached me with respect to a very interesting conversation that he had had directly with a Chinese switch factory by the name of Durock Shenzhen in regards to the rumors that they were involved in the manufacturing of the Stealios pieces. Based on the bits and pieces of the conversation that he had shared with me, the sale representative that he had talked to stated that they had “four different colors of purple tactile stems” and when asked for pictures regarding some of the pieces they offered, Figures 4 and 5 were provided by the Durock sales representative.

While not immediately obvious, there are several interesting things that pop out regarding these photos. First, in Figure 4, there are beige colored stems which do not appear, to date, in any Durock switches that have been sold. In fact,



Figure 4: Durock Sales Rep Stem Pictures.
(Credit to u/christokal)

on pure speculation alone, these do appear to color match to the housings and stems of Novelkeys' Cream switches. With respect to Figure 5, below, the left four most pieces (A-D) are pastel colored stems which appear to color match that of Geekmaker switches, as can also be seen below. This is of extreme interest and is discussed in the next paragraph. Stem E appears to be a color match of the T1 stems suspected of being produced by Durock, at the time of the discussion with the sales rep, and Stems F and G represent Durock original products.

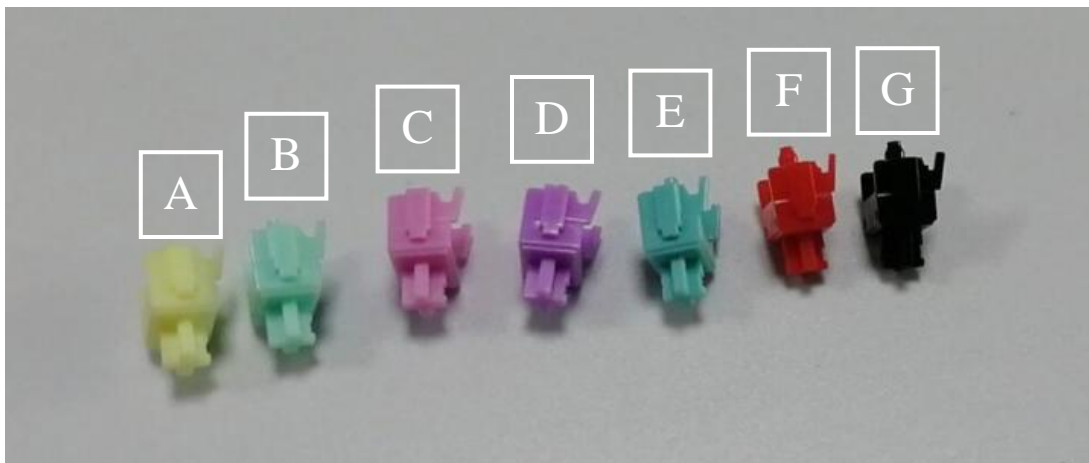


Figure 5: Durock Sales Rep Stem Pictures (II). (Credit to u/christokal)

The Geekmaker colored stems, A-D, at this point initially began to strongly enforce suspicions that Durock was behind the manufacturing of the fake branded Stealios. The rationale behind this lies in the original history of the Geekmaker switches. [14] In this early posting by u/dofboke, it is learned that Geekmaker Creamy switches were listed on various sites as having been made by Gateron, and in fact, the original housings of the Geekmaker switches *did* have a Gateron branded top housing. While this could easily make sense, as Gateron is a large production company, about part way down the thread u/ZealPC is quoted as saying that they aren't produced by Gateron and in fact "Geekmaker placed a bulk order from us once a few months back." u/ZealPC then proceeded to push that the site originally selling the Geekmaker switches branded and sold them as Gateron switches in order to capitalize on gullible western markets. Thus, switches with fake Gateron branding were directly connected to Durock Shenzhen, and by extension Li, an entire year prior to the rise of the Stealio controversy. In a purely speculative fashion, this may have been Tsai's first attempts to try and make money around the NDA contract he was forced to sign, assuming what Li had stated was true. Regardless, Li's factory, according to the pictures from the sales representative, were still producing stems that closely matched colors with switches accused of being fake Gateron's long before.

Shortly after this revelation that switches with fake Gateron branding were directly connected to Durock Shenzhen, u/christokal was able to secure a set of production samples of the switches offered by Durock Shenzhen, and within a month they arrived in hand. The pieces that were received were as follows:

#	Housing Type	Stem Color	Resembles	Type	#	Housing Type	Stem Color	Resembles	Type
1	Clear	Purple 1	Zealio V2 (62g)	Tactile	16	Smoky	Tan	-	Tactile
2	Clear	Purple 2	Zealio V2 (65g)	Tactile	17	Smoky	Maroon	-	Tactile
3	Clear	Purple 3	Zealio V2 (67g)	Tactile	18	Smoky	Yellow	-	Tactile
4	Clear	Purple 4	Zealio V2 (78g)	Tactile	19	Smoky	Black	-	Linear
5	Clear	Teal	Tealio	Linear	20	Smoky	Red	Redbacks	Linear
6	Smoky	Purple 1	Zealio V2 (62g)	Tactile	21	Clear	Light Blue	Geekmakers	Linear
7	Smoky	Purple 2	Zealio V2 (65g)	Tactile	22	Clear	Light Yellow	Geekmakers	Linear
8	Smoky	Purple 3	Zealio V2 (67g)	Tactile	23	Clear	Light Purple	Geekmakers	Linear
9	Smoky	Purple 4	Zealio V2 (78g)	Tactile	24	Clear	Light Pink	Geekmakers	Linear
10	Smoky	Teal	Tealio	Linear	25	Smoky	Light Blue	Geekmakers	Linear
11	Clear	Tan	-	Tactile	26	Smoky	Light Yellow	Geekmakers	Linear
12	Clear	Maroon	-	Tactile	27	Smoky	Light Purple	Geekmakers	Linear
13	Clear	Yellow	-	Tactile	28	Smoky	Light Pink	Geekmakers	Linear
14	Clear	Black	-	Linear	29	Clear	Dark Teal	Transparent T1	Tactile
15	Clear	Red	Redbacks	Linear	30	Smoky	Dark Teal	T1 Nights	Tactile

Figure 6: Table of factory samples received from Durock.

Upon obtaining these switches, I did several inspections of them with respect to the Stealios switches in order to determine if they shared the same characteristic flaws which were initially used in distinguishing the fake pieces. One of the most important points to be made here was that the receipt of 4 different purple, tactile switches *as well as* a teal linear piece without Gateron branding confirmed that there were more than just fake Tealios V2 switches being produced. In fact, I was later able to confirm this by receiving a full set of fake Zealios V2 with branding from u/levirules, which all bore the same distinguishing marks as the fake Tealios/Stealios and also the factory blanks. Aside the fact that the switches were nearly perfectly colored matched in terms of stem color with genuine Zealios V2, the clear housing variants did share all of the same distinguishing marks. As well, the difference in stem colors for the fake unbranded Zealios perfectly matched the gradient and weight changed of genuine Zealios V2 switches. Simply put, these pieces put the nail in the coffin and confirmed that Durock was either partly or wholly responsible for the manufacturing of the fake Zealios pieces. While the lack of branding on the top housings would make sense with Li's account of the drama, as he claimed that Tsai bought top housings from Gateron and the other pieces were purportedly bought from Li, there is one issue with Li's story. If Li was truly not involved in the manufacturing of the fake Zealios at all, then you would expect that there would be differences, at the extreme least, in the springs between the branded fake Stealios and the unbranded factory samples – but there aren't. Based on this assumption, I am led to believe that Li's accounting of the facts is not entirely true and that he did play some part in the manufacturing of the Stealios pieces conciously.

In addition to the confirmation of the connection between Durock and the fake Zealios V2 switches, the factory samples collected also contained unbranded switches with a dark teal stem reminiscent of the Transparent T1 and T1 Night switches from KBDFans. Further confirmation of this connection between Durock and KBDFans came in the form of a different shipment I had received roughly around the same time, which contained pre-production prototypes of the KBDFans' T1 switches. (Due to privacy concerns and fear of backlash from KBDFans', the seller of the pieces wished to remain anonymous, though they are active within the community and likely reading this.) A picture of the two branded prototypes, as well as a stock T1 Night switch may be found on the next page in Figure 7.



Figure 7: T1 Beta Prototype (Left), T1 Final Prototype (Middle), Stock T1 Night (Right). Note the difference in housing darkness between the prototypes and the release switch. (Personal Collection)

The two leftmost switches in Figure 7, above, are KBDFans' branded T1 pre-production prototypes while the right switch is the stock KBDFans T1 Night switch. While this might initially cause concerns that I had just placed alternate colored stems in T1 stock housings, it can be seen that the prototype houses are all slightly darker in shade compared to released pieces. In fact, this is not the only instance of this occurring, as the pieces received and reviewed on TopClack were noticeably darker in color than the release smoky housing T1s. [6] What is most peculiar here, though, is the presence of the yellow colored stems – as these are also the same color as the stem pictures provided by Durock representatives in Figure 4. Thus, based on the implied connection through the Durock manufacturing blanks, as well as the stem photos from the representative, these pre-production prototypes also makes certain at this point that T1s, as well as fake Zealios and Geekmakers, were all manufactured either partially with help from Tsai, or entirely by Durock and Li.

Being that the majority of this section has revolved around the connection of T1s, Stealios, and Geekmakers to Durock, Durock also shares tangential relation with a new and upcoming switch seller – ThicThock. ThicThock is the company that has recently completed its first groupbuy and is now in the manufacturing process of its switch – the Marshmallow – at the time of writing this document. (I did a write-up/review of Marshmallows in the same folder where this document is on Google Drive). According to a large update which was completed by ThicThock's owner, Jeffccy, surrounding rumors that Marshmallows were produced by Durock, these two switches share the same parent factory – JWK – but are otherwise unaffiliated. [15] This marks the first time throughout the course of Durock's existence that a public posting mentions the name of the factory under which Durock operates. Thus, this supports that the microswitch factory that Li is operating is likely JWK.

The Rise of Durock

Clearly undeterred by the events surrounding the Stealios controversy, Durock has made quite a name for itself within the community and has reached quite a large acclaim. As well, since the end of the controversy, several Durock switches have been released or placed in interest check at the time of the writing of this document. Below, I aim to briefly introduce each of the Durock switches released or planned

since the beginning of the Stealio controversy (in as best of order as I can manage), as well as a brief summary of the information surrounding these pieces.

Koalas –

The Koala switches, by and large, have been the most successful Durock switch outside of the T1 switches, as well as the most closely tied to drama. Originally, these were to be sold with KBDFans branding, but as can be seen in the Graveyard Addendum, this collapsed as soon as KBDFans chose to pull the T1 Night groupbuy from their site. Shortly after the pulling of these switches, an interest check was posted on GeekHack by Fropsie for an unbranded Koala switch, identical to the originally planned and prototyped pieces to be sold by KBDFans. [16] According to the original post, the interest check was approved by Biip, who was initially the driving force of these switches, and an MOQ of 10,000 of these pieces was set in place at \$0.48 per piece.

However, due to personal issues surrounding Fropsie, the control of the GB was then bumped to u/VicareyG, which many will recognize as being connected with Opticboards. [17] Unlike the initially planned \$0.48 per piece price, the price was increased by u/VicareyG to \$0.50 per piece, but in order for \$0.05 of each switch sold to be donated to the Australian Koala Foundation. The groupbuy closed in December of 2019, with reported 22,000 switches being ordered – which totaled \$1100 USD being donated to the Australian Koala Foundation.

The physical switches, themselves, are tactile 62g switches in a nylon top and bottom housing, with a POM stem, and a gold-plated spring. This design was chosen in order to match the Extended 2048 keycap set. This is discussed further in the Graveyard Addendum.

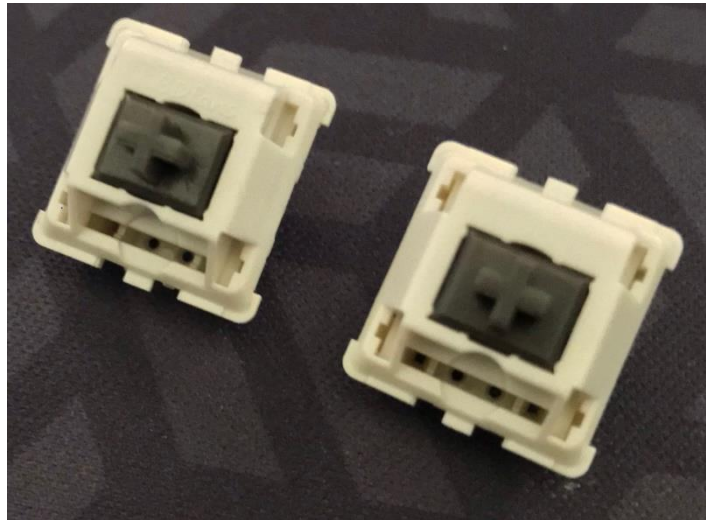


Figure 8: Koala Prototype (Left) and Koala Release (Right).
Picture courtesy of Fropsie (You still owe me these, by the way).

Okomochi and Pinoko –

Marketed as a pair of switches and riding off of the recent surge in Durock’s fame (and F2P_Corn’s love of the color pink), Okomochi and Pinoko switches were first introduced in late August of 2019 by Okonomiyaki(#2832) and u/F2P_Corn. [18,19] These switches were sold at \$0.65 per piece with an MOQ that started at 300 and was dropped to 250 due to community backlash. The Okomochi switches were a tactile T1 clone with a bright, translucent pink house and a clear stem, featuring 67.5g Punchy springs. The Pinoko switches were a linear switch with a translucent, pink housing with a similar clear stem, featuring a 68g Punchy slow curve spring.

The groupbuy of these switches were successful and switches were delivered in December of 2019, directly in line with the anticipated 8-12 weeks that was stated in the original groupbuy thread. Additionally, I have already completed an in-depth review of these switches which may be found in the same Google Drive thread which this was linked.



Figure 9: Okomochi Switches (Left) and Pinoko Switches (Right). (Personal Collection, picture from review)

The PrimeKB 3 –

Without any real prompting nor interest check/groupbuy phase, PrimeKB made a direct order from Durock for 3 different T1 clone switches, which they are selling under the collective name of ‘T1 Tactile Switches’. [20] In order to reduce confusion with respect to my collection, as well as the recent shit storm that has been Durock clone production, I have dubbed these as ‘The PrimeKB 3’.

The first switch is a 62g tactile with a dark grey, opaque housing and a red stem. The second is a 65g tactile with an identical dark grey, opaque housing and red stem, that although is listed as being a slightly darker color, does not appear to be in person. The final switch is a 67g tactile with a smoky, translucent black housing with a grey stem. Currently, as of the time of this being written, all are able to be bought on PrimeKB.



Figure 10: PrimeKB 3: 62g (Left), 65g (Middle), 67g (Right). (Personal Collection)

Tacit –

Unlike the other switches mentioned in the modern Durock era, these have been the least advertised as well as least known Durock switch. Originally posted to Keebwerk, and only Keebwerk, in September of 2019, these switches were promoted as aiming to be the first Durock silent tactile switch

with a light, wasabi green stem and white opaque housing. [21] These were aimed at having two different spring weight options at sale – one 55g and the other 67g.

However, the only update on this page is in October, stating that while there were functional samples made, some of the silencing parts were being remade, deferring an update to December. At the time of this document being written, no further update has been given by Keebwerk nor has any community wide announcement has been made regarding the status or potential fruition of these switches.



Figure 11: Keebwerk Tacit switch render. [21]

Alpacas –

Much in the same fashion as the PrimeKB 3, PrimeKB commissioned a Durock linear under the name ‘Alpacas’, which were aimed at accompanying the SA Bliss keycap set that was being sold at the time of release. [22] Keeping in line with the SA Bliss colorway, these featured an opaque, nylon grey housing with a light pink stem and gold plated 62g springs. These were initially sold at \$0.55 per piece and are currently sold out with plans to restock at the time of writing. Additionally, worth noting with these pieces is that they are the first of the Durock switches to feature factory lubing.

With the success of the Alpaca switches, and the very recent spike in interest surrounding Durock silent linear switches in December of 2019, a silent Alpaca switch was announced to go on sale in January of 2020. While no current picture of these switches exists, they are listed as having “a dark smokey clear housing with the same pink stem.”

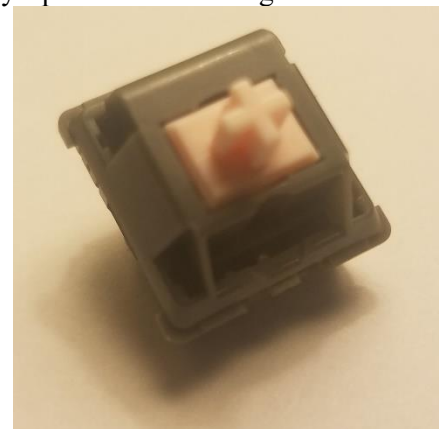


Figure 12: Alpaca switch.
(Personal Collection)

Bushi –

Completely separate from any major keyboard company, u/r_nb announced an interest check in October 2019 for a tactile and linear switch from Durock that would match GMK Red Samurai’s colorway. [23] The tactile switch was listed as a 67g switch, with a yellow housing (Nylon bottom/Polycarbonate Top) and a red POM stem at \$0.50 per piece. The linear switch was listed as a 67g switch, with a similar yellow housing and a gray POM stem at \$0.40 per piece.

However, these switches showed great struggle in reaching anywhere near the MOQ of 10,000 pieces needed during the initial groupbuy, with much of the concern being raised from the community surrounding a lack of color samples and only color approximations of what the switches would look like. [24]. In fact, after a solid month of groupbuy phase, it was reported that only 35% of MOQ was met. On December 24th, u/r_nb relisted the groupbuy with only the tactile switches as the linear switches apparently reached even less interest than the tactile ones. [25] While one can only speculate at this point, I highly doubt at the time of writing this that these will see success.

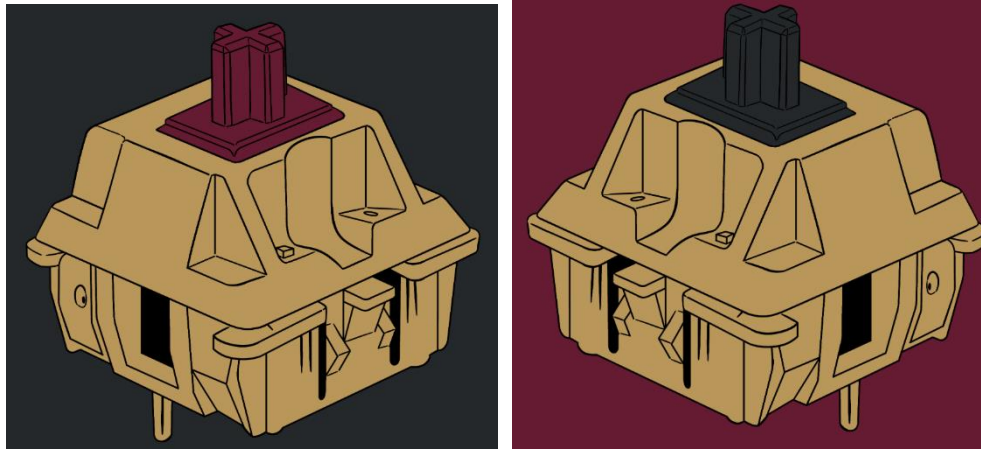


Figure 13: Bushi switch color diagrams. Tactile (Left) and Linear (Right). [23]

FFF –

In late November of 2019, ILUMKB posted the FFF switch, which was a pre-order of a linear switch made by JWK. [26] The switches were designed by FF of Matrix Lab, and feature a smoky black, translucent housing with a yellow-orange stem. The switches are 62g in weight, and unlike the vast majority of other Durock switches, these are pre-lubed.

Upon having received updated information regarding this switch post initial publication, there is still some debate as to whether or not FFF switches are Durock switches, or simply manufactured by JWK in the same fashion as Marshmallows. While one would be lead to believe that FFF switches are Durock, based in the similar smoky housing design as well as familiar 62g weight common in many Durock variant switches, the presence of the C³ Pumpkin switches discussed, below, leads to the belief that these are JWK made but *not* Durock affiliated. An additional point worth noting here, is that the original sales page, which still had pieces for sale at the time in which this document was written, listed a maximum of 5,000 switches to be sold. Since JWK's MOQ is 10,000 pieces (as is known from u/christokal's initial inquiry to the sales representative), it is likely that the other 5,000 pieces were already run in a private, Chinese-focused groupbuy in similar fashion to the C³ Pumpkin switches.

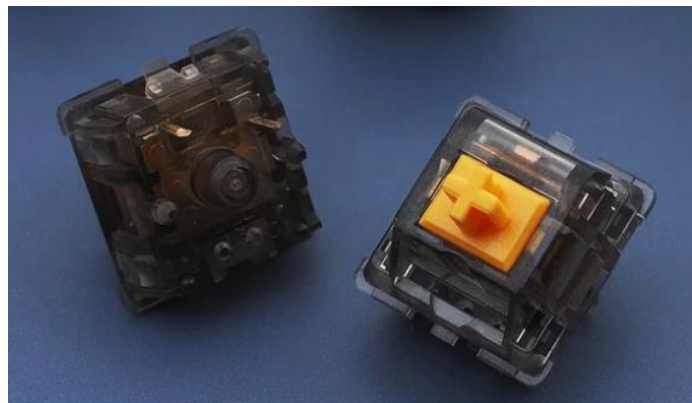


Figure 14: FFF Switches. [26]

Redbacks –

Note: This does not fall chronologically in line after the FFF switches, rather, I wasn't quite sure of when these pieces initially released, and I only discovered them after the release of the FFF switches.

DailyClack, much like PrimeKB and ILUMKB, has also stepped up to the plate with their own Durock switch – the DailyClack Redback linear. [27] These switches come as 67g linear switches, with a smoky black, translucent housing and a red stem. At the time of writing, they are currently still being sold, with no indication of limited stock, at \$0.81 per piece.

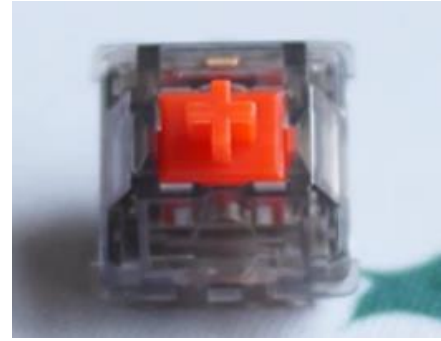


Figure 15: DailyClack Redback Linears. [27]

C³ “Pumpkins” / C³ Tangerine V2.5 –

Note: Much in similar fashion to the DailyClack RedBack switches, I wasn't able to accurately determine when in the timeline these switches were released for several reasons. First of all, while I was aware of their existence long before writing this document, I was unable to provide evidence and/or discussion per my source's request. Additionally, and most notably, these switches have only been run in a private Chinese groupbuy at the time this is being written, and thus they are still pretty much unknown to the vast majority of the western market.

In similar fashion to ThicThock and Marshmallow switches, Equalz/C³ has recently made contact with and established a switch design with JWK that is an attempt to recreate the failed C³ Tangerine V2 line that collapsed shortly after Gateron's increased MOQ for custom recolors following the supposed event's surrounding the Linjar groupbuy. [2.1,2.2] Unlike the C³ Tangerine V2s which failed, these C³ Tangerine V2.5 switches boast a translucent orange housing and light green stem, baring obvious resemblance to their namesake. (The nickname of Pumpkins was adopted only to reduce conversational confusion about which version of the Tangerine line these switches represented.) Additionally, these are believed to be linear switches with a 62g, gold plated spring.

According to a source who requested not to be named, FFF switches and the C³ Tangerine V2.5 share the same mold for bottom housings as well as stems, but *not* top housings. Since these switches are not affiliated with Durock, and bare a brand-new nameplate “Equalz”, this supports the aforementioned idea that both the C³ Pumpkin switches, as well as FFF switches are JWK affiliated and *not* Durock products. Additionally, worth noting here, much like the C³ Tangerine V1.5 switches, it is rumored that TheKeyCompany will soon be hosting the sale of these switches, as at the time of writing, the only sale that has been completed was a Chinese private groupbuy. [2.3] According to .JSON of TheKeyCompany, the switches will be sold in two different weights – 63.5g and 67g options – with the 67g option baring a darker green stem.



Figure 16: C³ “Pumpkin” switch. Note the first appearance of the “Equalz” nameplate to date. [2.1]

Seriko Switches –

The newest of the modern Durock era, Zambumon, DailyClack, and Homerow Co. simultaneously announced in late December the Seriko switch – the first Durock silent linear to hit the market en masse. [28-30] These switches, introduced as limited to this groupbuy phase only, are 67g

silent linear switches with a black bottom housing, yellow top housing (both opaque), and a black stem, in order to color match Zambumon's Serika keyset. Currently, Serikos are being sold at \$0.75 per piece for the groupbuy, which ends on January 25th, 2020. The estimated shipping date is mid-March of 2020.

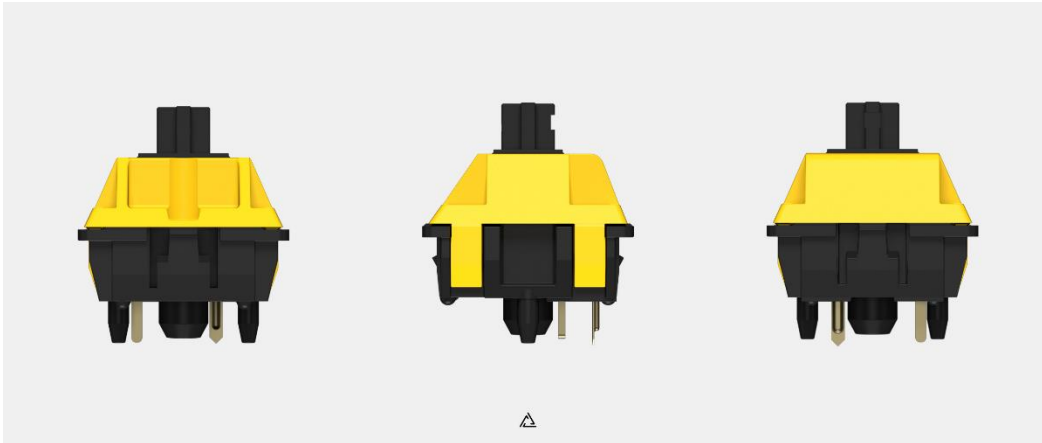


Figure 17: Seriko Silent Linear switch render. [28]

The Graveyard Addendum

The Stealio controversy did not just eliminate the KBDfans T1 switches from history, but also removed alongside them the prospect of several other interesting pieces that the community has long since forgotten. The first of these switches, the KBDfans Koala, was a 62g tactile T1 clone which featured a dark grey POM stem in a nylon, off-white colored housing. The color scheme was to match the release of Biip's EnjoyPBT Extended 2048 set and the initial release of this switch was done so via the Keebtalk release page for this set. [31] As is mentioned above, and further outlined under the Modern Durock Era section, an unbranded version of the Koala switch was later released in the future.



Figure 18: Initial Koala switch render from EnjoyPBT Extended 2048 announcement (Left) and keycap set render (Right). [31]

The second of the switches that were lost to the controversy were simply known as 'Sonic' and were a recolor of the KBDfans T1 switches being conducted in parallel with the GMK Wavez groupbuy at the time. The switches, whose initial interest check was posted by u/Visionaire, showed a render of a Sonic switch with a dark green housing and light green stem to fit with the color scheme of the GMK

Wavez modifier caps. The specs were simply listed as ‘67cN bottom out’ springs, which would have been identical, mechanically, to T1s at the time. [32]



Figure 19: Durock Sonic switches (Left), aimed to color match GMK Wavez' modifier keycaps (Right). [32,33]

The third casualty of the Stealios controversy came about purely as collateral damage. The ‘Sonic-L’ switch was another colored switch to be released alongside the Sonic switch and GMK Wavez set, though it was aimed to be a linear, Gateron Yellow recolor rather than a T1 recolor piece. (This is similar in nature to the Linjar switch by u/Emir, which is effectively a Swedish colored version of a Gateron Yellow.) The rendering of this switch showed the same stem color as the Sonic switch, though the top housing featured a noticeably lighter color, with the rationale for such being stated as to match the GMK Wavez alpha caps. The cancellation of the T1 Sonic switch effectively killed all steam for these pieces and prevented their existence from ever coming about.



Figure 20: Gateron Sonic-L switches (Left) which were designed to color match GMK Wavez' alpha caps colors. (Right) [32,33]

Personal

Big thank you to the following people who have either helped me along the way switch collecting or in pushing my lazy ass to complete this writeup:

- Satanarchist (u/parallelojam): You're the one who got me into all this madness, so you're more than guilty in creating this insanity.
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- Jeffccy: Thank you for getting me to write my first in depth review, it truly needed done and I hope to do more in the future.

- Switch Collecting Community: Thank you for all the support and help in making me realize how far I still have to go to truly fill out my collection.
- Ohio Keyboard Community: Best meetups ever, wouldn't miss them for the world.

- For anyone and everyone else who has supported my collection along the way or encouraged me to get this far – thank you dearly, your contributions haven't been and won't be forgotten.

Edits

As I am but a single goat, thus the following edits have been made since the original posting:

- Fixed u/christokal's reddit name because I misremembered it.
- u/VicareyG is not associated with GBoards, rather Opticboards. (Apologies Germ)
- Original sale Alpacas had switch lubrication. (FFF was not the first)
- Updated FFF switches with more detail, as well as confirmation of JWK affiliation.
- Added the C³ Pumpkin switch, confirmed JWK but not Durock affiliation.
- Added more citations surrounding C³ Pumpkin switches.

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