

Industry News

Shifman says it makes 'works of mattress art'

By David Perry

NEWARK, N.J. — Not too many bedding companies would dare put their top offerings in the category of works of art. But Shifman Mattresses isn't your typical bedding company.

The high-end producer, based here, first introduced its Masters Collection in 1997 when the Monet, the Picasso, the Van Gogh, the Rembrandt and the Renoir — named after famous artists, of course — made their debut.

Shifman has added to the collection over the years, and recently took the line to a new top price point of \$7,399 with the introduction of the Cezanne. The bed, which features 95% natural materials including pashmina cashmere and what the company calls "an exorbitant amount of cotton and natural latex," is hand-tufted to lock the various comfort layers in place and uses an eight-way, hand-tied box spring.

Company officials say the Masters Collection, which starts

at \$3,199, is deserving of the high standards suggested by its name.

"These are works of mattress art," said Bill Hammer, Shifman's president. "The amount of craftsmanship that goes into them is extraordinary. Every single factory worker takes as much pride in making these products as we do in talking about them. Everyone knows this company is all about making the finest mattresses possible."

"That's what our retailers want us to do," added Mike Hammer, CEO. They are looking to Shifman to add quality, not cut costs, he said.

The Masters Collection, like all Shifman products, features a two-sided construction. The Hammers say that type of design maintains its comfort levels much longer than single-sided beds, thus providing more value to the consumer.

Bill Hammer said the Cezanne, which was successfully introduced at the latest High Point Market, is "the most com-



The Cezanne is the new top model in the Masters Collection at Shifman Mattresses.

fortable mattress ever made."

Shifman's bedding lines start at \$699, which has been the company's starting price for years. Due to recent increases in the price of raw materials, the company will raise its starting price to \$749 on Aug. 1.

The Hammers say they are proud of every bed in their line, including the starting model. The starter "will hold up and last longer than any \$999 product, but it may not have the

look of competitors' products at \$999," Bill Hammer said. "That is intentional."

Shifman's starting collection is the Quilted Collection, which features up to 47 pounds of natural cotton upholstery in a king-size model. The cushioning layers feature about 50% cotton, about 40% polyurethane foam and about 10% polyester.

The Premium Collection, retailing from \$2,299 to about

\$3,000, features better materials, more cotton upholstery (up to 83 pounds in a king bed), hand-tufting, and eight-way, hand-tied box springs. About 80% of the filling materials in that line are natural.

The Masters Collection is the top line, featuring up to 95% all-natural materials in the comfort layers. The line uses elegant, luxurious materials. No polyurethane foam is used in that line, the company says.

Shifman piles on the layers of cotton as it moves up in price point. The company still garnets its cotton, breaking the bales of raw cotton down and turning them into thin layers. That process dates back to the 19th century and only a handful of bedding producers still use it today.

Why the emphasis on cotton? "It's natural, it breathes and it keeps you warmer in winter and cooler in summer," Bill Hammer said. "It holds up better than any other material. It also stays true to its firmness over time."