

# Stitches

## EMBROIDERY MACHINE REVIEW

Eight companies give us the dish on some of the newest embroidery machines and attachments in the industry. By Shane Dale

In the current economic climate, it's more important than ever for decorators to do their homework

when looking for the embroidery machine that best fits their business models. *Stitches* has compiled a

list of some of the industry's newest machines and attachments to make that search a bit easier.

**Barudan America Inc.** recently released the **Barudan C01 BEVT-1501 C and Barudan Golf Bag Attachment.**

**Key features:** Ansley Spencer, marketing manager for Barudan, says the C01 BEVT-1501 C comes with a color LCD Automat with icon-based operation menus. It has 15 needles with variable sewing speeds of up to 1,000 stitches per minute, a sewing field of approximately 17 ¾ inches by 20 ½ inches, 30 memory locations and 10-million-stitch internal memory. Additional features are a curved radius cylinder arm, a quick changeover system and exclusive electronic thread clamps that eliminate false thread breaks and thread pullout, according to Spencer.

The Golf Bag Attachment allows for stitch designs on side pockets, apparel pockets and hard-to-reach ball pockets, Spencer says. "It's designed to hold the heaviest of golf bags, and you can change over from golf bag attachments to other applications in only a few minutes," she says.

**Who should use this machine/attachment:** "The C-01 is perfect for small and large embroidery businesses," Spencer says. "The sewing field allows for larger items like blankets and jackets.

"The golf bag attachment is ideal for businesses that cater to the golf industry. It makes embroidery on golf bags seamless and efficient," she says. "The attachment can also be removed, allowing for embroidery on all types of garments and applications."

**Who shouldn't use this machine/attachment:**

"The golf bag attachment is an investment. If you are not successfully targeting the golf industry, this may not be the best option for you," Spencer says.

**User review:** Brenda Glazer, embroidery manager with Wilson Sporting Goods in Sparta, TN, says the golf bag attachment comes in handy for Wilson's golf product line. "It's versatile," she says. "You can get into the large side clothing pockets and the small ball pockets on the front." Glazer adds that the attachment requires very little maintenance and can handle large orders with no problem.

In terms of improvements, Glazer says she'd like to be able to close the clamps on the attachment closer together during small designs for stabilization purposes. "Also, it would be nice if there was some way to have a bar or shelf underneath to support the bags, because right now they're just hanging in limbo, and there's a chance that they can get pulled because they're so heavy," she says.

**Contact:** Barudan America Inc., Solon, OH; (800) 627-4776; [www.barudanamerica.com](http://www.barudanamerica.com)



**Brother International Corp.** recently released the **BE1201B-AC PC**, a full-size, singlehead machine with 12 needles and full-production-control networking software.

**Key features:** Steve Hobbs, sales manager at Brother, says the BE1201B-AC PC comes with a jumbo bobbin, which gives decorators 50% more thread, equating to more sewing time and less downtime and saving users an estimated \$2,000 per year. “Another key feature is the fact that it has a production control networking software that is exclusive to Brother that will allow you to be ‘Big Brother’ on the machine, to use the slang,” he says. “We’ll tell you when the machine was turned on and the cycle time, and it’ll tell you if it had a thread break and at what time, at what needle and at what stitch count.”

The machine also allows decorators to add equipment, such as an additional head. It also comes with a self-oiling system that saves users from even more downtime, Hobbs says.

**Who should use this machine:** “This machine is an excellent machine for any level of embroidery,” Hobbs says. “All companies are going to need singlehead machines, depending on their business model, to do small runs or business

samples. A singlehead is a very good starting point for any embroidery company.”

**Who shouldn’t use this machine:** “Your productivity on the machine is limited to one garment at a time, so if you have 5,000 pieces, you’re definitely going to be more productive on a multihead than on a singlehead machine,”

Hobbs says. “It depends on the stitch count.”

**User review:** John DeDonato, owner of Impact Marketing, says the level of service he received from Brother was the primary reason that he chose the BE1201B-AC PC over other machines. “We started off with one of their small tabletop machines in our house, and now we have a 5,000-square-foot facility,” he says. “They’re very patient. They do whatever they have to do to help us.”

DeDonato, who now owns three of the machines, says the BE1201B is “a good, solid machine,” and other than normal wear-and-tear issues, such as the wearing of the bobbin cases over time, has no complaints. “We’ve never had to retime the timing on the machine,” he says.

**Contact:** Brother International Corp., Bridgewater, NJ; (800) 432-3532; [www.brother.com](http://www.brother.com)



**Meistergram Embroidery Equipment** recently released the **PRO 1202 – Two-Head Bridge-Type Embroidery Machine**.

**Key features:** The 12-needle PRO 1202 has a super-wide 270-degree cap frame kit with built-in noise reduction technology and level II digitizing software, according to Ron Long, national sales manager for Pantograms, which is now the exclusive distributor for Meistergram in the United States and Canada.

**Who should use this machine:** “The cap frame kits are great for producing high mass-customization cap runs,” Long says.

**Who shouldn’t use this machine:** “The PRO 1202 cap frames are not for

doing one or two cap runs,” Long says. “The application works best for runs of six dozen and more caps.”

**User review:** Garlyn Gill, owner of Gill’s Screenprinting, says keeping the thread at optimum tension is simple with the PRO 1202. He also enjoys the machine’s outlining abilities. “Having the machine being able to run an outline of the design without using the needles is a big help to make sure

you’re not going to jam any fast-moving machine parts into the hoop when working with a new design for the first time,” he says.

Gill has been able to embroider T-shirts, polos, work jackets, hooded fleece jackets, dance outfits and shorts, underwear, duffle bags, laptop computer bags, golf towels and hats with the PRO 1202. “Being able to rotate the design so that you can put the garment on the machine in the way that best suits the garment and still be able to embroider the design onto the garment correctly is very helpful,” he says.

**Contact:** Meistergram Embroidery Equipment, Carlstadt, NJ; (888) 4-Meister; [www.meistergram.us](http://www.meistergram.us)



**Hirsch International/Tajima** recently released the **TEMX-C1501 – Tajima Neo Plus Embroidery Machine with Cylindrical Frame Attachment.** (The cylindrical frame attachment is sold separately.)

**Key features:** Eric Quinn, West Coast sales manager for Hirsch, says the TEMX-C1501 comes with a full-color display with a real-time design view and a 2-million-stitch, 200-design memory. “It comes standard with a complete 270-degree cap system and complete set of tubular hoops, and it has the industry’s most accurate rotary thread detection system, in addition to many reporting and editing functions on the control panel,” he says. “It can be used as a stand-alone machine or can be networked with other Tajima machines through a LAN connection.”

**Who should use this machine/attachment:** “Anyone from a startup to a home embroiderer to a commercial business” can use this machine, Quinn says. “This machine will turn out great embroidery if it’s your only machine, and it’s very dependable. If you are a bigger shop, this is a great machine to use for smaller runs or samples, so you can keep your bigger production multihead machines like the TFMX-IIC1506, TFMX-IIC1508 or TEMX-C1212 for larger runs. The cylindrical frame attachment is great for doing narrow-cylinder items such as golf head covers, socks and wine bags.”

**Who shouldn’t use this machine/attachment:** “If there’s a job to avoid on a machine like this, it would be something that needs a lot of room to hang down while embroidering, such as a suitcase or golf bag,” Quinn says. “Because it’s compact, there’s not a lot of room for the garment to hang down. The machine is more than capable of embroidering on these items, but you may not physically have the room to do them.”

**User review:** Cheryl Husslein, owner of Gold Canyon Embroidery, has owned her TEMX-C1501 for about six months and enjoys its mobility. “We’ve taken it to events, so that’s a nice little feature to have,” she says. “It kind of wows people.”

Husslein typically uses the machine to embroider on hats. “I leave it in hat mode, crank out 100 per order and it gives me no problem,” she says. “Just the whole design is comfortable to use, as well as the screen. I have confidence in it.”

**Contact:** Hirsch International, Hauppauge, NY; (800) 394-4426;  
[www.hirschinternational.com](http://www.hirschinternational.com)



## Finance Your Embroidery Machine

**Sean Evans, account manager for Beacon Funding Corp., which provides equipment financing for decorators, discusses the pros and cons of each option that decorators have in financing embroidery machines:**

### Option 1: Cash/Line of Credit

**Pros:** This may be the simplest way to obtain funds for a machine, Evans says. “Cash can be the cheapest way of financing because you’re paying what it is,” rather than the cost of the machine plus interest, he says.

**Cons:** With the tanking economy, banks are limiting credit lines, or worse, calling in customers’ credit lines with very little notice. “If they call it in, and say you have a \$50,000 credit line, it can be due next week,” Evans says. “If you have it charged up with a machine purchase, you have to scramble.”

### Option 2: Personal Credit Card

**Pros:** Credit cards may be the way to go if you can

find an offer that includes no-interest financing for six or 12 months and you plan to pay off the machine in that time period, according to Evans. “If it’s a piece of equipment you’re paying off, that may be a logical way to go about doing it,” he says.

**Cons:** Using a personal credit card to pay for a machine will not help you establish a business credit rating, Evans says. “It’s considered separate.” In addition, credit card companies can raise interest rates at any time. “If you’re one day past-due on your payments, they can technically call your account in default, and they can do that without notice,” he says.

Having a business expense as part of your personal debt amount can also skew your debt-to-equity ratio, which can hurt your chances for a home or car loan, according to Evans.

### Option 3: Equipment Financing

**Pros:** Beacon Funding offers this type of financing. “We look at things differently,” Evans says. “We look at the equipment, the individual credit information and business information if it exists.” Evans says Beacon looks at the machine as its own collateral. “If something were to happen, we’d just want that

equipment back,” he says. Evans adds that equipment financing is a good way to establish business credit.

**Cons:** Evans cautions that equipment financing may not be a good idea if the machine isn’t worth a lot in terms of resale. “Just like with the market resale value of a BMW vs. a Hyundai, there’s a difference,” he says. “The weaker the collateral, the more down payment you’re going to have. We look at the collateral and the value of the equipment, and factor that into the decision-making process.”

### Option 4: Bank Financing

**Pros:** From a cost standpoint, financing via a bank loan is going to cost the same or slightly less than equipment financing, Evans says.

**Cons:** Evans says that banks have very rigid ways of evaluating equipment for loans, which require decorators to put together “full-blown business plans” before applying for a bank loan.

Banks also typically want additional collateral. “They want other pieces of property as collateral, such as silk screen equipment or computers that are owned outright, beyond the machine being financed,” he says. “That protects their interests.”



**Melco Industries Inc.** recently released the **AMAYA XT**.

**Key features:** “The AMAYA XT has the largest cap sewing field in the industry,” says Justin Schierkolk, Melco’s marketing manager. “Multiple AMAYA XTs can be networked together to form a powerful and versatile multihead embroidery system.” Schierkolk adds that thread tension and feed is controlled by Acti-Feed computer software, which delivers precise thread tension. “You’ll get faster speeds, fewer thread breaks and consistent quality. You don’t have to use backing material on many designs,” he says.

AMAYA XT consistently reaches speeds of up to 1,500 stitches per minute, regardless of machine configuration. It also has a 16-color backup system and a precise laser-tracing eye, according to Schierkolk. “Plus, the independent systems are not affected by single thread breaks like conventional machines, which shut down production of all heads,” he says.

**Who should use this machine:** Schierkolk says the machine is ideal for embroidering shirts, caps, blankets, bags, pockets, jackets, pants, jeans and leather. “AMAYA XTs can also operate independently to fulfill small personalization orders and samples,” he says.

**Who shouldn’t use this machine:** “Melco’s AMAYA XT is designed for personalizing apparel in small business and mass production multihead environments. However, it may not be best suited for sash fabric embroidery in mass production,” Schierkolk says. To fill this need, Schierkolk says that



## AMAYA XT

heads would make us more efficient than a six- or 12-head machine with a much more limited capacity,” he says. Wagner adds that the actual sewing time is better with the AMAYA XT than with traditional machines. “If you have a thread break on a certain needle, the AMAYA operates independently and the other machines continue to sew while you fix that part,” he says. “The other machines continuing to sew during those 30 seconds is a huge advantage for us.”

Wagner says a drawback is the slightly higher maintenance costs that come with operating 12 machines rather than one or two machines that have a single control center. He adds that since the machines are connected to a PC, they can appear to be less user-friendly than other machines. “There’s a lot of hesitation and fear from people who aren’t computer-competent to run the AMAYA vs. other machines,” he says. “It’s more intimidating-looking.”

**Contact:** Melco Industries Inc., Denver, CO; (800) 799-8313; [www.melcousa.com](http://www.melcousa.com)

Melco’s parent company, Oerlikon, manufactures Shuttle Embroidery Machines ([www.saurer.oerlikon.textile.com](http://www.saurer.oerlikon.textile.com)).

**User review:** David Wagner, owner of Two Fish Apparel, decided that having independent singlehead machines would be a wise investment, which is why he bought 12 AMAYA XTs. “By doing runs of 20 to 40 pieces, I thought having the independent

**Toyota/Pantograms Mfg. Co. Inc.** recently released the **TOYOTA ESP9100 Net multihead machine**.

**Key features:** Ron Long, national sales manager for Pantograms, says the ESP9100 comes with wireless capacities, a quiet, low vibration and an additional attachment that provides a 15-inch-by-40-inch sewing field. “Different heads can stitch different jobs at the same time, eliminating maintenance time and costs,” he says.

**Who should use this machine:** Commercial, uniform and home-based business markets should invest in the ESP9100, Long says.

**Who shouldn’t use this machine:** “The machine isn’t meant for a crafter; it’s better for daily production use,” Long says. “If you’re doing 3,000 pieces or more a day, it might not be the best application.”

**User review:** Carol Chabay, owner of DC Signature Gifts,

did a lot of research before purchasing her embroidery machine, and discovered that all of her decorating friends had TOYOTA machines for at least seven years and were satisfied with their purchases. She has a pair of ESP9100s at the moment. “I do like the network ability of it, being able to send information to both machines, and how easy it is to use,” she says. “My machines have never broken down and the timing has always been good. They’re my two workhorses. I’ve had them for over a year and I would like to eventually purchase two more.”

**Contact:** Pantograms Mfg. Co. Inc., Tampa, FL; (800) 872-1555; [www.pantograms.com](http://www.pantograms.com)



## Choose the Right Machine for Your Business

**Nick Mattina, sales manager for Prodigy, discusses the four classes of singlehead embroidery machines:**

### **Class 1 (arm machine)**

**Jobs:** Mattina says Class 1 machines are best for decorators who embroider as a hobby or for craft fairs. A left-right sewing distance of 9 inches to 11 inches and front-to-back sewing distance of 8 inches to 10 inches allows for sewing of semi-wide caps. "A Class 1 is great because it's really easy to move around, and it's quiet," Mattina says, adding that Class 1 machines typically weigh less than 100 pounds and come with six to 15 needles.

**Examples:** Brother PR-600; Voyager HAPPY HCS

### **Class 2 (arm machine)**

**Jobs:** Class 2 machines typically

have a 270-degree cap system and have a sewing distance of 16 inches to 19 inches from left to right and 12 inches to 14 inches from front to back. "With Class 2, the arm gets a little longer. They're more industrial and have larger motors," Mattina says. Class 2 machines come with nine to 16 needles.

**Examples:** Barudan Elite Junior; Melco AMAYA XT

### **Class 3 (arm machine)**

**Jobs:** "You're going to do the same jobs as on a Class 2, but maybe a little bit bigger," Mattina says, adding that duvet covers or blankets can be embroidered on Class 3 machines, as they accommodate excess fabric. Class 3 machines generally have the same sewing distances as Class 2 and come with nine to 15 needles.

**Examples:** Barudan Elite Pro; HAPPY HCA; Tajima TMEX C



### **Class 4 (bridge machine)**

**Jobs:** Items with a great deal of excess fabric, such as horse blankets, are ideal for embroidery on Class 4 machines, according to Mattina. "A monogram shop that's going to be doing everything from tennis racquet covers to luggage, they probably need the most versatile singlehead machine," he says. Class 4 machines typically have sewing

fields of 13 inches to 17 inches from left to right and 16 inches to 20 inches from front to back.

**Examples:** SWF/EU-1501; Prodigy PM-1201-CSX(L).

For a list of questions to ask before purchasing an embroidery machine, go to <http://www.prodigyemb.com/New2Industry/Questions.asp?link=new>.

Prodigi by Midwest Distributors recently released the **SMART Sequin** attachment for its singlehead and multihead embroidery machines.

**Key features:** "Our SMART sequin attachment has interchangeable feeders, which allow for 3, 4, 5 and 7mm sequins of all shapes – stars, hearts, flowers, circles, etc. – to be fed through just one device instead of buying multiple devices for different sizes," says Andrea Bommarito, marketing coordinator and software specialist for Prodigy. "It's motorized for quiet movement and a more dependable operation. For high-performance, large multihead applications, we also offer a pneumatic cylinder drive for higher-speed production."

**Who should use this attachment:** The SMART Sequin attachment can be used for garment embellishment, dance costumes, wedding dress embellishment, elegant and special-occasion apparel, spirit wear, purse and bag embellishment, upscale and retail apparel and ornamental accessories like belts and scarves, according to Bommarito.

**Who shouldn't use this attachment:** Not every corporate client may be ready for sequins, Bommarito says. "For sequins, it just depends on what market you're working with. If you're working with only corporate apparel, then maybe you won't work with the sequins," she says.

**User review:** Gary Sewell, co-owner of Ann's Embroidery, purchased the SMART Sequin attachment for a dual-head machine when he and his wife wanted to explore some additional markets. "With schools and dance groups, you see more glitter on their clothes," he says, adding that the new version of the attachment is user-friendly. "The first one we got was not quite so much," he says. "It was a hydraulic and had a compressor. The new one is electric. It's quieter, faster and much easier to use."

One aspect of the attachment that Sewell would like to see improved is the trace function. "When you do the trace, if you're not careful you'll slam it right into the hoop," he says. "We've done that a couple times." Sewell says a laser would come in handy in avoiding that issue.

**Contact:** Prodigy by Midwest Distributors, Wentzville, MO; (877) 724-6400; [www.prodigyemb.com](http://www.prodigyemb.com)





## SWF East/MESA Distributors

recently released the **SWF 1501-T** with border frame.

**Key features:** “The SWF 1501-T is an ideal embroidery machine for both tubular garments and large flat garments,” says Kathy Lengyel, creative director for Scupe Marketing. “The large, flat table with the border frame allows for large embroidery areas up to 12 inches by 20 inches.”

The 1501-T includes a full-color LCD screen for direct on-screen editing, allows inputting of designs via a USB flash drive and has a direct connection to computers or floppy disks. “The machine features a self-oiling system, so there is no need to stop and oil the machine – just fill the main oil reservoir,” Lengyel says. “There are wicks in the machine going to the most common oiling areas, eliminating the many areas you would have to do by hand. It saves time and protects the machine.

“With the border frame, you can hoop large, hard-to-hoop items like horse blankets, car mats, duvet covers and sheets, or apply multiple items to be embroidered using sticky back stabilizer – for example, hair ribbons, dog collars and belts.”

**Who should use this machine:** Lengyel says mom-and-pop decorators are a good fit for the 1501-T since it’s a singlehead machine, but it could come in handy for the bigger shops, as well. “The benefit of the T is that it’s a table-top, so it can handle large embroidery areas if a larger shop wanted to do that,” she says. “But usually big shops want the large, multiple-quantity things.”

The border frame attachment, however, should be considered by all shops big and small, Lengyel says. “The border frame can go on all the machines,” she says. “It’s universal in that regard.”

### **Who shouldn’t use this machine:**

Large shops may want to look at some of SWF East’s multihead machines,



Lengyel says. “The 1504 is the same machine, but with four heads,” she says.

Lengyel says the border frame attachment is used only for flat items. “It cannot be used for T-shirts, polos, sweatshirts or anything tubular,” she says. “The flat item needs to be larger than the frame, or the sticky back stabilizer must be hooped with the item sticking to the stabilizer.”

**User review:** Kim Langevin, owner of A to Z Embroidery, says the border frame is a very useful attachment for a variety of applications. “I visit a lot of horse shows and market my embroidery services to horse lovers,” she says. “The border frame allows me to embroider horse blankets, saddle pads, trunk covers and patches for my customers.”

Langevin enjoys the ability that the 1501-T gives her to embroider large items. “I do duvet covers and Carhartt jackets,” she says. “I like the big table



to help support the items I’m doing. The smaller machines do not have the sewing field I’m needing or the big table to help support the items, and I love the capability to use a USB and read files and folders.”

**Contact:** SWF East, Tampa, FL; (877) 793-3278; [www.swfeast.com](http://www.swfeast.com).

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