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THE SOURCE
**THE
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IMPORTANT
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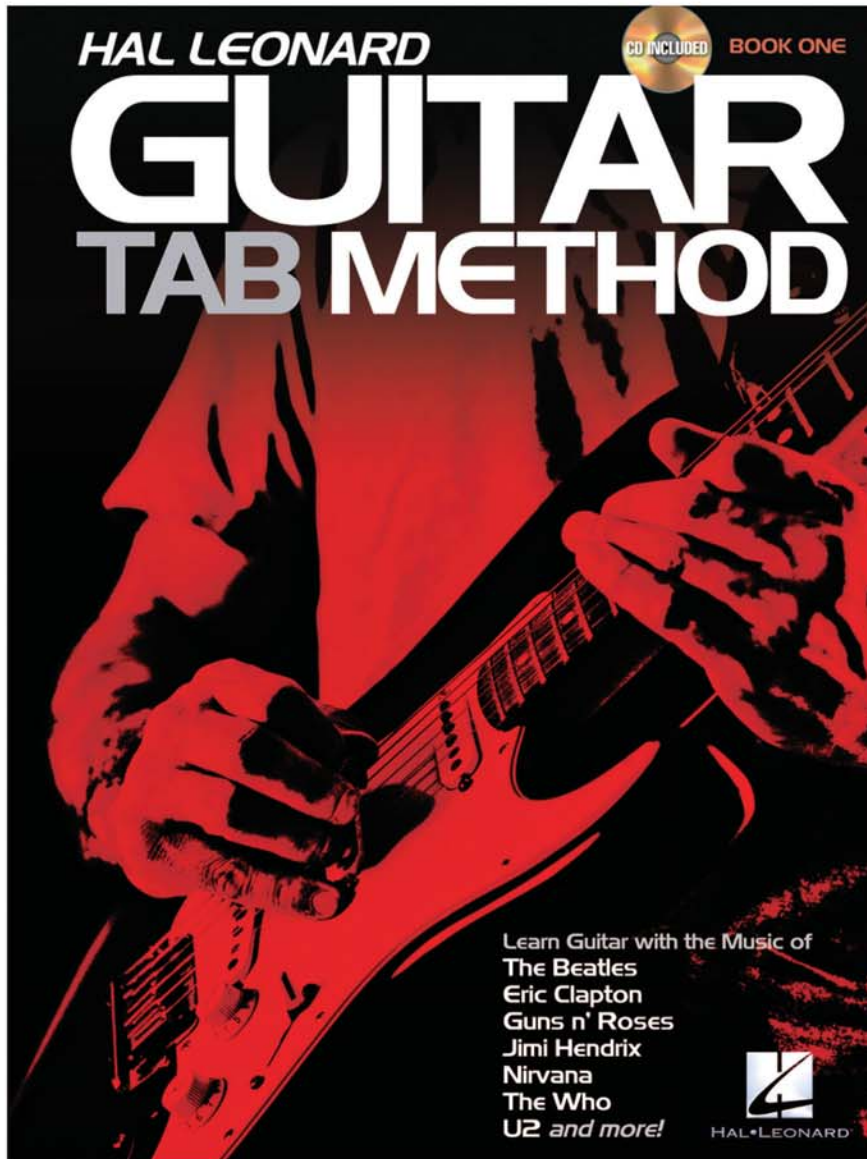
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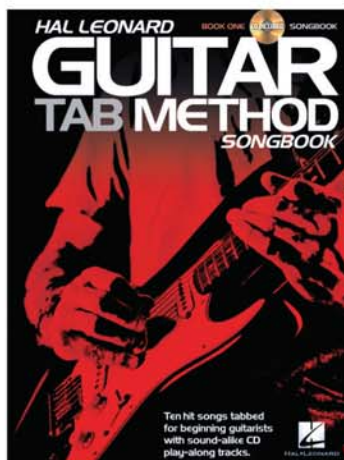
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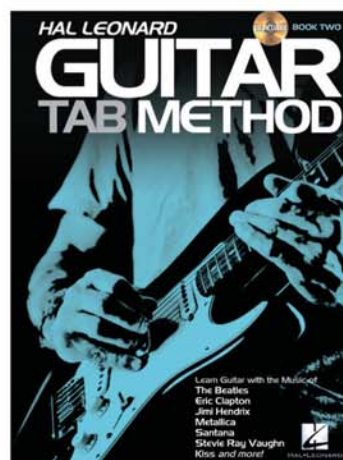
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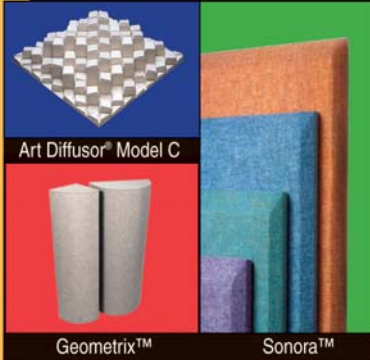




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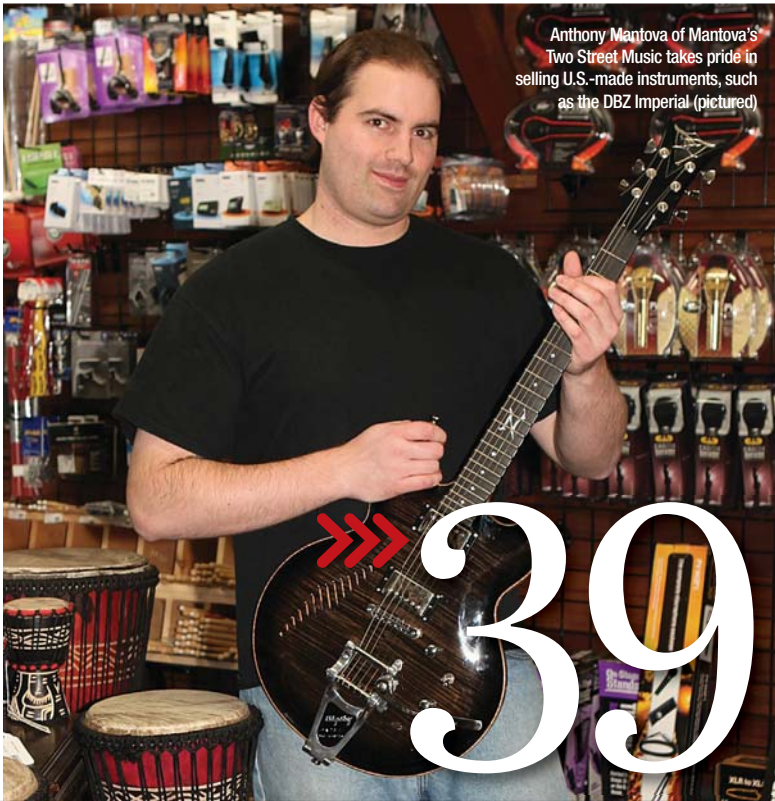
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INSIDE



Anthony Mantova of Mantova's Two Street Music takes pride in selling U.S.-made instruments, such as the DBZ Imperial (pictured)

Photo by John Chapman

THE SOURCE 2012

Music Inc. explores five of this year's biggest product trends that are bound to bolster your bottom line and re-energize your selection.

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A photograph of two women sitting on a red chair. The woman on the left is holding an acoustic guitar. The woman on the right is holding a microphone. In front of them on the chair is a Samson XP150 mixer. Two black Samson speakers on stands are positioned on either side of the chair. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

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adjective

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PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

BIGGER? TRY SMARTER

Tobias Music is a fascinating business.

Up until late last year, the Downers Grove, Ill., guitar shop operated from a tiny 400-square-foot showroom. Its website is little more than a bare-bones calling card. The company only specializes in two brands, Taylor and Martin, and operates with just two employees, the owners. Not to mention it sits in an epicenter of brick-and-mortar competition, with a Guitar Center, Sam Ash, Best Buy and handful of savvy independent MI stores within six miles.

In lots of ways, Tobias is a throwback. Yet you'd be hard-pressed to find a better model of lean-and-mean combo retail.

Music Inc. Contributing Editor Hilary Brown and I stopped by the shop in March to see its newly remodeled and, at roughly 1,600 square feet, significantly expanded showroom. (See the story on page 15.) I asked Paul Tobias, the company's second-generation proprietor, about business.

"Our fourth quarter of 2011 was a biggie," he said. "It was our best December ever. It was the best fourth quarter. And it was our best year in 33 years of business."

No small words. So what's he doing right?

For starters, Tobias Music uses being small to its advantage. The store has vibe — an intangible that's

harder to pull off with a large dealership. Customers embrace this. Holiday patrons, for instance, gladly ignored layers of dust during the remodeling. ("We deal with so many regular customers that they were as excited about it as we were," Paul said.) Also, Tobias' low overhead allows for low pricing, in many cases below that of big-box, chain and online competitors.

Likewise, specializing in only two brands helps the company be perceived as the local and, in some cases, national expert on those lines. It also lets Tobias laser-focus on those brands in its marketing. Case in point: The company won "Best Sales Promotion" at NAMM's dealer awards last summer for hosting powerhouse Taylor Guitars Road Shows.

Then there's Tobias' customer service. Paul recently used a trip to the Taylor factory as an opportunity to shoot video of wood panels with his iPad. He sent the video via Skype to a customer in the market for a Taylor Build to Order guitar. Again, this positioned Tobias Music as the local expert with an inside connection at the factory. (See "Made to Order," starting on page 50, to learn more about the company's custom-guitar business.)

Plus, Tobias doesn't jump on bandwagons. It embraces change but only when it makes sense. For Paul, a beautiful new showroom makes sense. An e-commerce-enabled website doesn't. This doesn't mean he ignores technology. He photographs the front and back of every guitar in stock with an iPad since he can't display all his inventory. This way, customers can flip through the iPad's photo album like they would a wine menu.

It's another reminder that you don't have to be the biggest to be the best. **MI**



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LETTERS

Honored & Humbled

We are humbled. The *Music Inc.* March/April cover story, “Lean & Keen” — which detailed the changes we’ve made to our piano dealership, Bettendorf, Iowa-based Foster Family Music, to sustain a viable business — has made us blush with all the attention we’re getting. After all, anyone who has survived the past 10 years as a piano specialty company has made lots of changes to their business model, or they wouldn’t still be here.

We thank Yamaha for Conservatory pianos, Silent pianos, Disklaviers and CVP model Clavinovas. We thank Allen Organ for great instruments that make a positive difference for our customers. We also thank our piano teacher, technician, and institutional customers and partners who buy into what we are trying to do and support us.

And we’d like to thank *Music Inc.* for recognizing us. With great contributors, including Greg Billings, Alan Friedman and all the others, your magazine makes a big difference in the industry.

*Jim and Christi Foster
Foster Family Music
Bettendorf, Iowa*

Foster Fan

Thank you for the great article about Foster Family Music in your March/April issue. It’s a positive business story that we all should follow — study the market, make a plan and have the courage to implement the changes necessary to thrive.

Jim has long been a creative thinker and has built his business through relationships.

It’s wonderful that this resourceful thinking is finding new connections in today’s market and at a low cost. Obviously,



‘Anyone who has survived the past 10 years as a piano specialty company has made lots of changes to their business model.’

– Jim & Christi Foster

this trait has been passed on to the next generation of Foster management.

*Paul Calvin
Vice President and General Manager
Yamaha Keyboard Division*

Making a Splash

I want to thank *Music Inc.* magazine and writer Jeff Cagle for the March/April profile “Tanglewood’s Splash” on Tanglewood Guitar.

Your recognition of this emerging brand in the United States illustrates an important point: The assortment of smaller brands on the market today make up a very important piece of the fabric of our industry.

We appreciate the recognition from *Music Inc.* and its readers.

*John Kelley
General Manager
Musiquip*

Gator Clarification

First off, thank you for the great profile on Gator Cases, “Gator’s Restless Spirit,” in the

March/April issue of *Music Inc.* It’s a testament to how well *Music Inc.* is read by the amount of comments I have received on the article.

There was a brief mention of my father’s 43 years of repping another case company, which is a bit inaccurate and I believe does his long history in the industry an injustice.

My father, Jerry Freed, entered the music business in 1961 as a salesman for Rheem Roberts, which is now known as Akai.

In 1966, he became the vice president of Jordan Amplifiers, and in 1968, Freed Sales was formed to service the musical instrument wholesaler domestic network, OEM and international. In 1974, he became half owner and president of IMC, located in Fort Worth, Texas. Upon selling the business in 1988, he formed Freed International, a manufacturers rep company that focused on international markets. In 2000, he and I formed Gator Cases with the goal of creating a case company focusing on the music and AV industries.

I’ve truly enjoyed sharing this chapter of his career with him, but there were many other great accomplishments before getting into the case business. Thanks for taking the time to clarify his history.

*Crystal Morris
Founder
Gator Cases*

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RETAIL

GUITAR CENTER | EXPANSION

GC OPENS 225TH STORE

Feb. 16 marked a new milestone for Guitar Center: the opening of its 225th retail location in Keiser, Ore., just outside of Salem.

Customers at the grand-opening weekend celebration were treated to exclusive savings, gear giveaways and free live performances. The store features Guitar Center Studios, the company's in-house music lessons facility, and GC Garage, an on-site guitar repair service. Musicians were able to try out GC Garage for free on grand-opening night if they purchased a guitar.

"The opening of our 225th store in Salem, Ore., is truly a landmark occasion for Guitar Center," said Gene Joly, the company's executive vice president of stores. "Our Salem location further underscores Guitar Center's ongoing commitment to our customers and to providing an extensive range of products, services and events. Like all openings in the past year, the Salem location reflects our new open-format design principles and streamlined merchandising layout."

Earlier in February, GC opened a new location in Emeryville, Calif., to replace its El Cerrito store. As it did in Salem, the company hosted a grand-



opening weekend to celebrate. The Northern California store also features Guitar Center Studios and GC Garage.

PUSHING FOR GROWTH

Guitar Center Professional (GC Pro), GC's outside sales division that caters to the needs of pro users, is also in expansion mode. It's capping off last year's 10th anniversary with several initiatives to help it grow in 2012.

"GC Pro had a fabulous 2011," said GC Pro Vice President Rick Plushner. "We performed above expectations with greater than 30-percent growth over 2010 — the biggest one-year jump we've had in our history. We're proud of our success and our growing reputation in the industry. In 2012, we are focusing on rein-

forcing our infrastructure in an effort to provide the best possible customer service, as well as increasing our sales force."

The division has hired 10 new sales associates and five new logistics coordinators, who will be charged with fulfilling orders, optimizing efficiency and expediting delivery to ensure customer satisfaction.

"Several offices now have three-person teams, improving our ability to spend more time consulting and fulfilling customer orders," Plushner said. "The logistics coordinators are a significant addition. Once a sales engineer develops specifications and provides consultations for a client, the logistics coordinator plays an integral role in ordering the products — whether from a surrounding Guitar Center

store, our distribution center or a special order from vendors — and then tracks the order and coordinates delivery."

GC Pro is also expanding its technical services operation. Last year, the division opened a technical services office in its Hollywood location. At press time, GC Pro was planning to open a new office in Nashville, Tenn., with a dedicated GC Pro technician, to provide services direct from the Nashville GC Pro location. Plus, GC Pro is establishing a national headquarters at its Hollywood location. It will include offices for GC Pro executive staff, technical services and sales. The site will also be equipped to host vendor and customer meetings.

"We already have an excellent demo facility, but we're going to be improving upon that and making it truly a world-class working recording studio where people can come and see the gear that we recommend," Plushner said. "We're very excited about seeing that in action, and we hope our customers are, too. With our expanding staff and enhanced services, we are refining what we do well, and that is customer relations, and that will lead to another strong year for GC Pro and our customers, both new and returning." **MI**

PROGRESSIVE MUSIC CENTER | ANNIVERSARY

STILL PROGRESSIVE AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

This year, Raleigh, N.C.-based Progressive Music Center celebrates its 20th anniversary.

Billy Cuthrell founded the company as a drum- and percussion-only teaching studio in Greenville with, as he put it, only 78 cents to his name and a handmade flier. These days, Progressive Music Center teaches more than 30,000 music lessons annually in multiple locations. It's also one of the first places in the United States to have offered a rock school format through its Rock Academy program, which began in 1996.

In 2000, Cuthrell incorporated the business, and two years later, he sold the company's



original Greenville location and closed its Wilmington branch to focus on growing in the Raleigh market. In 2005, Cuthrell

opened Progressive Music Center's largest location inside The Factory, a sports and entertainment complex in Wake Forest.

The company was featured on the cover of *Music Inc.* in September 2007.

"The typical retailer is interested in selling lots of instruments first and then bringing in lessons to supplement those sales," Cuthrell said. "I was more interested then, as I am now, in how to play the instrument and not what type of instrument to play. A good music education will help me sound more like Jimi Hendrix than a \$5,000 guitar and amp, so we design and offer innovative concepts and programs to get our students excited about learning and sounding their best no matter what equipment they use or purchase."

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AWARDS

Top Honors

The Ohio Music Education Association (OMEA) recently honored Columbus Piano Leasing of Columbus, Ohio, with the 2012 Industry Service Award. Company owner Mahlon Ray (pictured) executed the ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the 2012 conference in February. This marks the fourth consecutive year that the OMEA has selected Columbus Piano Leasing to supply the pianos for this event.



DESIGN

Gallery Treatment

Guitar Gallery in Nashville, Tenn., recently installed several Auralex acoustic panels in its showroom. According to Guitar Gallery owner Robin Weber, the store's wooden floors and high ceilings made the rooms "just a little too live."

"We turned to Auralex for some advice on how to fine-tune the sonic quality of our gallery," she said.

Guitar Gallery is an appointment-only boutique acoustic guitar shop.

VENUES

Cowtown Moves

Cowtown Guitars of Las Vegas announced plans in March to move to a new location in the Las Vegas Arts District. The new store will help the company better serve the local music and arts community. Husband-and-wife team Jesse and Roxie Amoroso bought Cowtown Guitars in June 2011 from the previous owner, Mark Chatfield.

OUTREACH

Super-sweet Donation

Chuck Surack (middle), founder and president of Sweetwater Sound in Fort Wayne, Ind., recently presented \$50,000 to Marshall White (second from right), director of Fort Wayne's Unity Performing Arts Foundation. The donation launched a fundraising campaign to send the Voices of Unity Choir to the World Choir Games in Cincinnati. In 2010, Voices of Unity won two gold medals at the World Choir Games in China.



Alta Loma Music's Corona, Calif., store



MUSIC & ARTS | ACQUISITION

MUSIC & ARTS BUYS ALTA LOMA MUSIC

School music chain Music & Arts has purchased Alta Loma Music, which is based in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. The deal was finalized for an undisclosed amount on March 23 and marks Music & Arts' official entry into the California market. (Previously, the company only had affiliate dealers in the state.)

Founded in 1978, Alta Loma Music specializes in music lessons and full-line retail. The company has a second location in Corona, Calif. Owner Pete Gamber is a regular columnist for *Music Inc.* and writes about managing and marketing music lesson programs. He and his wife, Genett, will continue working for Music & Arts. Pete will serve as an

educational sales representative, and at press time, Genett's role remained undetermined.

"We're delighted to have Pete and Genett as teammates, and I think we're going to kick some butt in Southern California and beyond," said Ron Beaudoin, executive vice president of Music & Arts. "We're going to leverage Pete's deep experience in the lesson business and layer the Music & Arts detail engine on top of that in both his stores, so that all the kids who come in for lessons are going to have even more product and solutions to choose from."

Beaudoin added that the acquisition will help Music & Arts get into the institutional business.

BEST BUY | CLOSING

BEST BUY TO SHUTTER 50 BIG-BOX STORES



On March 29, Best Buy revealed plans to close 50 of its 1,100 big-box stores and open 100 mobile small-format locations throughout the United States. The announcement came with news of the electronics retailer's fourth-quarter losses.

To improve performance, Best Buy has implemented an \$800 million cost-reduction plan, which includes laying off 400 employees. According to a statement from the company, its retail store strategy involves increas-

ing "points of presence, while decreasing overall square footage, for increased flexibility in a multichannel environment."

Stores in the Twin Cities and San Antonio metro areas will be remodeled with a new "connected store" format that features a greater emphasis on customer service and the multichannel experience. Company executives also expect to have as many as 800 mobile small-format locations by fiscal 2016. (Best Buy currently has 305 of these stores.)



Top: Tobias Music's new addition to its showroom; right: the old, redesigned showroom; bottom: the new accessories counter



The ukulele circle at Bertrand's Music

BERTRAND'S MUSIC | EVENT

Bertrand's Uke Circle Draws Crowd

Bertrand's Music of San Diego packed its showroom on Feb. 22 with its first ukulele circle. Co-sponsored by Kala Brand Music, the event drew more than 60 participants.

According to a statement from Kala, Bertrand's promoted and staged the event using Kala's free downloadable dealer guide, The Ukulele Circle Starter Kit. It offers steps for organizing the uke circle that Kala created in collaboration with ukulele virtuoso and educator James Hill. The kit includes songs, chord charts, tips for organizing and leading a circle, and a promotional poster.

"Our first ukulele circle was a big success," said Jessica Duarte, Bertrand's vice president of operations.

TOBIAS MUSIC | DESIGN

Tobias Gets a Facelift

Tobias Music completed a showroom makeover and expansion in March.

The project, which began in late October 2011, tripled the Downers Grove, Ill., guitar shop's space to roughly 1,600 square feet.

Tobias now has two connected showrooms. The old showroom features new carpeting and drapes, and the front door has been moved to make more room for accessories. The shop's new and much larger section boasts wood paneling, track lighting, a couch and, in the back corner, a bar, where patrons can learn about Taylor Guitars' Build to Order program on a flat-screen television.

According to company owner Paul Tobias, installing a new fire alarm system was one-third of

the project's expense. A bustling 2011 holiday season, along with what Tobias called "a little bit of financing" from a bank, helped pay for the project.

"[The banker] said that when a business expands, the biggest chunk of its budget is usually inventory for the new space," he said. "That's one thing we didn't have to do: order extra guitars. We had plenty."

In fact, much of the shop's stock is kept in back. To help customers view inventory, Tobias recently began photographing each guitar and showing them to patrons on an iPad.

"We're photographing everything, front and back," he said. "If you want to see our inventory, we're going to scroll through an iPad, almost like a wine menu."



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APPOINTMENT

Andres Promoted

Full Compass Systems has promoted Laurie Andres from marketing and public relations specialist to senior marketing coordinator. She will continue to coordinate day-to-day operations of the Full Compass marketing department, oversee production schedules, and contribute to the planning and development of marketing programs.



COMMUNITY

AMP Partners

Two major school music retailers, Paige's Music of Indianapolis and Frederick, Md.-based Music & Arts, have become sponsors of the National Association of Music Parents (AMP). Paige's Music's sponsorship enables parents of beginning music makers throughout Central Indiana to have a free subscription to AMP to learn alongside their kids about the benefits of music education.

"It's so important for parents to be informed about the benefits of music education and become involved from day one in supporting music in our schools," said Paige's owner Mark Goff.



From left: Yamaha's Paul Calvin, Keyboard Concepts' Jeff Falgien and Dennis Hagerty, and Yamaha's Bob Heller and Rick Young

KEYBOARD CONCEPTS | AWARDS

DEALER OF THE YEAR

During January's NAMM show, Yamaha named Keyboard Concepts "Dealer of the Year 2011 of Yamaha Acoustic Pianos."

The award is based on not only sales and sales growth but also a dealer's customer service and commitment to its community. Keyboard Concepts has four locations in Los Angeles and Orange County.

"Keyboard Concepts exemplifies what Yamaha looks for in a high-quality, valued dealer," said Bob

Heller, national sales manager for Yamaha's keyboard division. "Progressive management team, highly trained and conscientious staff, beautiful full-service stores — we're very proud of how Keyboard Concepts represents Yamaha pianos, which truly are unequaled world-class instruments."

"This is a great honor and, considering the economic challenges of the last few years, a great achievement by our staff," said Dennis Hagerty, president of Keyboard Concepts.

TRIBUTE

Thank you for your contributions to the music industry. You will be missed.

Steve Kirman

Steve Kirman, founder and CEO of Montreal-based Steve's Music Store, passed away on March 3. He was 65.

"What can I say about my father?" said Michael Kirman, son of Steve and vice president of Steve's Music Store. "He was truly larger than life, a quiet, unassuming man that just radiated a charisma, [an] aura."

"Steve's contributions to the music industry were unparalleled, and he will be sorely missed," said Sheldon Sazant, general manager of Steve's Music Store. "It is truly heartwarming to see the influence that he has had on the music community in Canada and abroad. Steve's legacy was his family, and our thoughts are with them at this time."



By Dr. Paul Shelden

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DISCOVER THE LEGEND
DISCOVER THE FUN



Note from Joe

Do people need to be “sold” on the concept of music making?

Estimates on the percentage of Americans who make music vary, but most of us agree that whatever the number is, we'd like it to be higher. As lifelong musicians ourselves, we inherently believe that music making provides benefits for people of all ages. We also know that the more people who play, the greater potential for industry success.

Whose job is it to reach those who don't currently play? And what should the message be? Most NAMM Members spend their marketing and advertising dollars promoting their stores or products, aiming for those already playing or in the market searching for brand, selection and price.

That leaves the largest segment of the population—those who don't currently play—largely out of the mix. That's where your association picks up the ball. Promoting music to this group is one of the most important benefits NAMM provides, yet is also one of the least understood.

In my opinion, the path to being a lifelong music maker begins early. That's why NAMM funds music/brain research that scientifically validates the many benefits of making music. Such research helps to convince parents about the importance of introducing their kids to music and gives them the ammunition they need to fight on behalf of their local school music programs—programs that are helping to create our next generation of customers.

Do teens need to be sold on making music? For many, it's all about access, opportunity and having a place to play. Promoting school marching bands, choral music (*Glee!*) and rock and roll through NAMM's SchoolJam program is all about getting kids to take the plunge and do what nature—and the media—is already telling them to do: play music, become popular and have the time of their life. By working with the media, your association is promoting teen music making each and every day.

Boomers and Gen Xers require a completely different message, one aimed at where they are in life. These markets are motivated by the thought of recapturing their youth, fulfilling a long-lost desire and enjoying the fun and camaraderie of playing in a band. Scientific evidence linking music making with significant health and wellness benefits is also a major incentive. Recreational Music Making, Weekend Warriors, the FORTUNE Corporate Battle of the Bands, New Horizons Bands, our AARP partnership and the daily placement of real-life stories about average people having a blast playing music are inspiring both generations to rediscover their “rock star dreams.”

Initiatives like our *Wanna Play?* consumer campaign, as well as the massive media coverage generated by the NAMM Show, keep music making in the public eye. National polls and the popularity of music-themed TV shows also point to the value people place on music. Playing a musical instrument is on many people's “bucket lists” and we aim to help them check that off their list. It's your Membership and support of NAMM's trade shows that helps provides the association with the multi-million dollar marketing budget needed to achieve this goal. By working together, we've created the largest market for music and sound products in the world.

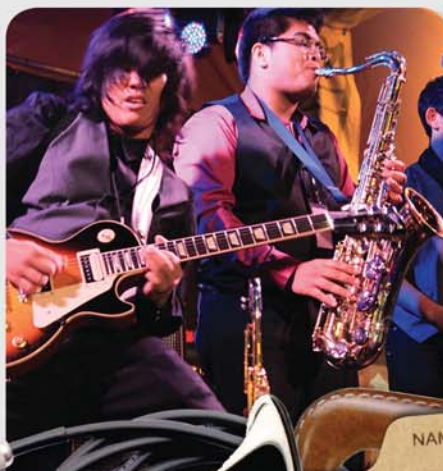
And we won't stop until we get everyone playing!

Joe Lamond • NAMM President/CEO

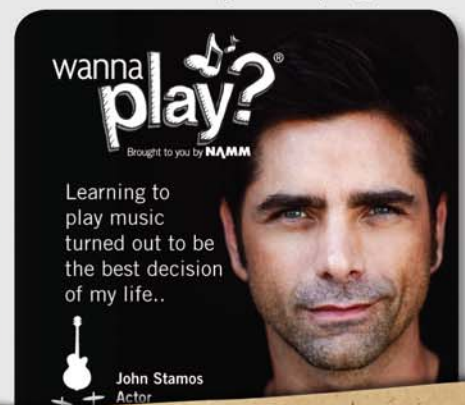
Media Preview Day



SchoolJam USA Finals



Wanna Play? Campaign



NAME
NAMM News

May No. 2012

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SUPPLY

KMCMUSICORP | BY DAVID WOLINSKY

THE ONE-STOP SHOP

Retailers, start salivating. Following the recent merger of their sales and catalog divisions, KMC Music and Musicorp — both sister companies under the Fender umbrella — have released a colossal new 954-page catalog.

But as KMCMusicorp Vice President of Merchandising Roger Hart explained, the 1-Stop catalog isn't about bragging rights. The sheer magnitude of its selection might be massive, but it's one of many recent steps to "make it easier for our customers to do business with us," as he put it.

So how is a full-color, nearly 1,000-page tome with more than 43,000 SKUs going to make it easier to work with KMCMusicorp when, prior to this announcement, its catalog was nearly half that size? Simple. The company has also added new salespeople to streamline its outreach.

With a chuckle, Hart remembered how it was once possible that five different reps could call on a single client's purchase. Not anymore. Recently, KMCMusicorp's outside rep force grew from 22 to 29, and 44 employees in total now man the phones. (In



Roger Hart

all, its sales force has swelled from 65 to 76.) The company has also realigned territories, so everyone has more breathing room and can reach out more frequently to clients.

In addition to increasing its call frequency to clients, KMCMusicorp has switched to a same-day shipping mandate on all orders for accessories, including picks, strings, straps and drumheads.

"We realize these commod-

ity items are a store's bread and butter," Hart said.

ADDED CONTENT, VALUE

While there are now scads of more items like those in the catalog, don't be fooled into thinking the thicker volume is merely more of the same.

"Our main goal is to make this the most comprehensive B2B catalog that has everything that our customers need in one centralized place," Hart said.

The color-coded catalog is available as an e-book that can be downloaded to an iPad or iPhone and easily searched in either format. There's also a nice perk to having a physical copy: The side clearly indicates each section. Plus, the catalog has two indexes, so you can browse by brand or product category.

Hart said there's been an effort to add more thoughtful content, which means minimizing stale, vague B2B trade descriptions of products.

"We want to have enhanced, consumer-ready descriptions," he added. "We don't want to just put down for a Vic Firth stick: 'VF58W MPL.'"

Sure enough, each product is explained in an honest-to-goodness blurb with complete sentences that ooze with juicy details, including what sort of sounds a drumstick's tip might create. ("The American Sound hickory drumsticks' ... tip ... bring[s] increased focus and clarity to the drums and cymbals.")

Still, Hart stressed that KMCMusicorp's work is incomplete.

"The catalog is never done," he said. "The catalog will continue to evolve as we have product additions and phaseouts as we continue to improve on our description of content." **MI**

ARIA LIGHTS | BY HILARY BROWN

Aria Moves Forward With Green Light

Johns Creek, Ga.-based Aria Lights has created a product that will not only help musicians see more clearly but also help the planet.

The company has rolled out 2- and 4-watt music stand lights, the Aria Solo and the Aria Diva, which are low-energy and low-power. The durable lighting structures and cardboard packaging are fully recyclable, and the bulbs don't need to be changed, preventing additional waste. These lights also don't give off odors from heat, which President Peter Hildebrandt said is typically a health hazard from incandescent lights.

He added that these features have caught the interest of musicians who are embracing the recent push toward green products.

"Rather than filling a landfill with a whole bunch of incandescent bulbs or, worse, compact fluorescent bulbs, which contain mercury, we're basically taking trash out of the landfill," Hildebrandt said. He mentioned that while the company works through four distributors, each of which have 2,500 stores, it's cities, such as Boston, San Francisco and Portland, Ore., "that really believe in the green story" and generate a lot of return.

The environmental benefits of Aria lights have also caught the eye of Toronto Symphony members. They've been testing out the lights after looking for something both ecologically friendly and portable.

The symphony was also able to split the cost of the lights with its venue due to the product's cost- and energy-efficient features.



Peter Hildebrandt

"They were looking for something they could use on the road with low maintenance," Hildebrandt said. "We shipped them out, and they did their testing and came back in a month's time and said Aria was the clear winner." The products were picked up by the Broadway show "Sister Act" soon after.

Hildebrandt has taken a multi-pronged approach to marketing Aria lights but said that word-of-mouth is responsible for approximately 70 percent of the company's business. While online merchants comprise a large portion of Aria's dealers, brick-and-mortar MI retailers are his most effective way to relay the Solo's and Diva's environmental advantages.

"Music stores really know their stuff," he said. "They'll truly be able to explain the benefits of this to their customers." arialights.com

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION | LEGAL

MUSICIANS FLY WITH EASE

In February, Congress passed a Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization bill that includes new standards for storing instruments on planes. Pending issuance of final regulations, the amended law will let travelers carry any instrument or related gear onto an airplane that can be safely stored in the cabin, rather than risk it being damaged in the plane's cargo hold or during baggage handling.

Included as an amendment to section 403 ("Musical Instruments") of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (H.R. 658), the bill provides airport personnel with specific guidelines for carry-on instruments, including when musicians may purchase a separate seat for an oversized or fragile instrument, as well as weight and size limits for storing a larger instrument in a plane's cargo area.

Also, guitar-sized or smaller instruments will be allowed on-board at no extra charge as long as they can be safely stowed in a baggage compartment or under the passenger's seat. Instruments that are too large to be safely stored overhead or under a seat but don't weigh more than 165 pounds may be carried on-board. However, the owner will have to purchase a separate seat in order to accommodate the instrument. Owners who want to transport larger instruments as checked baggage will be allowed to do so, assuming the instrument weighs 165 pounds or less. faa.gov





Richie Sambora

BLACKSTAR | ARTIST APPROVED

SAMBORA BACKS BLACKSTAR

Guitarist Richie Sambora of Bon Jovi is now using the Blackstar Series One 1046L6 and Artisan 100 amplifiers.

“From studios to stadiums, these are the amps I use,” he said.

Sambora, a Songwriter Hall of Fame inductee, has more than 20 Top 40 hits and, as co-writer with Jon Bon Jovi, has sold more than 130 million records. blackstaramps.co.uk

FENDER | FINANCE

Fender Files for IPO

Fender filed papers on March 8 for a \$200 million initial public offering (IPO).

According to an article in the *Los Angeles Times*, by filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission, Fender will use the money to help pay down \$246.2 million in debt and acquire other companies. Last year, Fender had a net income of \$3.2 million, up from a loss of \$17.3 million in 2010. Sales were up 13 percent to \$700.6 million, from \$617.8 million.

Fender will trade shares on the NASDAQ exchange under the ticker symbol “FNDR.” The company did not disclose how many shares would be sold or when the stock sale would take place. fender.com

YAMAHA | CHARITY

YAMAHA RUNS FOR GOOD CAUSE

For the fourth year in a row, more than 40 runners participated in the Southern California Half Marathon and 5K race to raise money for the Children’s Hospital of Orange County’s (CHOC) Trial Net program for Type 1 juvenile diabetes research. With \$5,000 raised this year, Yamaha has helped raise more than \$30,000 for the Trial Net program. CHOC is one of a handful of research facilities in the United States that’s trying to find a cure for Type 1 juvenile diabetes.

An avid runner, David Jewell, marketing manager for Yamaha Drums, said he was determined to raise funds and awareness for the hospital after his daughter, Katrina, was diagnosed with Type 1 juvenile diabetes in 2005.

“It really says a lot about Yamaha

Yamaha helps raise more than \$30,000 for the Trial Net program to fight juvenile diabetes

employees and all of my friends and family when so many people come out to help like this,” he said. “Katrina ran her first half marathon and made great time: 1:48:45.” More than 30 runners on Team Yamaha competed in the 5K race and eight ran the half marathon.

yamaha.com/yamahacares

D’ADDARIO | MANUFACTURING

D’Addario Completes New Series of String Winding

D’Addario has completed the seventh generation of a new series of string winding and polishing machines based on Otto Kaplan’s 1949 Kaplomatic technology.

In 1949, Kaplan envisioned and created an automated winding machine for his Kaplan gut core violin strings that joined the winding and polishing steps into one workstation, the Kaplomatic I.

“From 1949 to 1983, after our acquisition of the Kaplan Music String Co., this one Kaplomatic made all of Kaplan’s famed gut core violin strings,” said D’Addario CEO Jim D’Addario. “After the acquisition, with the help of violist, doctor of acoustics and luthier Norman Pickering, D’Addario began expanding its bowed string product line to include many



complicated string technologies. This required more sophisticated machinery, and from 1983 to 2012, our team of engineers has continually advanced Otto’s Kaplomatic principles.”

The company is currently building six of the new seventh-generation machines, which now include the latest in servo systems, computer controls and mechanical technologies.

daddariobowed.com

ZILDJIAN | PERSONNEL

Zildjian Awards Salesman of the Year

Zildjian has awarded Mike Carter and Chris Flatt of World Class Percussion Marketing Zildjian's Salesman of the Year Award.

Craigie Zildjian, company CEO, presented them with a signed cymbal at January's NAMM show in recognition of their exceptional performance.

"Mike and Chris were successful with both our established retailers as well as our new Zildjian



From left: Zildjian's Bob La Clair, World Class Percussion Marketing's Mike Carter, Zildjian's Craigie and Debbie Zildjian, World Class Percussion Marketing's Chris Flatt, and Zildjian's Bob DeLorenzo

direct customers," Zildjian said.

"They did an excellent job of partnering with our dealers to manage inventories, present new product opportunities, and create in-store and online promotions." zildjian.com

STEINWAY | FINANCE

Steinway Reports Sales Boost in Q4

Steinway Musical Instruments has reported its earnings for the fourth quarter of 2011 and the 2011 fiscal year. Fourth quarter sales totaled \$94.6 million, up \$6.6 million, a 7-percent rise over the same period in the previous year. The company's gross margin decreased to 32 percent from 33.2 percent in 2010.

Sales for the 2011 fiscal year totaled \$346.3 million, up \$28.1 million from 2010. The gross margin also increased to 30.4 percent from 30.2 percent in 2010.

"We had a great deal of atypical activity at the company in 2011," said Steinway CEO Michael Sweeney. "Operating managers remained focused on their businesses and delivered strong results for the year." steinwaymusical.com

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TUNER OF THE MONTH

KORG | PROMOTION

KORG'S TUNEUP

Korg has launched a Tuner of the Month promotion featuring a wide variety of tuners and metronomes for players of all instruments. The promotion runs through December.

Musicians can visit korg.com/tuners each month to see the current special. In addition, consumers should check with their local Korg tuner dealer for details on the special offerings each month. **{korg.com}**

GAMA | PERSONNEL

GAMA SELECTS BOARD MEMBERS

Guitar and Accessories Marketing Association (GAMA) elected seven industry veterans to serve as board members for 2012 during the organization's annual NAMM meeting in Anaheim, Calif., on Jan. 18.

Harvey Levy, past president of GAMA, recommended six existing board members serve an additional term and that Jay Wanamaker, senior vice president of sales at KMCMusicorp, be voted in as a new director. The new board includes: Paul Damiano of Damiano Music Consulting as president; David Lusterman of String Letter Publishing as vice president; Dennis Tenges of CF Martin as secretary; Peter D'Addario of D'Addario as treasurer; Jonathan Forstot of Taylor Guitars as director; Brad Smith of Hal Leonard as director; and Jay Wanamaker of KMCMusicorp as director.

"Having served on the GAMA board in the past, I am looking forward to helping to provide leadership in growing the guitar market through the GAMA educational programs and getting more people involved in learning how to play the guitar," Wanamaker said.

APPOINTMENTS

Knight Named President of Samson

Jack Knight has been appointed as the president of Samson Technologies. He joined the company in 1993 as its national sales manager and rose through the ranks. Knight has held the position of vice president of operations since 2000.

His appointment comes after the departure of the former president, Scott Goodman. Goodman had been with the company since its inception in 1980.

"Samson will always be close to my heart," Goodman said. "It's been like watching a baby grow up. Under Jack's leadership, it's ensured that the company will continue to mature and only get better. I'll miss all the terrific people I've had the sincere pleasure of working with."

"Scott had a profound impact on this company, and we'll miss him dearly," Knight said. "Moving forward, we're really excited to continue the company's innovation, growth and success."



Jack Knight

Hohner recently appointed Ryan Wear as its harmonica and melodica product manager.

Ian Webster has been named sales manager for the **ADJ Group** for the United Kingdom, northern region.

The Music Link has named Chris Lekas its new director of sales and promoted Sales Associate Misha Guiffre to national sales manager.

Connolly Music has selected Mike Zucek as its new regional sales manager and Andrew Magnani as sales director.

Jack Sonni recently joined **D'Addario** as its new vice president of marketing.

American Music & Sound has named Michael Palmer vice president of sales for Allen & Heath and Turbosound U.S.A. and Chad Bscherer regional sales manager for the MI division.

Focusrite has appointed Dave Froker as its managing director.

L-Acoustics has tapped Laurent Vaissié to the position of general manager for L-Acoustics U.S.

Professional audio and lighting equipment company **Group**

One has named Ryan Shelton sales and support associate.

Harman's Soundcraft Studer recently appointed James Tunnicliffe to the position of field support and applications engineer.

Jonathon Breen has been selected as **Yamaha's** new national sales manager for the band and orchestral division.

Jonathan Pusey has been promoted to the newly created position of vice president of sales and marketing for **Hosa Technology**.

Royer Labs has named Kevin Parker to the newly created position of director of sales.

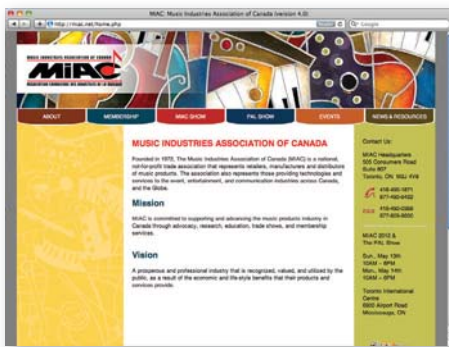
Korg recently hired Matt Kanjo as the new district sales manager in the Southern California territory.

DPA Microphones has appointed Susanne Seidel as executive vice president of sales and marketing.

Graph Tech has named Joe Markovitch as its new marketing and advertising manager. The company also named Meaulnes Laberge as its new product manager.

EAW has hired Steve Davis as EAW service manager.

WEBNEWS



miac.net

MIAC RELAUNCHES SITE

The Music Industries Association of Canada (MIAC) has launched its new industry-focused website. An improved search function makes content easier to find, and the site can be quickly changed to ensure pertinent information is readily available.

“We are pleased to offer our members an easy-to-use and valuable communication tool,” said Barbara Cole, executive director of MIAC.



seagullguitars.com

SEAGULL'S WEB REVAMP

Godin Guitars has improved the website for its Seagull acoustic guitar brand. The new site boasts photography of all the latest models, and informative video content on each individual series.

The site also gives musicians the opportunity to gain insight into the world of Seagull guitars and its 25 years of guitar building. The new website is featured in both English and French.



ampli.com

AMPLIVOX SOUND REDESIGNS SITE

AmpliVox Sound Systems has redesigned its website and expanded image options of more than 200 products. It has also added a wealth of resources to assist customers with product selection. The site's imaging capabilities give purchasers a detailed view of AmpliVox's products, including 360-degree views of many items.

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IDEAS

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LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

TALK THE TALK

It's an age-old adage that selling is storytelling. In a well-executed interaction, the sales associate weaves charming yarns that tell his personal story, his company's story, and the compelling story of his product or service. The more unique each of those components is, the more likely that the shopper will reward you, rather than your competitor, with the sale.

Sales professionals, in an attempt to differentiate themselves from competitors, explain why they are the single most reliable and qualified advocate for the consumer. Then, they go on to talk about the history of their company and all the benefits it provides its customers. But when it comes time to talk product, it becomes more of a features-benefits pitch without much of a story. After all, why waste time on the story when you're selling the same stuff as everyone else? In 2012, when brand is considered king, that's the way it is — *except* for the best of the best.

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

The secret weapon is choosing a brand that isn't as widely available. Rather than



Want to close sales? Tell a product's story, and use brands less traveled

going nose to nose with your competition, selling something they don't have gives you the edge that often tips the scales in your favor. Think of it from the consumers' point of view. They go from store to store, website to website, and everyone claims to be the best. Every company

is purported to be the ultimate source. And so with all else being equal, since they're looking at the same product everywhere, they end up confused enough to either make a random choice or no choice at all. But what if you change one of the variables: the product?

THE STORYTELLER

I learned this lesson by accident. Many years ago, my company became one of the very early importers of guitars and drums that we private-labeled under the Elger brand. But before they became well-known, we had the challenge of selling against the recognition and security of the big brands. Believe me, having a 40-foot container of instruments in the warehouse was a fine motivator to learn how to sell them. We became product evangelists, telling the story of their design, their background and a half-dozen other unique attributes that made them the clear choice for many customers. It was more work than selling the big names, for sure, but the payoffs were huge.

It happened again in the 1970s. The strongest product

category was sound reinforcement mixers, and the hottest of the hot products was the Tapco 6100 series mixer. They were a terrific product, a cleverly designed six-channel mixer, expandable to 14, with all the right gizintas and gizoutas and a respectable circuitry designed by the then-unknown Greg Mackie. The one problem was everyone carried them, so profitability was in the toilet. It got so bad that people didn't even think about percentage markups. We literally measured how many dollars we could make and watched that dwindle. To counteract the problem, we began to carry a nifty brand called Malatchi out of Boulder, Colo.

We told our customers that Jim Malatchi's boutique sound company was the hottest ticket in the Colorado live sound design market. We showed how much easier it was to visualize your settings with slide pots instead of rotary. We educated our customers on the benefits of extra effects and monitor busses. For our little 5-minute spiel, we were rewarded by making a lot of money while our competitors duked it out making just about

»»» IDEAS

nothing on the bigger name brand.

And for those who think this is something that couldn't work today, Charleston, S.C.-based Shem Creek Music's owner Phil Thomas and his staff were fighting a losing battle of dwindling profits trying to sell the same name brands as their larger, better-financed competitors. When I called on Shem Creek, I listened as its sales associates skillfully explained everything that made their store the place to buy. I'd never heard it done better, but they were still losing ground in the marketplace.

This past holiday season, Phil decided that enough was enough. After a conversation with me, he made Wechter guitars his push line. I armed him and his staff with Wechter's story. Along with selling the sales associate and the company, they began talking about the storied past of Abe Wechter and all the famous people for whom he'd built guitars. They talked about our Plek Pro setups and how they make our guitars play like guitars in a higher price range. The sales associates learned some of the fine points of our product design, and they could clearly demonstrate them. In short, they knew Wechter guitars as well as I do, and they spoke to their customers with passion and excitement. By romancing the guitars, they were able to create a presentation that transcended specs and pricing concessions. They involved their customers in an emotionally charged interplay where their own enthusiasm rubbed off on clients and caused them to get every bit as excited.

When you're able to get in the zone with your sales presentations, selling becomes at once more fun and rewarding. You create an experience instead of a transaction with your customer. Even the most hardened shopper will remember that special interaction he or she had with you. And if you're wise enough to promote a product that's unique to your store, you'll be amazed by the positive results. In the case of Shem Creek Music, hardly a day went by during the holiday season when I didn't receive replenishment orders for multiple guitars. And that's a happy ending. **MI**

Gerson Rosenbloom is managing director of Wechter Guitars. He's former president of Medley Music and a past NAMM chairman. E-mail him at gersonmusicinc@gmail.com.



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THE CUSTOMER WHISPERER | BY GREG BILLINGS

He's Just Not That Into You

Vendor relationships with music merchants have always been a delicate dance, but never more so than today. There was a time when vendors wooed us. There were steak dinners, elegant parties with ice sculptures and cruises to exotic destinations that didn't include factory tours.

But the declining number of storefronts, increased population of suppliers and presence of alternate distribution channels have changed the game. Now, nurturing vendor relationships is more complicated than ever. Following is a tale of one managed poorly and advice on how you might do better.



A tale of a vendor relationship managed poorly and how you might do better

OF COURSE IT'S PERSONAL

My first play for a major line was like my first crush. We had lots of mutual friends. I had a great location, beautiful store and fantastic sales staff. Plus, I was financially sound. The vendor's dealer was retiring, and I thought we could get the line on the rebound. But like the head cheerleader turning down a band geek, the vendor rejected our proposal and said, "It's not personal."

I was crushed.

Of course, it was personal to me, and it's personal to any dealer in a similar situation. The suits work 9-5 weekdays. They go from company to company and drift in and out of our industry. But for most of us dealers, this isn't a job — it's a life. Our careers are hopelessly enmeshed with our families, our neighbors, our churches and our communities. So yes, it's personal because it matters more to us than it does to them.

Years later, when I was planning my move to Florida, I talked with the head cheerleader again. He might as well have said, "It's not you, it's me." This time, unfazed, I called Bruce Stevens, then president of Steinway & Sons, who was very cordial and welcomed me to the family. Obviously, the cheerleader just didn't get me.

In addition to Bruce, there are many brilliant, dedicated and

fair people on the supply side. Hartley Peavey, Keith Mardak, Dennis Houlihan and Brian Chung come to mind, and there are many more. Of course, each of these fellows had humble beginnings, came up in the industry and know what it takes to win a customer.

Unfortunately, the layer of management in between the president and the sales rep can be filled by people, often outsiders, whose primary objective is keeping their jobs. Their status may depend on looking and acting tough. They must be approached with caution, but they can often be outsmarted. These self-anointed gurus create slick, useless POP materials to impress their bosses and contrive promotional campaigns that more often than not make those of us on the front lines cringe. Nonetheless, they have the power to make our lives miserable and make sure we never get to the big dance without their blessings.

COURTSHIP MATTERS

Looking back, there's much I could have done differently when I went after that major line. I blame my youthful arrogance. A proper courtship would have gone a long way. The popular cheerleader could have been charmed right from

the start with a little flattery. I should have known that if I wanted to end up in the back seat of the car at the drive-in, I'd better start with some flowers and candy.

The top marketing and sales guys at suppliers really do have power and discretion. They decide where marketing money goes, who gets territories and the size of discounts.

They also make the call in gray areas. Over the years, I've had the benefit of getting perks from buddies, and on the flip side, I've been punished — even when it hurt the supplier — because I stepped on the wrong toes. You would think that the harsh realities of the business world would trump eighth-grade playground politics, but occasionally, they don't.

So, don't take it personally. You may be furious at that pompous little weasel right now, but when he's onto his next job, we will still be working in our stores, taking care of our staff and serving our customers. Keep relations cordial, and keep the temperature down. It serves us best in the long run.

In the meantime, this sidebar offers a few strategies that might help if you find yourself outside of the in-crowd. But the best strategy is to not get into these situations in the first place. Play nice and tell them what they want to hear, all the while sticking to your core values and doing what's best for your business. You will probably outlast the suits and forget their names anyway. And in the rare case when they rise to the top, you'll be better off not being remembered as a troublemaker. **MI**

Greg Billings whispers to customers (and vendors) at the Steinway Piano Gallery in Naples, Fla. He welcomes questions and comments at greg@steinwaynaples.com.

+ EIGHT LINES TO MAKE THEM WANT YOU

1. **"You're so smart and clever."** If you want to get people to do something, guide them into thinking it's their idea. This can be as simple as congratulating them for thinking of it. My dad taught me this trick when I was a kid.
2. **"I was thinking of you the whole time."** If you're doing a good job with a brand, threats notwithstanding, vendors are unlikely to make a change unless they believe they have a better option, in which case they are probably already flirting. Call them on it, and put them on defense.
3. **"I just have to work on me right now."** If you aren't doing a good job with a line, it's probably hurting you more than them because the resources could be better deployed elsewhere. Dump them before they dump you. Taking the initiative away from them may make you more attractive and will at least serve notice to other suppliers that you won't be bullied.
4. **"Yes, dear, whatever makes you happy."** Goofy schemes are usually cooked up by a bunch of so-called experts sitting around a conference table at headquarters. The poor guy you are talking to is probably just following orders, so logical appeals to reason aren't going to be effective and might make things worse. You are unlikely to win a verbal argument, but you can stall and let the boondoggle sink from its own weight.
5. **"Dear John ..."** Make your argument in writing rather than verbally. If you're really steamed, always wait 24 hours, and do a final edit before mailing or clicking "send." Be sure to state your understanding of any unreasonable demands clearly, and always send a copy to the boss. Copying the boss tends to keep everyone honest and gives the poor guy a way to back down without losing face.
6. **"Maybe we should start seeing other people."** Play the field. Today, there are more brands than there are dealers to represent them, so you've got options. Pick the right vendors from the start — not because they're popular or pretty but because they're a good match. This isn't dating. It's marriage.
7. **"You should meet my roommate."** Get a wingman. Figure out who needs to be sucked up to, and assign someone in your organization to suck up. Sometimes, just changing faces can solve the problem.
8. **"Where is this relationship going?"** Just as you can't compromise your core values, neither can they. Don't pick fights you can't win. If you can't sell a particular product at a profit, take a pass, but keep smiling. — **G.B.**

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INDEPENDENT RETAIL | BY TED ESCHLIMAN

Rules of Engagement

It's one thing to be threatened by the success of a competitor. It's another to feel vulnerable in the face of exponential change to the very fabric of your business model. I don't think it's too alarmist to declare the battle of the brick-and-mortar retailer against cyberspace is currently at an epic crossroads.

I used to think the physical look of a showroom and the interactive touch and feel of a third-dimensional, human-to-human sales transaction would forever triumph over a sterile online experience, but e-commerce is undeniably evolving. Overnight shipping, instant information, barcode-selling price comparisons and end-user reviews have all put a new level of stress on the prowess of the traditional storefront and its soldiers. Face it: The Internet can now offer better pricing, quicker response and infinitely broader consumer information than ever before. If you aren't sweating this, you're living in a retail cave.



The thread of hope for brick-and-mortar retailing remains the quality of the sales experience. Even when a price is competitive — or better — one can't necessarily “feel good” shopping with a cold mouse or a cell phone. There's a universal absence of social affirmation and peer validation that brick and mortars are naturally equipped to exploit in the sales experience.

MISSION POSSIBLE

Our team needs to be wired for two missions. One, fill the cash register. Ask for the sale. Don't let a customer out the door without some effort to meet his or her musical needs using something available in the store capable of filling it.

Second, employees need to subscribe to the personal objective of making a customer feel better about himself. This can happen on many levels. It can be as simple and non-threatening as small talk on the sales floor about the weather, or it can be as deep as expressing genuine interest in and insight on what the customer intends to create with music. Compliment the stranger's taste in clothing, or celebrate the coolness of that vintage instrument brought in for repair. Remind the parent exasperated by the need to

buy reeds or strings for his child that what he's doing is laudable, that he's perpetuating a musically rich life for the child. Whatever the approach, the goal is to make customers feel better going out the door than they did when they came in.

CONVERSATIONAL PROTOCOL

Here are a few conversational rules of engagement.

1. Every customer should be greeted, not just personally but personally. (No canned, “Can I help you?” or “What's up?”)
2. Ask customers a minimum of two questions about how they plan to use the items they're shopping for.
3. Thank each customer for choosing to come into the store, not just for buying something.
4. Remind customers that they're doing a good thing by participating in the creation of music.

We must hone our employee showroom culture. We have to be grateful that the customer has chosen to do the transaction with our store and not online.

The human touch is the sharpest weapon in a brick-and-mortar retailer's arsenal. We just need to cut with distinction, or our industry will lose the privilege forever. **MI**

Ted Eschliman is a 30-year veteran of music retail and co-owner of Dietze Music in Southeast Nebraska. Mel Bay published his book, *Getting Into Jazz Mandolin*.

Engaging your customers in conversation earns their trust and their dollars

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FROM THE TRENCHES | BY MYRNA SISLEN

Why Groupon?

The Groupon people first called me a year ago to ask if I wanted to participate in their program. When they described how it worked, I couldn't think of a way to do it and not lose a lot of money.

For those of you who aren't familiar with Groupon, it partners with companies and sends their coupons to its large e-mail list. Groupon gives the store 25 percent of the value of the item or service. For example, if the value of the item or service is \$100, the Groupon sells for \$50. Groupon takes \$25, and the store gets \$25.



This was a little tricky for us. Granted, the advertising is pretty spectacular. In Washington, D.C., Groupons go to approximately 900,000 people and bring new people into a store. But it took me a long time to come up with an idea that would work. Finally, I decided that offering lessons in the summer would be a great way to use Groupon and fill lesson slots during a very slow time. Whatever I had to spend out of pocket would go directly to my teachers, who could really use the enrollment boost.

You want to make the offer's dollar value as high as possible, so the split won't kill you, and you want to offer something that will keep the new customers coming back. That's why lessons are such a good idea. Also, it's always good to partner with a vendor or publisher. They will usually be glad to help, as long as you mention their name in the advertising. In my case, I offered two guitar or piano lessons, registration, and a method book. We limited ours to 200 Groupons and made sure the expiration date was Sept. 1, before the fall enrollment rush.

The Groupon people design the ad and the wording and take care of the accounting. The fee is paid to them, and they send the store's portion in two installments. I must say they

were very prompt with payments.

THE RESPONSE

Our ad came out Memorial Day weekend, and we sold 155 Groupons. We also saw a substantial bump in our website, Yelp and Facebook page views. Many people who bought Grou-

pons or called to ask questions had never heard of our store, and most were from outside our typical customer base — families in our immediate neighborhood.

The first person who came in for her lesson bought a \$99 guitar case, and at that moment, I knew the promotion would turn out well for us. Customers took the lessons and bought instruments, accessories and other books. Nearly 40 percent stayed to take additional lessons. That number has shrunk since September, but a good 20 percent are still with us, paying for lessons and buying more supplies.

FUTURE PLANS

Would I do it again? I'm already planning next summer's Groupon. What will I do differently? First, I'll put "new students only" in the next Groupon. That's very important. Also, I will include all instruments — not just guitar and piano. (I think we would have sold all 200 if we'd included all the instruments we teach at Middle C Music.) And on the accounting end, we will do a better job tracking exactly what our Groupon customers purchased by creating a separate category in our system to track them.

To Groupon or not to Groupon? It's not even a question. **MI**

Myrna Sislen owns and operates Middle C Music in Washington, D.C.

Still on the fence about offering a Groupon promotion? Consider my example

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THE RETAIL DOCTOR | BY BILLY CUTHRELL

The Worst Call of All

When I receive sales pitches over the phone, I often listen to the calls so I can dissect them. I put them on speakerphone, so my staff can listen in, too. My people usually don't make cold calls for sales but still conduct a lot of business via telephone.

Many of the salespeople I hear from do a decent job, but recently, a customer service rep from a cable company telephoned my cell to tell me about a special package. The call only lasted a minute, but it was the worst sales attempt I've ever heard. It went as follows:



Salesguy: Is this Mr. Qutrill?

Me: Yes, and it's Cuthrell.

Salesguy: (Short pause) Uh huh. What? How are you today, Mr. Qutrill?

Me: Good. It's pronounced "Cuthrell."

Salesguy: (Long pause, and lots of background noise) That's right. I was calling, Mr. Qutrill, because we see you've been a longtime customer, and we want to tell you about some special packages ... we have put together that we think can save you some money. (Long pause) Do you like to save money, Mr. Qutrill?

Me: Yes.

Salesguy: What?

Me: Yes, I like to save money. Don't you?

Salesguy: We see you have cable and Internet through us. Um, if you bundle your, uh, home phone with us, we can help you save on ... Mr. Qutrill?

Me: Yes?

Salesguy: You like your home phone?

Me: We don't have a home phone.

Salesguy: How, um, did I call you then?

Me: You called my cell phone.

Salesguy: Yeah. Well, thanks and have a good day.

Disconnect.

Successful sales calls are easy to master and only have a few basic components. Let's look at six ways this salesperson could have done a better job.

1. If you're unsure about a customer's name, ask if you've said it correctly. If you haven't, apologize for mispronouncing it. My name isn't easy to pronounce, but it's not that hard once

you hear it. The tone of your voice can break the ice, as well, so be polite and cheerful.

2. Make sales calls in a quiet place where you're free from distractions. Turn your cell phone to vibrate, or better yet, turn it off completely, so you're not distracted by incoming calls and texts.

3. Pay attention to your customers' responses. Remember: You are asking them to spend money with you, so *listen* to them, and do so without long, awkward pauses.

4. Don't read directly from a script. If you have to because of company policy, try to memorize it. Speak clearly and in a relaxed fashion. No slang words or "text talk."

5. Know the product you're selling. I busted a salesguy once when he went on and on about a product. After Googling it, I found out it didn't do half the things he claimed it did.

6. Watch for missed opportunities. The sales rep missed a prime chance to sign me up for a home phone. He could have said, "If you don't have a home phone, that's not a problem. I'll be happy to explain why our home phone service is the best there is and explain the big savings you'll get by having your services bundled through us." **MI**

Billy Cuthrell owns and operates Progressive Music Center. Contact him at billy@raleighmusiclessons.com.

Six ways to improve an especially horrible telephone sales pitch



The best
two feet
on your floor.



THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Curing the Blues

What makes summer a drag? No customers coming in your store and no cash going in your cash register. Summer music programs can be a quick fix to increase your traffic flow and make your register ring all summer long.

Design programs that are fun for your customers and also inspire them to spend money.

These programs bring in revenue from not only student tuition but also from instructional book and sheet music sales. Accessory sales will spike since students are going to need reeds and strings, and charging admission to the final performances can bring in some cash. If you're hosting band camps, you might even keep some rental income if customers don't return their instruments at the end of the program.



SUMMER CASH

Find a no-cost or low-cost venue for the program's final show. Try pizza joints or shopping centers with performance stages — the shop owners will want foot traffic, too. Hold rehearsals in a group lesson room. If you need space, use your salesfloor after 8 p.m. or on Sundays if you're usually closed.

For maximum results, these programs should be four to six weeks in length. During this time, your store's foot traffic will increase, creating a music community. Long-term bonds are made this way. Parents will talk about what's going on at the store. You'll have anticipation leading up to the final gig. If you only run the program for a week, it'll be over and done before you know it and won't have a lasting impact on your lesson program. One-week programs can be more trouble than they're worth — they disrupt

your music lessons and retail business.

At my former store, Alta Loma Music in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., we hosted our own "Glee" program for voice students. We placed them into different age groups and used such books as Hal Leonard's Let's All Sing series. Participants each had their own copy of the book.

We also hosted separate beginner and intermediate summer band camps. We recruited students from our rental program and local elementary school bands. This kept kids interested in continuing to play. Hal Leonard's Essential Elements band folios are ideal for this kind of program and feature popular songs from movies and Broadway. Summer jazz bands and rock bands are obvious options, too.

THE PAYOFF

Imagine if you get 10 voice students, 20 beginner band students, 15 jazz students and 30 young rockers. You'll get 75 tuition payments, 75 book sales and 75 musicians coming into your store each week, plus their parents. Do the math. If you charged at minimum \$150 for tuition, that equals \$11,250. Books at \$15 each will yield \$1,125. Just those two items produce \$12,375. Charging admission to the concert will yield even more.

These programs are also great marketing tools for attracting new students to your store and your music lessons program. You can get extra traction by posting videos from the events on your YouTube channel.

Turns out there is a cure for the summertime blues. **MI**

Pete Gamber is the former owner of Alta Loma Music, which was recently bought by Music & Arts. He welcomes questions and comments at pete@altalomamusic.com.

Music programs are the prescription for curing the summertime sales blues



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THE SOURCE



Photo by John Chapman

Selling U.S.-made products is about more than patriotism for Matt (left) and Anthony Mantova of Mantova's Two Street Music

PAGE 40 NEXT-GENERATION GEAR

PAGE 46 MADE IN THE U.S.A.

PAGE 50 EXTREME CUSTOMIZATION

PAGE 54 THE B&O STEP-UP SURGE

PAGE 58 THE IREVOLUTION 2.0

PAGE 62 PLUS: MI CONSUMES PRO AUDIO

BY ZACH PHILLIPS

THE **NEXT** GENERATION

Breaking gear technologies that are shaping the future of music making and retail



Line 6's Marcus Ryle with the new StageSource speaker and StageScape M20d mixer

At January's NAMM show, Line 6 released a loudspeaker that can think for itself.

At first glance, this 1,400-watt unit, dubbed StageSource, looks like an everyday powered speaker. Tilt it on its side, though, and it automatically becomes a floor monitor. Put it on a stand, and it morphs into a front-of-house P.A. In fact, the StageSource L3t has six unique speaker modes, not to mention the ability to expand into a multi-unit system that can configure automatically to a venue. Oh yeah, and it sounds really good.

"There's obviously a reference P.A. mode," said Marcus Ryle, Line 6's co-founder and senior vice president of new business development. "But let's say you want to use it for acoustic guitar, and you're going to do a little coffeshop gig. We have a great tuning for that. Or, you can put it on the side and use it as a floor monitor. There's a separate voicing for that."

Line 6 may have led the smart-gear charge at NAMM, but it wasn't the only exhibitor ushering in the next era of techno wonders. This year's expo featured a bevy of products that brought elite technologies down to the masses, in everything from pro audio and recording to the guitar and band instrument categories.

"One of the things that a lot of dealers have picked up on is how great it is to have a solution for the customer that can solve so many of their problems," added Ryle, referring to the StageSource line.

And that doesn't just go for Line 6. This new breed of gear is especially focused on

problem-solving, as Ryle put it. Be it Peavey's AT-200 self-tuning guitar or daCarbo's carbon-fiber trumpets, these items mix extreme utility with wow factor. And you're probably going to see more products like them in the future. Here's what to expect.

NEXT-GENERATION AUDIO

ine 6's other big NAMM release, StageScape M20d, is a new concept in live sound mixing and recording. To put it mildly, this is not your dad's mixer.

Instead of a traditional surface with faders, this digital unit offers touchscreen-based visual mixing, with graphics of each instrument onstage, to get musicians up and running quickly. It can also automatically recognize which instruments are which and offers suggested EQ for each.

"You plug a mic cable in, and a microphone on a mic stand shows up on the stage," Ryle said. "If I plug in four things, I'll see four things on the stage.

"You'll see something onstage that's representative of what it is that you actually care about and not a bunch of extra channels that you don't care about."

Drill down deeper, and users can tweak the unit's EQ using a simple XY pad that features terms applicable to particular instruments. (Think "boom," "punch" and "bright.") There's automatic trim adjustment, built-in racks worth of DSP and the ability to record up to 20 seconds of audio from all channels simultaneously. Hook up an iPad, and a musician can replay that 20-second snippet and make tweaks to his band's mix from anywhere in a venue. Hook up StageScape M20d to StageSource, and the speakers will automati-

cally self-configure.

Ryle pointed out that this creates a unique opportunity for music retailers. These new items let dealers build a modular pro audio system in their showrooms, helping eliminate a bunch of excess SKUs.

"You can show a system much more simply, and you can create

an opportunity to have follow-up business with that customer as their career grows or as they add more musicians to their band," Ryle said. "They can buy more [StageSource] speakers and be able to perform in any environment they might have."

The challenge, of course, is introducing such a new concept to shoppers. Not surprisingly, Ryle suggested keeping a system set up, ideally in a separate room, "because when people hear these speakers, they're really going to be blown away."

NEXT-GENERATION GUITARS

Another new concept that took NAMM showgoers by surprise was the gearless self-tuning guitar. Peavey epitomized this

development with the AT-200 — the result of a partnership with Antares, which incorporated its Auto-Tune For Guitar technology into the instrument. With the push of a button, the guitar can instantly self-intonate or go into any number of alternate tunings. The kicker? You won't find any gears or moving parts, unlike

Maxx Fly. As with Peavey's model, the guitar is equipped with Antares technology and offers instant string intonation and alternate tunings, along with a virtual capo feature.

To boot, Roland launched the VG Stratocaster G-5. It can access five alternate tunings and features 20 different sounds

'It's the 21st century. I don't need another traditional-style offshoot.'

— Teddy Gordon, Make'n Music

previous self-tuning guitars. And it streets for only \$500.

"The self-tuning feature on the Peavey AT-200 operates in a completely different manner than previous attempts at creating a self-tuning guitar," said Hartley Peavey, founder and CEO of Peavey Electronics.

"The technology constantly monitors the precise pitch of each individual string and electronically makes any corrections necessary to ensure that every note of every chord and riff is always in tune, regardless of variables like finger position or pressure. No previous instrument has had that ability."

Parker also showed the Auto-Tune ATDF842 Maxx Fly, a new version of its high-end DF842

— everything from a Strat to a Martin acoustic — by harnessing the company's COSM technology. Like Peavey's and Parker's models, the guitar came about through a partnership, this time with none other than guitar-manufacturing luminary Fender.

"The G-5 is technologically distinct in its powerful built-in VG tunings and guitars models," said Gary Lenaire, product manager for Boss, Roland's guitar products division. "Ease of use also sets the G-5 apart from other electronics instruments. All of the exciting COSM sounds are set on only two knobs."

To music retailers, Lenaire added, "When customers play the guitar and hear the COSM models and tunings, then they

NEXT-GENERATION GEAR



YAMAHA THR AMP SERIES

"The THR is the first amp designed for where players play the most: at home," said Dennis Webster, marketing manager for Yamaha Guitars. "It was designed to be played anywhere: the living room, bedroom, office, outdoors. The small, lightweight design is portable with a vintage look. With the hi-fi stereo output, eight built-in VCM effects and five amp types, you can plug and play with amazing sound at any volume." MSRP: \$460. yamaha.com

PARKER ATDF842 MAXX FLY

This high-end model has perfect intonation, no matter where or how it's played, courtesy of Antares Auto-Tune technology. Users also get a bevy of alternate tunings, a virtual capo, and guitar and pickup modeling. The ATDF842 Maxx Fly features a basswood neck with a carbon glass epoxy fretboard and a one-piece alder body. MSRP: \$7,998.67. parkerguitars.com

PEAVEY AT-200

With the push of a button, the AT-200 can instantly tune itself or let players choose from an array of alternate tunings — all without bulky gears and moving parts. This is made possible through Antares Auto-Tune For Guitar technology. Street price: \$500. peavey.com

LINE 6 STAGESCAPE M20D & STAGESOURCE

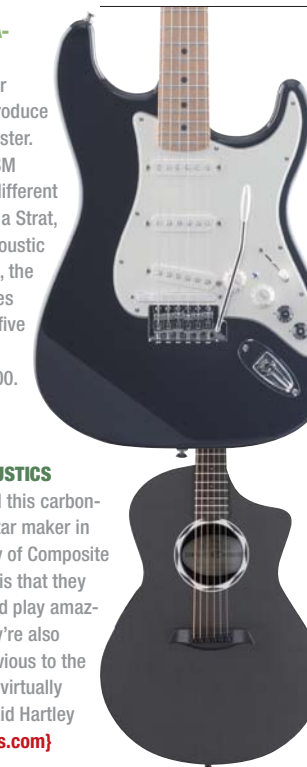
The StageScape M20d mixer features touchscreen control instead of faders, letting users mix from a graphic display of a stage setup. The StageSource L3t loudspeaker offers six modes for different performance scenarios, and the StageSource L3s sub has four modes. Hook up StageScape with StageSource, and the speakers will automatically self-configure. MSRP: StageScape M20d, \$2,799; StageSource L3t and L3s, \$1,679 each. line6.com

ROLAND VG STRATOCASTER G-5

Roland and Fender partnered up to produce this über-Stratocaster. The on-board COSM engine offers 20 different sounds, including a Strat, Tele, 12-string, acoustic and jazz box. Plus, the instrument features instant access to five alternate tunings. Street price: \$1,300. rolandus.com

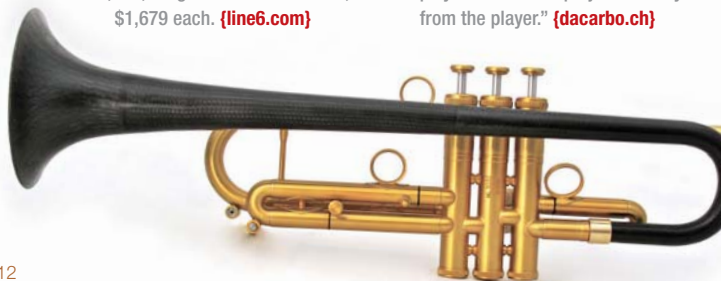
COMPOSITE ACOUSTICS

Peavey purchased this carbon-fiber acoustic guitar maker in 2010. "The beauty of Composite Acoustics guitars is that they not only sound and play amazingly well but they're also completely impervious to the elements and are virtually indestructible," said Hartley Peavey. caguitars.com



DACARBO TRUMPETS

These carbon-fiber instruments boast powerful articulation and warm, rounded tone. Plus, they're easy to play. "They do not dent!" added Steve Dillard, owner of HornTrader.com. "They are very lightweight. The sound was beautiful and sort of surrounded the player rather than projected away from the player." dacarbo.ch



will purchase."

Peavey also pointed out that his company's AT-200 has broad appeal, making it an appropriate SKU at a range of different dealerships. He said the instrument has already generated "a lot of positive feedback from retailers who are excited to carry it," but he cautioned dealers that the AT-200 "won't play itself" — it requires a demo.

"It is crucial that dealers show their customers how easy it is to use the instrument," Peavey said. "When you strum the guitar and press the volume and control knob, you can actually hear the guitar lock into tune. It's remarkable to hear, and it absolutely turns heads. The reactions we got from this guitar at NAMM were priceless."

NEXT-GENERATION MATERIALS

Hartley Peavey also has his fingers in another burgeoning trend: alternative materials. In particular, his company began embracing carbon fiber in 2010 with the purchase of Composite Acoustics, which produces 100-percent wood-free acoustic guitars. Peavey mentioned that he believes interest in renewable, sustainable materials for guitar making will continue trending up, and not only because they're eco-friendly.

"It is incredibly lightweight but also dense, strong and durable," Peavey said of carbon fiber. "As you know, sound waves propagate best through dense matter. This allows us to make the guitar soundboard very thin and resonant but still project a very rich, dynamic and loud tone. You can't help but be impressed by the ruggedness of these instruments."

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Apparently, some dealers are. Teddy Gordon is a trained luthier and owns Make'n Music, a high-end Chicago guitar shop. For him, carbon-fiber guitars not only benefit the environment by helping conserve tonewoods but also represent a noteworthy advancement in guitar manufacturing.

"It's the 21st century — I don't need another traditional-style offshoot," Gordon said. "I am very excited by all the advances in technology we have available today, and I'd like to see more luthiers embrace them and all the benefits they offer to the future of guitar making."

He pointed out that carbon fiber is very consistent and "immune" to changes in temperature

and humidity. "With composites, you have the opportunity to refine a design in order to have the sonic signature you are looking for, then replicate it consistently, over and over again."

The band instrument segment is also embracing this shift. DaCarbo began offering its carbon-fiber trumpets for the first time at the recent NAMM show. Andreas Keller, the company's founder, said daCarbo has attracted attention because there hasn't been substantial innovation in trumpet technology since the invention of piston valves. Plus, he added, carbon-fiber just looks cool.

"They make a great visual impact," Keller said. "This will

inspire every trumpet player to test-play it when he sees it in the shop window."

Steve Dillard, owner of trumpet specialty retailer HornTrader.com, doesn't carry daCarbo trumpets yet — he said their high price is keeping him from stocking them in quantity. Still, he commented that carbon-fiber instruments are important to the future of the brass category, as they can be consistently replicated and let players "dial in" their own horn sound via interchangeable components. And then there's the tone.

"The sound was beautiful and sort of surrounded the player rather than projected away from the player," Dillard said of da-

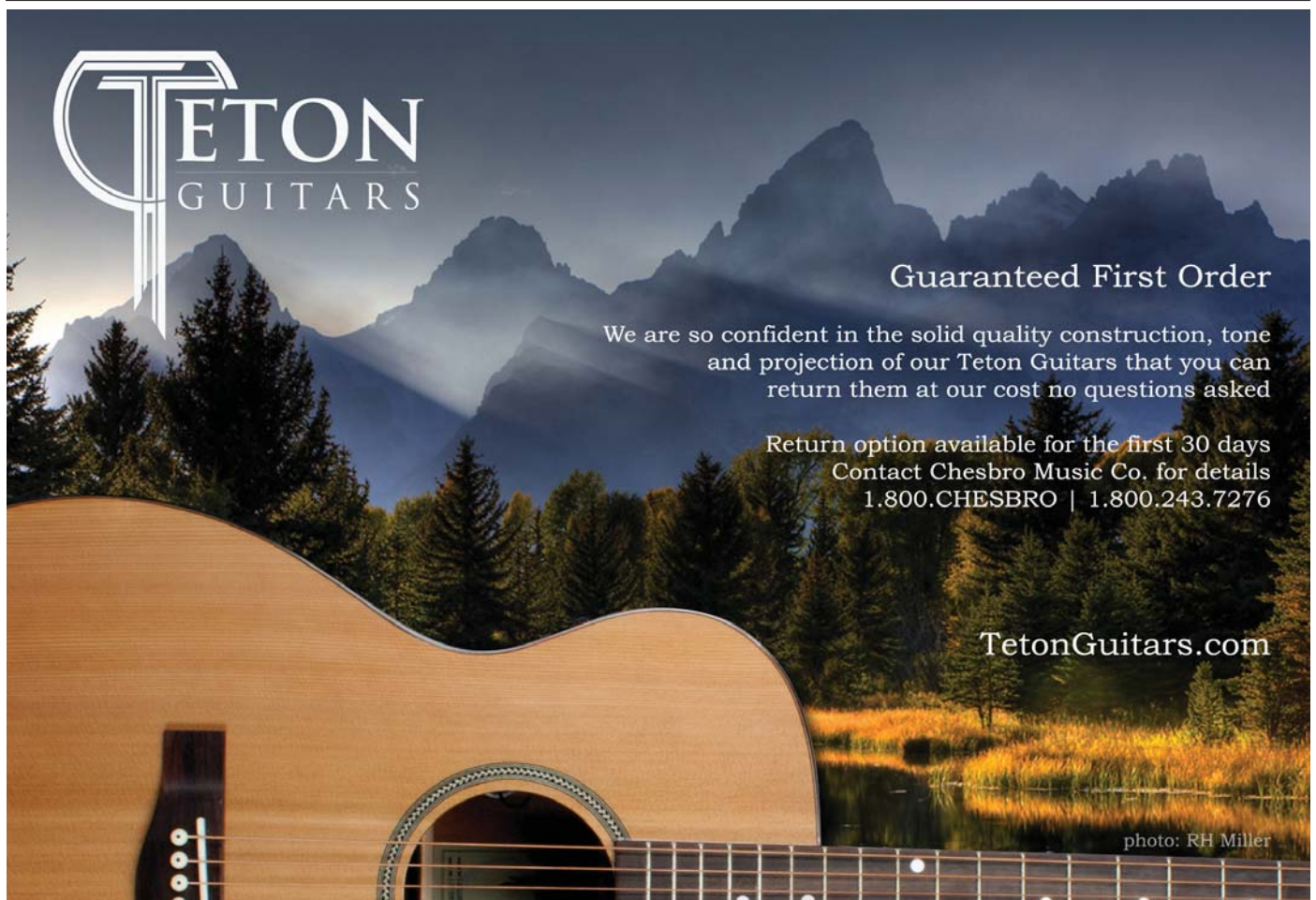
Carbo trumpets, adding, "They do not dent!"

And getting purists to accept carbon fiber might not be as difficult as one might think, according to Peavey.

"We guitar players can be traditional in our tastes, but Composite Acoustics guitars have convinced a lot of wood purists otherwise," he said.

"The consumers I have dealt with, regarding Composite Acoustics instruments, seem to be quite happy," Gordon added.

When asked if he could share his strategy for selling these guitars, he said, "To get as many as I possibly can and tell as many people as I can about how great I think they are." **MI**



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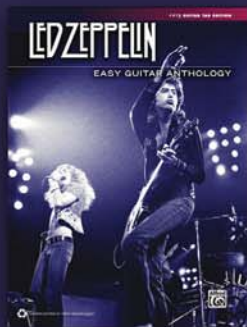
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BY KATIE KAILUS

BORN IN THE **U.S.A.**

Sales of U.S.-made instruments get a boost as the economy begins to rebound



Photo by John Chapman

In Toby Keith's tune "Made In America," the country artist sings, "Spend a little more at the store for a tag in the back that says U.S.A."

Americans have taken heed. This sentiment has been resonating with shoppers at not only supermarkets and department stores but also local music product retailers. Sales of U.S.-manufactured instruments have surged over the past few years, and the economic timing couldn't be better.

"In the last three years, we've seen the trend for our American-made products growing faster than the imported products," said Tim Caton, director of marketing communications at Conn-Selmer, a company that manufactures a large number of instruments at its Elkhart, Ind., headquarters.

Anthony Mantova, co-owner of Eureka, Calif.-based Mantova's Two Street Music, pointed out that his customers always appreciate the opportunity to purchase American products.

"We always like to see companies that make the effort," Mantova said. "Plus, products made in America are always in stock, while overseas-built products are often out of stock and have to be backordered."

Gretsch, a company synonymous with vintage Americana, recently released its Brooklyn drum set series, which pays homage to the company's birthplace. The kits feature a classic tone and "302" hoop that's reminiscent of the original double-flanged hoops Gretsch used until the mid 1950s.

"From a buying-trend sense, we definitely see that there is an interest in our American-made products," said John Palm-

er, product manager for Gretsch Drums. “So the resurgence has been pretty good throughout the economic downturn. We feel like we want to see what we can do locally in the United States and support the economy with the production that’s made here.”

JOB CREATION

Palmer’s sentiment rings throughout the MI industry. Lately, several companies have closed their overseas manufacturing plants while opening domestic facilities and adding to their U.S. staff.

Gretsch, which manufactures its Custom USA and Brooklyn series kits at the company’s plant in Ridgeland, S.C., recently doubled the number of workers at the factory due to high demand for its U.S.-made kits. DW Drums closed its factory in Mexico last year, bringing dozens of jobs back to the States.

“I know that I’d rather use a local vendor than source a job out,” said Scott Donnell, director of marketing for DW. “If it’s at all conceivable and makes business sense, we’d rather manufacture here at home.”

According to Donn Bennett, owner of Donn Bennett Drum Studio in Bellevue, Wash., customers have taken notice of this development and are shopping accordingly.

“There is definitely a sizeable portion of our customers that appreciate the fact that buying American-made goods is good for our economy,” Bennett said.

“If they can spend their dollars in a manner that gets them a product they are happy with and helps our economy at the same time, then their overall satisfaction with their purchase

is greatly enhanced. It’s a two-way win.”

Hartley Peavey, founder and CEO of Peavey Electronics, was recently named “Citizen of the Year” by *The Meridian Star* of Meridian, Miss., for his dedication to his hometown, which included moving production of three of his company’s brands — Trace Elliot, Budda and Composite Acoustics — to the city in recent years. Peavey said he believes a product’s manufacturing location factors into customers’ buying decisions.

“Our customers care about keeping jobs in the U.S.A., and so do we,” Peavey said.

Bedell Guitars builds about 2,300 guitars at its Bend, Ore., facility each year. Erika Mohr, marketing and communications manager for Two Old Hippies, Bedell’s parent company, said she counts on Bedell adding more U.S. jobs.

“We are strongly motivated to continue to offer prosperous and fulfilling livelihoods for the 45 U.S.-based employees and their families and to grow our American-made line of instruments well into the future in order to employ even more skilled craftsmen,” Mohr said.

QUALITY CONTROL

With U.S.-manufactured products comes an expectation of quality. And during a time when consumers have less expendable income, retailers and suppliers have noticed them paying more for an instrument that could last longer and require fewer repairs.

“Typically, American-made products are focused on quality over quantity,” said Ryan Cook, founder of Esoterik Guitars,

‘It’s just hip to play American drums right now,’

— Gary Forkum, Fork’s Drum Closet

which manufactures instruments in San Luis Obispo, Calif.

Steve Maxwell, owner of Naperville, Ill.-based Steve Maxwell Drums, mentioned that U.S.-made products do very well in his niche business.

“People like to be able to buy high-quality, U.S.-made products,” Maxwell said. “Our customer base really focuses on quality. They are willing to pay a reasonable premium for it.”

Quality also comes into play when sustaining a successful rental program, where long-lasting instruments are critical to recouping an investment. That’s one reason Tom Meyer of Meyer Music in Kansas City, Mo., said he features American-manufactured Conn-Selmer instruments in his rental pool.

“For us, the beginning instrument is not a throwaway instrument,” Meyer said.

“You want those instruments to hold up and feature the best quality long-term within a reasonable price range because you want the students to continue to want to play long-term and at a higher level.”

VINTAGE CHARM FACTOR

The explosion of U.S.-manufactured gear is also driving the demand for everything vintage. Not only are baby boomers reliving the music of their youth but younger musicians have shown interest in artists from the 1960s and ’70s.

“Those guys played Gretschs and Ludwigs, so I think the legacy aspect has a lot to do with the spike in U.S.-made products,” said Gary Forkum, owner of Fork’s Drum Closet in Nashville, Tenn. “I’m still selling John Bonham drum kits.”

Likewise, U.S. quality plays perfectly into consumers’ lust for everything boutique, rare and specialized.

“From pro audio to guitar stomp boxes and definitely in the drum business, we’re seeing musicians gravitating towards handmade, high-quality gear,” Donnell said. “In that sense, brand is less important. [Players are] more interested in an underdog brand that makes something unique and offers a more specialized value proposition.”

SELLING PATRIOTISM

With so many products manufactured overseas, American consumers have shown a thirst for supporting the U.S. economy. “There’s obviously a patriotic feeling that goes along with [buying American],” Palmer said. “I think people have looked inside to see how it would help our economy.”

Dealers have honed in on that patriotic feeling and used it to their advantage as an advertising tool. Rej Troup of Harrisburg, Pa.-based Dale’s Drum Shop said his store created its own “Made in the U.S.A.” signs for some of

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its U.S. drum brands.

"We group the drums together by company as much as possible and usually have one on the floor to try and the rest stacked in close proximity on display," said Troup, whose store has seen great success with such U.S.-manufactured brands as Ludwig, Evans, Vic Firth and DW Drums.

Paul Thomsen, band and orchestra manager for Brooklyn Center, Minn.-based Schmitt Music, noted that his store lists whether instruments are American-made on their tags.

"We use it as a selling feature and benefit," Thomsen said. "I believe that most customers feel buying American would be their first choice if the quality and value are sold properly. Our step-up customers are our target market [for American-made instruments]."

Along with carrying domestically manufactured instruments, Mantova said he also "shops American" first when it comes to accessories.

"We ask, 'What American companies make products, such as strings, straps and cleaners?'" he said. "We are always reading magazines and talking with our customers to see what's new."

Mantova's Two Street Music offers accessories from Lakota Leathers, Smith Mallets, Rim Risers, Curt Mangan Strings and Gorilla Tips, among others.

"The leading accessory sales come from products that are made overseas but assembled in America," Mantova said. "'Assembled in America' is a compromise worth making if you want a strong price point and the satisfaction of supporting American jobs." **MI**

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BY HILARY BROWN

MADE TO ORDER

The music products industry takes customization to new extremes

A musician walks into a bar. A genial-looking man behind the counter hands him a lengthy menu. “Order whatever you want,” he says, to which the musician replies, “my dream guitar,” and he isn’t joking.

The “bar” is in Downers Grove, Ill., nestled in a corner of newly expanded guitar dealership Tobias Music. Behind the sleek granite countertop hangs a flat-screen television on which customers can view scores of tonewoods and appointments available through Taylor’s Build to Order (BTO) guitar-customization program. For co-owner Paul Tobias, it’s not about fulfilling orders. It’s about creating an intimate and sensory custom-building experience.

“I think the flat-screen is really going to work to our advantage,” said Tobias, who proudly displayed an encyclopedic six-page “menu” of intricate inlays, unconventional neck widths and exotic wood grains. “Taylor has an endless list of categories where you can choose your options. A lot of people don’t know what those options are, so the game plan is to go to Taylor’s website. If a customer wants to know about maple binding, koa tops or Gotoh tuners, we pull up real nice pictures to give them an idea.”

Custom gear is nothing new, according to industry folks. “Musicians are some of the craftiest inventors out there,” said Samson Director of Marketing Mark Menghi. “There is not one musician I know that doesn’t like their gear personalized.” But lately, customers have transitioned from the industry’s mad scientists to its biggest critics.

“When you look at the same guitars for



Tobias Music's Paul Tobias shows off a premium Taylor Build to Order guitar

20 years, you get jaded,” said Eric Martin of Martin Music in Memphis, Tenn. “There’s always the customer who wants to say, ‘Nobody else has this.’”

Call it today’s Starbucks mentality. Modern musicians like their rigs like their lattes: highly specific. According to Taylor Vice President of Marketing and Sales Brian Swerdfeger, that mindset is no accident.

“[Extreme customization] is the true have-it-your-way experience,” Swerdfeger said. “The beginning of this customer-defined option trend started with the whole coffee thing. You have the guy who really wants to go into the minutiae and one

who says, ‘I want an 814ce with Englemann spruce.’”

Taylor’s BTO program isn’t far-removed from this coffee culture, with offerings that range from handcrafted beauties to a “Modify a Model” option where customers can tweak single features on pre-existing designs.

Conversely, customization is the direct result of an out-and-out technological revolution for DJs. Open-ended software and MIDI-mappable controllers have forced a category-wide paradigm shift — from singular workflows to creative, personalized rigs.

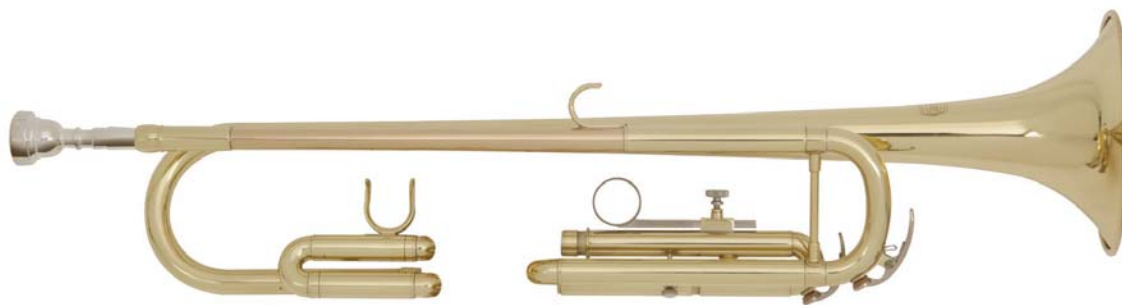
“In the DJ industry specifically, there is a major transition taking place, where the long-held

standard of two turntables and a mixer is less favorable, and the idea of an industry standard is disappearing,” said Craig Reeves, DJ product manager at Behringer. “Users are developing workflows based on their own experience.”

They’re even forgoing the antiquated term “DJ” for a more sophisticated moniker: controllerist. “A DJ ranges from anyone going to a party and playing tracks,” said Andrew Calvo, vice president of sales and marketing at Keith McMillen. “With all of these sophisticated tools, that term doesn’t take into account that these are instruments. It’s an art form that’s separate from being a DJ.”

Menghi attributed the industry-wide outburst of custom options to the widespread availability of information. “With so many companies, both big and small, making a variety of products and marketing them via the Internet, it is easier not only to find but purchase gear with the exact feature set needed,” he said.

Ironically, the Internet is also a dealer’s biggest competition in the custom market. “More than 3,000 custom drum kits are sold direct to consumers each year,” said Andy Strayer, Jupiter’s vice president of sales. “That’s 3,000 sales that dealers are missing out on. Customization has been a barrier that dealers historically



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have had a hard time getting past. We had to figure out a mechanism that made that transaction simple for both the consumer and the dealer."

It's a win-win for retailers — low inventory cost and sterling networking opportunities with vendors and gear enthusiasts. But with most custom business being conducted online, how can dealers capitalize on a market untapped by brick-and-mortar shops? As Tobias emphasized, it's about connecting, creating enthusiasm and customizing your store as a unique destination.

CUSTOM-ER AWARENESS

In its primitive stages, the custom market was narrow, limited to an exclusive society of small builders and big spenders.

"The problem is that most modular offerings are either too complex or too expensive," Reeves said of the DJ category, which tends to satiate the palate of working-class DJs with endless all-in-one solutions.

Mike Robinson, Jupiter's director of marketing, said this problem also exists in the custom drum market. With small builders' limited resources and materials, the wait time and end result on custom orders is often inconsistent, especially for an audience acclimated to 2-minute-or-less lattes. This has given industry heavy-hitters incentive to capitalize on small suppliers' inefficiencies.

"Customized drums have long been out-of-reach for the average person to afford," Robinson added. "They also haven't been available through normal retail channels. If there is an industry-wide trend [toward customization], it's been made possible

because the Internet has made it more convenient. Price and lead time are the barriers that prevented customization from going mainstream."

Dale's Drum Shop in Harrisburg, Pa., recently started capitalizing on the mid-level customer demographic by signing on as an authorized dealer for Mapex's MyDentity custom drum kit-building program. Through MyDentity's intuitive website, gearhead percussionists can opt for a personalized rig and choose from 516,837,888 shell, wrap, size and hardware combinations. Dan Grabski, Dale's sales manager, said by keeping prices mid-range — about \$1,000–\$1,200 for a four- to six-piece kit — Mapex has truly broadened the potential customer base.

"There's a huge range," he said. "The price point is the biggest thing. It's spot on, and it's very realistic. Mapex really gave all-around options. There's a traditional style and classic look, and you have guys who are 40 that are wowed by those kits. But then, on the flip side, there's the younger crowd that wants to get a bit more exotic and extreme."

Though the custom market has become far more vast, dealers agree it's not for first-time players. One exception is the customizable DJ market, where Calvo said such products as Keith McMillen's QuNeo can function as building blocks for grandiose creative setups.

"Out of the box, it can be an all-in-one solution for entry-level DJs, but it can also be a great complement to something more complex," Calvo said. "There's a lot of that going on right now, where people are piecing together gear and going out with one or

two people and doing a lot of interesting performances using several companies' products."

GET EXPERIENCED

Martin said the best way to generate interest in customized gear is to get customers involved in the creative process, and for dealers, that means full immersion into custom culture. He and Tobias are graduates of Taylor University, a dealer education program that culminates in the construction of BTO guitars.

"Dealers pick out their own sets of wood," Swerdfeger said. "They've been through the process personally, so the dealer has that menu and a whole bunch of

things to talk a player through their build. You have a local guitar expert who can answer questions and may have a guitar or two in stock that they can refer to. It's a great one-on-one experience."

While visiting the Taylor facility, Tobias even sends potential customers videos of the wood via Skype on his iPad.

Martin added: "It's certain cache to tell a customer, 'I went to the factory and picked out every piece of wood on this instrument. And I have pictures of the raw sets of wood! I think it's unique to have a story behind it, and customers feel good about spending more money than they would for a stock model.'"

Having custom models on display in-store and on dealer websites can also drive traffic and further sales. Grabski said he keeps multiple MyDentity kits on display, along with relevant in-store POPs from Mapex. And in the DJ sector, Calvo said that even big-box stores have embraced modular culture, creating specially merchandised sections of their stores specifically for creative controllers.

"Get the products in front of players," said Orin Portnoy, founder of Mod DIY custom amps and pedals. "Once they try one of our kits, they come back for more, and then they want parts to modify the kits."

"Dealers should be able to answer questions with authority," Reeves said. "Cover [customer] needs quickly and painlessly. It's one thing to blow out a bunch of puff marketing. It's another thing to provide front-line soldiers with answers to your customers' technical questions. We also need to provide dealers with an open channel of communication, both at the corporate and regional level."

In other words, act as a one-stop custom shop. Spread the word by providing useful information that will pique the interest of gearheads and make them remember the experience — even from behind the bar. **MI**

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BY ZACH PHILLIPS

STEP-UP SURGE

School music retailers are pushing B&O step-up instruments harder than ever. Here's why

Mark Goff shows the step-up band instruments at his dealership, Paige's Music



Red Schiff's B&O step-up business came to a dead stop in 2009. What's more, no amount of savvy marketing or salesmanship seemed to reverse the trend.

"After the election, people just stopped buying step-up instruments," said the president and owner of All County Music in Tamarac, Fla. "There are some bellwether products — some bellwether clarinets and trumpets — that are industry-standard step-ups. We went *months* without selling them. That was an anomaly."

A year later, economic conditions in South Florida began to improve slowly. Schiff charged his road reps with getting more step-up models into students' hands. Business started flowing back in, and late last year, he even opened a boutique flute business to capitalize on a perceived hunger for a brick-and-mortar specialty shop.

"Once people found out that the sky wasn't falling and they kept their jobs, things started coming back," Schiff said.

And come back they have, big time for some dealers. Like All County Music, Robert M. Sides Family Music Center has been refocusing on step-ups. According to Peter Sides, president of the Pennsylvania-based dealership, his step-up rentals have doubled since December 2010. Mark Goff, president of Paige's Music in Indianapolis, also confirmed the trend at his company.

"Our step-up business has grown significantly in the past three to four years, and we believe there is still a great deal of upside potential for growth in the next few years," he said.

RECAPTURING BUSINESS

A perfect storm of factors is driving the resurgence. At Chicago-based school music retail giant Quinlan & Fabish, step-ups have been on a steady upward climb for several years, according to George Quinlan, company president. He credited “improved distribution models” at the supplier level and more opportunity for margin as the key reasons.

“At single-digit margins, local dealers were forced to simply price-match to get sales rather than become creative retailers,” Quinlan said.

“When street prices dictated margins [on step-up instruments] below 10 percent, with some of the most popular brands closer to 5 percent, there was little incentive to try to grow that sector of our business. Once protected distribution models were developed, the improved margins allowed local dealers like us to add value to the instruments through financing options like rent-to-own plans, service plans, approval services and events. Adding value is what we do best and what customers value.”

Likewise, Woodwind & Brasswind’s bankruptcy in late 2006 could also be driving the surge. For years, the band and orchestra retail behemoth had the step-up market cornered with its dirt-cheap prices. These have risen back to typical street levels since Guitar Center acquired the company in 2007. To “recapture” clients from such large dealers, Paige’s Music, like All County Music, has opened three in-house specialty shops, according to Goff. These include percussion, orchestra strings and flute boutiques.

“We made the decision several years ago as a way to recapture the most profitable step-up customers from the national mail-order houses,” he said. “We knew we could never duplicate what they were doing on a grand scale, so instead we chose to identify the instruments with the highest profit potential and target those customers. The results have been very encouraging.”

And then there’s the economy. As Schiff suggested, pent-up demand after the economic dry spell is helping stimulate higher-ticket sales. Tom Schmitt, head of

Minneapolis-based full-line regional chain Schmitt Music, mentioned that his company is seeing “a good increase” in step-up sales. “Demographics and a recovering economy are both having a good effect on our step-up B&O sales.”

Plus, the rising quality of instruments, in general, might be making step-ups more attractive to consumers. “I believe step-ups are growing for a couple of reasons,” Goff said. “One, because many school music retailers are purposefully focused on growing

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The A-5000 flute features a sterling silver, hand-cut headjoint with an undercut embouchure hole. It also has a silver-plated body and footjoint, as well as French-style silver-plated pointed key cups, ribbed construction and shimmed Pisoni professional pads. The flute comes with a French-style case with a nylon cover. [\[anthemmusic.com\]](http://anthemmusic.com)



ANTONIO BAZZINI STRINGS

Connolly Music became the U.S. distributor for Antonio Bazzini step-up violins and cello outfits last year. These instruments are designed in Italy, made in China and set up in Germany under strict quality-control standards. MSRP: starts at \$1,800 for the violin, \$4,800 for the cello. [\[connollymusic.com\]](http://connollymusic.com)



JUPITER 1100S

Featuring a 4.8-inch yellow brass bell, this new trumpet comes with an oversized bell wire for extra warmth and brilliance. It's well-suited to a lead player seeking a more focused tone without sacrificing power and clarity. MSRP: \$1,495. [\[jupitermusic.com\]](http://jupitermusic.com)



PHAETON FLUGELHORN

This horn boasts a focused, mellow sound via its select yellow brass and matched brilliant rose brass bell. It has a short piston stroke design and direct-air column feature for easier control of volume, projection and focus. Pistons are interchangeable. MSRP: starts at \$1,485. [\[pjlmusic.com\]](http://pjlmusic.com)

CANNONBALL VINTAGE REBORN SERIES FALCON

This vintage-style saxophone offers light action and a traditional bell and neck. The limited-number "Falcon" hand-engraving is done at Cannonball's Utah facility. The saxophone also includes Wild Horse Picture Jasper finger buttons and a few modern keys for easier playability. It has a compact, centered and vibrant sound. [\[cannonballmusic.com\]](http://cannonballmusic.com)



DIPLOMATTE SAXOPHONES

"I have been involved with the design and development of all of our models with a keen understanding of the needs of students and pros alike," said Diplomatte President Paul Shelden. "As a result, we have been very successful with our step-up instruments, which are reasonably priced, as well. Our instruments are made by extraordinary craftsmen using the finest materials, all following design plans that have earned the highest praise worldwide." [\[diplomattemusic.com\]](http://diplomattemusic.com)



ANTIGUA AS3220LQ

The versatile alto sax has an elegant style, expressive tone and solid construction. It features an annealed brass body, power forged keys, fully ribbed construction, tilting low Bb spatula and premium leather pads. The instrument is designed for beginners and professionals. [\[antiguawinds.com\]](http://antiguawinds.com)



this segment, and two, because there has been an explosion of high-quality, lower-cost step-up products from suppliers."

Sides has seen this development play out in terms of his average sale price. His top-selling step-up trumpet, for instance, has a street price of \$995 — well below the \$2,500 required for such illustrious models as the Bach Stradivarius.

"So, step-up doesn't necessarily mean pro anymore," he said. "The intermediate market's really growing."

GOING DEEPER

But turning these favorable market conditions into profits is also requiring serious pavement-pounding. As Goff alluded to earlier, he and many of his fellow school music dealers have been pursuing this business more aggressively.

He explained that Paige's Music has a three-pronged approach for boosting step-ups. First is your standard recruiting and training, which includes rewarding the sales team for seeking out opportunities to move students into step-ups. The company also has a formal step-up program with select schools and targets beginning students six to 18 months after they join band and orchestra in middle school. Last, Paige's Music has opened its three boutique shops.

"We looked at all the ways our business could grow in the future and felt that our most profitable growth would come from going deeper with our current customers," Goff said.

All County Music is also going deeper with existing accounts, while pushing step-ups harder to new schools and stu-

dents. “Each of our school representatives has demonstration horns that they put in schools,” Schiff said. “They follow up after we get feedback from the students about how they like the instruments. Then, we’ll talk with parents, students and band directors about the experience.”

Quinlan & Fabish has bolstered its step-up business, in part, by expanding its schedule of clinics and artist appearances. More recently, the company hosted such names as Julian Bliss, Richard Stoelzel and Jose Valentino Ruiz, along with the Lyric Opera trombone section. These events are held in-store and at schools, often with help

from manufacturers. “Typically, the artist does one or two in-school appearances during the day with an in-store event in the evening,” Quinlan said.

RENTAL RESURGENCE

The step-up surge extends to rentals, too. In late 2010, Peter Sides began using a rewards program to inspire his road team to push step-up rentals harder. The first rep to earn a set number of points won a free trip to the National Association of School Music Dealers (NASMD) annual convention in March. One rep hit that goal in just two months. The following year, Sides upped the ante and kicked off the contest

earlier, on July 1. The result? In March, he sent all his road reps to the NASMD convention after they doubled the company’s step-up rental numbers.

Sides explained: “I said, ‘For the last four years on the student-rental side, we’ve set company records. So we’ve maximized that. What are we really bad at now?’ And they all agreed we weren’t cultivating step-up rentals and sales the way we should be.

“You have to do the math and say, ‘What’s more likely, that you’ll sell four step-up instruments this month and generate \$8,000–\$10,000 in sales or that your school’s going to

order \$10,000 worth of reeds and sticks?’”

Sides added that his return rate hasn’t changed significantly. “That’s the other thing that I think people would be surprised about,” he said. “We’ve been tracking return rates for over 10 years, and for step-up instruments, it’s under 5 percent. Most years, it’s under 2 percent.”

To boot, the company achieved this boost without much additional stock, according to Sides.

“I said, ‘Guys, we have all this inventory here. We’ve got a great rental program. But you’ve got to market it. You’ve got to push it.’” **MI**



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BY KATIE KAILUS

iREVOLUTION 2.0

iDevices become bona fide professional music-making gear



Mackie's Ben Olswang with the DL1608 digital live mixer

In one short year, the iDevice has morphed from a novel way to record, produce and make music into a new standard of the MI industry. And nowhere was this trend more visible than January's NAMM show, where a fresh crop of gear tapped deep into the iDevice's potential.

Welcome to the iRevolution, second generation.

"I think in the next few years we'll be taking everything we all know about creating music on other devices, whether they be computer-based or gear-based, and looking at fun, new ways to do that on these mobile devices," said Hillary Money, PR manager for Blue Microphones, which recently contributed its Mikey Digital plug-and-play external mic to the iDevice trend.

The surge in iOS-integrated audio gear is reminiscent of the change from analog to digital signal processing that took place 20 years ago. And Scott Klimt, marketing lead for DigiTech, said he believes there are still a lot of musicians in a wait-and-see mode while the trend continues to evolve.

"As we develop and communicate the incredible benefits the iPad, iPhone and iPod bring to our products, more and more musicians will adopt the trend," he said. "Over the next few years, iOS-integrated audio gear is positioned to become the fastest-growing category, leading to new product lines from all major manufacturers. Just as network and USB connections have become a standard in many audio products, the connection with mobile devices is the next generation's emerging standard."

At January's NAMM show, DigiTech

launched the iStomp, which has the ability to change the stomp box hardware into a completely different pedal using an iPhone, iPod Touch or iPad.

“Everyone with an iStomp can load any pedal from the Stomp Shop app to their iStomp for up to 5 minutes for free,” Klimt said. “I love the fact that I can try every pedal with my own gear to find the right fit.”

NOW TRENDING

A year after iOS-integrated gear became ubiquitous in the market, audio manufacturers are making the most of the trend. Mackie, for instance, has embraced the iPad as an ideal way to control a mixer with the recent release of its DL1608 iPad-integrated live mixer.

“We plan to bring this concept to market in designs with different channel counts and additional form factors in the future,” said Ben Olswang, Mackie’s product manager. “Customers have already embraced the iPad in their everyday lives, and it will be no different in the pro audio world. Mackie is at the forefront of this technology and will continue to set the pace. We are dedicated to the idea that technology empowers musicians and are excited to deliver the best possible tools to make this happen.”

iConnectivity also recently released the iConnectMIDI, which lets musicians use their iPads to create new sounds and mixes by using a variety of apps to manage MIDI events. The company is now combining iOS, app software and network functionality with its traditional equipment used for the studio or stage.

“This allows musicians to



DigiTech's Scott Klimt displays the iStomp

‘Over the next few years, iOS-integrated audio gear is positioned to become the fastest-growing category, leading to new product lines from all manufacturers.’

— Scott Klimt, DigiTech

take their creativity to a whole new level as they gain ease of control with their equipment and the freedom of creating unique sounds and effects never experienced before,” said Tara Dudar, marketing manager for iConnectivity.

Online retailer Hello Music

has done well with iOS-integrated gear. CEO Rick Camino cited the Alesis iO Dock and Akai Synthstation 25 as best-sellers.

“The great thing about sales of this type of product to our musician member community is that they compose music on these devices, then take those

frameworked songs into studios that we offer in our services section,” Camino said. “Our community is one of the major tastemakers and influencers, which is another reason why revolutionary devices like the iPad and iPad-related software and services are such a popular Hello Music category.”

MARKETING 101

The iRevolution may make some retailers skiddish and wondering if they’ll still be able to rake in revenue from mixers, pedals and other products that are becoming available as free or low-cost apps. But iConnectivity’s Dudar said she believes these new applications can re-energize gear sales if dealers show users how they can enhance their creativity by connecting the right gear to certain apps.

“Recommending the correct gear that supports the user’s applications provides value for the

consumer, which translates into better sales,” Dudar said.

Staying proactive in targeting digitally motivated customers creates a better opportunity to draw in sales of these products. Mackie’s Olswang said such in-store features as free Wi-Fi to browse apps or store-owned

iPads for sales and public use appeal to the customer’s lifestyle and allow for real-time use.

He added that dealers who have their own apps or who target customers with couponing and incentives on popular geo-based apps, such as Foursquare, create consumer interest.

“Get them in your store and give them the ability and incentive to share,” Olswang said.

“Dealers that can do this successfully are going to reap the rewards.”

“[Merchandising] is a great first step,” Money added. “We’ve talked to a few retailers who’ve

done this, and they’ve seen their sales on these products sometimes double and triple.”

Merchandising these products alongside iDevices also garners attention. George Hines, owner of Berwyn, Pa.-based George’s Music, said he promotes iOS-integrated products in his buyer’s guides, as well as in e-mail blasts and newsletters.

“They are great attachment items at point of sale,” he said.

Hines has seen so much success over the past few years with iOS-related products that he has even created a multimedia accessories department at George’s Music to handle them.

Alesis Product Manager Dan Radin mentioned that one of the greatest perks of iOS-integrated gear is that customers can go into a store with their own iPads and play their own apps and content when shopping. And retailers can capitalize on this, especially by stepping up their video content.

“This is a huge way to personalize the customer experience,” he said. “We’ve found that video reviews, demos, tips and tricks are particularly valuable to this customer, so the more video content a retailer can create covering these products, the better.”

Radin added that these videos don’t need to offer ultra-high production values. In fact, most customers prefer a loose, conversational presentation that’s all about the content.

“You don’t want to appear corporate and stiff,” Radin said. “We find that this customer wants to see a degree of proficiency to build credibility. It’s all about authenticity, not slickness and formality.” **MI**

Trendworthy iGear



ALESIS AMPDOCK
The AmpDock uses an iPad’s processing power and lets users unleash their guitar tones. The unit features tonal shaping through the iPad’s processor. alesis.com

ALTO PROFESSIONAL MASTERLINK LIVE SERIES
The Masterlink Live 16 and 24 mixers feature three-band EQs with sweepable mids, dedicated analyzer and talkback mic inputs. altoproaudio.com



BLUE MICROPHONES MIKEY DIGITAL
This external condenser microphone transforms an iPad, iPhone or iPod Touch into a high-quality stereo recording device. The unit boasts automatic and manual gain control, an auxiliary input for direct recording, and an LED clipping indicator. bluemic.com

DIGITECH ISTOMP
This guitar stomp box is 24 pedals in one, letting players pick any sound they’d like through their iPhones, iPads or iPods. Two pedals are included with the iStomp for free. digitech.com



ICONNECTIVITY ICONNECTMUSE
The iConnectMUSE is a compact personal mini mixer that combines several music accessories into one iOS-controlled product. The unit can charge the iOS device at the same time and boasts six stereo inputs and six stereo outputs. MSRP: \$199.99. iconnectivity.com

KORG MONOTRON
This pocket-sized synthesizer lets users create their own beats and tunes either by itself or partnered with their iPhones, iPads or iPods. The unit is equipped with a built-in speaker and battery. korg.com



MACKIE DL1608
The DL1608 redefines live mixing by combining the power of a full-featured 16-channel digital mixer with an iPad. This gives users the mobile freedom to control not only the mix but also powerful plug-ins, such as EQ and dynamics. mackie.com

TASCAM IM2
The iM2 turns an iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch into a high-quality stereo recorder. A pair of condenser microphones plugs into the dock connector of the Apple device. The mics are adjustable over 180 degrees. tascam.com



THOROUGHBREDS



IronHorse Head shown with DHK12 Cabinet

DarkHorse Head shown with DHK12 Cabinet

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- Three Stage Clean/Pure/Solo Mode Switch
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- Series Effects Loop
- Selectable 4 & 8 ohm Outputs for Varying Cabinet Configurations
- Accepts Optional Two Button foot switch
- All Metal Chassis
- Made in Canada

DARKHORSE

- 15-Watt All Tube Lunch-Box Head
- Operates in full Power (6V6) Mode or Low Power 2-watt (12AU7) Mode
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- Brit / USA / Pure Switch for the Tone Stack
- Uses Hand Selected 12AX7 (x2), 6V6 (x2), and 12AU7 (x1) tubes
- Versatile Speaker Outputs
(allows Dark Horse Head to drive Varying Cabinet Configurations)
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- Made in Canada



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WARNING! This is **NOT** a Stompbox - It's a 25-Watt Microamp!

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BY DAN DALEY

MI CONSUMES PRO AUDIO

Music recording and live sound systems become an even bigger factor in the MI product mix



Steven Slate

Steven Slate ducks out into the hallway at January's winter NAMM show in Anaheim, Calif. He's trying to get away from the din that has become a hallmark of the biggest MI products show on this side of the Atlantic Ocean, one that even an increased presence of volume-level monitors roaming the show can't seem to keep close to the mandated 85 dB on the exhibit floor. (One of them explains that it's been running closer to 92 dB or so on average, and the best they can do is warn "the leaders of the pack" to keep local noise wars from going nuclear.) But Slate isn't annoyed. To him, the racket is the sound of his business expanding.

Slate Pro Audio used The NAMM Show to introduce its new Raven X1 production console for digital audio workstations. That kind of high-end audio item would once use the Audio Engineering Society's (AES) annual show as its launch site. But something has changed: The convergence of pro audio products with the mainstream MI constituency of musicians has accelerated in recent years. Musicians increasingly use their own equipment to record music instead of relying on conventional recording studios and engineers. Today, musicians are the engineers, running an ever-growing cornucopia of pro audio systems that seem to embody an expanded version of Moore's Law — faster, smaller, more powerful, easier to use and cheaper year after year.

"NAMM is the most popular girl in school now, and the AES show has become kind of the geeky kid in the lunchroom no one wants to sit with," said Slate, drawing on a high school metaphor that seems particularly appropriate at this rambunctious show. "Musicians use this kind of equipment now, and we want to show it where they will see it."

THESOURCE: AUDIO TREND

They will use Slate's new console and plenty more. Pro audio sales, including sound reinforcement, were up 10 percent last year to \$1.3 billion, according to NAMM's annual report, and pro audio's presence at winter NAMM was up 4.4 percent, according to Scott Robertson, NAMM's former director of public relations and social media. (Robertson left NAMM in March to start his own PR and marketing firm.)

"We're seeing an increase in the number of pro audio companies exhibiting at the show year over year because the demand for those kinds of products [is] coming from the buyers," and, putatively, from those retailers' customers, as well, Robertson added. He pointed out that NAMM shows tend to attract a lot of music celebrities, whose presence has become an important part of marketing strategies for all sorts of products, MI and pro audio alike.

PRO AUDIO STARS

Pro audio also has its own universe of stars. Such luminaries as Ed Cherney, mixer for The Rolling Stones; Elliot Scheiner, whose work with Steely Dan is legendary; and Frank Filipetti, whose work with Frank Zappa, Foreigner and Korn spans generations, were at NAMM. They were attracted by the TEC Awards — pro audio's own little Oscars-type event — which left the AES show, where it was a perennial for the past 25 years, and became a regular part of winter NAMM in 2011.

Pro audio's new love affair with NAMM is based on several factors. Pro audio products have been coming steadily down in

price for more than a decade, ever since digital technology has come to dominate product design.

"Processing costs just keep coming down, and that's translating into lower prices for pro audio products, just as it has for MI products in recent years," Robertson said.

This brings pro audio products into the budget ranges of most MI customers, encouraging MI retailers to expand their pro audio sales offerings. Many signal processing products, including reverbs, equalizers and compressors, some costing several thousands of dollars, have left their expensive analog hardware shells behind and are now sold as software plug-ins, often for as little as \$99 or less.

Then there's the fact that much of the pro audio gear shown at NAMM is attracting upscale pro audio users, as well. Even though the product has entered this new low-cost digital paradigm, many of these users

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began as musicians and are in various stages of migrating to the top of the pro audio chain. That's attracting high-end manufacturers, such as Digico, which used NAMM 2012 to introduce a new MADI interface that offers 96 channels of audio I/O over USB 2.0.

Behringer used the show to introduce the Ultralink USB wireless microphone system. AKG debuted the IVM4500 in-ear monitoring system. BSS Audio released its first AVB switch for networking multi-channel audio and video over standardized Ethernet.

These and other products would have been introduced at more rarefied venues in the past, such as AES, the National Association of Broadcasters show or installed-AV exhibition InfoComm. Those trade shows remain important, particularly as conduits for technical papers and for high-end and commercial product introductions, but The NAMM Show is gaining traction for pro audio products and systems across the sector's entire spectrum.

And that offers a more perceptual but still compelling advantage to pro audio manufacturers below the top tier and those still trying to establish their brands: validation by proximity and association. It's no accident that Slate Pro Audio's booth was just down the aisle from that of Solid State Logic, which, despite its own forays into plug-ins and entry-level products, still bears a Rolls-Royce aura in the pro audio universe.

"There's a huge customer base that does recording and live sound that's part of the NAMM

market," said Jack Kelly, president of Group One, Digico's U.S. distributor. "Also, there's a lot of pro audio dealers that are in Southern California, and others are drawn from around the country and internationally to the show because pro audio is getting more attention there. They're coming out for a day or two just to see those kinds of products, so that's why we're there."

Phil Wagner, president of U.K.-based mixer and DSP manufacturer Focusrite, said a decline in the number of pro audio-only dealers has also driven his cohort to NAMM's doorstep.

"There are very few companies that aren't selling into the MI space [because] there are fewer high-end-only places to sell through today," he said from the Focusrite booth in the middle of the Anaheim Convention Center's Hall A, the show's pro audio epicenter. "This is also a place where pro audio manufacturers can experiment a bit in the sub-\$1,000 scale of the [pro audio sector]."

Kelly also noted that the declining costs of developing pro audio equipment have lowered the barriers to entry for existing MI companies trying to move into the pro audio realm.

LIVE SIDE GETS BIGGER

That's been especially evident in one large, growing corner of the pro audio sector: live sound.

Winter NAMM attracted several major brands in the



K-array's Andrea Torelli (left) with a showgoer at the Prolight+Sound expo

live sound system sector, most notably Harman's JBL and related brands, including BSS Audio and Crown amplifiers, as well as Bag End, DAS Audio, Electro-Voice, Mackie, Renkus-Heinz, Yamaha and QSC. The show is also viewed as a good platform for such new brands as On Point Audio, which showed a new line of P.A. and installed sound speakers.

Line 6, best known for its modeling architecture guitar amplifiers, used winter NAMM to mark its entry into the P.A. business. The company's StageScape M20d mixer uses Apple-like graphic icons instead of typical pro audio glyphs and metrics to represent functions, including equalization and level control. An iPad connection allows touch-screen interfacing capability and can sense when the system's StageScape speakers are added for various types of performance venue characteristics. (iPads were ubiquitous at The NAMM Show for pro audio

products, especially as the screens for audio mixers.)

There were other clues that live sound is gaining traction at the show. NAMM's H.O.T. Zone, an initiative that offers training in recording technology and business matters for musicians, included a live mixing panel for the first time this year. It featured front-of-house mixers Monty Lee Wilkes and Kenneth H. Williams, who mix live sound for Britney Spears and Erykah

Badu, respectively. Mike Hansen, sales manager at publisher Hal Leonard, said the company's live sound how-to titles, such as its flagship *The Ultimate Live Sound Operator's Handbook*, are selling faster and being revised more often to reflect changes in the technology.

As a side note, Hal Leonard also recently expanded its own pro audio technology products division. It now distributes more than 20 premium brands, including Avid, Antares, Band-in-a-Box, Blue Microphones, Finale, IK Multimedia, Line 6 and Steinberg.

AUDIO CHALLENGES

Wayne Hrabak, Yamaha's marketing manager for live sound products, said P.A. systems pose a unique challenge in the MI sales and distribution channels, especially in a turbulent economic environment.

"Live sound products are not instruments," he said. "A guitar is an emotional investment,

and if someone really wants it, they'll find a way to pay for it. In the case of a P.A. system or a mixer, it tends to be more of a cut-and-dried business decision, and that's more affected by the economy. That's something we're still working through: how to make a live sound system more of an emotional purchase."

Hrabak added that he suspects positioning a product at the cutting edge of technology is important, as is a strong product launch, which he said Yamaha's new DXS and DXR powered P.A. speakers got at the January show.

With the rapid proliferation of manufacturers and products in

pro audio, he advised MI retailers to pick and choose lines carefully, perhaps more so than they might with typical MI products.

Andrea Torelli, marketing manager for K-array, the P.A. line marketed in the United States by Sennheiser, said that the emotional link musicians feel for their instruments is beginning to take hold for P.A. systems. This is being driven, in part, through another new product category that musicians have been bonding with: laptops and tablets. The fierce loyalty that Apple has engendered in the music market seems to be translating to other pro audio

products that aren't as warm and fuzzy as a Les Paul or a Strat.

Retailers and audio manufacturers may also get a bump as live performances and concert touring begin to replace some of the revenue lost to slumping CD sales during the last decade. According to tour industry trade publication Pollstar, concert-ticket sales in America tripled in value between 1999 and 2009, from \$1.5 billion to \$4.6 billion. Ticket sales stuttered a bit as the recession's effects took hold, but concert tickets still outsold CDs in the United States, a diverging trend that's expected to continue. Live sound is suddenly sexy.

Pro audio products will be a larger component of the product mix for MI retailers, if only because the line between the studio, the stage and the instruments is blurring. David Schwartz, former publisher of *Mix* magazine and now the director of NAMM's H.O.T. Zone agenda, summed it up this way: "There's a natural progression taking place. Musicians today are so influenced by technology. You're not on one side of the glass [in the studio control room] or the other anymore. It's all in one place now."

And that place is increasingly MI retail. **MI**

Order your parts online and get back to the music.

The advertisement features a close-up of a computer mouse in the foreground, with a blurred background of musical notation on a staff. The text 'WDBIZ.COM' is prominently displayed in the lower left, and the 'WD Music Products' logo is in the lower right.

Providing the world's leading guitar builders and luthiers with the top brands of bass and guitar parts since 1978.

The advertisement for Hunter Musical Instruments features a central image of five instruments: a saxophone, a clarinet, a tuba, an oboe, and a violin. The text 'HUNTER NEW YORK' is at the top left, and 'QUALITY BAND INSTRUMENTS FROM HUNTER' is at the top right. Below the instruments, the text reads: 'Provide your customers with the highest quality instruments and the best possible price points. Hunter offers a full line of instruments that are made to the best standards. Call us today to find out how you can profit from Hunter Musical Instruments. Fast shipping available from our New York warehouse.' The bottom section contains the company name 'HUNTER MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS' and contact information: '3300 Northern Blvd. Long Island City, NY 11101 (718)706-0828 ■ FAX (718)706-0128 www.huntermusical.com'.

BY ZACH PHILLIPS

THE VALUE OF VIRTUAL PRINT

Kevin Cranley, president of Willis Music, likens on-demand sheet music to iTunes. As he put it, “People want one song, and they want it right now.”

He, like many music retailers, looks to on-demand digital sheets as a modest but growing business. It’s not a savior to a dealer’s digital-age woes, but it can be a huge customer-service enhancer that drives traffic and, sometimes, additional purchases.

Cranley, who’s also currently the chairman of NAMM, offers on-demand sheet music at his Florence, Ky.-based dealership using Hal Leonard’s Digital Retailer program and Sheet Music Now, which is powered by Online Sheet Music. (Alfred Music Publishing also offers a service, Total Sheet Music.) Since 2007, his on-demand business has increased at a steady 8 percent.

“Change is sometimes through innovation and other times a reaction to new customer expectations,” Cranley said. “I believe this is the latter, and we have to step up and give the customer what they want.”

THE CUSTOMIZATION FACTOR

Customers are attracted to on-demand services for their near-inexhaustible virtual libraries and ability to tailor songs to any key.

Like many dealers, Cranley



Jen Burleigh-Bentz

Retailers are divided about on-demand sheet music's business sense, but most agree it's a customer service godsend

acknowledged that his staff will usually steer customers to a physical book first. But for a customer who needs a last-minute piece of music, on-demand can be a godsend.

“So many people in the industry, as well as regular walk-in customers, come into our store with an immediate need,” said

Jen Burleigh-Bentz, co-owner of Brickhouse Music, a full-line dealer in River Falls, Wis. “Oftentimes, these folks are more than happy to purchase a book with the song in it, but with on-demand sheet music, we can usually tailor that music to the customer, as opposed to the customer taking ‘whatever they can get.’”

And like iTunes, on-demand sheets can also attract a different kind of customer than the typical book buyer. Carol Wasson, owner of Wasson Music in Centerville, Ohio, said these customers generally aren’t seeking a specific folio or music in a particular genre.

“They are not referenced to a radio playlist or some Billboard Top 40 chart but a song that they or a friend have heard somewhere and then down-

loaded to their phone or iPod,” said Wasson, who added that her on-demand business is currently growing anywhere from 5–10 percent depending on the month.

“We have seen a steady increase in the interest of print on-demand over the past several years as the technology has evolved and developed, especially for occasions, such as weddings or funerals, when one needs something last-minute and even in a specific key,” said Beth Wind, president and owner of Dave’s Music Den, which is located inside Sweetwater Sound in Fort Wayne, Ind.

Still, the business needs to be nurtured. Peter Sides, who offers on-demand print at his Robert M. Sides Family Music stores in central and northeast Pennsylvania, stressed that promoting the service with in-store signage is key.

“Most customers don’t know it even exists if we don’t tell them or show them,” he said.

CUSTOMER SERVICE TOOL

Wind mentioned that her on-demand sheet music service hasn’t spurred a huge boost in profits. That said, her store charges an extra fee for print on-demand, “which makes it the same profit margin for us as a conventional sheet.”

“Although at a lower margin, we are producing gross profit

dollars that would not exist otherwise,” Cranley added.

“They’re not a large percentage of our annual sales, but the markup and profit is a higher percentage than what is normal for our sheet music purchasing,” said Marcia Stearns, owner of Bookmark Music in Pacific Grove, Calif.

Plus, there’s zero inventory commitment. “The in-store download program has proven to be a valuable fiscal asset,” Wasson said. “Money is not tied up in print music sheets that don’t sell and then I have to wait months for credits from the publishers. It has also saved on employee time spent culling through invoices and sheets to create [return-authorization] requests.”

But more than anything else, the real value of on-demand sheet music is intangible. David Jahnke, Hal Leonard’s vice president of national sales, called it “the ultimate customer service tool,” and Burleigh-Bentz agreed.

“I would have to say that the contribution at this point is still mostly customer-satisfaction-related, as opposed to generating high income,” she said.

ON-DEMAND PRINT PAINS

Large print music specialty dealers are less sanguine. Denton, Texas-based print chain Pender’s Music has experienced 100-percent growth in its on-demand sheet music business each year, according to Richard Gore, company president, who noted that the category represents 1 percent of his total sales. However, he acknowledged that the time spent to help each customer select and print on-demand music makes the sale a break-even endeavor at best. Plus, on-demand has



Beth Wind

significantly cut into Pender’s classical vocal book sales.

“I do not believe it will be a profitable part of our business until a self-serve kiosk is developed,” Gore said.

Still, Pender’s Music is embracing the digital revolution. Gore mentioned his company continues to seek ways to integrate on-demand into all channels of its business, both online and in-store.

“Our hope is that the publisher-dealer channel of distribution may be maintained and enhanced as different delivery modes become available,” Gore said.

Eric Strouse, president of Stanton’s Sheet Music in Colum-

bus, Ohio, added that he believes on-demand sheet music benefits small mom-and-pop stores more than print-only dealers, mostly because small retailers “now have access to the digital inventory that they don’t have to purchase ahead of time and risk being stuck with overages.” But for stores like his with a mammoth physical inventory, he claimed on-demand sheets cut into folio sales and new-issue products “that might have been sold before downloading.”

For Strouse, the main benefit of on-demand sheets is they give his store a means to always leave the customer happy.

“Basically, it allows Stanton’s an opportunity to sell something

to the customer before they walk out the door.”

FULL-LINE BENEFITS

But like the small mom and pops, large full-line retailers may also be benefitting from on-demand.

Canadian music retail giant Long & McQuade’s Vancouver, British Columbia, superstore has seen a boost in gross profits since it began offering the service, according to Bob Kohl and Christie Smith, who run the print department. Smith mentioned that, surprisingly, on-demand sheet music hasn’t affected her store’s individual sheet or folio sales. And it’s a growing business.

“I think given the choice, if the published sheet music is in stock and in the correct key, a customer will choose the slick, colorful publication over the digital download, so there is no reason our sheet music sales should go down,” Smith said.

She’s not alone. Cranley said his sales of single sheets increased last year, driven by in-store displays that feature both trending and historically top-selling titles. Burleigh-Bentz also mentioned she hasn’t seen a large dip in print music sales at her store.

“[Customers] still want to have a book that lays open on their piano,” she said.

“Bethel Music Center has been offering on-demand sheet music services for quite some time now, and the sales have pretty much flattened out,” said Bruce Treidel, founder of the Bethel, Conn., dealership. “While I feel it is a very important service to offer, most customers come in to browse the print music. There seems to be a connection when books are held and flipped through.” **MI**

BY ZACH PHILLIPS

THE YOUTUBE CONUNDRUM

Marcia Stearns has seen her instructional DVD sales dip since the advent of YouTube. According to the owner of Bookmark Music in Pacific Grove, Calif., the trend has been especially noticeable with her under-30 customers.

“When we thought to expand a little more into the pop market, we found that younger folks are very tuned into the Internet and go there first for pretty much everything,” Stearns said. “When they can’t find it demoed on YouTube, then we see them.”

She’s not alone. Poll a handful of music retailers, and the majority will likely agree the video-sharing website has cut into their stand-alone DVD sales. Jen Burleigh-Bentz, co-owner of Brickhouse Music in River Falls, Wis., is among these dealers and has pared down her store’s DVD selection.

“I’ve had customers explain that they don’t need to buy DVDs, as they can access all of the information that they need online,” she said.

“DVD sales have dropped significantly over the past few years,” said Kevin Cranley, president of Florence, Ky.-based Willis Music. “We are very selective with the DVDs that we stock.”

As Bruce Treidel, founder of Bethel Music Center in Bethel, Conn., pointed out, the recession probably contributed to this decline, too. “I also feel the rise



The video-sharing website's effect on DVD sales at music retail

in going to YouTube for information instead of the traditional sources is greatly fueled by the economy. Young musicians and their parents simply don't have the money to support the interest in music.”

THE FLIP SIDE

Dig a little deeper, though, and YouTube's effect on DVD sales isn't quite so simple. As Burleigh-Bentz explained, she's also had customers purchase DVDs because they discovered a particular artist on YouTube.

“I feel the effect on both sides of the coin,” she said. “Some customers will have seen a specific instructor on YouTube and will ask if I stock any of their

DVDs for sale. That's a coup.”

“YouTube has had a significant effect on sales — sometimes good and sometimes bad,” Treidel said. “We do get people in looking for the song they heard on YouTube.” Still, he added that there's “so much instruction available on YouTube it has had a dampening effect on instructional DVD and book sales.”

This isn't to say savvy customers can't tell the difference in quality between free online lessons and a professionally produced instructional video. Stearns mentioned people will come to her for DVDs when they realize a YouTube video doesn't sound like the recording.

“Usually, they'll see something demoed by another kid doing it by ear,” she said. “They'll copy that and realize there's missing info and want a better version.

“Or, if they realize that what they saw or heard didn't sound exactly like their recordings, they come to us for the official music. And they'll gravitate toward the products with DVDs. The adults

are more likely to go for a book or book/CD combo.”

DVD ANOMALIES

Not everyone's feeling the pinch either. Dave's Music Den is located inside indie retail powerhouse Sweetwater Sound in Fort Wayne, Ind. Beth Wind, president and owner of the print shop, said the company is currently seeing an increase, not a decrease, in instructional DVD sales. She noted that Dave's Music Den mainly fulfills customer requests for DVDs.

“They have typically researched very well,” Wind said. “I have not yet seen any evidence of YouTube affecting those sales.”

Plus, bundled DVDs can still bolster the perceived worth of books. Richard Gore, president of Denton, Texas-based print retail chain Pender's Music, reported a major decline in stand-alone DVD sales at his company. But he acknowledged that customers tend to see the added value in a book when it includes a DVD, and they'll pay a higher price for the package.

“YouTube has, to some degree, taken over for live instruction *and* for purchased media instruction,” Burleigh-Bentz added. “That tends to be a bit distressing, with my large stock of DVDs, but I know it is not conclusive. Once again, the customer needs to be online with a steady working stream to be able to view YouTube, whereas the DVDs are a bit more versatile — but for how long?” **MI**

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From left: Morty, Iris and Ron Manus



BY KATIE KAILUS

ALFRED AT 90

Ron Manus, CEO of Alfred Music Publishing, jokes that his parents falling in love was the best thing that ever happened to his career.

It may have also been the best thing that happened to his company. Ron's father and mother, Morty and Iris, crystallized Alfred's core business, music education — a focus that con-

tinues to this day as the company celebrates its 90th anniversary.

"Morty really shifted Alfred's focus to education, and he co-authored many of our staple best-sellers, including Alfred's Basic Guitar Method in 1956 and Alfred's Basic Piano Library in 1982," Ron said.

"We sometimes explore other opportunities outside of our core, but in the end, we keep coming back to education. It's what we

do best, and it's what Alfred is best known for. Alfred is music education."

Founded in 1922 by composer and musician Alfred Piantadosi, the publisher was purchased by Sam Manus, Morty's father, in 1928. Following Morty's and Iris' tenure, Ron's brother, Steven, became CEO in 1996 until Ron's appointment in 2009.

Under the Manus family, the

company moved its offices from New York to Los Angeles in 1976 and, during the '90s, opened international offices in Australia, Singapore, the United Kingdom and Germany. Alfred partnered with Daisy Rock Guitars in 2003, purchased Warner Bros. Publications in 2005 — which more than doubled its size — and released the customizable method, Sound Innovations, in 2009.

Music Inc. Associate Editor

PRINTMUSICSPECIAL: ALFRED MUSIC PUBLISHING

Katie Kailus recently caught up with Ron Manus to discuss the company's history, the state of the print music market and untapped opportunities for music retailers.

KK: *What has been the most significant change in the print music industry since you've been active in the business?*

RM: Technological advancements have really changed the industry and made a lot of amazing new things possible.

Customizable method books, e-books, digital sheet music downloads and videos on-demand are some offerings that have recently been deployed. Many retailers are plugging into our Total Sheet Music online portal, which lets customers purchase digital sheet music, or are taking advantage of our Leaping Brain VOD solution to sell our videos digitally and instantly.

Our Sound Innovations series for both strings and band is the world's first customizable method and lets them choose to include note names in the note heads, change the starting key, and even customize the cover and intro letter, just to name a few features. The technological advancements are enabling some cool, new products and convenient ways to deliver products, but I do feel that much of this is an enhancement to the traditional print music industry and not a replacement of books and sheet music.

KK: *You took a large bet in a dramatically changing industry when you bought the rights to the Warner Bros. catalog. How's that process going?*

RM: We certainly bet our business when we purchased Warner Bros. Publications — an entity that was considerably much larger than Alfred at the time. It was a big leap, no doubt, but it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and one that had so many benefits.

For example, it brought us some amazing educational powerhouse brands, including Suzuki, the Belwin catalog and 21st Century Guitar Method. We got the amazing pop catalog that we continue to develop and incorporate into our educational programs. There were also some very talented employees at Warner Bros. who continue to bring many years of experience and valuable insight into the combined company.

Altogether, it has been one of the greatest business decisions we have made and one that further cements Alfred Music Publishing as the world's largest educational print music publisher.

KK: *Transitions can be tricky for a family business. How did you handle the transition of your brother, Steven, leaving his position as CEO and you taking over?*

RM: Steven took me to lunch one day and told me he was ready to move to Spain and retire. Being in a family business that he cared about very much, he gave me some considerable time to prepare me and the team for the transition.

I wasn't sure at first if I was going to be a good CEO or if I was up to the challenge, but the more I thought about it and the more people I spoke with, I realized that I have been in this business all my life, and I am totally ready for the challenge. I spent a lot of time with my dad and Steven and the rest of the executive management team to make sure the transition went as smoothly as possible.

Now that I've been the CEO for a few years, I respect all the challenges and massive responsibilities that accompany this role, but I also embrace the opportunities that come with it. For example, I'm environmentally conscious, so one of the first things I did after becoming CEO was implement the Alfred Cares initiative to do our part to help the environment.

KK: *With all of the changes in the print industry coupled with the dynamics of the economy, what do you see as untapped opportunities for music retailers?*

RM: From tapping into the immediacy of e-commerce sales and digital on-demand sales to hosting educational music clinics in your store to partnering with us in meaningful ways to expand your market presence, we offer quite a few resources to help you achieve these goals.

If you're not already selling online, we can help you build an e-commerce website preloaded with Alfred's titles, so customers can search, review and purchase 24/7. There are also dealers reading this who are not yet selling print. Print is a powerful way to build add-on sales, and it is very profitable.

KK: *What lies ahead for Alfred?*

RM: Alfred's core business has remained educational music publishing, and I expect that to continue well into the future.

Our editors and authors vigilantly seek the absolute best way to produce the most innovative and useful tools for tomorrow's music educators by gauging teacher feedback and engaging with students and educators at the more than 400 clinics we attend each year.

We sometimes explore other opportunities outside of our core, but in the end, we keep coming back to education.

It's what we do best, and it's what Alfred is best known for. Alfred is music education. **MI**

PRINTMUSICSPOTLIGHT



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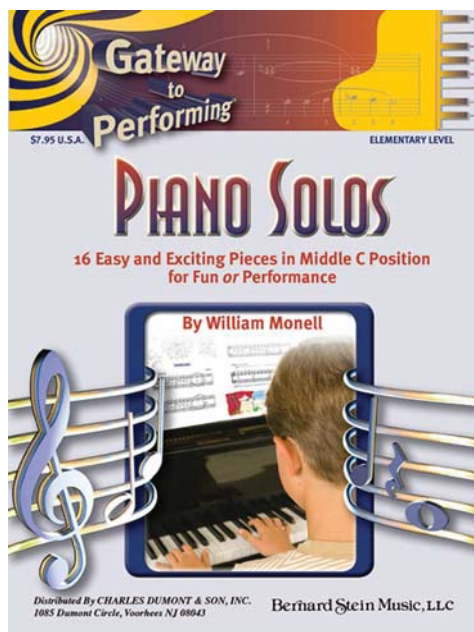
PRINTMUSICSPECIAL: NEW TITLES

CHARLES DUMONT | GATEWAY TO PERFORMING

Gateway to Music

Charles Dumont's new *Gateway To Performing Piano Solos* gives the elementary-level student a repertoire of 16 easily performable pieces and gives the teacher additional stand-alone material. It can be used with any piano method after the student has been introduced to all notes in middle C position, legato and staccato, and flats and sharps. Presented with colorful illustrations, some instruction and variations in tonality using accidentals, the music increases in difficulty as students progress. MSRP: \$7.95.

{dumontmusic.com}

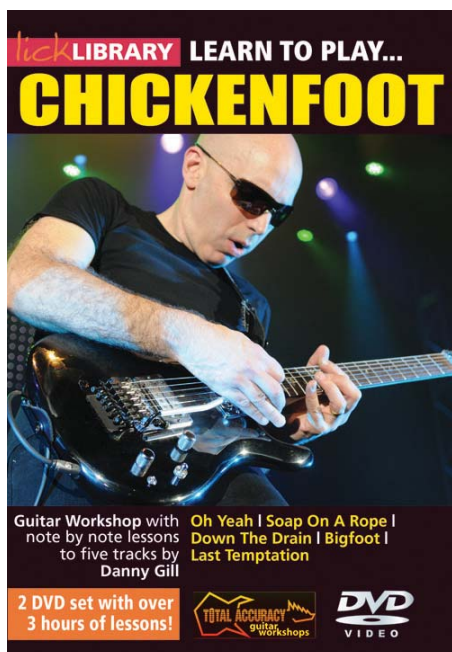


LICK LIBRARY | 'LEARN TO PLAY CHICKENFOOT'

Playing Chicken

Lick Library has debuted *Learn To Play Chickenfoot*,

which includes more than two hours of guitar lessons that feature the skills of guitarist Joe Satriani. Danny Gill, Satriani's pupil, teaches users the five Chickenfoot tracks. The DVD provides an easy way to learn his riffs and solos and will help players develop an arsenal of licks and techniques. Each riff and solo is played slowly and up to tempo and explained note by note. {licklibrary.com}



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ALFRED | 'GUITAR CHORD RESOURCE'

Practice A-Chord-ingly

Alfred recently introduced *Guitar Chord Resource*, a 424-page guide to playing and using chords, produced in partnership with National Guitar Workshop. Designed for guitarists of all skill levels, *Guitar Chord Resource* is a one-stop source for exploring guitar chords. Written in both music notation and tab, nearly every chord is included with exercises and detailed explanations that teach how to apply, interpret, strum, fingerpick and transpose them. {alfred.com}



CARL FISCHER | NEW CHORAL MUSIC

Choral Craze

Carl Fischer Music has unveiled a collection of new choral music for 2012. The release includes works by some of the best-known names in choral literature, such as Earlene Rentz, Russell Robinson, Dave and Jean Perry, Darmon Meader, Vicki Tucker Courtney, and Steve Kupferschmid. The 2012 choral collection's material ranges from diverse folk songs and spirituals to editions and arrangements of masterworks, making literature selection easy for school and church music directors. {carlfischer.com}



HAL LEONARD | 'HARMONICA PLAY-ALONG:
VOL. 9 — CHICAGO BLUES'

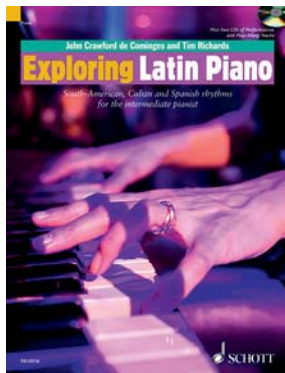
Chi City Sings the Blues

Hal Leonard has added *Harmonica Play-Along: Vol. 9 – Chicago Blues*. By following the notation and listening to the CD, users can hear how the harmonica should sound and then play along using the separate backing tracks. The melody and lyrics are also included in the book. Songs include: “Got My Mojo Working,” “Hard Hearted Woman,” “Help Me,” “I Ain’t Got You,” “Juke” and “Messin’ With The Kid.” MSRP: \$14.99. **{halleonard.com}**

SCHOTT MUSIC | 'EXPLORING LATIN PIANO'

Latin Flavor

Schott Music has unveiled *Exploring Latin Piano* by John Crawford and Tim Richards. The collaboration between the two U.K. pianists and educators offers intermediate pianists a detailed introduction to the highly rhythmic music of Latin America and Spain, featuring a wide range of styles from many countries. **{schott-music.com}**



LATHAM MUSIC | 'IT TAKES FOUR TO TANGO'

Last Tango

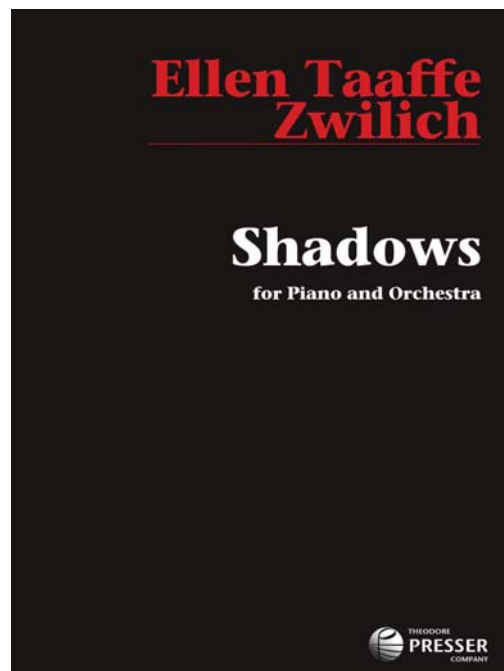
Latham Music has released *It Takes Four To Tango!*, authentic tango writing arranged by Christian Laszlo, an Argentinian student of Thom Sharp. Harmonic dissonances, rhythmic accompaniment and chromaticism add to the fire of the dance. All players are featured with melodic moments. Due to rhythmic challenges, rehearsal is recommended. MSRP: \$16.95. **{lorenz.com}**



THEODORE PRESSER | 'SHADOWS'

Out of the Shadows

Theodore Presser recently unveiled Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Shadows* for piano and orchestra. *Shadows* is Zwilich's fifth piano concerto and the second concerto that she has composed for pianist Jeffrey Biegel and a consortium of many orchestras. The book is described as a work evoking the recollection of ancestral, religious and cultural roots in people's constant migration. The final movement reflects the triumph of the human spirit over natural and man-made disasters. MSRP: \$40. **{presser.com}**



LM STRAPS | FLYBOY

Reporting for Duty

LM Straps has launched the Flyboy guitar strap series. These straps feature a blend of natural-looking canvas with soft, natural-looking cowhide leather and suede, as well as a hint of military styling. There are five models to choose from with three color choices. Flyboy straps are heavy-duty but soft and comfortable. lproducts.com



ELECTRO-HARMONIX | 12AY7/6072A EH

Vintage Rewind

Electro-Harmonix's new 12AY7/6072A EH is a small-signal, twin-triode tube. Almost all Fender tweed-era amplifiers used the 12AY7 in their first pre-amp stage, and those who own a later-model Fender with a 12AX7 in the first pre-amp stage can replace it with the 12AY7 EH to capture the signature tone of a tweed-era Fender. The lower mu factor of the 12AY7/6072A EH also spreads the sweep of the gain and volume controls. ehx.com



JHS | SPONGEBOB GUITARS, UKES

SpongeBob Sounds Off

John Hornby Skewes has added new electric and acoustic guitar and ukulele outfits featuring SpongeBob SquarePants. The SBG78 7/8-size electric guitar comes with a micro blaster amplifier with volume, tone and overdrive controls. Ideal for smaller hands, the SBG34 3/4-size electric guitar features a funky built-in speaker. Ukuleles include the SBUP2 Pineapple, the SBUK1 and the SBUV3 Flying V (pictured). jhs.co.uk



Hohner | JOHN LENNON IMAGINE SERIES

Lennon's Signature

Hohner has debuted the John Lennon Imagine Signature series harmonica. Featuring white cover plates, white packaging and a clear acrylic comb, the Imagine harmonica pays tribute to Lennon's legacy. The harmonica is handmade in Trossingen, Germany. MSRP: \$99. hohnerusa.com



CHESBRO | BUGS GEAR UKULELES

Buggin' Out

Chesbro Music has unveiled Bugs Gear ukuleles in nine bright colors. The ukes are rich in tonality and ideal as an entry-level instrument for all ages. They're available in black, blue, green, honey burst, natural, pink, red, white and yellow. chesbromusic.com



PROTECTION RACKET | HARDWARE CASES

Wobble-Free

Protection Racket's new hardware cases come with heavy-duty 4 x 4 wheels that are designed for smooth, no-wobble transportation. The new retractable handle also makes for easier maneuverability. Upgrades to the bags include a stiffer poly-prop, which runs up both ends and down the base of the case for better rigidity and strength. protectionracket.co.uk

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1 ST. LOUIS MUSIC ALVAREZ AB60CE SLM recently debuted the new Alvarez AB60CE electric-acoustic bass. The AB60CE features a hand-selected solid Sitka spruce top, mahogany back and sides, bi-level rosewood bridge, and rosewood fingerboard. The bass is also fitted with real bone nut and saddle, Paua abalone, and mother of pearl inlays. MSRP: \$659. stlouismusic.com



2 RECORDING KING GREENWICH VILLAGE Recording King has launched the 13-fret Greenwich Village. It features a 4 1/2-inch deep body, giving it extra projection. The guitar comes with the choice of all-solid with a solid Sitka spruce top and solid mahogany back and sides or a solid top with a solid Sitka top and rosewood back and sides. MAP: \$549.99. recordingking.com



3 CRAFTER T-6MH, TE-6/MH Crafter's new all-mahogany T-6MH and its cutaway acoustic-electric counterpart, the TE-6/MH, feature an orchestra body built with a solid mahogany top and mahogany back and sides. The T-6MH boasts ivory-colored binding against a dark satin finish. A gig bag is included. MSRP: TE-6/MH, \$749; T-6MH, \$529. crafterusa.com

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FENDER | MUSTANG FLOOR

Fender Gets Floored

Fender recently debuted its first-ever multi-effects unit, the Mustang Floor. It's a user-friendly, versatile floor unit that delivers modeling and effects in a wealth of musical styles. A natural offshoot of the Mustang series amplifiers, the Mustang Floor is designed for a variety of applications. Features include nine footswitches and a solid-aluminum treadle-style control pedal. fender.com



TECH 21 | BOOST SERIES

Tech 21 Gets a Boost

Tech 21 has expanded its Boost series with four new effects pedals. They include Boost Distortion, Boost Overdrive, Boost Fuzz and Bass Boost Fuzz. Each unit delivers optimized performance with studio-quiet operation. The boost function delivers up to 21 dB of clean boost. MSRP: \$195. tech21nyc.com



PEAVEY | TRIPLE X II

Triple Threat

Peavey's new Triple X II all-tube guitar amplifier head is packed with high gain, high power and tone-shaping features. The amplifier specializes in modern high gain and versatility with a three-channel attack. The Triple X II can crank 120 watts into 16, 8 or 4 ohms with four 12AX7 pre-amp tubes and four EL34 (or 6L6GC) power tubes. peavey.com



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ON-STAGE STANDS | MSB-6500 MICROPHONE STAND BAG

Bagged Up

On-Stage Stands is now offering the MSB-6500 microphone stand bag. It lets users transport up to three weighted-base stands without worrying about scratches, dents or lost components. On one interior side are three zippered pockets that can each house either a single round base or single hex base. On the other interior side are three long pockets to hold the related shafts. MSRP: \$59.99.

{onstage
stands.com}



KÖNIG & MEYER | iPad HOLDER

Hold Up

König & Meyer has released a new iPad holder. It provides an ideal support system to work on or view an iPad in the studio or onstage. The holder keeps the tablet firmly in place on a tabletop. The iPad easily snaps in and out of the holder and can be switched between landscape and portrait view. The swivel clamp viewing angle can be adjusted up to 90 degrees. By turning the iPad holder to the landscape view, users can add their keyboard. {k-m.de}



AUDIO-TECHNICA | AT2005USB

Universal Hand-held

Audio-Technica recently unveiled the AT2005USB cardioid dynamic USB/XLR microphone. Ideal for recording instruments and vocals, this hand-held dynamic mic has USB and XLR connections, enabling use with either a computer or a P.A. system. It boasts a durable metal construction; low-mass diaphragm; and smooth, extended frequency response. {audio-technica.com}

LAUTEN AUDIO | FC-387 ATLANTIS

Lauten's Latest

Lauten Audio has debuted the FC-387 Atlantis. A solid-state, multifunctional large-diaphragm condenser, the microphone features multiple switches for three different polar patterns, gain and unique timbre settings. The FC-387 is ideal for recordists looking for a diverse and useful modern FET studio microphone. It offers a blend of full, rich low end and midrange, as well as smooth and unique high-mid and high-frequencies. {lautenaudio.com}





iCONNECTIVITY | iCONNECTMUSE

Connect With Your Muse

iConnectivity's new iConnectMuse is a compact personal mini mixer that combines several music accessories into one iOS-controlled product. It's ideal for gigs at home or on the road. The unit can charge the iOS device at the same time and boasts six stereo inputs and six stereo outputs, each with its own unique mix. The iConnectMuse also features a headphone output. MSRP: \$199.99. iconnectivity.com



BOSS | VE-5 VOCAL PERFORMER

The Voice

Boss has unveiled the VE-5 Vocal Performer, a compact, mobile personal effects processor and looper for vocalists. Featuring a simple-to-use tabletop design that can be easily attached to a mic stand for performing, the VE-5 is ideal for singers, rappers, beatboxers and webcasters. rolandconnect.com

DIGICO SOLUTIONS | UB MADI

No. 1 Solution

DigiCo Solutions' new UB MADI lets any computer instantly connect to MADI via USB 2.0. The UB MADI uses the latest Stealth Digital Processing FPGA technology straight out of the company's SD range of consoles. The unit fits into the top pocket and delivers 48 simultaneous inputs and outputs, totaling 96 channels of audio I/O over USB 2.0. digico.biz



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DANGEROUS MUSIC | DANGEROUS SOURCE

The Danger Zone

Dangerous Music recently launched the Dangerous Source, a portable desktop unit ideal for engineers on the go or for fitting a limited space on the desktop. The Dangerous Source monitor controller boasts speaker switching for two sets of speakers, speaker volume, AES/SPDIF digital in, two stereo analog in, dual headphone out with a separate level control and direct connection to a computer for monitoring of digital audio over USB. Dangerous Source is capable of up to 24-bit, 192-kHz audio on both digital inputs. dangerousmusic.com



PRESONUS | VSL

Virtually Limitless

PreSonus' Virtual StudioLive (VSL) remote-control/editor/librarian software now incorporates Smaart Spectra and Smaart Locator tools for sound-system analysis and optimization. Smaart is an evolved collection of audio measurement tools and techniques. Users can tap into the power of the StudioLive mixer's (pictured) EQ to improve the sound of their P.A. systems. With Smaart-enhanced VSL, users can also view the spectral content of their mixes in real time and easily make changes. presonus.com



AVIOM | PRO16

Mixing It Up

Avid has released a series of Pro16 Personal Mixing Systems. It features an ideal mix of gear for what most performers or groups require onstage or in the studio. The MIX1, MIX4, MIX6, MIX6Y, MIXSP and MIXMZ systems are now available. Without complicated setup, the systems can simplify sound check and provide consistency for performers. avid.com

GENELEC | 7050B, 7060B

Genelec Adds Two

The new Genelec 7050B LSE subwoofer is an ideal partner to the 8020A biamplified active monitoring system for stereo and surround sound applications. The 7050B extends the LF response down to 25 Hz with bass articulation. This is made possible in a compact enclosure due to Genelec's Laminar Spiral Enclosure technology. The 7060B active subwoofer is a precise bass monitoring tool for modern 6.1 or 5.1 channel surround sound or traditional stereo systems. MSRP: 7050B, \$1,495; 7060B, \$2,890. genelecusa.com



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SABIAN | B8 PRO

The Pro Zone

Sabian has introduced the B8 Pro series. The two new B8 Pro O-Zone crashes feature similar O-Zone multiholed designs to HHX and AAX models, but their double ring of response-enhancing holes guarantees they respond rapidly, with brilliant explosion and dirty agitation. Available in 16- and 18-inch models, they're ideal for drummers who play with speed and aggression.

{sabian.com}



MANHASSET | DRUMMER STAND

Taking a Stand

Manhasset has released the new Drummer Stand. It's portable with a full desk and 16-inch chrome shaft that attaches via a multiangle multiclamp to all varieties of drum set tom mount hardware. The stand provides a tool to view a drum chart and still keep the conductor in sight. It also attaches easily to other devices, providing the functionality of a full music stand while minimizing visual interference for the audience.

{manhasset-specialty.com}

LOS CABOS DRUMSTICKS | RED HICKORY 5A, 5B

Environmentally Savvy

Los Cabos Drumsticks recently unveiled Red Hickory 5A and 5B nylon tip drumsticks. Producing drumsticks with respect to the environment has been one of the company's mandates since the beginning. The Red Hickory line lets the company use a greater portion of the wood from each tree harvested.

{loscabosdrumsticks.com}





SPAUN DRUMS | WATERFALL BUBINGA

Rainbows & Waterfalls

Spaun Drums has released its Waterfall bubinga/maple kit. Features include a Waterfall bubinga face with maple core, silver glass pinstripes inlaid through the center of each drum and a high-gloss finish. The kits also boast Spaun's proprietary SBR solid brass resonator lugs and double 45-degree bearing edges. spaundrums.com



DRUM WORKSHOP | METAL SNARES

Black Panther

Drum Workshop recently added to its DW Collector's series metal snare drums with the workhorse black nickel over brass drums. These drums are ideal for both live and studio applications. The thin, rolled 1-mm shell includes a rolled bearing edge and snare beds. The Custom Shop drum can be ordered in chrome, black chrome, satin chrome, black nickel and 24-karat gold. dwdrums.com



ACORN INSTRUMENTS | TRIPLE-D10

Triple Threat

Acorn Instruments has added a second digital drum set to its lineup with the Triple-D10. The new set offers an ideal feel and rugged construction, as well as an expanded sound library, dual-zone cymbal pads with choke-strip, a separate kick drum pad and setup flexibility. The Triple-D10 is fully USB class compliant for use with the player's favorite music production software. MSRP: \$599.99. acorn-instruments.com



GON BOPS | FIESTA CAJON

Fiesta Forever

Gon Bops' new Fiesta cajon is ideal for students and beginners or as a second grab-and-go instrument for gigs where players may not want to travel with high-end models. With an adjustable maple front panel and internal snare wires, the Fiesta cajon offers authentic Spanish flamenco tones and boasts large rubber feet to ensure bass tones don't get lost in the floor. gonbops.com



VATER | STICKMATE

Jingle All the Way

Vater recently unveiled its Stickmate Jingle and Shaker models. The Stickmate slides onto a stick, brush or mallet to provide added sound effects while playing. It's made of a lightweight polymer, and the low profile doesn't interfere with performing. A cutout in the handle allows for a thumb rest. MSRP: \$35.95. vater.com

CARLSBRO | EDA50, EDA200S

Elite Electronics

Carlsbro has launched its first electronic drum and percussion amplifier and stage monitor series. The two models, EDA50 and EDA200S (pictured), feature mono or stereo signal amplification, different speaker configurations and power ratings. The EDA50 is a two-way 50-watt amplifier with a single 10-inch LF driver and 2-inch HF driver. The EDA200S is a stereo three-way cabinet with 200 watts of power. It's configured with dual 6 1/2-inch mid drivers. carlsbro.com



DRUM WORKSHOP, INC. MILESTONES THE DRUMMER'S CHOICE™ SINCE 1972



1972

DW begins as a drum school in Santa Monica, CA



1974

A height-adjustable trap case seat is the first product to market



1977

Drum Workshop buys tooling from the Camco Drum Co. and reintroduces the 5000 pedal



1978

Company moves to its first production facility in Los Angeles



1979

First DW advertisement in Modern Drummer featuring Nick Ceroli



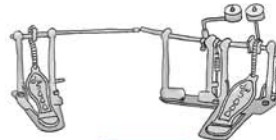
1980

Manufacturing begins on the popular 5000 Series chain-drive pedal



1982

DW expands its operation to keep up with demand for pedals and begins experimenting with drums



1983

First-ever double pedal design changes drumming forever



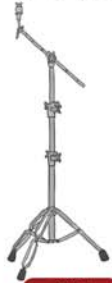
1985

The first remote cable hi-hat is introduced



1990

First DW Drums catalog features Jim Keltner, Mic Fleetwood, Chad Wackerman and Jason Bonham



1991

Complete line of 9000 Series hardware is unveiled



1992

DW expands manufacturing operations and moves to Oxnard, CA



1995

The year's patented innovations include the Delta ball-bearing hinge, Edge snare drum and True Pitch



1997

The DW Custom Shop begins making proprietary maple shells



1999

DW patents unique "Dog Bone" clamp system



2000

Pacific Drums and Percussion is launched to reach more drummers



2003

9000 Series single and double pedals are released



2005

Classics Series drums are added to the Custom Shop line



2007

DW Jazz Series is the first custom Jazz kit in history



2008

The DW Custom Shop unveils revolutionary X Shell technology



2009

Legendary Rock drummer Dave Grohl joins the DW family



2010

SSC Specialized Shell Configuration combines the Custom Shop's cutting-edge sonic technology



2011

Performance Series is the first DW-branded production drumset



2012

Drum Workshop celebrates 40 years as The Drummer's Choice

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PEDAL STOP | ACCESSORY

Stop, Drop & Play

Designed by Austin, Texas-based musician John Williams, the new Pedal Stop keeps your electronic sustain pedal in place during practice, recording or performing. The device attaches directly to the keyboard stand and is not dependent on the surface of the floor. It's adjustable and made of high-grade steel. MSRP: \$39.90. pedalstop.com



GATOR CASES | GKPE-88D-TSA

Safe & Sound

Gator Cases has debuted the GKPE-88D-TSA, which boasts an extra-deep interior height — making it an ideal fit for the Yamaha MOX8 keyboard workstation. Made of a heavy-duty polyethylene plastic, the GKPE cases sport an upgraded look and sleek, black uninterrupted aluminum valance. Heavy-duty rubber-gripped handles and recessed in-line wheels make transport easy, and a thick EPS foam-lined interior and specialized adjustable foam wedges hold everything securely in place during transport. gatorcases.com

ALESIS | Q61, QX61, QX25

In Control

Alesis recently introduced the Q61, QX61 and QX25 USB MIDI keyboard controllers. The Q-series USB MIDI controllers are a no-nonsense way to add expressive MIDI control to any production or performance. Each controller features USB MIDI for easy connection to Mac, PC, iOS devices and traditional MIDI hardware modules, samplers and synthesizers. MAP: Q61, \$149; QX61, \$199; QX25, \$99. alesis.com



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RS BERKELEY | LEGENDS SERIES

Big Band Sound

RS Berkeley and Drake Mouthpieces have added the Benny Carter Legends series alto mouthpiece to the Legend line. It's hand-made in the United States by Drake and combines technology with a hand-finishing tradition, creating a reproduction of Carter's mouthpiece.

{rsberkeley.com}



JUPITER | 1100S, 1102RS, 1104RS

Three's Company

Jupiter recently added three new trumpet models: the lead-voice 1100S with yellow brass bell and the ensemble-ready 1102RS and 1104RS models featuring rose brass bells. The horns boast new features to facilitate better playability, ideal intonation and better tonal quality for all players. MSRP: \$1,495-\$1,725. {jupitermusic.com}



MUSSER | 3PM

Practice Makes Perfect

Musser has unveiled the 3PM, a three-octave practice marimba designed for at-home student use. The 3PM marimba includes graduated paduk bars, a sturdy wood frame, an X-style portable stand, a cover, a pair of mallets and a soon-to-be-released online package of scales. MSRP: \$1,995. {musser-mallets.com}

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ANTIGUA WINDS | MODEL CL3230

Designer Wares

Antigua Winds has launched the Antigua-Backun model CL3230 clarinet. The instrument is a joint project between Antigua Winds and woodwind designer Morrie Backun. The clarinet starts with premium-grade grenadilla wood, turned, bored and machined in the Backun facility in Vancouver, British Columbia. The bodies, bells and barrels also undergo careful hand-finishing work and inspection by Backun technicians. antiguawinds.com



D'ADDARIO | KAPLAN ORCHESTRAL DOUBLE BASS SET

Rich Tones

D'Addario recently released the Kaplan Orchestral Double Bass Set. All Kaplan bass strings use a stranded steel core. The Kaplan bass G string is titanium wound, and the A and D strings are nickel-wound. The E and C-Ext-E strings are stranded steel core/tungsten-wound strings. This set produces a full, clear tone that offers a rich sound. MSRP: \$405. daddariobowed.com




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Available now from Alfred Music Publishing at www.GreenSongBook.com.



RANE, SERATO | SIXTY-ONE

Rane, Serato Add Mixers

Rane and Serato have introduced the new Rane Sixty-One and Sixty-Two mixers for Serato Scratch Live. These units tightly integrate the performer, music, software and hardware.

The Sixty-Two is a plug-and-play package supporting two computers, a two-deck digital vinyl simulation, an SP-6 sample player, and software and hardware effects.

{rane.com; serato.com}



CHAUVET | PIX SERIES

Chauvet Gets Pixelated

Chauvet has used pixel-mapping technology for its new PiX series, which is comprised of the par-style PiXPar 24 and PiXPar 12 wash lights, as well as the linear COLORband PiX (pictured) and COLORband PiX Mini. The COLORband PiX is a full-size linear pixel mapping fixture that easily generates video effects and animations when multiple units are used together. {chauvetlighting.com}



ELATION PROFESSIONAL | EVCMH

Got the Moves

Elation Professional has unveiled the EVCMH, a DMX-512-controllable moving video camera designed to spotlight almost anything and project it onto a video wall or TV. Featuring DMX-512 controllable pan/tilt, zoom and focus, the EVCMH can focus on almost anyone or anything in a room. An array of 48 total cool and warm white LEDs lets users customize different skin tones and ambient light in a room, so the EVCMH always projects the best images.

{elationlighting.com}



AMERICAN DJ | MICRO WASH WWCW

Whiteout

American DJ recently launched the new Micro Wash WWCW, an ultra-bright mini white LED par. Offering the versatility of manual and DMX operation, the Micro Wash WWCW features 19 built-in white color macros, a 10-degree beam angle, strobe effect and 0- to 100-percent electronic dimming. The unit can run in five operational modes, including DMX-512 mode, sound-active mode, macro mode, auto mode and manual color mode. When operated with a DMX controller, users can choose from three or five channels. A three-button LED display on the rear panel provides easy access to the fixture's modes and settings. MSRP: \$139.95. {americandj.com}

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Raegan Medeiros

John Michael's Music and Sound
Muskogee, Okla.

We have a band of kids who take lessons at our store. We took them out to one of the elementary schools and had them play. We told everyone, "All the kids went to John Michael's Music," and had them talk to the students at the school afterward. It's a good way to get kids thinking about where to go for music lessons.

Another thing that I did last year that worked out was take fliers around to a lot of the schools. I just made up a flier with a cute, little girl playing a guitar on it that said, "Do you want music lessons?" I called the elementary schools and middle schools around our area and said I wanted to drop off some sign-up information about music lessons the same way they do for soccer. And they said, "Just bring them by." I called my local print place and took the remnant paper. A lot of times, you can get it copied for cheaper if you do it that way, so you say, "I don't really care what it is as long as it's bright." They'll give you the leftovers and give you the extra discount.

We're not a really big band store. We basically just do combo. Let's face it: Not all kids are interested in school band, but we offer guitar, piano and vocal. It was a really good way to involve those kids in the arts.



Melissa Loggins

Music Authority
Cumming, Ga.

I use the Jackrabbit program, which sends out reminders to parents regarding lesson renewal. Lessons are scheduled in four-week blocks. We do a lot of things that help with retention, but generally, the way I promote is to do it every couple of months, especially in periods where we have a huge drop out in enrollment and kids are going away for the summer.

Specifically, I send out reminders around March or April because I want to grab kids before they head out to camp in May. But I also promote when school starts and during the holiday when more kids are going to get a guitar.



Joe Summa
Greenwich Music
Riverside, Conn.

How have you successfully promoted your lessons program?

A general policy that I've been pushing is having an open invitation for first-time students to do a free 30-minute lesson. We used to do it with an instrument purchase. Now, if they don't have an instrument, we will loan them one for the first lesson, so they can try it. It's been really effective because our teachers are all really good. Out of every 10 people that we get to try a free lesson, eight of them end up paying for more lessons, and a lot of them sign up for a semester of lessons.

I pay the teachers for it, too. Running a print ad or an online ad could be \$500, and even a half-hour single lesson costs me about

\$20 to pay the teacher. It's money well-spent because of the extremely high rate of retention.

I've got the staff on-board, so whenever someone's buying an instrument, a book or anything, staff will engage them in a conversation and ask, "What do you play?" They'll ask if they take lessons, and sometimes, the customer will say, "Well, I've always wanted to."

We schedule it right then and there. People like free stuff, and we charge \$48 for a half-hour single lesson. It's a pretty good deal, and there's no obligation for them to use one of our guitars for the lesson. It's almost like you can't

say no.

Our local schools are strict about teachers recommending students to go to places, but I still let all the local teachers know via an e-mail campaign that if students ever ask about private lessons, we offer the complimentary 30-minute lesson. That's definitely worked because I often ask where people have heard about us.

We have some signage and stuff, but with that, you still have to point it out to people because they're so bombarded with signage. And you have to make sure that everyone who comes in, no matter what they're buying, knows about it.

OLD SCHOOL
COOL



The Loar

www.theloar.com

A man wearing a black beanie, sunglasses, and a dark jacket is walking away from the camera on a cobblestone street. He is carrying a white Samson Carbon 49 USB MIDI Controller under his arm. The controller has a semi-weighted keyboard and various control buttons. The background shows a city street with other pedestrians and buildings.

Program change.

Carbon 49 USB MIDI Controller.

With a semi-weighted keyboard, easy-to-use controls, iPad compatibility and *Komplete Elements* by Native Instruments, Carbon 49 makes music production accessible to everyone. \$89.