

# MMR

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Working for All of

# Washington

Ted Brown Music Remains  
an MI Stalwart of the Northwest



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# C O N T E N T S

# MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

## FEATURES

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#### Right As 'Rain:' How Rain Retail Software is streamlining retail stores across America 26

If a salesperson approached you at a NAMM Show and told you that you could increase your sales by 20 percent, you'd probably say thanks, but no thanks – there's no way that's possible. But when Sean Royslance of Rain Retail Software says that's what his company does, it's not some scheme, it's the veritable data from customers who've employed his software in their stores

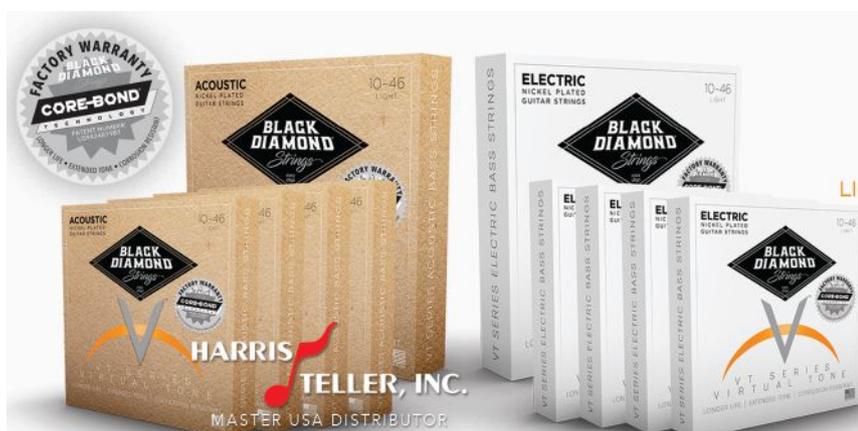


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# MMR is Not Backing Down; We are Doubling Down on Our Commitment to You and the MI Industry



Since 1879, there has been one constant in the Musical Instrument industry: *Musical Merchandise Review (MMR)*. Through depressions, wars, and pandemics past and present, *MMR* has

consistently been published to serve the needs of those in the industry.

As we face another challenging time, please know that *MMR* will continue to help spread the news and information that is even more vital during these dramatic days.

As always, *MMR* stands ready to help amplify your company's news and messaging to the largest audience of MI retailers and professionals in the industry – in **BOTH** print and digital formats.

There is a comfort in these times: finding a copy of *MMR* in your mail. We will not take that comfort away from you. Please know that *MMR* will continue to be there for you during the good times and the bad.

We know you're out there fighting the good fight. Please know we're standing right beside you!

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# Industry News

## Hal Leonard Announces Enhanced Program for Retailers to Benefit from Website Sales

The Hal Leonard Shopping Cart program, where consumers shopping on halleonard.com “check out” by selecting a retailer of their choice, has transferred millions of dollars a year in sales to retailers. In 2019 alone, \$4 million in orders were transferred.



Hal Leonard is proud to announce a revised program that simplifies the process so that the consumer has a seamless transaction with Hal Leonard processing the payment and fulfillment and providing the selected retailer with a commission. The Preferred Retailer Online Fulfillment Program (PROF-it) is open to any retailer with a physical location: they don't even need to have an e-commerce website.

Participating retailers receive monthly reports on purchase activity so they can stay connected with the customers. Retailers also will receive custom-coded URLs that they can use on their websites or social media to ensure their customers automatically go into their store's shopping cart when they visit halleonard.com.

For more information on the Hal Leonard PROF-it program, retailers can call the Hal Leonard E-Z Order Line at (800) 554-0626.

- Industry News
- Supplier Scene
- Trade Regrets
- Letters
- People on the Move
- MMR Global

## Rovner Products Seeks to Relieve PPE Shortage in Maryland with Donation

Although Rovner Products' production department has been idle since the end of March due to Governor Larry Hogan's COVID-19 state mandate closing all non-essential businesses in Maryland, in late April some of the company's manufacturing equipment was redeployed.

"In March, stories of desperate medical workers were all over the news, and we realized we could use some of our manufacturing capabilities to help alleviate the dangerous shortage of PPE," says Rovner president George Reeder. Knowing they could figure out the production methodology, he and his wife, Rovner co-owner Lynn Reeder, immediately began searching the internet for materials they could use to build a prototype of a vinyl face shield. "To our surprise and frustration, raw goods were extremely difficult to find because of the already enormous demand," says Lynn. "So we had to get creative."

At her suggestion, they reached out to an upholsterer specializing in marine applications, who graciously agreed to supply the marine grade vinyl and double-stick tape they needed at his cost. After much trial and error prototyping with whatever materials they had on hand, more sleuthing finally yielded a source of foam to create a forehead bumper. And with the appropriate elastic too difficult to find in a timely manner or in the quantities needed, George discovered that the strapping used on shipping cartons was an excellent substitute, eliminating the need for staples.

Rovner employees helped create the parts, and the company is relying on additional eager-to-help volunteers to as-



Lynn Reeder

semble the 3,000 face shields they have begun to donate to their community. "This is temporary for us," says Lynn. "We didn't want it to be a revenue stream, but a true reflection of the message we see all around us...that we're all in this together. We just felt like this was a way we could show our gratitude to the people who are really stepping up." The Reeders plan to reach out to hard-hit local nursing homes, and other small businesses or health-care organizations that must have close contact with the public. "I don't think we'll run out of places to donate in Maryland, but if we do, we're happy to go farther afield to help wherever it is needed," says George. The Reeders add that while this project has been emotionally gratifying, they are eagerly anticipating the day when they can get back to doing what they do best: manufacturing ligatures.

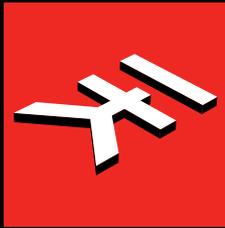
## GC Announces Completion of Transactions to Address April 2020 Debt Payments

Guitar Center (GC) has announced that it had completed a series of transactions to address its April 2020 debt payments. These transactions provide near term liquidity to help navigate challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic and were made possible through the support of each of Guitar Center's lender groups.

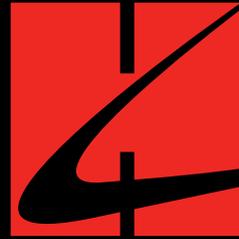
Tim Martin, Guitar Center's chief financial officer, says, "We are pleased with the outcome of these transactions and the support and cooperation that we received from our lenders who recognize the value of our businesses. These transactions bolster our immediate liquidity position and allow us to focus on operating our business through these difficult



times. We believe that with these transactions and the staged reopening of the country along with our pre-pandemic positive business performance, we are well positioned to meet these challenging market conditions."



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## Taylor Guitars Launches Historic Urban Wood Initiative with its New Builder's Edition 324CE Made with Urban Ash

Taylor Guitars has launched a new Urban Wood guitar initiative. Developed in partnership with West Coast Arborists, Inc., the initiative gives select trees in need of removal from California cities a second life as high-value instruments. The first urban wood species to be featured in the Taylor guitar line is Urban Ash, used for the back and sides of Taylor's new Builder's Edition 324ce guitar.

This urban wood program marries the idea of sustainability with local sourcing in Taylor's home state of California, bringing attention to an entirely new concept: the "urban forest." This refers to the planned and managed tree canopies that provide the green infrastructure of cities and neighborhoods.

In 2017, Taylor co-founder Bob Taylor, along with Taylor's director of Natural Resource Sustainability, Scott Paul, and master guitar designer Andy Powers, began to explore the idea of making guitars from end-of-life urban wood as another expression of Taylor's commitment to responsible sourcing practices. As Powers has noted, historically, makers of string instruments used materials that were locally available.

Taylor's exploration led to a relationship with Anaheim, California-based West Coast Arborists, Inc. (WCA), an established company that provides tree services to more than 300 municipalities and public agencies across California and Arizona – including Taylor's home base of El Cajon, California. The company's ability to manage tree inventories across the regions they service is remarkably advanced, thanks to proprietary software that incorporates GPS tracking and other data integration.

To offset rising disposal costs and develop socially respon-



John Mahoney, Bob Taylor, and Scott Paul

sible market alternatives to keep trees out of landfills, 25 years ago, WCA launched a pilot urban wood recycling initiative with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF); it has since evolved into the WCA's Street Tree Revival program.

The company also invited Taylor to evaluate its inventory of urban wood species from their log yards to determine if any would make instrument-grade tonewoods. After building prototype guitars with

a handful of species, Powers identified one that excited him: Shamel ash, better known as tropical or evergreen ash. It's a tree that was widely planted across parts of Southern California after World War II. Some 70 years later, some of those trees reached their end-of-life cycle and needed to be removed.

To help draw attention to the idea of using available urban timbers, Taylor is calling the wood Urban Ash.

Within the Builder's Edition collection, the Builder's Edition 324ce was designed with the versatility to appeal to a broad range of players, including working musicians looking for a premium performance tool. Together with a mahogany top and V-Class bracing, this makes one of Taylor's most player- and stage-friendly guitars.

Both Taylor and WCA view this new Urban Wood guitar initiative as a new paradigm of responsible urban forest management with the potential to not only create a new, high-value market for end-of-life wood that has traditionally been part of the urban waste stream, but to bring more attention and resources to re-greening projects and expand the urban forest canopy in communities throughout Southern California and beyond.

### Letters

Good Afternoon,

I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed your editorial in the May 2020 issue of *MMR*. I love your direct, down to earth approach!! I work as a sales associate in a local piano store in my town. As a lifelong musician, I am new to the music industry/retail side of things, so I am reading... learning... absorbing. As our store gets the *MMR* magazine monthly, I have really enjoyed it... just read the May issue from cover to cover. Hang in there with all of this craziness and keep up the good work!!!

Sincerely,  
Kathy Rumfellow

### Celebrating Music Making in the Time of COVID – Global 'Make Music Day' to Go Virtual This Year

Make Music Day, the worldwide music celebration held each June 21, the summer solstice, is going virtual this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, organizers officially announced in May.

Typically featuring over 5,000 free outdoor concerts, performances, music lessons, jam sessions and other musical events on streets, sidewalks, parks and other public spaces across the U.S., this year's celebration will take a virtual approach to encourage all people, of all musical abilities, to celebrate the joy of making music. More than 85 U.S. cities and the entire states of Connecticut, Hawaii, Vermont, and Wisconsin will take part in Make Music Day 2020, further demonstrating the power of music to unite and uplift people, spread joy, and build community amid this challenging and unprecedented time.

Unlike traditional music festivals, Make Music Day celebrates and promotes the natural music maker in all of us, regardless of age, background or skill level. Make Music Day is an open invitation for everyone to make, enjoy, perform, teach and learn music on the longest day of the year and the launch of summer. Across the U.S., in cities large and small, musicians and organizers heeded the call and have created fun, engaging, new ways for anyone to join in the celebration on Sunday, June 21 while also practicing social distancing.

Make Music Day is presented in the U.S. by The NAMM Foundation and coordinated by the non-profit Make Music Alliance.

All Make Music Day events are free and open to the public. Participants who wish to perform, or to host musical events, may register at [MakeMusicDay.org](http://MakeMusicDay.org).



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## Supplier Scene

### Breedlove Guitars Offers 'A Cure for the Quarantine Blues' Program for Dealers

With deep discounts on select models, Breedlove Guitars now offers "A Cure for the Quarantine Blues," a program designed to assist dealers as they prepare to reopen or resume shipping and enable players to safely access affordable, superior quality instruments.

Through June 30, consumers will receive discounts of \$50 off easy playing, entry level Discovery models; \$100 off sustainably sourced acoustic/electric instruments in the all solid wood Organic Collection; and \$250 off Made in Bend guitars in the handcrafted, Sound Optimized Oregon Series, featuring native myrtlewood.



"We've heard from so many of you," said Breedlove owner Tom Bedell. "We're all a little blue and burned out, but, as you've affirmed, music helps. We'd like to help, too, by making it easier than ever to live the guitar dream."

If dealers are unable to provide curbside service or delivery, Breedlove will safely ship directly to buyers. "Acoustic guitars are fun, low maintenance and always ready to rock," Bedell said. "Let's make music together, even if we're apart."

### Shure Donates \$79,000 Worth of Earphones to CPS Students and Teachers

As students and teachers continue with their transition to online learning, ensuring the right tools to learn from home can be a challenge. Shure has stepped up to help its neighbors by donating \$79,000 worth of earphones to Chicago Public Schools (CPS).

The earphones are compatible with mobile phones and laptops to enable more focused learning for students and teachers who may encounter distracting noise or difficulties in hearing online lessons at home. Shure's SE215 Sound Isolating Earphones help eliminate noise and are designed to be comfortable for extended wear.

An inline mic provides clear audio for two-way communication between students and teachers. Select Chicago Public Schools on the South, West, and North sides of Chicago have received the earphones to distribute to those who need them.

"Once schools were closed, teachers, staff, and administrators were forced to move toward a new normal by having

students and teachers use online learning tools like Google Hangouts," said Jeffrey Finelli, principal at Edison Park Elementary School. "Shure made a donation specifically for families who were not fortunate enough to have the proper tools to help their child learn effectively at home. It made a world of difference for so many families. Students are now not distracted when they are participating in the live video conferences and able to communicate with their classmates. This was not possible before Shure made their generous donation."

"We are pleased to lend our support to CPS students and educators during this challenging and unprecedented time," said Mark Brunner, vice president of Global Corporate and Government Relations at Shure. "This significant need for online learning tools presented an opportunity for Shure to fulfill what we consider to be a vital part of our corporate responsibility to our community."

### Bedell Guitars Holds the World's Largest Brazilian Rosewood Library

Bedell Guitars is your source for Brazilian rosewood, now holding the world's largest library of legal, documented Brazilian rosewood.

Company founder Tom Bedell takes wood seriously, and he is committed to conservation and to keeping the planet healthy and alive for generations to come. He has traveled to 15 countries in a relentless effort to ensure transparent, sustainable sourcing for all native and exotic tonewoods used in Bedell instruments.

Along with key Co-Hippies, he established the Tonewood Certification Project, which promises no clear-cut woods will be used in Bedell instruments and that any living trees will be "individually harvested in a manner that leaves the rest of the forest and ecological system as undisturbed as possible."

Importantly, for Brazilian rosewood, the project promises to use only ethically-sourced *Dalbergia nigra* from a collection of "treasured tonewood," fully compliant with all international regulations, and harvested before a specific 1992 ruling by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, which was launched by a coalition of countries in the 1970s to protect fragile wild fauna and flora.

It has long been illegal to harvest Brazilian rosewood. Since CITES and the 2008 Lacey Act extension, it has also been, in many, if not most, cases, illegal to even transport such rosewood, leaving artists and hobbyists alike concerned about losing valuable instruments to customs officials at border crossings.

As part of Bedell's Seed to Song program, each instrument is accompanied by a Guitar Portrait, which lists the woods used in each model and shows the exact specifications, thicknesses and frequencies of that wood, as determined by Sound Optimization.

In the case of Brazilian rosewood, to travel it is necessary to have a Guitar Passport issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As all of Bedell's Brazilian is fully CITES compliant, with proper documentation meeting Lacey Act requirements, it's simple to obtain one just by contacting the Bedell offices in Bend, Oregon.



## Roland Announces Major Expansion of Roland Cloud

Roland has announced the largest expansion yet to Roland Cloud, the company's evolving cloud-based platform offering more than 50 authentic Roland software synthesizers and sound libraries.

The expansion moves the platform to the company's primary roland.com website and welcomes the ZENOLOGY Software Synthesizer, a "virtualized ZEN-Core" plug-in instrument that will change the relationship that hardware and software creatives have with sound. Other enhancements include new membership plan options, Lifetime Key purchases, international availability with multi-language and local currency support, and a refreshed "Roland Cloud Manager" app that now offers access to new sounds for compatible hardware owners.

Customer access begins with a Roland Account – the key to unlocking an expanding range of valuable services and offerings for creatives. Users sign up for free inside Roland Cloud Manager, and no credit card is required. With a Roland Account as their passport, users receive free features like the ZENOLOGY Lite Software Synthesizer and select hardware patches. They can also purchase memberships, Lifetime Keys, and sound expansions, with more to come.



A Lifetime Key gives the purchaser access to a single Roland software instrument of their choosing, with continuous use privileges available for as long as their Roland Account is active. Lifetime Key purchasers also receive ongoing free updates and the benefits of cloud-based mobility when signing into Roland Cloud Manager on any compatible computer.

Roland Cloud Manager keeps everything current and organized while allowing users to create and manage a Roland

Account. Members can also manage all ZEN-Core compatible Roland hardware, access ZEN-Core Sound Packs, and use ZENOLOGY as a librarian from one centralized location within Roland Cloud Manager.

Roland Cloud now offers three membership levels: Core, Pro, and Ultimate, with both monthly and annual pricing options available. All paid membership levels start with a free 30-day trial of Ultimate. In addition, anyone signed up for a free Roland Account can explore the ZENOLOGY Lite software synth featuring 176 tones and six drum kits, access sounds for Roland hardware, and more.

### Martin Guitar Partners with TrueFire to Offer Free Online Guitar Lessons

For a limited time, Martin Guitar has partnered with TrueFire to give Martin customers three months of unlimited streaming access to TrueFire's online library.

To qualify, residents of the U.S. and Canada simply purchase any Martin instrument by May 31, 2020 and register the warranty at [martinguitar.com/warranty](http://martinguitar.com/warranty) by June 30. Customers will receive a unique code that unlocks 40,000-plus video lessons on TrueFire.com, along with a free download of Corey Congilio's *Acoustic Rhythm Guitar Playbook*.

For those looking to add to their collection of Martin guitars, or buying their long-awaited first, there has never been a better time to pick up a new Martin and take your playing to the next level.

## Gibson Virtual Guitar Tech Service Launches Worldwide

Gibson has launched a free, virtual, and fully-interactive guitar tune-up service, the Gibson Virtual Guitar Tech Service. A global experience, the service matches players worldwide with Gibson's team of professional techs in real-time to cover basic tune-ups for guitar, bass, electric and acoustic players in any genre or style. The Gibson Virtual Guitar Tech Service is available in multiple languages, including Spanish, French, German and English, reaching across time zones in Europe and the USA with more territories to be added.

Gibson Virtual Guitar Tech Service is personalized for any player who wants to self-serve their instrument. Unlike online instructional videos, you will not be alone; the Gibson Virtual Guitar Tech Service provides you with real-time, interactive, video assistance from an experienced Gibson technician to help guide the process. With Gibson's free online one-on-one video conference calls, the Gibson Virtual Guitar Tech Service will assist with your Gibson, Epiphone, Kramer or Steinberger electric or acoustic guitar, ukulele, banjo, mandolin, or electric bass.

To schedule an appointment, first go to [www.Gibson.com](http://www.Gibson.com) and schedule a free 30-minute one-on-one consultation call with a VGT. On this video conference call, you'll discuss the instrument type, condition, any issues you're currently experiencing and what type of services are needed. The VGT will ask questions about your playing and style, as well as, your experience and comfort level with working on your own instrument. The VGT will give you a list of the basic tools and supplies needed to successfully perform the tune-up tasks.

Upon completing step 1, schedule a free 60-minute one-on-one Basic Guitar Tune Up Service with a VGT. This appointment is confirmed after your initial consultation call in order to give you time to order the recommended supplies and tools. The VGT will guide you—via real-time video—step-by-step through the process of servicing your instrument.



## PRS Guitars' Tenth 'Experience PRS 2020' Event a Virtual Success

When the team at PRS Guitars decided to proceed ahead with hosting their tenth "Experience PRS" virtually, they had no idea of the impact it would make. This year's event was supposed to be held on May 8 and 9 and was expected to attract more than 3,500 attendees from all over the globe, including PRS artists, dealers and international distributors, customers and enthusiasts, and worldwide press for two days of music, education, factory tours, and fun at PRS Guitars in Stevensville, Maryland. The virtual Experience premiered on the PRS YouTube channel on May 9 and accumulated over 25,000 views by the end of the weekend.



A still from the PRS factory tour video

"As soon as we realized we would not be able to host Experience PRS this year, we knew we wanted to find some way to still connect and celebrate with our extended PRS family. We ended up premiering these artist videos on YouTube so we could have a 'live' feel and get to hang out in the comments with the presenting artists, customers, and fans," said Judy Schaefer, director of marketing for PRS Guitars. "There were lots of familiar people watching along together, and that feeling of community that is so palpable during our Experience events was present in a very real way. I couldn't be happier with the outcome."

The virtual Experience event rolled out with two sessions of clinics featuring artist clinics from the same artists that would have been presenting on the Experience stages. The culminating piece of Experience PRS is always a concert on the main stage. With that option not possible this year, the closing

event for Experience PRS 2020 was a special, star-studded video with Paul Reed Smith and several PRS artists and friends. The video, called "Long Distance," was shot from a series of Zoom calls from Paul's home studio. The discussions that ensued from the 14 artists that participated were both intimate, entertaining, and educational. The PRS marketing team edited 4.5-hours of call footage down to under a half hour for the video. The individual conversations will be released, in full, on an on-going basis starting this week.

"I'd like to thank all of our artists for being so gracious with their time and their craft. They are a huge part of Experience each year, and I am thrilled we were still able to share their clinics and stories in this unique time," said Bev Fowler, director of Artist Relations for PRS Guitars.

The videos premiered live on PRS Guitars YouTube channel and will be available in perpetuity so fans can watch them anytime. To watch the PRS Experience, visit [www.youtube.com/prsguitars](http://www.youtube.com/prsguitars)

## Trade Regrets

On May 2, NAMM's Dan Del Fiorentino sent the following message:

**Ray Hennig**, the Texas music retailer who sold Stevie Ray Vaughn his first Fender Stratocaster passed away on April 30 at the age of 91.

Ray opened Heart of Texas Music in the early 1960s after years of repairing guitars for friends. He built homes in Texas and was happy with that line of work, but his passion was in music – so he did both. Over the years, he has been awarded many honors from the city of Austin and from the state for his ethics and good business practices. For a generation of blues and rock fans, Ray is also known for his friendship with the late Stevie Ray Vaughan, who bought his "number one" guitar from Ray in the 1980s. Over 50 years in the business, Ray sold instruments around the world and often was asked to address large tour groups who come to visit Austin in the hopes of knowing more about Stevie Ray and Texas music. Ray was always willing to answer questions and take time for everyone – perhaps one reason he was such an icon in our industry and in Austin!

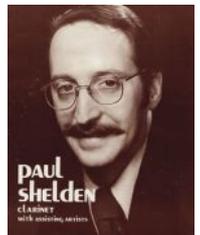


Longtime music retailer and RPMDA past president **Joe Keith** passed away April 29.

Along with his wife, Claudia, he opened The Music Mart in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with the goal of doing all that was possible to support music education and lesson programs. As the store grew, so did his personal interest in growing the industry he so deeply cared about, leading him to join a small group of retailers looking to formalize a new organization. Together Joe and Claudia became pioneers in the Retail Print Music Dealers Association (RPMDA). For their many contributions, the couple was awarded RPMDA's highest honor, the Dorothy Award.



MMR has received confirmation that clarinetist, saxophonist, flutist, conductor, arranger, educator, and Diplomatte Music founder **Dr. Paul Shelden** passed away on April 17, 2020 in his Long Island home. He was 79. The cause of death was complications due to COVID-19.





**Foundation de ma Vie and LSM Ambiocréateurs Honor Québécoise Heroes With Help From CHAUVET**

Every day when health care professionals enter Chicoutimi Hospital in Quebec, they get ready to face the grim realities involved in caring for patients afflicted with COVID-19. Now, they are also greeted with a rainbow of colors intended as an expression of gratitude from the Fondation de ma Vie (Foundation of my Life) and LSM Ambiocréateurs.

Spearheaded by project leader Ricky Ricken of LSM, working closely with the Fondation de ma Vie, the display covers the entire width of the hospital's entrance side in brilliant blues, oranges, yellows and purples from a collection of over 70 CHAUVET Professional COLORado 1 Tri Tour IP fixtures from LSM's own inventory.

Placed at the base of the building and on ledges at various heights, the RGB fixtures cast their glow to the top of the hospital's two the six-story wings. Light from the COLORado units also shines to the top of the complex's main tower, which at 39 meters is the fourth highest building in Saguenay. The IP-rated lights illuminate the building every night.

In keeping with the selfless spirit of cooperation that has brought this community together amidst the pandemic, the illumination project was an all-volunteer effort on the part of LSM, master electrician Gabriel Chaperon and lighting programmer Dany Bouchard, as well as Alexandra Girard, Jean-Philippe Beau-lieu, and Remi Larouche.

**Yorkville Sound Partners with Starfish Medical to Produce Canadian-Made Ventilators**

Yorkville Sound is now dedicating their engineering and manufacturing expertise to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic. In conjunction with Starfish Medical, Yorkville's design team is engaged in an open-source ventilator design project, with a goal of increasing the availability of ventilators in Canada.



"Our design and manufacturing team is very excited to be part of the solution during this unprecedented time," says Steve Long, Yorkville Sound's president. "We're providing circuit-board design and layout, as well as the assembly of the control panel for the ventilator project. Our capable facility is quite nimble, and we are able to produce finished results quickly and with accuracy. We are dedicated to help flatten the curve and provide much needed equipment for our country's healthcare professionals."

Yorkville Sound's collaboration with Starfish Medical is an answer to the government's call to action to Canadian businesses and manufacturers to help deliver critical health supplies to fight the COVID19 pandemic. This particular ventilator project is inspired by The Winnipeg Ventilator, a project designed for ICU use and among the easiest in the world to bring into high volume production. More information on this ventilator design can be found at [thewinnipegventilator.com](http://thewinnipegventilator.com)



**ON THE MOVE**

**Shure Incorporated** has announced that **Mike Knappe** has joined the company as associate vice president of Musician and Consumer Audio Product Development. He will be responsible for all listening products and microphones sold in the retail segment as well as the company's MOTIV digital microphone line.



Knappe comes to Shure from Harman, where he led its Lifestyle division's technology team for next-generation consumer and automotive audio experiences, including cloud personalization and health and wellness.

**Yamaha Corporation of America** has announced that **Reed Larrimore** has been promoted to senior director of Combo Channel Sales. He continues to report directly to Garth Gilman, corporate vice president. In his role, Larrimore is responsible for leading sales efforts for the company's combo music products, as well as expanding the scope of distribution for Yamaha Guitar Group products under the Line 6 and Ampeg brands. He is also tasked



**People**

with broadening sales for Steinberg software and hardware products.

The appointment of **Nick Fichte** to the role of business manager, **L-Acoustics** Creations, completes the existing new business team and positions the division to make headway in key installation markets, leveraging the relationships and knowledge that Fichte has forged in his 15-year career in the AV industry.



**Audio Media Research (AMR)** has announced that **Will Pirkle** has joined the company as chief science officer. In addition to authoring books on plugin development, papers on audio signal processing and guiding graduate research, Pirkle brings 30 years of experience in audio hardware and software research and development to AMR's marketing and engineering teams, having worked in the professional audio industry at companies including National Semiconductor Corp, Korg R&D, and XM Radio. Pirkle is an associate professor and music engineering program director at the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami.





MICHAEL VEBBER PHOTOGRAPHY

*working for all of*  
**WASHINGTON**



**Ted Brown Music Remains an  
MI Stalwart of the Northwest**

By Victoria Wasylak

If you ever try to explain the Washington state music scene, make sure to include Ted Brown Music in the mix. Amongst all the churches, youth groups, schools, bands – oh, plus that little gem called Seattle – the six-location music retailer is where many bands always return to in their time of need, literally.

“We’re not far from a large performance arena, so when a show comes to town and they need something, we are the place for them,” store president Whitney Brown Grisaffi shares with pride of their flagship Tacoma locale. “Outside of schools, we support the hobbyist musician as well as the pros. There is a thriving music scene in our area, and we’ve partnered with a lot of places to help support live music. We’ve always said, ‘When people think of music, we want them to think of Ted Brown Music.’”

As the Washington company quickly approaches 90 years old – a milestone they’ll reach in 2021 – with 180 employees strong, it’s clear that mission still sticks across the board at the store’s locations in Tacoma, Richland, Yakima, Seattle, Silverdale, and Puyallup.

Founded in 1931 by Ted Brown with only 11 employees, the company weathered the depression and WWII at its original Tacoma location, where pianos and print music were the main items in stock. In the years to come, Brown would be one of the stores to quickly welcome the newfound craze of rock ‘n’ roll, stocking radios, phonographs, and records (“Even those scandalous titles that had to be kept below the counter!” Grisaffi chides).

The company didn’t expand to multiple locations until Ted’s son, T. Warren Brown, took over in 1960. He added a storefront to a Washington mall to capitalize on the home organ craze. Ted Brown Music can also credit Warren with one of their most impressive components: educational service reps.

“Warren was always looking to progress and grow the business and started to participate in an [idea] group,” Grisaffi explains. “That’s when he learned about having educational service reps call on schools and he introduced that in Washington state.”

To this day, Ted Brown Music employs 10 full-time educational service reps who “strive to be the music director’s able assistant” for music educators across the state. The benefits remain twofold: Ted Brown Music gets additional business, and band directors and music teachers have help maintaining and growing their music programs.

“It allowed us to help service all the small school districts that were too far from Tacoma to come in regularly,” Grisaffi reflects. “Our investment in ed reps made us indispensable and we’ve been an integral partner to schools across the state ever since. Having our ed reps on the frontlines has helped us support and grow our reach. We ask, ‘What do you need to help you do your job?’ and then try to get it for them. We help break down barriers, make connections, bring the things they need and get creative in getting more students into their programs.”

Garrison Grisaffi, Puyallup store manager and great-grandson of Ted Brown, says that the educational reps “play a massive role”

“While Ted was a visionary, I’m sure he never could have dreamed of some of the things Ted Brown Music is doing today.”

- Whitney Brown Grisaffi



A Ted Brown Music delivery truck from the early days of the company



An old snapshot of the storefront of flagship Ted Brown Music



The old main floor of Ted Brown Music

in Ted Brown Music’s work with school districts: “They serve the band directors and the students at the schools. They also encourage the directors and the students to head into our stores for the same great in-store experience that they try and create on the road.”

In the 1980s, Ted Brown Music introduced another key part of their service roster as they began to develop a pro audio department, which now spans audio, video, and lighting expertise. Currently, the company’s AVL services employs three designer salesmen/project managers, three full-time installation techs, and one part-time installation tech.

“The 1980s saw the introduction of MIDI and we opened our pro audio department to support those products,” Whitney Brown Grisaffi explains. “The pro audio department lead us to working with churches beyond their print needs and we started to do audio installations. A number of years later, this helped us expand that service to full-on audio, video and lighting installations. We’re now a general contractor and work on initial construction projects.”

Speaking on the store’s current audio, video, and lighting services, Grisaffi says that Ted Brown Music’s specialists design and install systems in every part of Washington, from churches and casinos to courtrooms and school buildings. The standard fare of lessons, repairs, and rentals round out Ted Brown Music’s services.

“We’re now involved in many initial builds and are onsite when the construction starts,” she says. “Each of our locations has full time repair techs in-house. We can handle the quick on-the-spot, walk-in customer repairs as well as institutional (school) repairs without having to send them out somewhere else.”

Now, 40 years and four additional locations later, Grisaffi represents the third generation of Ted Brown’s family to operate the MI company, and she takes the store’s reputation seriously.

“Being a school music dealer, we feel our first job is to help children discover the joys of making music with others,” she emphasizes. “With that said, we are big supporters of school music programs and have gone to bat for them more times than I can count. We are currently helping a district see the error of their ways in cancelling 5<sup>th</sup> grade band.”

Serving band and orchestra students is truly such a core part of Ted Brown Music’s business, and their inventory and expertise demonstrates it; The company is also a Shokunin dealer for Yamaha, a first chair dealer with Conn-Selmer, a franchisor of Accent, and is Straubinger-certified for flutes. On the shelves of each Ted Brown Music location are an assortment of instruments from Jupiter, Eastman, St. Louis Music, Cannonball, Buffet Crampon, Maple Leaf, Getzen, Howard Core, Fox, Trevor James, and Gemeinhardt.

Grisaffi has her own, sentimental ties to school music programs from her own experiences as a teenager and young adult: “I was given lots of opportunities to participate in music – I didn’t really appreciate it until junior



Founder Ted Brown



T. Warren Brown, son of Ted Brown



President Whitney Brown Grisaffi and vice president Stephanie Brown Howe



Garrison Grisaffi, manager of the Puyallup location and the fourth generation in Ted Brown Music

high when I met a very inspirational band director. He made band fun and even managed to make playing the bassoon sound cool! I played that through college.”

To this day, the granddaughter of Ted Brown doesn't play instruments much, but still enjoys making music with her voice; she's active in her church choir and sings tunes from around the globe. "I can say I've sung in at least eight different languages," she shares.

For both beginner and advanced players, Ted Brown Music offers a host of community gatherings. The company's weekly drum circle (now suspended due to COVID-19) has been going for 20 years, with famed percussionist Arthur Hull sometimes dropping by as a guest facilitator. Recently, the company host-

ed their first online all-ages "open mic" night, welcoming talent from across the country.

The centerpiece of the store's community events, though, is the Ted Brown Music Outreach, a 501c3 organization founded in 2007 "in order to help bring the joy of music to those who otherwise couldn't afford it."

Offering rock school camps, instrument exploration camps, and free instruments to students in need, the outreach program has grown significantly in 13 years.

"2007 was the first Outreach summer programs – four exploration camps and one middle school summer band," recalls Stephanie Brown Howe, VP of Ted Brown Music and director of the Ted Brown Music Outreach. "We also started gathering instruments our customers wanted to donate to kids who could not afford to rent or buy. In 2008, we collected about 10 instruments and sent them through our repair shop and gave them out to students who asked. We quickly came up with a form for the students' parents to fill out, because we were getting lots of requests."

Last year alone, Ted Brown Music collected 250 instruments donations, and distributed 195 of them to students who couldn't have been in their school band programs otherwise. Since the start of the instrument distribution program, the company has given away over 600 instruments to children in need.

"The best news is these instruments belong to that student, and they can play for life," Howe says.

As the years have passed, the formats of the outreach programs have shifted; the original middle school band program is now two jazz improvisations camps, and a keyboard exploration camp has also formed.

Nine years ago, Ted Brown Music's "Live it OutLoud" rock school launched, offering students eight weeks of immersion in the music industry. As students form four-to-six person bands, they learn skills like band management, music promotion, songwriting, and recording. The camp also includes an opportunity for the newly formed bands to record an original song at London Bridge Studio in Shoreline, Washington, where artists like Alice In Chains, Pearl Jam, and Macklemore have recorded parts of their catalogue. Kids between the ages of 12 and 18 are able to sign up, and the rock school welcomes players of all kinds, from vocalists and keyboardists to bass players and beyond. The program culminates with a "Final Red Carpet Award Show," where each new band performs two songs to an audience of their friends and family.

"We are so proud of our students and what they have accomplished, personally, and professionally," Howe says. "The Live It OutLoud program encourage the students to take charge and

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find their 'people.' They come into the program unsure and sometimes a very vulnerable stage in their lives (a number have tried to commit suicide prior to the program) by the end of the summer they have a group they can call on and confidence to stand up and be who they were meant to be. One past participant went on to graduate from Renton Instrument repair school and now works for us in the repair department."

This summer, the programs will adapt to the COVID-19 crisis and the new reality of social distancing by hosting very small classes or hosting sessions virtually. Ted Brown Music has already started to adapt as public health concerns keep "non-essential" brick and mortar stores closed. In the interim, Ted Brown Music offers limited hours for curbside pickup so musicians can still grab the gear they need on short notice. Looking ahead, Grisaffi says that this new pickup trend will prevail in retail long after the pandemic has passed.

"The world has changed due to COVID-19," she notes. "Curbside service was already gaining popularity, especially in grocery delivery. I believe it will continue to be a service which customers want and may even expect from retailers. We plan to make it a regular option for delivery on our website."

After all the major historical events that Ted Brown Music has seen in 89 years – a World War, recessions, and the trauma of 9/11 – adjusting to life in a pandemic is just one of many hurdles that company has overcome. And, like in all times of hardship, the current struggle of life during the COVID-19 crisis reminds everyone just how important music and entertainment can be.

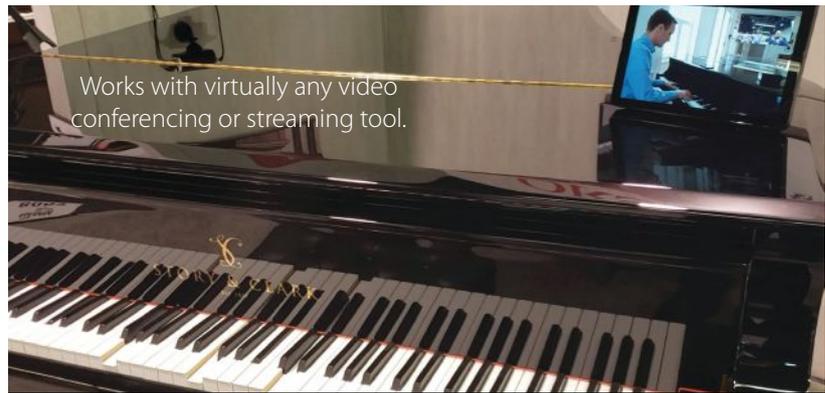
"I think this, like the most recent recession, will help people remember how important music is in the lives of everyone," Grisaffi notes. "I think our industry is resilient and most of us will come out on the other side stronger having utilized our creativity to show people that music is essential – and to use a NAMM phrase, #MusicIsLife."

"While Ted was a visionary, I'm sure he never could have dreamed of some of the things Ted Brown Music is doing today," she adds. "My father modeled that and when I took over as president, I inherited excellent leaders. I have to say I've also hired some excellent leaders. I hope to be able to do that for Garrison when he's ready to take on leadership of TBM." 

**"Being a school music dealer, we feel our first job is to help children discover the joys of making music with others. With that said, we are big supporters of school music programs and have gone to bat for them more times than I can count. We are currently helping a district see the error of their ways in cancelling 5th grade band."**

- Whitney Brown Grisaffi

## THE QRS-CONNECTOR KEEPS YOU WORKING



Shown above QRS Artist Mike Jones is interacting with NAMM attendees from New York, as the Story & Clark piano at the NAMM show plays along in PERFECT SYNC.

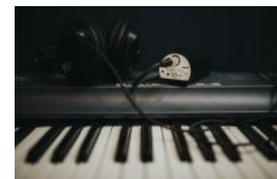
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Shown here using Skype and PianoMarvel on the multi-touch workstation

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## Note From Dan

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# A Blueprint for Recovery: Voices From the Past

## What we can learn from the courage and actions of our industry's forebears.

We, as an industry, can find strength, and insight from the wisdom of our past leaders, and comfort in knowing we are not alone in facing adversity. Through wars and recessions, and now a pandemic, the music products industry has proven its enduring value and passion, but, like our predecessors, it will take some creative thinking and ingenuity to build a stronger future.

During his NAMM Oral History interview, James Mixer explained how piano companies were manufacturing toilet seats during World War I and gliders during World War II. Retailers, during the Great Depression, took on product lines outside of music products. For example, Menchey Music in Pennsylvania added a new greeting card brand to its inventory—it happened to be called Hallmark.

After WWII, the big band musicians who had jobs before being drafted came home to find the swing era coming to a close. With the help of the GI Bill, music education classes and band repair schools were turning out qualified professionals, many of whom enjoyed a full and successful career in the years ahead. Fred Morgan was one such soldier who enrolled in an instrument repair school, and soon after graduating, opened a small shop outside of Sacramento, where he remained happily doing what he loved until his retirement over 60 years later! Many others, like Bernie Vance in Bloomington, Indiana, opened their own music retail stores. When I interviewed Mr. Vance in

2003, he pulled out a yellowing copy of "Training GI's For Music Stores," a short pamphlet NAMM created to help our members through that period of change. Anna Sipavich, a real-life Rosie the Riveter, assembled a variety of products working for the Wurlitzer Company during the second world war, ranging from keyboards to airplane parts.

Through each challenge, there were new opportunities to be discovered. School music programs developed after the war, and NAMM ramped up its advocacy efforts, which continue today with The NAMM Foundation. Popular trends such as the ukulele emerged from the ashes of WWI. Clever retailers and suppliers were right there to fill the need of the demands.

These examples of rethinking and reinventing business models show how we can look for creative ways to reach customers. In our era, consider how you're engaging consumers through your websites and social media as you cultivate new business.

While we do not know what will happen next, we do know that our industry will survive and thrive. The current health-crisis will lead to new ways of doing business, new product opportunities and new ways to engage your customers.

By working together, we will write our own history.

**Dan Del Fiorentino • NAMM Music Historian**



Music in wartime is especially important.  
There are no barriers of language, race or creed. Music speaks to our souls.  
Many people today are going through anxiety, sorrow and suffering.  
Anything which can take them out of themselves into the realm of beauty  
deserves support from all of us.

**Eleanor Roosevelt**

**The creativity and resilience demonstrated throughout our industry's history can provide insight and inspiration to our own recovery.**



**James Mixter** recalled that the Baldwin Piano Company made toilet seats during World War II to stay in business.

See more:  
[namm.org/Mixter](http://namm.org/Mixter)



**Anna Sipavich** worked in the Wurlitzer Company factory, assembling music products and airplane parts.

See more:  
[namm.org/Anna](http://namm.org/Anna)



**Bernie Vance** took advantage of NAMM's "Training GI's For Music Stores" program after World War II.

See more:  
[namm.org/Vance](http://namm.org/Vance)



**Robert Menchey's** store began diversifying its product line to include Hallmark greeting cards during difficult economic times.

See more:  
[namm.org/Menchey](http://namm.org/Menchey)

Our global community's response to this crisis has been incredibly inspiring, with more yet to be written. Please share your story at [namm.org/playback/submit-a-story](http://namm.org/playback/submit-a-story).



Despite any obstacle, NAMM and our members have moved the industry forward since 1901.

We are all in this together.

[namm.org](http://namm.org)

#MusicISLife

# Is This Thing On? The Stage Microphone Market

By Christian Wissmuller

**P**erformance microphones and recording studio mics have quite a few characteristics in common, of course. The ability to capture and amplify – and perhaps record – human vocals and acoustic instruments is the main purpose of a mic and, naturally, the degree to which any type of microphone achieves that end successfully makes that tool more (or less) appealing to end-users.

Stage microphones have additional “must have” features, though. First off, these things take a lot of abuse – from performers, to roadies, sound engineers, baggage handlers, audience members, and weather – and must be more rugged than their studio counterparts. Additionally, most touring musicians and all but the top-tier of performance venues can’t afford to drop a ton of cash on what will almost certainly be more than just one or two units. Performance mics often need to be relatively cheap, which means designers need to craft product simultaneously robust, sonically effective, and modest in price.

We spoke with reps from a few big names in this stage mics – read on to get their take on the state of this market segment.



## For your brand, what models of stage/performance mic are currently hot sellers?

**Gary Boss:** We have a few vocal mics that are “hot sellers.” The ATM510 does very well for us, as it is not only a rock-solid vocal mic, but we also offer it in a three-pack at a substantial discount. That tends to get folks’ attention.

For higher-end live sound, our AE6100 has always performed well, as it is very well behaved on loud stages thanks to a highly consistent and tight hypercardioid pick-up pattern.

The mic that might be a surprise that has become one of our best sellers is the AT2010. This handheld mic was designed using the same condenser element that is found in our best-selling AT2020 studio mic. One of the design criteria was to make a live sound condenser vocal mic that had the higher fidelity associated with condenser mics but with output and ease of mixing of a dynamic.

**Ryan DiPietrantonio:** Our most popular SKUs are our Concert 88x systems, Concert 99 systems, AWX and AWXm wind instrument systems and some of our replacement headsets and lav mics. The Concert 88x and Concert 99 systems are fantastic values and have premium features such as automatic channel scanning. The AWX/AWXm wind instrument systems feature a completely redesigned microphone paired with a rechargeable clip-on transmitter that fits in even the tightest of horn cases. Our redesigned SE and DE (single ear and double ear) low-profile headsets are awesome and are great for stores because they can be used as upgrades for major wireless brands with the included adapter cables.

**Robb Blumenreder:** While Sennheiser offers a versatile assortment of microphones, our best-sellers are split between two amazing vocal microphones: e 835 vocal microphone (\$99), e 935 vocal microphone (\$179); and two of our most successful backline microphones: e 609 Silver guitar amp microphone (\$109) and our e 604 drum mic, which is offered in a 3-pack (\$349).

For Neumann, the KMS 104 and KMS 105 (\$699) are considered the pinnacle of vocal microphones. Featuring a true condenser capsule with a gold sputtered diaphragm and innovative, integrated pop screen design, the KMS series are the best complement you can give a talented vocalist to bring their studio sound to the stage.

**Soren Pedersen:** The legendary Shure SM58 is more popular than ever. And we’re starting to see more and more SM7B on stage these days.

## What qualities are customers looking for in a stage microphone?

**RD:** I think most customers are looking for something that sounds great first off, has a low noise floor, can survive a few drops, but, most of all, fits within their budget.

**RB:** There are a few non-negotiables when you’re working with stage microphones and right at the top of that list is durability. Mics aren’t treated with the same care as their musical instrument counterparts – they’re often considered tools, so they need to hold up to a rough life on the stage to get the job done. Stands fall, things get stepped on and a mic can’t jump out of the way of a drummer’s stick or guitarist’s headstock. So, sound aside, everyone is looking for a product that can last while they stand at the counter admiring the MI jewelry in the glass cases. Sennheiser can easily check that box thanks to our team of German engineers and rigorous testing procedures.

From a design perspective, vocal mics can be pretty straightforward, but our backline microphones are purpose built for their applications. Now that’s not to say that they can’t be used for secondary applications, just that they are generally built to address a challenge on stage. For instance, our e 604 microphone is a small, dynamic mic that can be tucked into tight drum set configurations, incorporate cable management and give you a huge sound. The e 609 Silver features a unique capsule design that keeps the mic body tight up against the guitar cab and even lets you forgo a mic stand if that’s your style. These design elements make for a unique product and it’s very easy to immediately understand how it can make your life easier on stage so you can focus on your performance.

**SP:** The number one thing is quality – both sound and build quality. Not only do customers demand the same great sound night after night, but they are looking for a reliable microphone that can withstand different environments: a rugged microphone they don’t have to worry about.

**GB:** It basically comes down to durability, feedback resistance and intelligibility/fidelity. That’s just the first part of the equation; customers are also always looking for responsive customer support and great service from the manufacturer.

## For stores that do especially well in serving this market segment, what are some best practices they adopt when it comes to display, marketing, et cetera of stage mics?

**RB:** The best possible thing you can do is to educate your staff so that they have talking points to help navigate what can be an overwhelming experience for some. Just like a server at a restaurant, staff that's had experience with an item can do a better job in talking about it – it's important for your team to be the customer and try out the products you sell in store, too.

Sennheiser offers training through our Sound Academy as well as through our comprehensive network of area sales managers and independent rep firms. Of course, we're only a phone call away if we can ever help you, your staff or our mutual customer! Assuming your team is trained and ready, the next best thing for someone checking out microphones is to actually hear them with their own voice.

Learning about the customers' needs based on the equipment they already have can help you narrow things down: do they own their own PA, if so – what kind, what's their signing style, is this for live or studio use – these questions help to determine what the right product might be for them. Take our e 835 and e 935 microphones – depending on the PA system being used, one might be a more logical choice than the other. For example, bands that are using powered speakers or speakers on a stick (i.e. 12" with horn) and only routing vocals through the PA would probably notice a distinct difference comparing the 835 to the 935, namely that the 835 will really cut through while the 935 is much more neutral. The reason for this is based on the pre-emphasized EQ curve with the e 835. The e 935 is designed for a more natural response, generally larger PA systems that have a full band mix running through them and recording applications. Shooting out products with your own voice is a great way to understand if you've found a match as it's important to test them for your individual voice and style. Since some people are shy and don't want their voice heard across a store, offering up a pair of headphones hooked up to a mixer with the EQ settings flat, gain stage set the same, and setting up the mics on a couple stands is a way to gain a friend when it comes to an introverted performer.

Since online business is a significant portion for many retailers, it's important to have a comprehensive overview on your product pages and not just stock images. Generally, the manufacturer will have more than enough content for you, but you want to stand out from the noise and the best way to do that is to generate your own content. Whether that's pictures, videos or audio samples on your



Gary Boss, Audio-Technica Director of Marketing



Robb Blumenreder, Commercial Manager,  
Professional Audio, Sennheiser



website or social media, engaging with your customers in a unique and captivating way will help ensure they spend more time on your site while getting information that's beyond the generic info made available to everyone reselling these products. Another great way to help push product is to have client reviews or testimonials talking about their experience, music type and involving them as an important part of your community.

**SP:** The SM58 and SM7B are two products that have a wide and universal reach. Customers recognize the products from the stage, YouTube, twitch, everywhere. They have become pop culture icons which makes it easier on stores when they can show their customers pro gear at a consumer price.

**RD:** I think the best thing a store can do is to demystify wireless. Many times, performers will want to take their stage show to the next level, but are afraid to "cut the cord" and go wireless. Everyone has had trouble with a WiFi router at one point and many think the same tech issues will arise with a wireless mic. However, some stores have a mock stage setup and if you can demonstrate in under five minutes how to connect a receiver to a mixer, scan for an open channel, and then pair the wireless transmitter and have the customer repeat that process, that gives them the confidence to go forward and rock!

**GB:** Demo, demo, demo. This is one of the key differentiators between brick-and-mortar and online. Even when mic samples are posted online for live mics, many customers really prefer to hear them (and feel them) in person through a PA. Studio mics are more forgiving in this regard, where online demos can be very effective. Retailers should have a dedicated PA set up and ready to go with a mixer and two cables ready to provide A/B demos. I would also suggest giving your customers choices and options, but not so many that it is confusing. Also only sell the mics that you and your crew believe in. The most successful pitch comes from a genuine belief in the product and company you are selling. The customer is looking for you to be the expert, so you should make certain that you and your staff are the experts. Audio-Technica is always happy to provide mic training for anyone who needs better chops or a refresher on microphones. In the scheme of things, mics are one of the most important yet least expensive accessories a customer can buy to improve their sound, so a little expertise goes a long way (and can easily create return-customers for life).

**What have been the most significant recent innovations in stage microphone design and manufacture -- and what do you expect to see more of in the future?**

**SP:** Our dual diaphragm KSM8 vocal microphone was a huge breakthrough in dynamic mic technology. With two ultra-thin diaphragms and groundbreaking reverse airflow technology, the KSM8 Dualdyne delivers unparalleled acoustic performance for stage and broadcast. More to come from Shure!

**GB:** Obviously wireless has been growing steadily compared to wired products, not only on stage but in our everyday lives in all manner of products. The ability for companies to duplicate the sound of their wired products to a wired counterpart has been getting better and better. Getting the sound right is not an easy engineering task. Recently, Audio-Technica has made capsules of most of our handheld mics available for our wireless using an industry-standard thread mount. Finally, as the adoption rate on in-ear monitors and the quality of cost-effective PA systems continues to rise, more customers are discovering the benefits of live condenser mics on stage.

**RD:** I am most excited about pairing microphones with smartphones. A wireless solution like our Go Mic Mobile offers users the ability to have professional audio to their phone, audio is no longer seen as an afterthought for video. Content creators have realized that 4K video means nothing if the audio sounds like it was taped in another room with a mic under a blanket fort. I expect more wireless options, stereo mics and shotgun mics built for phones coming in the very near future.

**RB:** Sennheiser and Neumann are fortunate to have long-standing products that have become industry standards for production and studio professionals alike. Taking cues from requirements for these demanding applications and applying them to our products has made for an exceptionally success-



Soren Pedersen, Senior Product Specialist at Shure, Inc.



ful line of vocal and backline microphones. Neumann continues to abide by their quest for perfection, utilizing a team of experts in our production clean rooms to assemble each and every microphone capsule that goes into our products. As the saying goes, a diamond is forever and we certainly strive for that goal with every product that has the Neumann diamond logo on it. From our KMS Series of vocal microphones to the KK series of capsules made for Sennheiser wireless, Neumann has found a second home for the discerning musician unwilling to compromise their sound outside the studio walls.

For Sennheiser, our evolution line of wired mics got its start in 1998 and has grown over the past 22 years to become a pillar within our MI portfolio. Our investment in a custom built, highly automated production line enabled us to bring German precision to dynamic microphone production. Providing unparalleled consistency and innovation in the protection of your sound is what helps set Sennheiser apart. A great example of this can be found within each and every evolution dynamic microphone – a hum compensation coil generates a phase-inverted, opposing field, which cancels out background noise from the power grid and other equipment, protecting the sound you work so hard to perfect. The evolution series features a wide selection of vocal and instrument microphones that have been purpose built to excel in just about any application or backline need.

In the future, we will continue to see a democratization in the microphone space. The use cases are expanding, and now more than ever, people who never thought about sound quality are invested. DIY and professional vloggers and podcasters are ushering in a new generation of microphone users, and this will undoubtedly impact the design elements in the next generation of mics.



Ryan DiPietrantonio, Brand Manager for Samson

This development will likely be fast-tracked due to our current situation. We see more and more content recorded and streamed live, as well as performances that would be typically reserved for stage instead broadcasted. Microphones that are purpose-built for this market, taking elements of pioneering stage mics like our evolution series, will define the future of this space. **PAIRPARTS**



# ...And We're Live!



Live Streaming Lessons and Content from Your Store is Easier Than You Think!

By Scott Robertson

**W**ith physical contact limited due to COVID-19, smart retailers are looking for new ways they can keep their lesson programs going strong and stay connected with their customers. Live streaming is a great way to do this.

Live streaming refers to online streaming media simultaneously recorded and broadcast in real time. It is often referred to simply as streaming, but this abbreviated term is ambiguous because “streaming” may refer to any media delivered and played back simultaneously without requiring a completely downloaded file.

The whole category is really booming. In 2016, live streaming was already a more than \$30 billion industry and it’s just getting started. Even before COVID-19, live streaming was on track to more than double in growth by 2021 to become a more than \$70 billion industry.

Okay, you’re sold, but you probably want to know how your store can actually do it because good intentions are only half the battle here. Here’s a great way to set up your very own home live streaming studio that isn’t very expensive and very easy to do.

You’re going to need a few key pieces to get this going. They are:

1. Your mobile phone or computer
2. Audio interface
3. Good microphone
4. Mic stand with phone holder
5. Lighting
6. Cables

While there are a number of brands creating the items above – both individually and as packages – for the purposes of this article, I’m going to focus on one bundle. Most of these pieces come in a new set from audio leader VocoPro called the Streamer-Live package. But first let’s review those six key pieces.

### Mobile Phone or Computer

Yes, you can just use your phone and/or computer to do this, but as Stephen Covey reminds us, it’s best to begin with the end in mind – so you need to decide where you want to live stream: YouTube, Facebook Live, Zoom, Google Hangout, Skype? Then just make sure you have that app downloaded, an account created, et cetera., and you’re ready to stream and post great content on behalf of your business.

### Audio interface

You need something to bring your high quality audio into your phone or computer while you stream. Included in the recommended Streamer-Live package is VocoPro’s Streamer USB audio interface. This cool little red box has tons of features including Bluetooth wireless input, 16 onboard sound effects, both chat and singing mode with features like pitch correction, pitch bend, and vocal eliminator for accompanying music tracks. This makes it one of the most flexible and affordable audio interface packages on the market. Also, this audio interface is rechargeable to eliminate the need for a constant power supply while you’re shooting. The interface also shows you the battery life left so you always know.

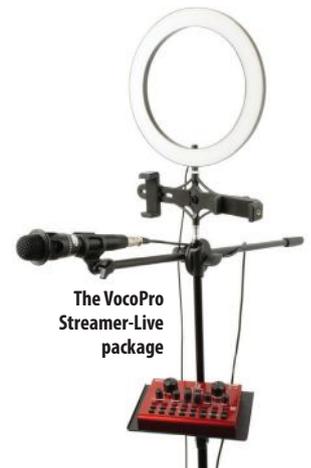


### Good Microphone

The sound isn’t going to be amplified by itself, so you’re going to need a good mic. I recommend the VocoPro condenser mic included with the VocoPro Streamer-Live package. This mic definitely gets the job done and works seamlessly with the rest of the VocoPro package.

### Mic Stand with Phone Holder

This is very important because you need a stand that holds both your phone and the mic. As a bonus, the stand included with the VocoPro Streamer-Live package has a small shelf to hold the audio interface too!



### Lighting

When live streaming or shooting any video, lighting is critically important. Luckily the VocoPro Streamer-Live package comes with a nice white light ring that also mounts to the stand and gives you the perfect lighting for your live stream shoot.

### Cables

This may seem kind of boring, but cables extremely necessary. You need a mic cable as well as a cable to connect the audio interface to your phone. These cables are included in the VocoPro Streamer-Live package. But you will also need the little adapter to get the audio interface’s 1/8” cable plug into your iPhone or Android phone.

And there you have it. Now just set it up at home or in the store and you’re ready to join the live streaming party! Your audio will sound great, you have sound effects should the mood strike you, and your video will be lit well and look fantastic.

Now that’s a great way to create some interesting lessons and content and get back to profitability in the new normal of the post-COVID-19 world. 



# Amplifying Education

## While in Quarantine, Pro Audio Companies Give Professionals New Learning Opportunities

By Victoria **Wasyłak**

**Y**ou could call mid-March the days during which the live music industry went dark. Across the country, those fateful weeks saw a major chain reaction – Broadway going dark, LiveNation calling off all scheduled arena shows, and the smaller venues quickly following suit. Almost overnight, performers, roadies, and sound and lighting engineers lost their livelihood for the foreseeable future.

Even most bars and churches have shuttered for the time being, leaving livestreams from isolation as the one remaining option for musicians to work for tips and air their creativity.

For all the audio professionals in quarantine, though, that's not even an option.

While many of these workers are furloughed at home, major pro audio companies are stepping up to help them make the most of their time in isolation. Almost as soon as venues closed, free webinars and other accessible educational resources from the likes of Martin Audio, Shure, Ashly Audio, ChamSys, and many others began to fill a void.

In early April, ChamSys unveiled daily online webinar training sessions at their online ChamSys Training Academy, as well as new courses, tutorials, and appointment opportunities for audio professionals stuck at home. Free MagicQ and QuickQ online training sessions are also available. Right from the jump, ChamSys report-

ed over 1400 bookings in early April alone.

"With the majority of our users unable to work due to the restrictions in place on live events worldwide, we want to provide a resource to help them return to work stronger, with more resources and knowledge," says Phil Watson, director of ChamSys USA. "We have a strong existing training team worldwide, so it was only a matter of redirecting more of our attention to online training. For live daily seminar training, we were up online within a day. We already had a suite of free weekly online webinars and live meetings. We have increased these to multiple events a day, in four languages: English, German, Spanish and Italian. We expect to add French in the near future. We also increased our one-to-one live meetings. These are now available in multiple languages, across many time zones."

For Martin Audio, who's currently hosting weekly webinars, their expanded offerings aim not only to educate, but to offer people in quarantine a means of connecting with other people.

"With so many people trying to fill their days, it was opportune to offer educational webinars as a way of helping technicians stay up to date with the latest technology during this unprecedented time for the industry," James King, director of marketing for Martin Audio, tells *MMR*. "We hoped that through some live online training we can help people to interact with their friends

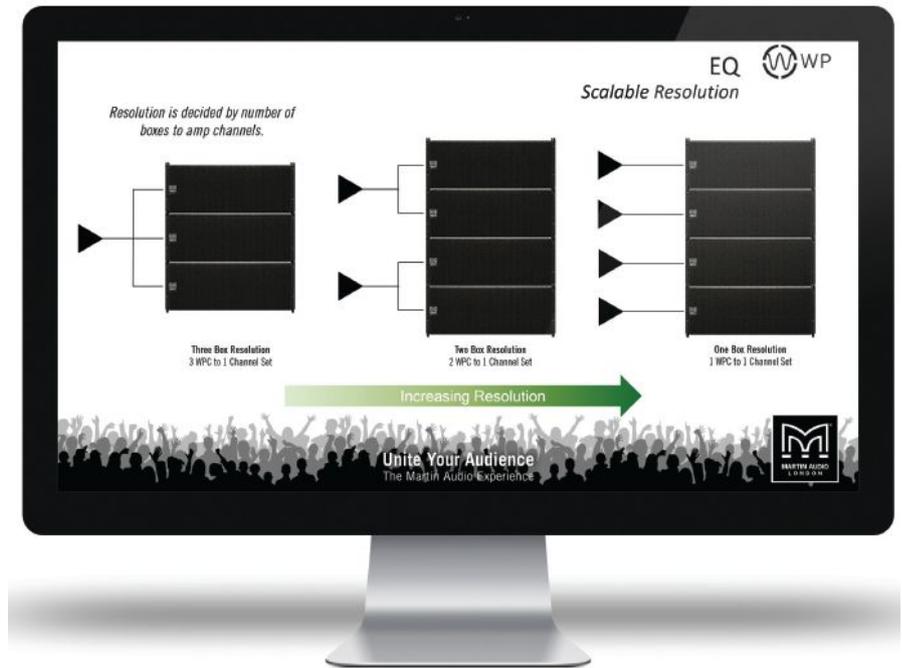
and colleagues while also learning something new. In these challenging times, we all need to be supporting the AV industry and the thousands of hard working people that help make it great and that will continue to make it so, long after this difficult period comes to an end."

The employees of Martin were able to launch their series of webinars in only a week's time, building on educational and presentation ideas that the company had started to develop prior to the COVID-19 crisis. Using GoToMeeting as the platform for the weekly webinars, Martin has shared that their webinar attendance has surged considerably since the start of the U.S. quarantine.

"We couldn't be more pleased: we had over 1,000 registrations for the first webinar session, which is around 10 times the average registration for one of our webinars," King adds. "In fact, we had to upgrade our software package to accommodate everyone. Added to this, the training area of our website is now the most visited page after our homepage, and that has never happened before. On average, we continue to get well over 500 registrants each week. The sessions themselves have been well-received with many of the participants asking questions at the end of the live sessions and sending in further questions as a follow up to our technical team during the week. It's helped them fill an hour in their day, it's taught them something new, and it helps them feel part of a community at a time when everyone needs that the most."

Similarly, the Shure Audio Institute also has seen an incredible increase in their number of attendees, as they offer webinars on everything from using IEMS on tour, to networking wireless gear for stages. In early April, Shure expanded its monthly education programming to make it weekly. Also available are "legacy webinars" about Shure products, and Integrated Systems Certification for level 1 and 2 (eligible for CTS credits).

"Shure has always provided webinars and training for free to the general public. However, we felt it was important to provide more frequent content to end-users during this time, which is why the Shure Audio Institute is delivering weekly training sessions," explains Dave Klein, director of Shure Audio Institute. "Demand for the sessions have been higher than normal, with three times the audience tuning in for recent training sessions versus previ-



A glimpse at Martin Audio's webinars

ous webinars. Feedback from attendees have been positive and we are trying to keep the topics timely and of interest to the target audience."

For the powers that be at Ashly Audio, rolling out free education opportunities was part of the grand plan for 2020 anyways, prior to the development of the pandemic. The company already had a handful of webinars ready to go, allowing them to launch Ashly University via WebEx in early April.

"When things changed drastically for our industry, we knew we needed to accelerate the time frame," explains Noel Larson, vice president of Marketing and Business Development at Ashly. "Providing training right now allows our partners to continue some level of activity during these tough times. And it is our goal to continue to offer that as long as we see demand for it." Audio professionals can sign up for one-hour sessions via the Ashly website, where they can peruse the week's topics pertaining to Ashly fixtures and installations.

"Because we had planned some of this in the previous few months, our team was impressively swift with getting things up and running," Larson adds. "We had a few webinars ready -- as mentioned, it was our plan to introduce these regardless - but the Ashly team has quickly come up with new topics and new ideas to keep things fresh for folks. That combination of creativity and pre-planning had us ready to go within weeks."

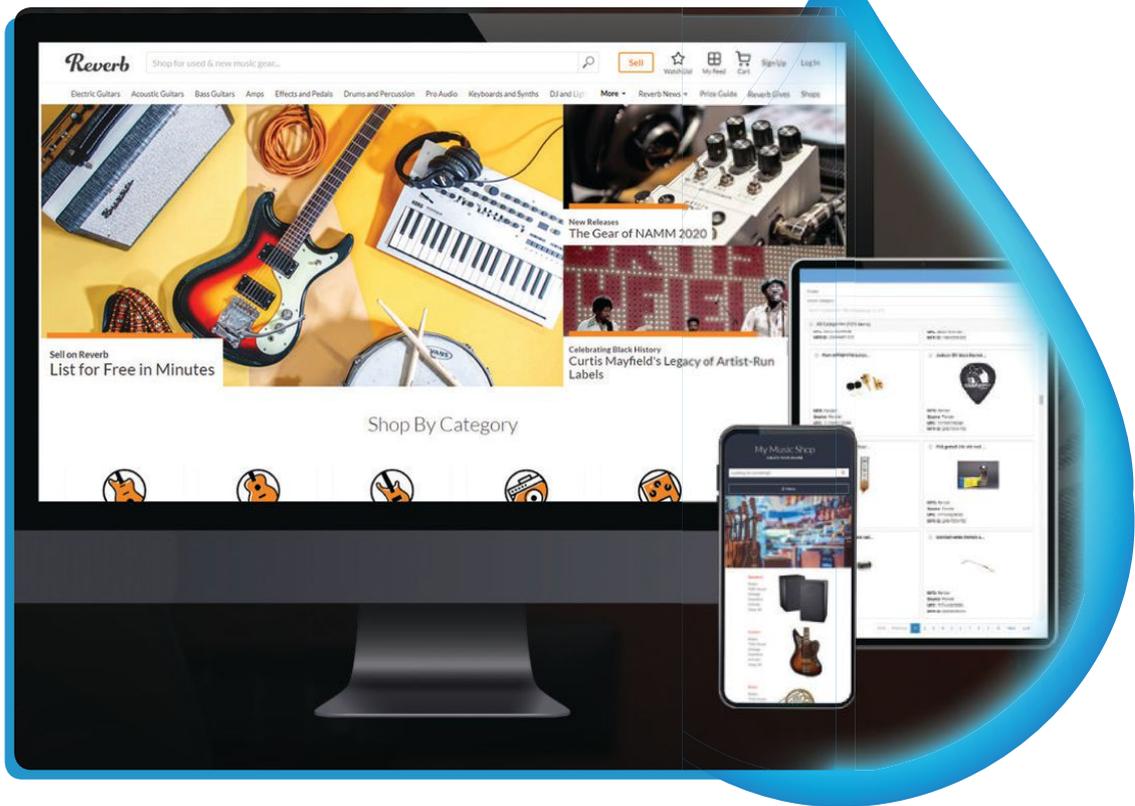
As with other companies, the response from audio professionals has been overwhelming and positive for Ashly University, resulting in added sessions to keep up with the demand.

"The reception has been far beyond our expectations," Larson says. "We've added additional classes because of how much demand there's been. Multiple sessions have been full."

While state orders continue to lengthen the duration of quarantine and keep musicians and audio workers away from live music opportunities, companies like Ashley Audio, ChamSys, Shure, and Martin Audio simply keep the educational content coming. Other major players in the audio world have stepped up to the plate in recent months, too; Sennheiser launched a #DontStopTheEducation webinar series, DPA Microphones has a wealth of creative online resources for audio professionals on their website, and Audio-Technica has uploaded a series of recording techniques to YouTube, all catered to at-home learning. As the weeks pass and the future seems uncertain, at least one thing is clear: the pro audio community is in this together for the long haul.

"The feedback we're hearing is that this is helping our partners stay informed, educated, and prepared for when things return to normal," Larson affirms. "We will continue to support them for as long as they continue to ask for this type of professional development." 

## RIGHT AS



## Rain

## How Rain Retail Software is Streamlining Stores Across America

By Victoria Wasylak

If a salesperson approached you at NAMM and told you that you could increase your sales by 20 percent, you'd probably say thanks but no thanks – there's no way that's possible. But when Sean Roylance of Rain Retail Software says that's what his company does, it's not some scheme, it's the verifiable data from customers who've employed his software in their stores.

Rain Retail is a software company that streamlines inventory information, a store's website, and their POS into one cloud-based seamless system. Put simply, the software allows independent brick and mortar stores to have the same online capabilities as big box stores. With Rain Retail Software, stores access their point of sale and inventory management all combined with their e-commerce website, boosting the accuracy of their inventory for both employees and customers.

As Roylance explains, "If you sell [a particular item] in the store, it comes down off the website. If you change the price, it's reflected immediately on the website. Everything is always showing accurate and up-to-date at all times because it all operates from one single back-end cloud-based database."

Roylance has seen overwhelming success with businesses – both in MI and other stores – who have taken the software on.

"We wanted to know, during the first 12 months with us, what happened to their gross revenues?" he says. "And on average, their

gross revenues increased by 21.5 percent. So, if you are a store doing \$500,000 a year, now you just grew by 21.5 percent, now you're up over \$600,000 a year. For them, that's a massive difference."

That very "massive difference" has been years in the making. Growing up on a farm in central Washington in the '80s, Roylance first got a computer at age 12: A Commodore VIC-20 with 4k of memory. With the computer, he started programming, making him one of the only kids in his high school who knew how when he was older.

"In hindsight, it was great growing up on a farm, I learned how to work a lot. But my whole goal in life was get off the farm," he says. "I have fond memories now. At the time, it was a lot of hard work. It was cold, working with cattle in the snow, doing hay in the summer, all that kind of stuff. Then I went off to college and studied computer science, because I really liked that programming element. About the time I was wrapping up school is when I realized that entrepreneurship was something that I was interested in. But as a programmer, at that point, I got a full-time job programming before I finished school."

Roylance worked as a programmer for over 10 years, but the major career shift came from Roylance in 2008 when he attended a trade show with his wife, a quilt pattern designer, to sell her pat-

terns. In hindsight, Roylance says, the afternoon wasn't especially lucrative, but it pivoted him in the right direction to start Rain Retail Software.

"When I was there, somebody came up and said, 'Hey, we do e-commerce websites for people in this industry.' I looked at what they had and felt like it was very lacking. I thought that I could build something that could do better. And so, for the next six months, I went back home and spent all my evenings, weekends, holidays, vacation days just coding all the time and built our very first version of our e-commerce platform that still carries on to this day."

At the next trade show, Roylance signed up his first 24 clients with his new software in-hand. Following the new sign-ups, he quit his full-time job in 2009 and officially started Rain Retail Software, aiming his business towards specialty retail stores. While his initial venture was with craft stores, he quickly learned that the same software helped music and sporting goods businesses.

"At this point, that today is kind of our bread and butter is specialty retail," he explains.

Around 2012, Roylance and his team noticed that customers were often re-searching items online for price and product specs, then going into stores to test out the item and purchase it. Pouncing on this new retail behavior, Rain Retail Software established a cloud-based system, which combined point of sale inventory management with a store's e-commerce website.

"In 2012, we began to really see this behavior evolving quickly amongst consumers, and we saw these stores that were having some real significant success," Roylance says. "As we worked with retail stores and we helped them get all their products onto their website with their current inventory counts and the current prices, [we saw] that when they did that and kept it up to date, it was having a big impact on their overall sales. We found what would happen is that their revenues would grow very noticeably, but most of that growth actually occurred via in-store sales. That the way it would work is people would go online, see, 'Okay, they have this guitar I'm looking for. I'm going to go into

the store and check it out.' And then they end up making the purchase once they get into the store. But the reason why they went online was to do some pre-work, if you will, and look at things before they then made that trip."

In many cases, the cloud-based system has allowed customers to find out about products that are in storage but haven't even been displayed yet, all thanks to them finding items listed online. These kinds of scenarios are exactly what contribute to the significant aforementioned sales boost.

The installation process is piecemeal, allowing stores to take small, manageable steps to get their inventory logged and e-commerce site established without having to close the store for days at a time. On average, Roylance says the process takes six to eight weeks in a series of trainings, but once everything is in place, the payoff begins.

Many stores have even reported back to Roylance and his employees that new hires pick up their software far faster than their older systems. And if problems do

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“After discussion, what we found over and over again with store owners is one of the things that they value most would be that ability to get some of their time back. That’s really what we’re shooting for with many of these tools and integrations.”

– Sean Roylance



arise, he and his team offer unlimited customer support. In total, Rain Retail Software employees roughly 85 people across their departments, which span onboarding specialists and general support employees who can provide training and additional insight.

“We very much hold their hands,” Roylance notes. “That’s one thing that sets us apart from a lot of the modern software systems and businesses out there. We feel you need that modern, easy-to-use technology, but as you tackle these different business needs, it does introduce complexity, and so you need that support as well.”

Regarding pricing, each business pays one flat initial setup price, and additional monthly payments that vary based on each business’ number of checkout lanes and locations. The monthly fee includes the store’s website, hosting, software upgrades, and customer support.

#### Music-Minded Software

While Rain Retail was originally founded on a basis of craft supply stores, Roylance has found that his software lends itself especially well to the intricacies of running independent MI stores. Aside from easily categorizing and tracking serialized inventory and repairs, the software easily plugs a store’s inventory into Reverb.com so that they can seamlessly sell products there as well.

“We’ve seen some stores just do some tremendous volume of business on Reverb,” Roylance explains. “Again, the amount of work that it takes to do that is just next to nothing, because everything is all on our system. They get it [a product] in, they put it into their system, now it’s up on their website, it’s also on Reverb. If it sells on Reverb, we immediately take it down automatically off the website, and they know about it. If it sells on the website or in the store, we immediately take it down from Reverb. That’s been a really powerful thing for these retailers to now be getting their products out in another area where people can go and see what they have for sale and do business with them.”

In addition, the Rain Retail software also simplifies many other MI-related aspects of a business, like handling instrument rental and rent-to-own programs. This includes providing an easy way to intake customer and payment information.

“As far as we had encountered to this point, the concept of rent-to-own is unique to the music industry,” Roylance says. “We just recently finished our initial substantial offering for rent-to-own. The thing that’s really great about it is that people can go online and sign up to do a rent-to-own. Then they can also go online to update and make payments. But then, maybe the credit card that they have on file is expired, or for whatever reason doesn’t work. Well, we have automated themes, like, where you can send out a text message to the clients saying, ‘Hey, your payment failed. Click here, go to the website, enter in a new credit card and update your payment information.’ All that without the store having to even

know that the payment was declined.”

Another notable music-specific feature of the software is that Roylance and his employees have worked with major manufacturers and distributors in the music industry to collect useful product info. By gleaning product photos and information directly from the manufacturers, store owners don’t have to manually enter product specs for every item in their inventory. Instead, those details auto-populate by merely scanning the item’s barcode or typing its name.

“After discussion, what we found over and over again with store owners is one of the things that they value most would be that ability to get some of their time back,” Roylance explains. “That’s really what we’re shooting for with many of these tools and integrations.”

In addition, MI stores can easily take in and manage consignment items. In an effort to automate the consignment process, customers who’ve dropped off consignment items can see their status – sold or unsold – and receive an automatic message and payment when an item does sell.

#### Future Integrations

Looking ahead, Roylance plans to add even more features to his software. In progress are ways to directly integrate selling items with Amazon and eBay, much like Rain Retail Software already does with Reverb. This feature would remove “a third-party layer” that Roylance says often reduces the quality of the integration. While he has found that Reverb is still number one in online instrument sales, he explains that Amazon and eBay also move a significant amount of MI gear.

“Reverb is doing more instrument sales than Amazon and eBay combined. I’m not trying to be a salesman for them [Reverb],” he says. “Nevertheless, there’s still quite a bit that happens on Amazon and quite a bit that happens on eBay. We want to get retailers plugged into those channels as well.”

Add these new integrations to Roylance’s already-successful and efficiency-boosting software, and the profits are noticeable.

“When that store signs up with us, there is that legitimate 20 percent bump in sales increase on average, plus a potential another 20 percent increase in sales through Reverb. If you can make one key decision and get a 20 percent to 40 percent increase in sales, to us, it’s a no-brainer.”



Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Rain Retail has created a microsite that’s designed to share insight, resources, and news on new features, with the main focus of helping clients weather the COVID-19 crisis. Check it out here: [www.rainpos.com/insights-and-resources](http://www.rainpos.com/insights-and-resources)

# music

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# Leadership in a Time of Crisis and the New Frontier



By Menzie Pittman

**"P**ick up the Pieces..." – let me guess, you liked that song better in 1974 because you never thought it would pertain to your business, right?

Well, as it turns out, the Average White Band was right on the money, and that's exactly what we must do now: pick up the pieces! Interestingly, if you listen to the shout chorus in the song, the AWB tells you what to do – they just don't tell you how to do it. So, let's look at a few thoughts on how we pick up those pieces.

## But first, a word from our sponsor: Leadership!

Is there ever a better time to witness leadership in action than during a crisis? Absolutely not. Whether you are talking about national, state, local, or business levels, leadership is really exposed during a time of crises. Let's focus on the characteristics of leadership itself.

If you check online to find the definition of "leadership," you will find many characteristics that are applied to the word. What you will not find are the adjectives *decisive* and *brave*. *Inquisitive*, *resourceful*, and *compassionate* are also missing in the list of descriptors. What you will find are the words *transparency*, *passion*, and *communication*, and according to *Forbes* those are the most important traits. It appears to me that some truly unique qualities are now missing from the corporate definition of leadership.

At first glance, the corporate definition of leadership seems a bit weak. However, if you ponder it long enough, you will realize that the problem with the current definition of the word leadership, is perhaps the understanding of the word itself. We have lost the *courage* to delve deeply into what leadership really means. *Honesty* has become inconvenient. *Responsibility* is now just jargon as opposed to action. *Conviction* is a word we reference with the penal system; seldom is it currently used with clarity of intent.

As you look at the crisis in front of us, just ask yourself, "Are there any qualified leaders in this moment who are comfortable?" Great leadership is uncomfortable most of the time. Leadership is not a feeble word, nor are true leaders feeble. It is not faint of responsibility, nor are the genuine leaders. When leadership is defined via corporate speak, is it leadership? Or simply a paper tiger?

## Now back to our regularly scheduled broadcast regarding how to pick up the pieces

What's the best piece of advice you have heard in the past six to eight weeks, while pondering how and when to reopen your business? The best advice I heard came from a NAMM webinar with Bob Phibbs. Bob's advice: "Re-open your business as if it's a new business, and you're opening

for the first time." When I heard that, I thought it was a truly good strategy.

If you take a second to think about it, it is true. We can't really get back to where we entered the conversation, so why try? Maybe there's a better way to look at the idea of our business and the core values it represents.

Some people believe that perhaps there's a chance that folks may not want to go back to the way things were: fast, demanding, all give and no take. I may be going out on a limb here, but I believe civility may come back into vogue. Of course, just as I was getting comfortable with this thinking, a BMW blew by me at 80 miles an hour on a two-lane road today, so I guess we will land somewhere between the two ideas. But I think we all agree, there is no "normal," and in the strangest of ways, that's actually good news.

So, what should today's thinking be? It should be what has always worked, but something that we, as a society, have recently taken for granted: service, service, service! Courtesy, kindness, civility, specialized knowledge, the idea of "going the extra mile," or "embracing empathy," "doing something extra without being asked," and the big one: "winning the customers' trust again" – *as if you're opening for the first time*.

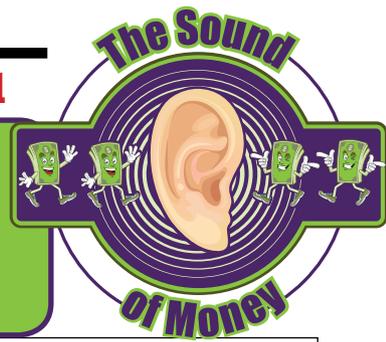
I do believe online education becomes a tool that will be more accepted and more prevalent. However, I also believe that true, high quality, one-on-one music education will now become more respected and honored for what it really is, a valuable apprentice system. I have no facts to support my opinion, and I could be completely wrong. But there are hints that I may be right. What did we lose in the last six to eight weeks? Human interaction.

And if you take something from someone, it usually becomes a very sought-after commodity. The truth is we had begun taking music for granted. There ya go – I said it. We had become obsessed with gadgetry and technology. Of course, technology is not necessarily bad, but on its best day, it is artificial. That's not too different than changing the definition of a word for convenience.

The new normal will be a marriage of all our best ideas blended with the leadership necessary to execute that understanding in the new frontier. Something tells me we've had a little time to think about that. 

*Menzie Pittman is the owner and director of education at Contemporary Music Center in Virginia (CMC). Following a performance and teaching career spanning more than 32 years, he founded CMC in 1989 and continues to perform, teach, and oversee daily operations. He has 50 years of musical experience as a drummer and drum instructor. Menzie is a frequent speaker at NAMM's Idea Center, and a freelance writer for MMR's "Small Business Matters" column.*

**"We have lost the courage to delve deeply into what leadership really means."**



# Who Are You?

The Joker asks Batman, 'Who are You?'  
Batman answers, 'I'm Batman' By Jaimie Blackman

I live in New York City. I suspect as you read this June column, some social distancing may be relaxed in different parts of the country, but as of the date this column is being written, I'm still hunkered down in my NYC home. This life-pause has slowed down my tempo, giving me more time for inner reflection. Perhaps you have also had the time to recharge your inner battery, helping you to better connect with your customers, when once again you can shake their hands.

It is in the realm of philosophical thought to ask questions which ultimately lead to self-knowledge. For instance, why might a solid philosophy of music retail lead to a high level of personal and business success? Or, does the music retailer draw its primary inspiration from music, or retail? And of course, the ultimate philosophical question: who are you?

The attraction your customers have to music and, by extension, your business, can be found in the aesthetic qualities inherent in music itself, rather than the business of retail. When the lover of music tries to describe the musical experience, the messaging will be found in the language of human feelings. As a music retailer, music educator, music maker, or music lover, we understand and deeply feel the relationship between music's aesthetic qualities like melody, rhythm, and harmony, with the subjective qualities of life like the patterns of feeling, and the feeling of significance.

Maximum retail value happens when retailers help impact and improve the human condition. At the heart of the matter, music retail is not the same as grocery retail. The former nourishes the soul, the latter nourishes the body. It's easy to get lost in the flashing lights and colors of merchandising. The successful music retailer well understands that the purpose of the retail environment is to cultivate the desired emotions. He or she recognizes that customers are buying the music gear and taking lessons, because they feel their life will be enriched.

Ultimately, the music retailer's financial success is determined by the impact the MI retailer has on the human condition. The MI retailer who understands how to connect on a deep level, is rewarded both personally and financially.

On a practical level, how is this accomplished? Caring – caring about yourself, your employees, and your customers.

I have personally walked into music stores, ready to buy, but didn't because I didn't feel the love. The salesperson did not ask me the questions which would create the retail bond needed to buy. Questions like, "Tell me what music means to you?" or "What type of music do you listen to?" or "Tell me what's important to you in the guitar your looking for today?" Caring is an essential chapter in the playbook of all successful MI retailers. (Refer to my MMR March 2019 column, "How is Caring Measured?" and from MMR September 2019

"The Art of Music Retail," where I explore how owners can use the language of music to communicate with their team.) All the core skills you would value in an employee like deep listening, caring, and character require the ability of your employee to manage their own mindset – to quiet the gremlins, and to be in the present moment.

Especially now, in wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, a practice to turn down the mental chatter is key: What are your inner thoughts? Do you have a mechanism to quiet the noise so you can be more creative? Having a regular mindfulness practice to quiet the mind will create a mind state, which helps to answer these questions. (refer to my MMR March 27 online post titled *In Tune: Music as the Bridge to Mindfulness*, a book by Richard Wolf.)

“Maximum retail value happens when retailers help impact and improve the human condition.”

In my first "Sound of Money" column in November 2017, I wrote "Tapping into, and successfully managing, your intangible assets is key to growing the value of your business and selling it profitably." A sound philosophical foundation for music retail, rooted in the value of music itself, may be your most valuable intangible asset.

In the end, it will never be about things. It will be about the human condition, and since music has an express path to the heart, the impact will always be profound. When I asked my dad shortly before he died if he had any regrets, it wasn't about having more money, or more possessions. He said it was not spending enough time with his children.

Music retailers are better positioned than Disney to deliver happiness, purpose, and meaning. So, answer the question: who are you? Be safe and be well.



Jaimie Blackman – a former music educator & retailer – is a financial advisor, succession planner, and certified business advisor. Blackman is a frequent speaker at NAMM's Idea Center. He writes *The Sound of Money* a monthly column for MMR. Visit, [bhwealth.com](http://bhwealth.com) to subscribe to newsletter and podcasts. Registered Representative, First Allied Securities, Inc. Member FINRA/SIPC.

## Accessories

### jj Babbitt's DH-113 Alto Clarinet Mouthpiece

To round out the quartet of new Premiere by Hite composite blend mouthpieces for 2020, jj Babbitt has unveiled the DH-113 Alto Clarinet mouthpiece. Finally, developing young musicians can play in the higher registers with confidence and control without sacrificing the resonance expected in the middle and lower registers. Not only does the specially blended resin help to shape the personality of the DH-113, but the craftsmanship of the Artisans of JJ Babbitt in Elkhart, Indiana add the post mold finishing touches that make the new Alto Clarinet mouthpiece stand alone in its class.



[www.jjbabbitt.com](http://www.jjbabbitt.com)

## Print & Digital

### Excelcia Music's Digital String Orchestra Music Release

Thirty-two new string orchestra pieces from favorite veteran composers as well as talented, up-and-coming composers make up Excelcia Music Publishing's 2020 String Orchestra music release. Recognizing these challenging times for music education with school closures and remote learning, the publisher has released an innovative digital catalog for 2020 String Orchestra music, complete with pop-up Score Videos and composer insights as well as free professional recordings on all major streaming platforms. Each score, and its accompanying parts, are meticulously-edited and beautifully set for ease of reading and include unique features to help facilitate efficient rehearsals.



[www.excelciamusic.com](http://www.excelciamusic.com)

### Cello Duet Delights from Hal Leonard

Students and professionals alike can play Massimiliano Martinelli's and Fulvia Mancini's original arrangements with the release of their first songbook: *Cello Duet Delights: 10 Popular Songs for Two*. The pair arranged each piece which is presented in full score, and with separate Cello 1 and Cello 2 pull-out parts. The accompanying audio is accessed through Hal Leonard's popular MyLibrary system. It can be streamed or downloaded and includes PLAYBACK+, a multi-functional audio player that allows players to slow down audio without changing pitch, set loop points, change keys, and pan left or right.



[www.halleonard.com](http://www.halleonard.com)

## Accessories

### Whirlwind's IMP 2 Direct Box

The IMP 2 direct box converts a line or instrument level unbalanced signal to a low impedance mic level balanced signal. Features include: 1/4" parallel-wired High Z In/Out jacks to input and "loop through" the source signal. These I/O jacks are wired in parallel, making no difference which one is used for input or output; Low Z OUTPUT (Male XLR Jack) that provides a low-impedance (150 Ohms), balanced output suitable for connection to a mixing console; a Ground Lift switch to help isolate hum and buzz; and uses Whirlwind's TRHL transformer. The IMP 2 comes with a three-year warranty covering defects in materials or workmanship.



[www.whirlwindusa.com](http://www.whirlwindusa.com)

### MEC Bass Pickups

These MEC bass pickups represent quality and sound, manufactured carefully by hand. The range includes models for 4-, 5- and 6-string basses, both as a set and individually. The metal covers are available in different high-quality finishes such as gold, chrome, black chrome, brushed gold, brushed chrome, brushed black chrome. A new option are the covers with open-polepieces for the J/J-style models.



[www.shop.warwick.de](http://www.shop.warwick.de)

### Chedeville Umbra Mouthpiece Series

Chedeville has announced the launch of a completely new range of classical clarinet mouthpieces called the Chedeville Umbra Series. The new Chedeville Umbra Clarinet Series was designed and developed in collaboration with acclaimed International soloist and co-founder of RZ Clarinets, Milan Rericha. For the creation of the new Chedeville Umbra clarinet mouthpieces no expense was spared, starting with the proprietary "Chedeville Rubber," a purer rod ebonite that recreates the great rod rubber of pre-war Chedeville mouthpieces.



[www.chedeville.com](http://www.chedeville.com)

## Amplification

### JJN-20R MkII Combo Amp from Blackstar

Blackstar's latest addition to Jared James Nichols' signature amplifier line, the JJN-20R MkII Combo Amp, features a racing green tolex and a distinctive tilt-back design, making the amplifier look just as good as it sounds. The JJN-20R MkII limited edition combo is now available for \$729.99.



[www.blackstaramps.com](http://www.blackstaramps.com)

In an effort to pivot towards the new age of distance learning and teaching in quarantine, MMR has assembled some devices for at-home content creation, recording, and lessons.

**Gig Gear's Cam-A-Lot Backdrop Device**

Gig Gear LLC's Cam-A-Lot is a dual-sided video conferencing screen that provides a clean background during video calls. It easily secures onto the back of almost any chair – including folding chairs – and completely blocks out the entire background of a user's video. The screen is dual-sided with one side featuring a white background for a clean look, while the opposite side features a green screen that can be used to project a virtual background. The Cam-A-Lot is ideal for a wide range of video calls – from those working at home to teachers and students practicing distance learning to AV professionals in virtual meetings. The Cam-A-Lot is 57 inches in diameter, and when not in use, it collapses and folds down to a compact 22-inch diameter.



[www.gig-gear.com](http://www.gig-gear.com)

**On-Stage's AS800 FET Condenser Microphone**

On-Stage's AS800 FET condenser microphone captures everything from soft vocal whispers to thundering kick drums with detailed clarity. The AS800 makes a perfect audio recording companion for both beginners and professionals on a budget. An included shock mount isolates the mic from external vibrations to reduce unwanted rumble. The AS800 comes equipped with a carrying case for easy transportation and a storage pouch to keep the capsule free from dust.



[www.on-stage.com](http://www.on-stage.com)

**IK Multimedia's iRig Pro Duo I/O**

IK Multimedia's iRig Pro Duo I/O is an enhanced, ultra-compact 2-channel audio/MIDI interface that enables high-quality recording on the go with iPhone, iPad, Android devices and Mac/PC. The new iRig Pro Duo I/O features updated mic preamps with increased gain, as well as the addition of a USB-C cable to work with all of today's latest devices and new, dedicated PC drivers to ensure optimal performance on laptops and Surface tablets. In addition, refined volume controls with level indicators for more convenient workflow and a new rubberized finish to better stand up to the road, offer the same standard of quality customers have enjoyed from IK's award-winning iRig Pro I/O single-channel interface.



[www.ikmultimedia.com](http://www.ikmultimedia.com)

**Zoom's H6 Handy Recorder in All Black**



The Zoom H6 All Black Handy Recorder combines Zoom audio quality with versatility via Zoom's "capsule" system. Change mics on the fly, or even expand inputs using any of the company's six powerful expansion capsules. The H6 All Black features four XLR/TRS combo jacks (expandable up to six) with dedicated pad switches and gain control, two 1/8" outputs, a stereo line out, as well as a headphone out with dedicated volume control. The H6 All Black also functions as a powerful stereo or multi-channel audio interface for your computer or iPad, via USB. With over 20 hours of continuous recording time using just four AA batteries, the H6 All Black records individual WAV files up to 96kHz / 24-bit. With the optional AD-17 power adapter, you can extend your recording time indefinitely. The H6 All Black comes standard with the handy recorder, X/Y mic capsule, and free Cubase LE and Wavelab LE recording and editing software.

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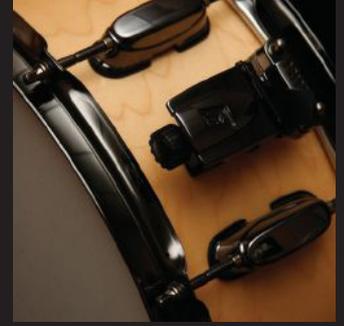
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By Dan Daley

# The Future of Education Just Arrived

**A**mericans are staying home so they don't get sick. What they are getting, though, are guitar lessons from Kiko Loureiro of Megadeth or some time on the drum kit with Chad Szeliga of Black Label Society. In fact, economic pressures on musicians and music teachers had been propelling them deeper into an online teaching environment for years before the COVID-19 virus hit, but the pandemic has only accelerated that dynamic. Large organizations such as the Grammy Music Education Coalition and major instrument manufacturers like Fender and Gibson have been proffering online instructional video lessons, often heavily discounted or for free as brand builders.

This has not been limited to musical instrument instruction. Pro audio companies have jumped aboard, often taking online tutorials previously reserved for high-end customers and making them more broadly available for a wider audience. In some cases, they're creating new instructional content aimed at beginners. German microphone maker Sennheiser, for instance, offers a free global webinar series, which includes a roundtable featuring experienced audio engineers as well as lessons on microphone basics. And sessions are held around the clock, allowing people from all time zones to participate.

The business of MI retail is also getting its due, even if Summer NAMM and its industry panels have been canceled. NAMM has produced a lineup of virtual music-business seminars, including a panel where members shared their experiences filing for federal aid, just as canceled music-business conferences like Midem and A2IM's Indie Week are also gamely carrying on virtually.

A few are even teaching the teachers. For instance, publisher Hal Leonard is promoting its series of multiple online resources that educators had already been using, with most of the sites having added extra tools or limited free accessibility ("to get through the next few weeks," the publisher's press release stated optimistically). These distance-learning tools include HL's *Essential Elements Method Book* and a page of additional resources and FAQs that teachers can access.

Music teachers' associations are trying to step up. The largest of them, the Music Teachers National Association summed it up on its web portal, "We are deeply aware of the severe impact the pandemic has had on their families, studios and livelihoods. Some have had to put their teaching on hold in order to provide support and care for loved ones.

Others have embraced online, remote lessons as a new adventure in teaching and learning. Still others have continued to teach in their studios by taking extraordinary measures to maintain a safe and sanitary environment along with appropriate social distancing."

**“Economic pressures on musicians and music teachers had been propelling them deeper into an online teaching environment for years before the COVID-19 virus hit, but the pandemic has only accelerated that dynamic.”**

There are quite a few online resources that can tell teachers how to teach remotely. There are fewer, however, that can instruct them on how to keep their careers together through the pandemic, which had both shut the door on their ability to play live music and curtailed their being able to teach students face to face. Teachers who are masters of their instruments suddenly had to master the online environment, picking their way between Skype and Zoom, and the vagaries of a cascade of poorly designed government financial-assistance programs. These, like the Payroll Protection Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan were ostensibly designed to help freelancers and sole proprietors like music teachers but were set upon like vultures by multimillion-dollar corporations like the LA Lakers and Shake Shack. Those two were shamed into giving back the millions they "borrowed" to pay employees they'd already laid off, but plenty of other not-so-small businesses managed to get a piece of that pie before the money ran out.

Not to beat the drum of inequality too loudly – we'll have an election in November for that – but a combination of the pandemic and our institutional and corporate reactions to it will likely leave all of education, including music education, a changed place for teachers and students alike. Keep abreast of what regional and national music-education associations are doing to help keep the lights on. There's always the chance that it could be a change for the better. 

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