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TUNING INTO GROWTH:

Why Concert Ukuleles are Hitting the Right Notes in 2025

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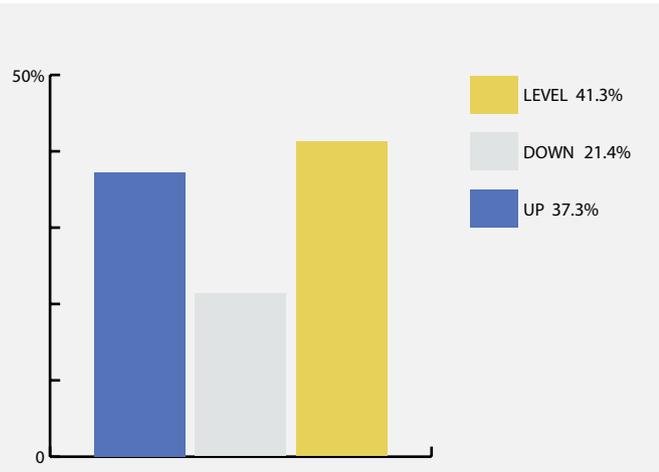
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By Christian
Wissmuller

Riffs, Roots, and Resonance:

The Fretted Instrument Market in 2025

Let's talk frets.

The fretted instrument market continues to strike a resonant chord in 2025. From the timeless appeal of acoustic guitars to the relentless innovation in electrics and the steady thrum of bass guitars, this sector is evolving — sometimes quietly, sometimes with full-stack volume. And yes, there's a certain four-stringed dark horse worth watching: the concert ukulele (see page 11 of this issue).

First, the numbers — and they're encouraging. While post-pandemic booms in guitar sales may have cooled from their 2020–2022 highs, the overall trajectory remains solid. Consumers haven't stopped picking up guitars; they've simply become more intentional. The era of panic-buying and bedroom-studio mania has matured into something more sustainable: players looking to refine their rigs, upgrade quality, and support brands that offer authenticity and innovation in equal measure.

Electric Vibes and Player Sophistication

Electric guitars are experiencing a kind of renaissance that feels less like a fad and more like a generational pivot. We're seeing a rise in "neo-classicists"—young players embracing vintage specs, single coils, and tube-amp tones while exploring new sonic territory via pedals, modeling amps, and DAWs. That sweet spot between analog warmth and digital convenience is where the magic is happening.

Manufacturers have taken note. This year alone, we've seen several mid-tier electrics with features once reserved for high-end custom shops: roasted maple necks, noiseless pickups, and boutique-inspired finishes. Players are expecting more—more playability, more tone control, more value. Smart builders are delivering just that.

Retailers, take heed: the days of stocking walls of red and black Strats are long gone. Curation matters. The modern buyer is educated and often comes in knowing exactly what they want—sometimes with a 10-page Reddit thread as backup. It's not about volume; it's about vibe and versatility.

The Ever-Resilient Acoustic Market

On the acoustic front, the demand remains strong, especially for models that marry traditional craftsmanship with player-focused upgrades. Built-in electronics, slimmer neck profiles, and sustainable tonewoods are proving to be key differentiators.

And while the dreadnought still holds court, smaller-bodied guitars—parlors, 000s, even travel-sized models—are making steady gains. Why? Because comfort and convenience now factor heavily into the purchase decision. It's not just what sounds best—it's what feels best, on stage, in the studio, or on the couch.

In short, the acoustic market isn't about chasing trends; it's about honoring roots while making space for innovation. There's something beautifully stubborn about a market segment that still thrives on tonewood and tradition.

Low End, High Impact: The Bass Market

Let's not sleep on bass. The instrument that holds the groove is finally stepping into the spotlight in a way that feels long overdue.

We're seeing a noticeable uptick in both beginner bass sales and high-end boutique models. Social media—particularly platforms like TikTok and Instagram—is playing a huge role here. Young musicians are embracing bass as their first instrument, drawn in by its rhythmic core and the cool factor that's (finally!) being recognized in the wider musical culture.

For retailers, the key lies in education. Stocking a variety of scale lengths, pickup configurations, and amp solutions (yes, including headphone practice rigs) makes a difference. And don't overlook accessories—strings, pedals, and preamps are often where repeat business lives.

A Word on Concert Ukuleles

Now, let's talk about the fretted elephant in the room—or should I say, the koa-clad darling that keeps surprising us.

Concert ukuleles continue to carve out a niche that's both nostalgic and refreshingly modern. Their popularity isn't just a residual echo from the early 2010s uke boom; it's a result of sustained interest from educators, songwriters, and hobbyists who appreciate the instrument's portability and charm, with just a touch more range and depth than their soprano siblings.

Importantly, concert ukes hit the sweet spot for many retailers: high turnover, low return rate, and massive appeal across age groups. We've even seen crossover interest from seasoned guitarists looking for something new to noodle on. Brands that lean into quality construction, fun aesthetics, and solid gig bag options are winning the day.

Final Thoughts: Resilience & Renewal

The fretted instrument market isn't just surviving; it's evolving with purpose. There's a hunger for musical expression out there—one that transcends price points, genres, and generations. Whether it's a first-time buyer walking out with a \$150 uke or a seasoned pro trading up to a custom bass, the emotional connection to these instruments is real, and it's ours to nurture.

As we move into Q4 and prep for the all-important holiday season, let's remember: it's not just about inventory. It's about inspiration. Every guitar, bass, and concert uke on the wall is a potential spark for someone's next big journey.

And that's something worth tuning into.



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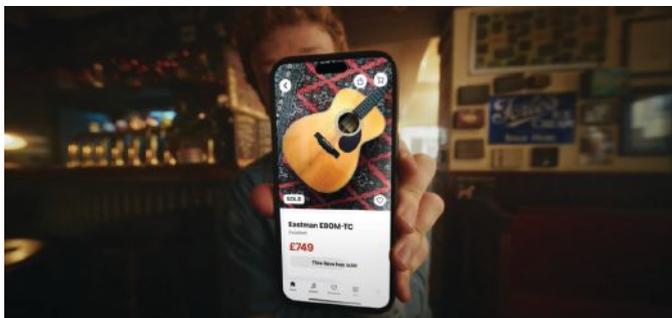
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REVERB UK RELAUNCHES WITH A LOWER SELLER FEE AND ONE-OF-A-KIND MUSIC GEAR

Reverb, the largest online marketplace dedicated to musical instruments, today announced the relaunch of Reverb UK, complete with lower selling fees and new tools for sellers. Now, sellers on Reverb UK will pay a bundled 5% fee once their music gear has sold, 3% less than before, getting more money for their music gear.

With Reverb UK's all-in 5% fee, hundreds of UK-based music shops, as well as the hundreds of thousands of musicians on Reverb UK, will make more money on each sale. The addition of discounted postage labels via DPD, Yodel, and Evri, as well as UK-specific market trend data that sellers can use to price their gear, further empowers sellers to get their gear into the hands of musicians throughout the UK and beyond using the music gear marketplace created by



musicians for musicians.

Said Reverb user and BRIT Award-winner Mark Ronson during his 2024 "Industry Insights" talk at NAMM 2024, "We were working on the score for Barbie, and we realized that Director Greta Gerwig was in love with the sound of '70s and '80s analogue synthesizers. I looked on Reverb for a Yamaha CS-80, and I saw that there was one about an hour and a half away, so

we drove out to get it and its sound became a key part of the movie's soundtrack."

For nearly a decade, Reverb UK has provided a platform for musicians looking to sell and buy music gear. Featuring a wide range of instruments, from the console used by the Beatles to record *Abbey Road* to over 150,000 second-hand and new instruments, the leading music gear

marketplace has proved popular with enthusiasts, local bands, and world-renowned musicians alike, from Muse and Duran Duran to Placebo and many more.

"Since 2016, Reverb has played a key role in the UK's music-making community by connecting musicians with music gear they love," said Reverb's COO, Tiffany Miller. "Whether you're parting with a vintage Telecaster or looking for unique pedals that can reshape your sound, our straightforward fees and key product improvements make selling music gear more rewarding than ever before, giving musicians more time to focus on what really matters: making music."

To sell your music gear on Reverb UK, visit: <https://reverb.com/featured/reverbUK>

UNIQUE BILLSVILLE HOUSE VENUE UPGRADES WITH ALLEN & HEATH

Billsville House, a unique and intimate house concert venue, has been enhancing the live music experience for a decade, evolving from its roots in Williamstown, Massachusetts to its current home in Manchester Center, Vermont. Founded by Doug Hacker and Caroline Schneider, with their sons Ethan and Kai Hacker handling production, sound engineering, and ticketing, Billsville has cultivated a space that warmly embraces both audiences and musicians.

The genesis of Billsville stemmed from Doug and Caroline's passion for live music and the challenge of accessing good venues in rural Massachusetts, especially with young children. Inspired by a friend's house concert, they reached out to musician Joe Pug, who agreed to play a small show at their home, leading to a new tradition.

This led to their distinctive operating model: offering musicians 100% of the proceeds from ticket sales, along with "a fine helping of our vegetarian cooking, and a place to stay for the night," said Hacker. "It's a deal that makes sense to everyone involved."

This arrangement allows indie and touring musicians to turn potential daily losses between show days into a profitable and enjoyable evening. "We attract really incredible acts," said Hacker, including Grammy-winning artists



SQ-5 Console at Billsville House outdoor stage

like Sierra Hull and Tony-winning writer Anais Mitchell, who have performed in their living room and backyard. The venue prioritizes an intimate listening experience, with focus on the music in a cozy home environment.

Ethan Hacker's journey into Billsville's sound engineering began in 2011 with a simple 4-channel analog mixer. "Our goal has always been to create a unique sonic experience and optimize the space as a listening room," said Hacker. As more elaborate acts came in, he recognized the limitations of his setup – and has since proudly upgraded to an Allen & Heath SQ-5 digital mixer and a GX4816 stagebox.

Hacker found the transition to the SQ-5 remarkably smooth. "I kind of jumped right into it," he said, adding that he spent a few hours familiarizing himself with the

workflow before feeling confident enough to mix a show the very next day. "I felt like it was a really fast learning experience," said Hacker, "it was very intuitive."

A significant improvement was the SQ-5's capacitive touchscreen, which was ideal for navigating menus compared to their previous non-touchscreen console. "The customizable fader banks are also really huge for my workflow," said Hacker. "Having my input channels and DCAs and groups on the same fader bank was a big improvement."

Hacker also immediately noticed improved sound quality. "I hear a lot more punch straight out of the preamps," he said. "That simplifies gain staging during soundchecks with a more confident head amp level coming in."

The SQ-5's built-in FX engines have also been highly beneficial. "The

SQ's reverbs got me to a place that I was happy with quicker," said Hacker. "In a living room with minimal natural reverb, being able to just dial the slightest amount in – and to have so much granular control over it was really nice."

For their unique L-shaped living room, Hacker uses SQ's matrices to feed two sets of mains, a front fill, and a sub, ensuring all processing and tuning are handled directly within the console.

Hacker also leverages the SQ MixPad app on his laptop and iPad for initial setup and soundchecking. "The wireless control allows me to be connected with the musicians on stage, especially if I'm running their monitors too," he explained. "I can listen to them and make adjustments without being stuck behind the console."

As Billsville House continues into its second decade, its charm lies not only in the caliber of artists it hosts – but also in the genuine care poured into every performance. What began as a family's love for live music has grown into a cherished cultural hub where musicians feel at home and audiences experience music in its most authentic form. Billsville remains a rare gem in Vermont's music scene, proving that sometimes the most unforgettable concerts happen not in big halls, but in the warmth of a living room.

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18 LEADERS FROM MUSIC PRODUCTS INDUSTRY TO ATTEND 2025 WOMEN OF NAMM LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Women of NAMM (WoN) has announced that 18 leaders from the music products industry will participate in the WoN Summit, October 13–15, 2025, at the NAMM Headquarters in Carlsbad, California.

Now in its sixth year, the WoN Summit is an intensive, three-day leadership and professional development experience designed to support women working across the industry and their goals to connect, support and grow their leadership and professional abilities. Led by Dr. Jennifer Hall, a renowned leadership development expert and psychologist, the summit empowers women in the music products industry with opportunities to enhance their leadership skills, elevate their careers and network with industry colleagues.

Participants will include NAMM members from both music manufacturers and retailers:

- Margaret Addison, Johnson String Instruments
- Brittany Bauman, Nuvo Instruments
- Hannah Bliss, Focusrite Group US
- Toni Carroll, Encore School of Music and Arts
- Lauren Carr, West Music
- Lorenza Cocco, La Bella Strings
- Erin Connelly, Menchey Music
- Allison Dolegowski, Shure
- Hailey Earp, Candyman Strings & Things
- Beverly Fowler, Paul Reed Smith Guitars
- Jennifer Gershon, Yamaha Canada Music
- Kara McCanna, Heid Music
- Whitney McGuire McNicol, Maxwell's House of Music
- Jonni Murphy, Fender
- Mary Peterson, CodaBow International
- Korrine Marie Smith, Haynes Flute Company
- Beth Smith, The Music Shoppe
- Laura Whitmore, Positive Grid

To learn more about the Women of NAMM Summit and how you can get involved, visit the Women of NAMM page.



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FOCUSRITE GROUP HOSTS INAUGURAL EDUCATIONAL SUMMIT AT CREATE-IT STUDIOS IN FRANKLIN, TN

The Focusrite Group proudly hosted its inaugural Educational Summit on August 14-15 at the cutting-edge Create-it Studios in Franklin, TN. Organized by Dr. Lee Whitmore, Vice President for Education, Focusrite Group Americas, the summit brought together leading voices in music, audio, and education for two days of thought leadership, collaboration, and exploration of best practices in preparing the next generation of creators.

The event followed closely on the heels of the July 26th Focusrite Group Create-it Takeover, held at Create-it Studios, a groundbreaking creative innovation space developed in collaboration with Walmart and sponsored by Full Sail University. Located inside Walmart in Franklin, TN, Create-it Studios is a one-stop destination for podcasting, music production, video creation and live events,

open to everyone, regardless of experience or background.

At the Education Summit, attendees participated in panels, workshops, and discussions that spanned topics such as immersive audio, curriculum design, music technology innovations, and cross-industry collaboration. A highlight of the program was a Dolby Atmos® panel moderated by GRAMMY®-nominated engineer and audio educator John Merchant, with guest experts GRAMMY-winning engineer Jon Blass and noted electronic music producer/DJ Greg “Stryke” Chin sharing insights on the future of spatial audio.

Special thanks were extended to the Create-it team, along with Full Sail University’s Andrew Duncan and Michael Orłowski, for their contributions to the event.

Attendees included representatives from:

- Belmont University
- Calhoun Community College
- Columbia State Community College
- Dark Horse Institute
- Dolby Laboratories
- Eastman School of Music
- Florida State University
- Full Sail University
- Greenwich High School, Greenwich, CT
- Lipscomb University
- Loyola University New Orleans
- Metro Nashville Public Schools
- Miami Dade College
- Middle Tennessee State University
- North Carolina State University
- University of Alabama at Birmingham
- University of North Alabama
- Virginia State University

“Focusrite has always been deeply committed to supporting education and empowering the next generation of music creators,” said Dr. Lee Whitmore. “This summit gave us the opportunity to bring together a remarkable group of educators, industry leaders, and innovators to share knowledge, inspire one another, and advance the role of music technology in education.”

The Focusrite Group Educational Summit marks the beginning of an ongoing initiative to foster dialogue and collaboration between academic institutions, industry leaders, and creators, ensuring that the tools, resources, and inspiration needed for tomorrow’s music innovators remain accessible and impactful.

ADAM HALL GROUP APPOINTS LOUD TECHNOLOGIES ASIA AS EXCLUSIVE LD SYSTEMS DISTRIBUTOR IN SINGAPORE

The Adam Hall Group is continuing its international growth and expanding its sales network in Southeast Asia: Loud Technologies Asia PTY is now the exclusive distributor of the LD Systems brand in Singapore. With this new partnership, the global event technology manufacturer headquartered in Neu-Anspach aims to further expand the presence of its pro audio brand in the dynamic city state and tap into new market potential.

Loud Technologies Asia, based in Singapore, is an established distribution partner specializing in high-quality audio, lighting, video and control solutions for professional applications. The company has extensive regional market

experience and – in addition to the exclusive distribution of LD Systems – will also offer the other brands of the Adam Hall Group in Singapore on request. The regional clientele includes AV integrators and rental companies as well as retailers and public institutions.

“Singapore is a demanding market for professional AV technology, but one that is also very innovative,” explains Alessio Foti, global business development manager of the Adam Hall Group. “With Loud Technologies Asia, we have gained an experienced partner who understands this market and has an excellent customer and service network. We look forward to working closely together to establish LD



Colin Evan Quek, Alessio Foti, and Kheng Ying Koay

Systems’ audio solutions in the region in the long term.”

KY Koay, senior sales manager at Loud Technologies Asia PTY, adds: “We are delighted to partner with the Adam Hall Group and offer our customers stable, reliable support – not just in Singapore, but also regionally. With the strong product portfolio and the excellent brand reputation, our customers can count on reliable availability and first-class after-sales service – both decisive criteria when making a purchase.”

PEOPLE

Gibson, Inc. announces the appointment of **Anne Rohosy** as chief commercial officer (CCO). In this expanded role, Anne will lead Gibson’s global commercial strategy, overseeing wholesale, direct-to-consumer, and retail channels as the company accelerates its growth and brand presence worldwide.

“I am excited to step into the role of chief commercial officer,” says Anne Rohosy. “Gibson has a legacy unlike any other, and we have incredible opportunities ahead to expand our reach, strengthen our brands, and deliver for our fans and partners worldwide.”

“Anne’s leadership has been

instrumental in shaping Gibson’s transformation over the past several years,” continues Cesar Gueikian, president and CEO of Gibson. “Her deep experience in building global brands, leading complex commercial organizations, and driving innovation makes her the right leader to take Gibson’s commercial strategy to the next level.”

Anne has been a key member of Gibson’s leadership team since 2021, serving as chief human resources and impact officer, as well as managing director of the Gibson Amplifiers business. During this time, she has led organizational transformation, championed culture and people strategy, and guided

the revitalization of Gibson’s iconic Amplifier division.

With over 30 years of leadership experience across top-tier global brands, including Levi Strauss & Co. and Nike, Inc., Anne brings proven expertise in brand building, P&L management, sales and marketing operations, and organizational transformation.

In addition to her executive leadership, Anne has contributed her expertise to global board and advisory roles in consumer products and technology-driven businesses, adding further depth to her perspective on innovation, market expansion, and consumer engagement.



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Casio America, Inc. has announced that **Stephen Schmidt**, vice president of the company's Electronic Musical Instruments (EMI) Division, will retire on September 30, after 19 years of dedicated service to Casio.

During his nearly two-decade tenure, Stephen Schmidt played a key role in advancing Casio's corporate creed of "Creativity and Contribution," offering people new ways to experience and enrich their lives. He began his career at Casio America as vice president of sales, supporting all major divisions including watches, calculators, digital cameras, business projectors, digital pianos, and portable keyboards. In 2009, Schmidt assumed the more focused role of vice president of the EMI Division, where he made a lasting impact by overseeing the development and marketing of Casio's award-winning musical instrument lines. These include the Privia and Celviano digital pianos, as well as the Casiotone portable keyboards — recognized globally for their innovation, quality, and accessibility, making them a trusted choice for everyone from beginners to educators and professional performers.

Throughout his time with Casio, Schmidt also contributed to several key initiatives across other divisions, including the U.S. launch of the Oceanus watch line, the development of Casio's jewelry channel, and the introduction of new business ventures such as the Tryx digital camera and slim projectors. In the musical instruments space, he led three standout product launches, including two high-profile "Beyond Sound" events for the XW synth series—featuring The Crystal Method and Karmen—and

the 2015 launch of the Grand Hybrid piano at Lincoln Center. Most recently, he supported the 2022 release of the Privia PX-S7000, a flagship product that redefined digital piano design for the modern lifestyle.

Before joining Casio, Schmidt built a successful career in the consumer electronics industry, holding leadership roles that spanned direct-to-consumer marketing, brand development, and long-term business strategy. He earned a strong reputation for consistently managing sales and profitability growth while helping brands expand their footprint in competitive market segments.

"Stephen has been a vital part of Casio



America's success in the music industry," said Yusuke Suzuki, President and CEO of Casio America, Inc. "His leadership and vision have helped shape our Electronic Musical Instruments division, driving innovation, expanding our market reach, and strengthening our reputation for delivering outstanding products. We are deeply grateful for his contributions and wish him all the best in his retirement."

Reflecting on his career, Schmidt said: "It has been an honor and a privilege to lead a company with such a well-known name and rich history. Casio's mission to bring music to more people, initiated over five decades ago, has resulted in several award-winning, groundbreaking products. We continue to bring musical instruments to market for everyone, wherever they may be in their musical journey, from beginners to professionals. It is incredible to see how the music created through these instruments has changed lives, and it has been a joy to be part of that process."

These milestones reflect Schmidt's deep commitment to innovation, cross-functional leadership, and expanding Casio's presence across both new and established markets.

Following Schmidt's retirement, Brian Piccolo, currently General Manager of Sales for Casio America's EMI Division, will assume Schmidt's responsibilities, ensuring continuity for the company's dealers, partners, and customers.

With deep appreciation for his years of service, Casio America congratulates Stephen on his retirement and celebrates the legacy he leaves behind.

Solid State Logic announces that it has appointed **Mark Skipper** to the position of national sales manager, Eastern U.S., where he is responsible for SSL Broadcast and Live solutions. In his new role, Skipper joins SSL's U.S.-based distributor, Group One Ltd. as part of expanding its business development and customer relationships, reporting to Rick Naqvi, Senior VP of USA Sales.

Skipper, who is based in southern Virginia, brings more than two decades of broadcast and professional audio experience to his role. Prior to starting with SSL, he has been a recording studio owner and A1 sports mixer for top networks including NBC, ESPN, Fox, CBS and others. He is also experienced in music production as a classically trained violist who has performed and recorded with multiple chamber orchestras and musical ensembles.

In his new role at SSL, Skipper is looking forward to interfacing with customers and helping solve their problems in both the broadcast and live sound production realms: "Throughout my audio career, I've approached studio problem-solving through strong relationships with others... always building meaningful human connections and fostering a team culture that thrives on collaboration—now by leveraging SSL's exceptional audio solutions for superb sonics for all to enjoy!"



Congratulations to Ritmüller for 230 years of achievement!



From Johannes Brahms to David Syme, Ritmüller

pianos have shaped music history for over two centuries. It was on a Ritmüller piano in Göttingen where Brahms composed his groundbreaking *Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15*, blending perfectionism with innovation. Today, his legacy continues to inspire pianists around the world.

The new Limited Special Edition Ritmüller RZ9, our 230th Anniversary upright model, brings concert-level performance to an upright design. Featuring the revolutionary



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As Ritmüller's Worldwide Brand Ambassador, American virtuoso David Syme carries this tradition of excellence forward. This year, David will commemorate the 230th anniversary of Ritmüller with his "Living Room Concerts" series at his estate in West Cork, Ireland.

From Carnegie Hall to collaborating with leading orchestras, Syme embodies the artistry and innovation that will continue to define Ritmüller for decades to come.



David Syme, Ritmüller Worldwide Brand Ambassador



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CONCERTED GROWTH: HOW CONCERT UKULELES ARE TUNING UP SALES FOR RETAILERS

By Christian Wissmuller

“ Today’s concert ukulele customers are more discerning than ever, often seeking a blend of playability, aesthetics, durability, and value. ”

Rock Clouser



MIKE GEORGE
Product Manager of Instruments and Accessories at C.F. Martin & Co., Inc.



ROCK CLOUSER
Strings Brand Manager, KHS America (Lanikai)



MICHAEL SCHEAR
President, Amati's Fine Instruments/Amahi Ukuleles



LEANNE MCCLELLON
Director of Domestic Sales, Kala Brand Music Co.

There was a time when the ukulele was largely relegated to the realm of novelty — a cheerful punchline strummed on beaches or tucked into classroom programs. Those days are long gone. The concert ukulele, in particular, has emerged as a bona fide instrument of choice for a wide swath of players: from hobbyists looking for a richer, more resonant sound than a soprano, to working musicians who value portability without sacrificing tone. With its slightly larger body, expanded range, and a timbre that feels at home in folk, pop, and even jazz contexts, the concert uke has shed the “cute” stigma and stepped confidently into the spotlight.

Dealers have taken note, as have manufacturers, who continue to expand their lines with models aimed at every corner of the market — beginner-friendly price points, mid-range workhorses, and handcrafted boutique builds. For retailers, the concert ukulele represents not only a steady-selling, low-barrier instrument but also an increasingly aspirational one, as players often “step up” from entry-level sopranos into this category. In short, the concert uke isn’t just a passing trend. It’s a category that continues to evolve, offering fresh opportunities for growth while helping to keep the wider string market strumming along.

For your brand, what’s currently the top-selling model(s) of Concert Ukulele?

Mike George: 2025 is a centennial anniversary for C.F. Martin & Co. concert ukuleles (originally added to our catalog in 1925) and we’ve released two commemorative models that have been our top sellers this year.

Rock Clouser: Logically, Lanikai’s top-selling concert ukuleles include our high-volume models widely adopted in educational and classroom settings, such as the mahogany MA-C and the long-established LU21-C. Both are well-supported at the entry level thanks to their practical feature sets and traditional aesthetics.

However, it’s worth highlighting that one of our top three concert bestsellers is the highly sought-after Quilted Maple Trans Blue cutaway electric concert model, QM-BLCEC. While not priced for entry-level buyers, it stands out for its exceptional performance features — offering comfortable playability, reliable stage and studio functionality, and versatile tone-shaping capabilities via the Fishman® preamp and built-in tuner.

Michael Schear: Our UK210C Mahogany Top, Back & Sides with padded gig bag is our top-selling concert model.

Leanne McClellon: Some of our long-standing concert models continue to be tried and true models, such as our Kala 15 Series Concert, as well as the Classic Mahogany. However, a somewhat new-comer has been our wildly popular Voyage Series Concerts — particularly the “Unity” model. People love the design and story behind it. The Teak Tri-Top Cutaway has been an amazing hit for those looking for a pickup and cutaway at a surprisingly affordable price.



roundtable

What qualities and features are today's customer looking for in a Concert Uke?

RC: Today's concert ukulele customers are more discerning than ever, often seeking a blend of playability, aesthetics, durability, and value. As the market has been strong for several years many advancing players and even beginners know the features to look for.

Obviously, playability is foremost. Lanikai uses a wider nut to accentuate and enhance the comfortable playability. Intonation and tuning stability are important for any string instrument. Lanikai uses excellent quality open gear tuners to keep the headstock light and tuning stable. The nut and saddle are professional grade Graphtech® Nubone® material to give the instrument projection and focused harmonics. Lanikai's body tone woods give a warm, balanced tone with good projection. Naturally we offer a variety of highly figured laminate, solid top and all solid wood options in our line-up.

We recognize it must be visually striking as well as functional, so we have abalone and pearl inlays and rosettes, body purfling and binding options as well as vibrant colors and natural woods. We offer several models equipped with a Fishman® pre-amp and tuner with cutaways for easy upper fret access.



Durability and adjustability are important too so for larger models with longer necks we have truss rods in all baritones, guiteles, and bass ukuleles to ensure consistent playability. Finally, all Lanikai models at all levels have a padded gig bag or case provided as well as a lifetime warranty. As one of the oldest production and dedicated ukulele brands, these premium features have become our standard offerings expected by our players and we are quite happy to oblige.

LM: There are different types of customers, so it's not a one-concert fits all. The uke market has matured, so we are seeing a gravitation toward the higher-end – solid and exotic woods, pickups, and special appointments. Customers love something that looks a bit unique – that is why we see some of our best sellers these days being those with cool designs and different features. On the flipside, many schools use concert size, and for them, it's all about a quality uke with the classic sound.

MS: High quality tuning gears, Aquila Strings, high quality fingerboard and frets.

MG: Very akin to our guitars, we find that most Martin consumers expect traditional builds and aesthetics. Most of our models are koa and mahogany, using the same build techniques and design elements from the golden age of ukulele making. Instruments that stand out tonally, intonate and play well and get better with age have been our tenets.

Many segments within MI that experienced a surge in sales during the pandemic have experienced considerable "cooling down" in subsequent years. Do you feel this has also impacted ukulele sales?

LM: The massive surge in sales that happened during the pandemic was fueled by so many people staying home, looking for new activities to do, as well as available funds, so naturally with more people going back to work, along with some uncertainty of the economy, there has been a cool down. However, we have found that people still want ukuleles! We have many retailers actually reporting that they have seen increased sales of Kala ukuleles year

over year, and continue to project growth of the brand. There are tons of people still playing and collecting ukes, picking up uke for the first time, or playing it in school.

MS: Yes, we have noticed some cool down in ukes sales. However, we have noticed substantial growth in school programs using ukuleles. This growth in school sales has helped offset the cooling down in overall sales.

MG: The surge of the pandemic brought so many players into the fold, that a "cool down" was inevitable and ukuleles are no exception. The ukulele is one of the most approachable stringed instruments, and with the low barrier to entry, it still makes the perfect first or tenth instrument.

RC: Yes, the ukulele market has certainly felt the post-pandemic "cooling down" seen across many areas of the music industry. As demand normalized, several brands exited the once-crowded space. But the market hasn't disappeared, it's simply adjusting. With economic uncertainty, the ukulele's affordability and ease of learning continue to make it a relevant choice for educators, hobbyists, and advancing players alike.

Personally, I believe the overarching outlook remains positive, though the market is evolving. Continued interest in music education and recreational playing keeps demand steady, but manufacturers must respond with innovation – better materials, fresh designs, and inspiring models that connect with today's players.

Is your production of Concert Ukuleles being impacted by newly introduced tariffs?

RC: Unfortunately, newly introduced tariffs have become yet another challenge for the ukulele market, significantly impacting the production and pricing of most concert models. Entry-level instruments across the board – not just ukuleles – are especially affected, which may discourage new players from entering the market. As manufacturers, we're being forced to reassess sourcing strategies, pricing models, and inventory planning.

While it's still early to gauge the full impact, these changes are already leading to higher prices, supply chain disruptions, and market instability. The situation remains fluid, but it's clear that



adaptability and strategic planning will be essential moving forward.

MG: We source materials from around the globe and our supply chains are robust enough to handle most issues that arise. That said, we haven't seen any material impact yet.

MS: Absolutely! Because of tariffs we've had to adjust our production forecasts to match last year's sales, not to exceed last year's sales.

LM: Thankfully, we were planning well before the tariffs even hit, which minimized the impact on production. There are some models we decided to discontinue simply because they no longer made sense, given the cost.

What are some best practices you'd advise MI retailers to adopt when it comes to marketing and displaying Concert Ukes?

MG: I'm a fan of balancing features with benefits to the player. The breadth of assortment can be challenging to lay out but the retailers that do it best tend to give players time with an instrument to understand the tonal nuances at play.

LM: Make sure that you have a selection to choose from. The most successful retailers offer concert ukes in different styles and price points – this way the bases are covered. Show the customer the higher end one first and you might be surprised to see they go with that



one. It may also be worth pitching a concert size at times before starting with the soprano. The sound of the concert will be more full and it will give the customer more room on the fretboard. And, make sure the ukes are accessible in the store. Let people pick them up and try them out!

MS: We recommend our dealers reach out to school programs to see if they are interested in growing their music program by adding ukuleles. We also recommend stocking a large variety of concert ukes in various price ranges & exotic woods as we've found first time buyers will often purchase by their pocketbook first, then their eyes and then by their ears.

RC: Well, with the evolving market, understandably many dealers are refining their ukulele displays to focus on a few select models and key brands. It's crucial

“ *The massive surge in sales that happened during the pandemic was fueled by so many people staying home, looking for new activities to do, as well as available funds, so naturally with more people going back to work, along with some uncertainty of the economy, there has been a cool down.* ”

Leanne McClellon

Taylor Phat Boy flugelhorn

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“ **Because of tariffs we’ve had to adjust our production forecasts to match last year’s sales, not to exceed last year’s sales.** ”

Michael Schear

that these displays remain intentional and inviting – never sparse or neglected. Popular models like concert ukuleles should be well represented, with instruments kept in tune and polished. A visually appealing mix of colors, wood types, and varied price points helps attract a wider range of customers.

For online sales, dealers can stand out by offering smart accessory bundles that include tuners, chord books, polish cloths, straps, capos, and more. These packages add value and convenience for buyers to make a confident choice. Staying connected with local players, teachers, and ukulele clubs also helps maintain strong ties. Hosting after-hours ukulele jams is one proven way to strengthen community and keep the ukulele spirit vibrantly active.

To keep interest fresh, store staff should be well-trained on the stocked brands and models, and displays should be rotated monthly with new arrangements. A knowledgeable team and a dynamic presentation go a long way in keeping customers engaged and excited about ukulele.

Any recent or upcoming Concert Ukulele models you’d like to mention?

RC: As a dedicated ukulele-only brand, we typically have several new models and models in development. Recent additions in concerts include two special edition models.

The SPPW-CX is a resonate satin all laminate Spruce Top concert with Pacific Walnut back and sides. It is equipped with accurate chrome open back tuners, two strap buttons, a NuBone® nut and saddle for enhanced harmonic projection and a wide comfortable neck profile. A padded gig bag and limited lifetime warranty is included.

The SMBB-CX is another concert size Limited Edition model. It

has a striking glossy black burst Spalted Maple top. The glossy black back and sides, plus Maple binding accentuate the edges and give it a bold eye-catching look. In typical Lanikai fashion, it is equipped with the NuBone nut and saddle, wide comfortable neck profile. Topping off this model are Gold open back tuners and two strap buttons. A padded gig bag and limited lifetime warranty is included.

Finally, I will mention we now offer a hardshell arched top wood case for concerts. The HWC-C case will give your treasured concert ukulele extra protection. The interior has plush lining with padding and a covered storage compartment. The case is equipped with Heavy Duty Chrome hardware and a comfortable balanced handle.

MG: As I mentioned, we’re still celebrating our 100th anniversary with a style 1, all sinker mahogany model limited to 91 units which is the same number we sold in 1925. In addition we have a similarly appointed but more affordable model running for the entirety of 2025 with all solid mahogany.

LM: We have two new offerings to expand on two proven series. The Amara Tri-Top Cutaway expands on the popular Teak Tri-Top Cutaway model, and the Makala Indonesian Acacia expands the Makala offerings. We expect more concert models in the new year.

MS: We’ve added a new line called the Heritage Series. These ukuleles feature a variety of exotic woods, big sound and are easy on the pocketbook.

Expectations for this market segment in the coming months?

MG: Our approach is that of a marathon, rather than a sprint and to focus on building the highest quality instruments that inspire musicians worldwide.

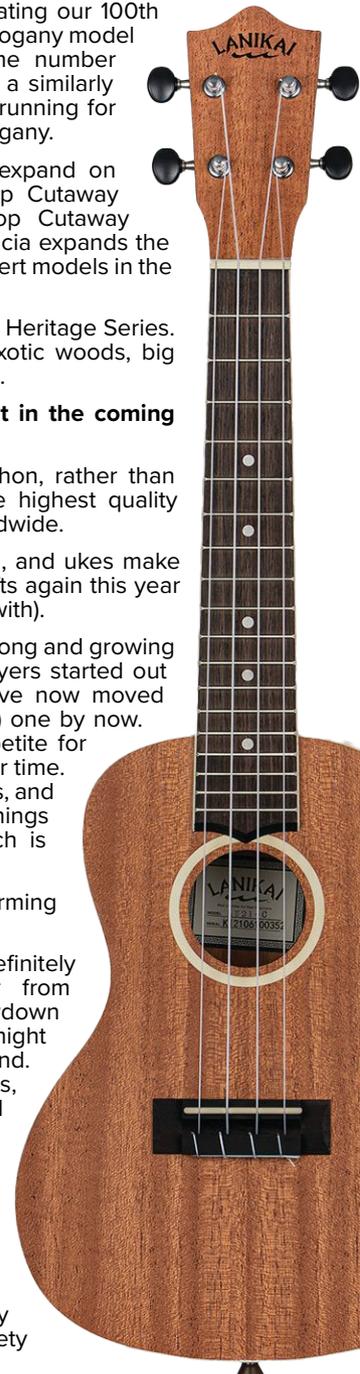
LM: The holidays are fast-approaching, and ukes make such a fun gift. They will be a hit for gifts again this year (as well as all of the accessories to go with).

Beyond that, the uke community is a strong and growing one! It has also matured, so many players started out with an entry level uke, and they have now moved on to their second or third (or beyond) one by now. This means there will be a larger appetite for more expensive models continuing over time. Students are still playing ukes in schools, and clubs are forming all the time – these things continue to create new players, which is very healthy for this market segment.

MS: We have noticed that business is firming up for the 4th quarter.

RC: While the ukulele market has definitely cooled off from its peak, it’s far from disappearing. In fact, the current slowdown – combined with rising tariffs – might actually set the stage for a rebound. As discretionary spending tightens, consumers may gravitate toward instruments like the ukulele that offer a low cost of entry, musical versatility, and a fun, easy learning curve.

Dealers who position ukuleles as an affordable gateway instrument into music-making could find renewed interest, especially if they focus on value-packed bundles and community engagement with a focused variety steadily on display.

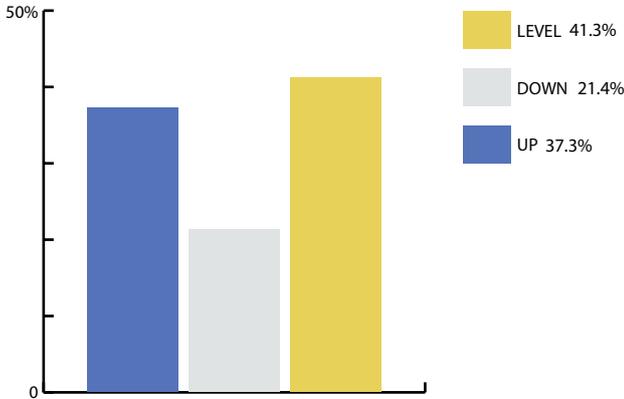


IN CASE YOU MISSED IT – ELECTRIC GUITAR & BASS CASES AND GIG BAGS SALES STAY STRONG IN 2025

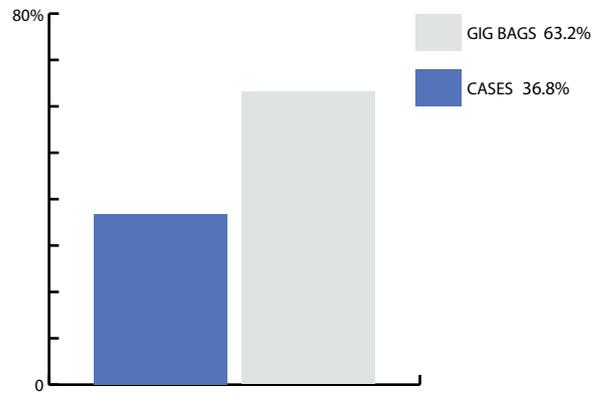
By Christian Wissmuller

As the landscape of musical gear continues to evolve, one thing remains constant: players want their prized instruments protected—and they're looking to their trusted dealers for the right solutions. From the touring pro hauling gear across continents to the weekend warrior heading to a local jam session, electric guitar and bass players rely on cases and gig bags that deliver durability, comfort, and style. In this month's *MMR Dealer Survey*, we're diving into the trends, top-sellers, and customer preferences shaping the market for electric guitar and bass protection. What's moving, what's stalling, and what do players really want? We asked — and you answered.

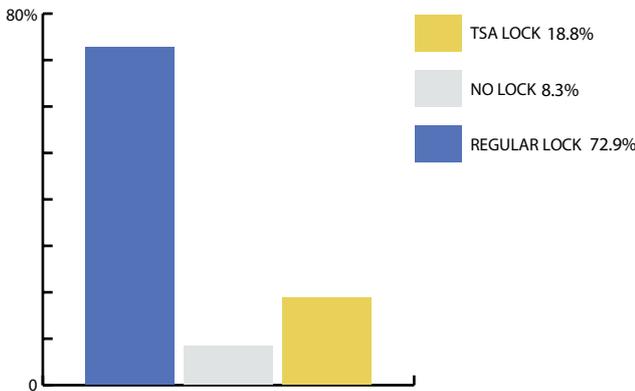
For your store, sales of electric guitar & bass cases and gig bags in 2025 are...



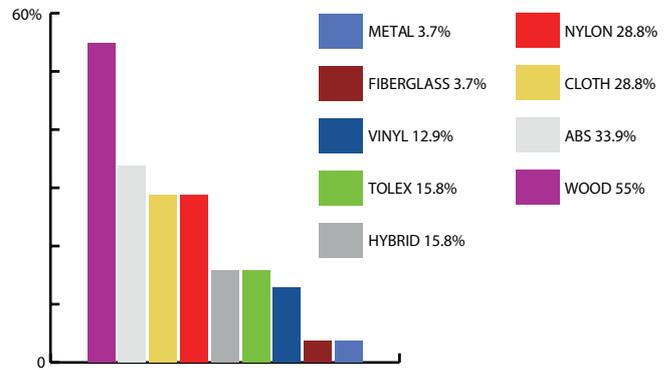
What sells the most for your MI retail operation: electric guitar & bass cases or gig bags?



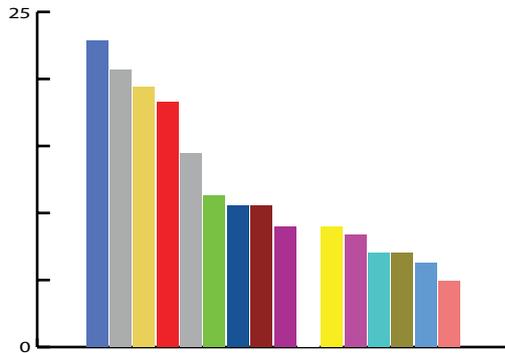
What is your customers' preference re: locking systems?



What types (primary material) of hardshell cases are most popular?



What brands are the top sellers for your store?



What trends are impacting sales of cases and gig bags for electric guitar & bass in 2025?

"Regarding gig bags, portability (as well as cost) is reason number one for all instrument levels starting around \$30 for decent entry level Gator bags. But many pro's will put their higher end solidbody and semi-hollow guitars in bags that cost \$150 and up so their hands are free to carry other things to gigs. I think we're selling hardshells more often for higher end acoustics than gig bags simply for the safety factor. We don't sell an awful lot of high end hardshells, though, simply because [with] companies like Fender, Ibanez, and PRS, higher end guitars come with them. Personally, from the standpoint that I also still gig often – I have a closet full of hardshell cases that never leave the house. When bringing two guitars to a gig I'm going to sling both over my shoulders in pro (\$200+) gig bags."

JOE CHIAPPONE | Northfield Music | Pittsford, NY

"Less and less guitars are coming with gig bags and cases."

RYAN BRONDYKE | West Music | Coralville, Iowa

"No one is willing to pay for a guitar and then pay an additional \$129-159 for a hardshell case. We sell gig bags. I stocked up and got over 100 gig bags three years ago when they cost a lot less, though they had a 15% surcharge for textiles as it was."

VAN COCHRAN | Cochran Guitars | Martinsville, Illinois

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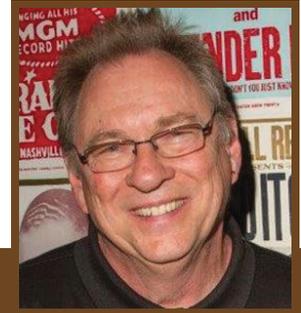
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THE SMALL BOX SHOPS – AND THE PART WE PLAY IN THE BIGGER PICTURE

By Menzie Pittman, Author of *The New Musician*



“ The whole point of having an original store is to express your own authentic, creative ideas, and bring a unique product to market. ”

When someone asks me what I do for a living, the wise guy in me always wants to reply with, “I try to change the world every thirty minutes – I teach music lessons.” The historian in me wants to say, “I teach rising musicians who Little Richard is, and why he matters more than Pat Boone.” Eventually, I stop clowning around and tell them that I own a small music store, teach music, and recently published my first book, *The New Musician*. This is where the tone of the conversation shifts, and the questions start flying, with good reason.

Most people in the “normal” job world find art-related jobs intriguing, but intimidating. They know there is no net, so the pursuit of a high-wire career is not something they are willing to attempt, for fear of failure. You can’t really blame them for that phobia, when according to a 2025 report by Commerce Institutes, 80.6% of Arts and Entertainment businesses fail in the first year, 52.9% fail after five years, and 35.4% fail after ten years.

So, with such a high probability of failure, what are some of the secrets that successful Small Box businesses know, that allow them to achieve that success?

The first tool that makes for a successful Small Box Shop is Clarity of Mission.

Having Clarity of Mission is different from just writing a mission statement. Clarity of Mission is maintaining the consistent execution of a well thought out business plan. When you get this part of the formula right, big things can happen for any business. First you write it, then you live it.

The second tool on my list of must-haves is Originality.

Think about it — all box stores, regardless of size, ache to be original and unique. Most big boxes are not lacking for products, they have tons of them, along with multiple shiny, pre-printed displays that look exactly the same in each location. While that may be efficient, it lacks originality and imagination, and last I checked, art-based businesses are supposed to stimulate your imagination. So, when it comes to originality, more often than not, the Small Box Shop is the winner. That being said, once you

showcase your originality, others will have no remorse over pilfering any clever ideas you may execute. If they are on display, they will be borrowed. That’s a truth that creatives just have to live with.

The third tool on my list is a Creative Decision Maker.

Utilizing this tool can be a little trickier. The Small Box Shops have creative leadership, but bigger money often attracts bright candidates. The problem is, creativity is not always embraced by big money leadership, and creativity is the life blood of the Small Box Shop. When the decision maker of a small business is allowed to fully express their creativity, it is then that the business comes alive, and thrives.

I do notice one oddity, though. The creative freedom that a Small Box Shop offers can be intimidating. With that being the case, leaders of small boxes often default to mimicking what they have seen other successful independent stores do. This mistake will put you right back in the category of Unimaginative. The whole point of having an original store is to express your own authentic, creative ideas, and bring a unique product to market.

The next and final item on the list of tools is Adaptability.

The best recent example of this skill being necessary to have is the COVID hangover. Whenever I speak with smart business owners, I always ask them how they were affected by the pandemic, and if they think we are still sweeping up the mess. They almost always say we are absolutely still dealing with a Covid hangover, and many compare it to people’s addiction to scrolling. Nobody wants to talk about it, but true leaders are able to admit that these struggles are real.

So what’s the answer? Admission is the first step, and then, adaptability. How do music stores adjust? I personally believe there is no better elixir for both of these conditions than learning a musical instrument. My suggestion is to sail into the wind. Yes, it’s harder, but after a storm you will always come out a better sailor. What better time to seed the fields of music-making than after a creative drought? And who better to lead the charge than the Small Box Shops?

2025 HOLIDAY BUYING GUIDE

New and Notable Musical Instruments and Gear to Stock in Preparation for the Coming Holiday Season

By Christian Wissmuller

'Tis the season (well, almost) when wish lists get written, credit cards get maxed, and — if all goes according to plan — musical instruments and accessories get wrapped up and tucked under trees. For MI retailers, the holidays aren't just another sales cycle; they're the main event. A strong December can help soften the edges of a slower spring, and the right mix of inventory on your shelves come crunch time can make all the difference between ringing in the new year with confidence — or with clearance tags.

That's why *MMR's* Holiday Buying Guide has become a kind of seasonal compass. We've assembled a wide-ranging lineup of products, at price-points from stocking-stuffer to serious splurge, all worth a second look as you gear up for the year's busiest stretch. Call it a cheat sheet, call it inspiration, or call it a reminder that, yes, people do still want guitars, drum kits, synths, and all manner of shiny accessories under the tree. Bottom line? The right gear, in the right place, at the right time — that's the real holiday magic.

Under \$50

Heller Electric Three-Series Cable Line with Lifetime Warranty, Available via OMG Music

OMG Music LLC introduces Heller Electric, its new in-house brand of professional instrument, microphone, speaker, and patch cables. The launch features three series — High-Standard, Braid-Matrix, and Coil-Connect — all designed for top-tier performance, durability, and backed by a Limited Lifetime Warranty. All models are in stock and shipping from OMG Music's Sheridan, Indiana headquarters.

The Lineup

Braid-Matrix Series — Heavy-gauge 20AWG OFC core, 99% braided shielding, tangle-resistant woven jackets in tweed and modern colors, hand-soldered plugs, optional gold plating.

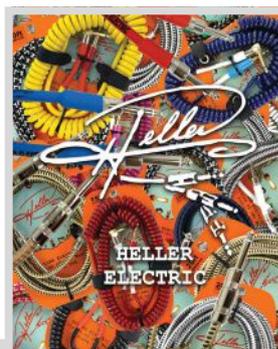
Coil-Connect Series — Vintage-style coil with modern 20AWG OFC conductor, high-density shielding, perfect for organized, low-noise

stage setups. Coil-Connect Pro adds 99% "High Density Weave" shielding.

High-Standard Series — 24AWG OFC (instrument/mic) and 16AWG OFC (speaker) conductors with copper braided shielding. Rugged, kink-resistant jackets, hand-soldered all-metal plugs, and full lineup including instrument, mic, speaker, patch, and adapter cables.

Pricing & Availability

- MAP: High-Standard from \$19.95 | Braid-Matrix from \$29.95 | Coil-Connect from \$39.95
- Channel: Authorized dealers via OMG Music LLC
- Packaging: Peg-ready, full-color designs



Superslick AlphaSynth Synthetic Lubricants

Trusted by repair techs, educators, and musicians, AlphaSynth delivers consistent, pro-level performance every time. These long-lasting synthetic formulas are safe for classroom use, easy to apply and clean, and made with premium base oils and USA-made components. Perfect for rental fleets, retail counters, or repair benches — and with the new case-friendly size, they also make the ultimate stocking stuffer for musicians.

MSRP: \$3.80



www.superslick.com

Cobalt from Bari Woodwinds

Bari Woodwinds Inc. is introducing its newest reed called Cobalt.

This new reed is totally different from the current great reed lines already sold by Bari Woodwinds. The Cobalt reed is shaped like the traditional cane reed and is made from an entirely different material for maximum resonance. The material used is an expensive material which is worth the cost for the sound and playability of the reed. The material used also plays and feels like cane reeds.

The new Cobalt reed will only be available in alto and tenor and is MAP priced at \$42.95. The strengths will coincide with the other reed lines, soft, medium soft, medium, medium hard and hard. Please contact Bari with any questions or inquiries you may have at Ron@bariwoodwind.com.



Solo Styles for Christmas: Classic Carols in a Variety of Popular Styles

The Solo Styles for Christmas book series from Excelcia Music Publishing contains 15 newly-arranged classic Christmas carols in over 25 popular music styles by various arrangers. Each individual carol is arranged in three distinct styles, and has corresponding free downloadable play-along tracks. The optional purchase of the iReal Pro app (available for iPad, Android, Mac, and iPhone) provides access to even more styles, creating unlimited possibilities with these festive carols.

Every solo offers an opportunity to improvise and to learn the building blocks of improvisation with written examples that are fun to play. Popular musical styles such as Jazz, Latin, Pop, and Country are included in Solo Styles for Christmas. Whether entertaining at holiday gatherings with family and friends, or performing publicly, these solos will impress and delight!

Books are available for Flute, Oboe, Bb Clarinet, Alto Saxophone or Baritone Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, Bb Trumpet, Horn in F, Euphonium or Trombone or Bassoon, Tuba, Violin, Viola, Cello, and Bass.

Solo Styles for Christmas books are available for \$12.99 each through excelciamusic.com and music retailers.

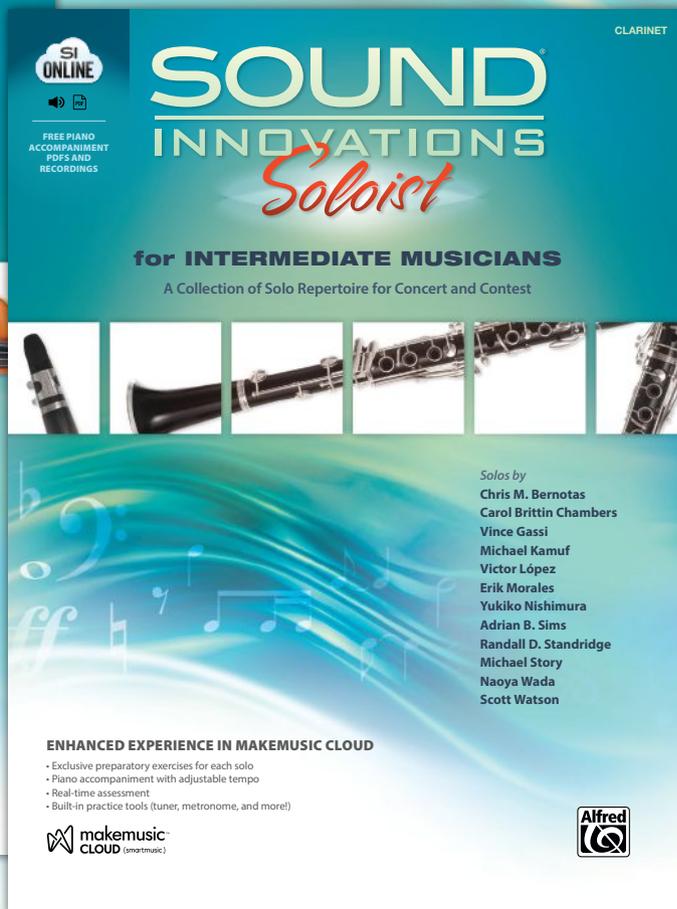


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VOX AmPlug AP3AC

The Vox amPlug 3 AC30 delivers iconic AC tones with switchable Normal and Top Boost channels, rich built-in effects, rhythm patterns, and an AUX input - all powered by fully analog circuitry. Compact, expressive, and perfect for practice or recording.

MSRP: \$59.99



Blackstar BEAM Solo

The Blackstar BEAM Solo is a next-generation headphone amp for electric, acoustic, and bass guitar that transforms practice into a fully immersive, pro-grade experience. With In The Room speaker simulation, patented ISF tone shaping, SpeedDial control, and XpressFX, it delivers real amp feel in a compact form. Connect via Bluetooth, explore Artist Patches, record direct over USB-C, and share your custom tones through the mobile app - all from your pocket.

MSRP: \$129.99



Rovner Products Launches the LGX Ligature: Power, Projection, Precision

Rovner Products proudly introduces the LGX ligature, the next generation in high-performance ligatures designed for dynamic, expressive musicians across jazz, rock, marching, and military band settings.

The LGX features Rovner's proprietary Mass-Loaded Technology® paired with its innovative Resonating Ribs™ design, delivering unmatched power without compromising tonal integrity.

Built for exceptional cut, projection, and articulation, the LGX maintains tone and intonation - even at triple-fortissimo dynamics.

Whether you're competing with amplified instruments in high-energy live environments or driving intensity in solo performance, the LGX provides the sonic clarity and presence players need to rise above the mix.

Each ligature includes a protective Rovner cap and is proudly Made in the USA.

Available now through trusted distributors, Amazon, and www.rovnerproducts.com, the LGX is poised to become a go-to choice for musicians seeking maximum expression with uncompromising control.

From educational institutions and marching ensembles to touring professionals, the LGX equips musicians to perform with confidence, power, and finesse.

Elevate your sound. Experience the next generation of performance with the Rovner LGX ligature.

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Under \$500

Takamine Guitars G Series GD11MCE

For more than 60 years, Takamine Guitars has been producing some of the most highly regarded and best-selling acoustic and acoustic-electric guitars for the working musician. The G Series GD11MCE is one of Takamine's most affordable dreadnought cutaway models, but its value-packed price belies its excellent looks, feel, tone, and playability. With construction of sapele - top, back, and sides - this guitar is great for acoustic blues, bold strumming, or roots music. The low-gloss natural satin finish adds a great old-school vibe to the instrument. Also, the transition to the stage is made effortless with the addition of Takamine's own TP-4T electronics, complete with an equalizer and chromatic tuner built-in.

MSRP: \$499



Audient EVO4

The EVO series offers professional, incredibly powerful, and totally portable audio interfaces make for recording music at home or on the go. Award-winning EVO mic preamps and advanced analog-to-digital converters deliver studio quality results with no effort. The groundbreaking Smartgain feature allows the mic preamps to set their own levels and avoid clipping. Each EVO product is not just another audio interface, it's an entirely new way of doing things. The EVO04 is a 2 in, 2 out interface equipped with 2 mic preamps, 1 instrument input, stereo monitor output, 1 headphone output and is compatible with iOS devices without the need for external power.

MSRP: \$179.99



Chedeville Kanter Opera Bb Clarinet Mouthpiece

Building on the success of the Kanter Cinema, the Chedeville Kanter Opera is the next evolution in our collaboration with legendary mouthpiece maker and studio musician, James Kanter. Featuring a larger tip opening than the Cinema, the Opera is designed for players seeking greater warmth and tonal breadth.

To meet Jim Kanter's exacting standards, Chedeville engineered a proprietary tool to replicate his unique filing process, ensuring each Kanter Opera mouthpiece meets his meticulous specifications. Crafted from Chedeville's proprietary rubber with precision manufacturing, this mouthpiece resonates across a variety of musical settings.

The Opera is the most open facing in the Chedeville Kanter series, delivering a rich sound with added depth and flexibility across all registers. It provides a responsive feel with a natural sense of resistance, allowing for expressive nuance and dynamic control. This mouthpiece rewards focused air support and musical intention, making it an exceptional choice for players across genres. Tip opening: 0.047" (1.20mm)

The engravings on this mouthpiece have been left unpainted in order to achieve Jim Kanter's vision of a more subtle and understated look.

<https://chedeville.com/product/kanter-opera-bb-clarinet-mouthpiece/>

MSRP: \$350, MAP: \$350



ESP Guitars LTD EC-256 Black

If you're looking for an excellent single-cutaway electric guitar, the LTD EC-256 takes many of the coolest aspects of ESP's higher-end models and offers them in a super-affordable guitar that's ready to rock. A classic shape that's excellent for all musical styles and genres, the EC-256 looks amazing with multiple binding on the body and headstock — something you may only expect from much higher-end guitars. Playing the EC-256 is also a dream come true, with set-neck construction for fast and easy access to the highest frets. The EC-256 also features a mahogany body, a comfortable and fast three-piece thin U-shaped mahogany neck, and a rosewood fingerboard with flag inlays and 22 extra-jumbo frets. This guitar features the acclaimed ESP Designed LH-150 humbucking pickups that offer great tone for all genres of music, and the sonic flexibility of coil-splitting controlled by a push-pull switch on the tone knob.

MSRP: \$499



Under \$2,000

KORG microKORG2

The new microKORG2 delivers everything musicians loved about the original, now expanded with modern performance tools. A 2.8" color display transforms sound design, giving you animated visual feedback and an oscilloscope view to shape and "see" your sounds in real time. The new vocal processor takes the classic vocoder further, adding hard-tune pitch correction, a harmonizer, and studio-quality effects, complete with a dedicated metallic gooseneck mic. Updated natural-touch mini keys make chords and fast phrases easier to play, while a built-in loop recorder, arpeggiator, and effects including modulation, delay, reverb, and EQ unlock new creative possibilities. Compact and portable, the microKORG2 runs on AC or batteries, so inspiration can follow you anywhere.

MSRP: \$699.99



Rousseau 3.0 Classic NC Alto Saxophone Mouthpiece

The new Rousseau 3.0 Saxophone Mouthpieces are now fully manufactured from start to finish at the JodyJazz factory in Savannah, GA, taking the Rousseau mouthpieces to a whole new level. These amazing new mouthpieces are now created using the same combination of state-of-the-art manufacturing techniques, old world craftsmanship, and the strictest quality controls in the industry, that have made the JodyJazz mouthpieces so highly coveted.

The Rousseau Classic NC Alto Saxophone Mouthpiece was developed as a complement to the original Rousseau "R" Series, but it quickly took over as the most popular Rousseau model. When Dr. Rousseau couldn't find any commercially available saxophone mouthpieces on the market to recommend to his classical students he decided to try and design his own mouthpiece. The R Series Saxophone mouthpieces and now with further refinements the NC Series, were inspired by a mouthpiece that Marcel Mule gave Dr. Rousseau in 1961. It has been designed with an entirely new choice of facings to meet the needs of the world's top performers. Its features include a new rollover baffle to give good projection and a then generous dip in the chamber after the rollover baffle provides a beautiful warmth to the sound. Redesigned sidewalls give an even, centered tone, the symmetrical tip rail gives an immediate response at all volumes, and a longer shape provides a more secure fit and easier tuning. Available in 3, 4 & 5 tip openings.

<https://rousseaumouthpieces.com/product/classic-nc-alto-saxophone-mp/>

MSRP: \$235, MAP: \$164.95



Darkglass ANAGRAM

ANAGRAM by Darkglass Electronics is the groundbreaking bass multi-effects unit that's taken the bass world by storm. Engineered to redefine tone, flexibility, and performance, ANAGRAM offers a purpose-built solution for bassists seeking unmatched sound-shaping capabilities.

Delivering ultra-low latency, pristine clarity, and studio-grade audio, ANAGRAM replaces tedious menu diving with an intuitive block-based architecture—designed to feel and function like building a pedalboard, minus the cables. With virtually no learning curve, creating music with ANAGRAM is effortless and inspiring.

Featuring a curated selection of distinct preamps, over 50 customizable effects, a looper, tuner, and support for user-generated impulse responses (IRs), ANAGRAM empowers limitless creative exploration. Seamless integration with the Darkglass Suite application allows users to upload and manage cabinet IRs and neural models, fine-tune presets and banks, and enjoy frequent, exciting software updates.

ANAGRAM sets a new standard for bass multi-effects. It's a modern platform built for the stage, studio, home — and beyond.

MSRP: \$1,199.99



EMG Pickups Announces All New E-Series Bass Pickups

EMG Pickups introduces the all-new E-Series line of active bass pickups. Featuring the commonly used slim soapbar cap design, the E-Series pickups unlock a multitude of bass models for simple, drop-in EMG upgrades.

Unlike any other EMG design, the E-Series pickups feature wide aperture coils with ceramic magnets. This potent combination delivers powerful low end while retaining the cutting articulation that the modern bass player requires. Designed with versatility in mind, the E-Series can excel in a wide range of genres and play styles and are available in 4, 5, and 6 string sizes. Just like all EMG active pickups, the E-Series are free from hum and buzz and include solderless wiring kits for DIY installation.

For further tonal shaping, the E-Series pickups are compatible with EMG's wide range of bass EQ's and accessories, so the possibilities are virtually endless.

Unlock the potential of your bass with the EMG E-Series pickups.

Individual E-Series pickups start at \$109.00, with sets starting at \$209.00.

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dY2QV7mip1Q>

Under \$2,000



Pro VLA III - Multivoice Tube / Opto Compressor

The Pro VLA compressor has been one of the most popular ART products for over two decades. The original has been hailed as one of the best compressors ever made at its price point, and ART has just announced the new Pro VLA III.

It's an optical compressor in a 2U rackmount enclosure, with two channels that can be used independently or linked for stereo operation. The Pro VLA III uses a fixed-input, variable-threshold design, and features a 12AT7 tube for warmth and saturation.

New to version III, the Voice switch selects between tube and solid state signal paths. The ratio range has been extended to 1.25:1 – 20:1 to allow more subtle dynamics control than its predecessors. Headroom has been increased, background noise has been reduced, and channel symmetry has been improved in the linked stereo mode. It now features a universal power supply, and the front panel has been updated to match the Pro Channel III.

Other features include variable threshold, attack, release, and output controls, independent bypass per channel, and simultaneous metering of input level, output level, and gain reduction. The rear panel has balanced 1/4" and XLR inputs and outputs, and a button to select +4 dBu or -10 dBV operation.

The Pro VLA III will begin shipping this fall to ART dealers worldwide.

MAP: \$599



holiday buying guide

Crown Series Jazz Trombone – VTRB-CSOB203

Make a bold statement this holiday season with the Crown Series Jazz Trombone by Victory Musical Instruments, finished in dark orange lacquer with a sleek black slide. Crafted for serious musicians and jazz lovers alike, this professional-level instrument delivers a rich, warm tone and smooth slide action that feels effortless under your hand.

With a .508" bore and 8" bell, it offers precise articulation and vibrant projection — ideal for soloists, section players, or advancing students ready for the next level.

This striking model doesn't just sound great — it turns heads. A high-quality case and 12C mouthpiece are included, making it a complete, ready-to-play gift.

Whether for the stage, the studio, or under the tree, the VTRB-CSOB203 is a standout choice in the under-\$2,000 category.

Learn more at VictoryMusical.com

MSRP: \$1,749



ENGL Amplifiers E725 RAVAGER IR

Designed for musicians seeking a versatile, portable solution in guitar amplification, ENGL's Ravager IR is a 20-watt, 2-channel tube amp that blends vintage tone with modern technology. A true tube amp, the Ravager IR provides a 12AX7/ECC83 in the preamp and an EL84 in the power amp section, producing dynamic, harmonically-rich tones. Its dual-channel design provides pristine cleans and aggressive overdrive, making it ideal for stage, studio, or home use. A special feature of this amp is its built-in IR Loader, enabling musicians to use up to four impulse responses (IRs), loaded via USB for unparalleled cabinet simulation. This makes recording and silent practice effortless while delivering exceptional sound quality in a compact, lunchbox-style chassis. Additionally, it's equipped with an XLR output for live and studio applications, along with a headphone out for private practice.

MSRP: \$879.99



Yorkville EXM Pro10 Battery-Powered PA Speaker

Designed for endurance and high output, the EXM Pro10 represents a new milestone from Yorkville Sound; Our first lightweight battery-powered loudspeaker with a 48V battery.

It features an onboard 3-channel mixer with multiple built-in effects, so it can be used without an external console. Multiple built-in effects can be used simultaneously to tailor the sound from each input. With Bluetooth connectivity, the EXM Pro10 facilitates wireless stereo playback between two cabinets.

The versatile cabinet can be used in three performance positions; Upright, tilt, or for use as a monitor wedge.

Portable and powerful, the EXM Pro10 continues our commitment to power extraordinary gigs in extraordinary places.

MSRP: \$999



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Aguilar TH500V2

Designed for the discerning bassists, the Tone Hammer 500 offers a lightweight yet powerful solution inspired by the soulful warmth of tube amplifiers. Its rich and harmonic preamps offer a round, full-bodied character, making every note resonate with depth.

Simple and intuitively designed, the Tone Hammer 500 features a classic 3-band EQ set with bass, treble, and fully sweepable midrange controls. The Drive control adds distortion and even more tube-like grit and punch to your sound.

Equipped with the Aguilar Cabinet Suite, players have the

ability to load any of our in-house designed SL/DB cabinet IRs or load their own custom IR files for cabinet emulation options via XLR or headphone out. Additional updates include universal mains, which provide worry-free voltage changes when traveling internationally, and the ability to support a 2.67-ohm load for expanded cabinet pairings.

The Tone Hammer 500 meets the performance needs of modern bassists, ensuring a flawless blend between live, studio, and at-home settings.

MSRP: \$999.99



JodyJazz DV JC JODY CUSTOM Alto Saxophone Mouthpiece

An exciting new addition to the acclaimed DV Series! Based on JodyJazz Founder & President Jody Espina's personal, custom-modified DV mouthpiece, the DV JC JODY CUSTOM Alto offers a unique balance of warmth, power, and versatility. Over years of performance across diverse musical genres, Espina refined his own DV to meet a wide variety of musical demands. This special design is now available to all players for the first time.

The culmination of years of incremental, real-world performance-driven innovation, the DV JC JODY CUSTOM Alto incorporates unique internal design refinements that deliver the power and projection that metal pieces are known for while preserving an unusually warm, full-bodied midrange and bottom end. Like all the DV mouthpieces, it has the same ability to “disappear” as a metal mouthpiece in terms of feel, producing an almost hard-rubber-like warmth, that has made the various DV models some of the most popular metal mouthpieces in the world. The proprietary combination of facing, chamber, and baffle design – never before released commercially – gives the DV JC JODY CUSTOM a distinctive voice within the DV family.

Sonically positioned between the DV and DV NY, the DV JC JODY CUSTOM Alto produces a big, fat, warm tone with enough projection for contemporary settings while remaining sweet and dark enough for expressive ballads. Constructed from 14kt gold-plated virgin bell brass and available in 6, 7, and 8 tip openings, the DV JC JODY CUSTOM Alto delivers unmatched tonal richness, comfort, and flexibility for the modern player.

<https://jodyjazz.com/dv-jc-jody-custom-alto/>

MSRP: \$595, MAP: \$595



Yorkville Sound's New 10" & 12" YXL Towers

Yorkville Sound is pleased to announce the release of its most affordable Column PA systems. The YXL Tower10 and YXL Tower12 are designed for performers and presenters who need a full-range solution that is powerful, lightweight, and easy to use.

These new models feature a 10" or 12" subwoofer, four 3" midrange drivers, and a high-frequency compression driver. The integrated 3-channel mixer offers mic, line, instrument, and Bluetooth® connectivity including wireless stereo playback between two systems. Three voicing modes optimize the sound for live music, recorded playback, or speech. Both offer 1550 watts of peak power, and each weighs less than 42 pounds.

The speaker column can connect directly to the subwoofer or on the included extension for additional height, and each system also includes a subwoofer cover and gig bag for easy transportation.

The YXL Towers will make their trade show debut at the CFX Loudspeaker showcase on September 23rd, and begin shipping to Yorkville Sound dealers worldwide this fall.

YXL TOWER10 – MSRP \$1,359, MAP \$999

YXL TOWER12 – MSRP \$1,599, MAP \$1,149



Under \$7,500

Château CAS-80C Alto Saxophone

The Château CAS-80C Alto Saxophone is crafted with 85% copper, delivering a warm, rich tone ideal for serious and professional musicians.

Each instrument is handcrafted, ensuring exceptional quality and attention to detail. With its elegant full-body floral engraving and distinctive cognac finish, the CAS-80C is as visually stunning as it is musically expressive.

Notable features include a High F# key, Mother-of-Pearl key buttons, Pisoni pro pads, and Italian blued steel springs — all designed to provide smooth playability, responsive action, and long-lasting durability.

MSRP: \$2,590



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NS Design CR Zebrawood Series

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- 720 grams (25.5 oz)
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 - Includes custom hardshell case with handle, shoulder strap, separate compartments for shoulder rest, accessories, bow compartment and exterior zipper pouch.
- MSRP is \$5,525. Please contact sales@nedsteinberger.com for dealer net and MAP information.

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The lightweight solid-body design of the CR Violin transfers the full spectrum of sound to the pickup without feedback and is very stable even with changes in temperature and humidity. The ergonomic shoulder and chin rest provide comfortable, stable support, with removable treble side bout. The solid ebony fingerboard is hand graduated for consistent string articulation. Fine tuners are mounted on the body behind the bridge for precise, stable tuning and quick, easy string changes.

Equipped with the NS Polar Pickup System, designed to express bowing and plucking, it delivers a full, natural sound across a wide dynamic range. The preamp allows the choice between two distinct tone qualities: extended frequency response of modern low impedance electronics, for full-blown "electric" sound, and active electronic shaping to replicate the frequency response of the traditional violin, for a more "acoustic" sound.

www.thinkNS.com

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