

M M R

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

Celebrating 147 Years of Serving the MI Industry

Est. 1879



SETTING THE FIRST NOTE: THE BEGINNER TRUMPET ROUNDTABLE

STUDIO-GRADE FX:
NOW THAT'S A PLUS

SQ+

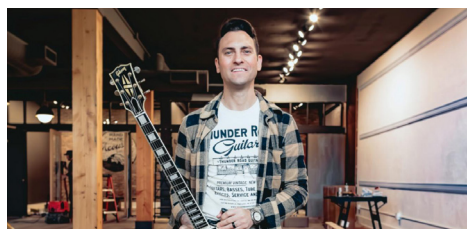
ALLEN & HEATH

Rack
ULTRA
FX

INSIDE



Guest Editorial: Piano Beats Guitar by 61%
and It's Not Even Close



Retail: Thunder Road Doubles Down



Small Business Matters: Relationships - The
Lifeline of the Music Industry

CQ

MIX SMARTER
WORK FASTER
SOUND BETTER



Sound your best on stage, in rehearsals, and in the studio.

CQ makes it easy, whatever your mixing style. Musicians can jump in with instrument-specific Quick Channels and dynamic FX, tweak their monitor mix via an app and let our intelligent Gain and Feedback Assistants handle the details.

Engineers will love the in-depth channel processing and apps for remote position mixing. Multitrack recording couldn't be easier with an integrated USB interface and SD Card slot.



CQ-18T



CQ-20B



CQ-12T



FIND OUT MORE AT [ALLEN-HEATH.COM/CQ](https://www.allen-heath.com/cq)

ALLEN & HEATH

C O N T E N T S



MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

FEATURES

Vol.185 JULY 2026 No. 7

ROUNDTABLE

SETTING THE FIRST NOTE: THE BEGINNER TRUMPET ROUNDTABLE

11

Every trumpet player starts somewhere, and for most, that journey begins with a beginner instrument. While entry-level trumpets are often viewed as a stepping stone, they're among the most important products in any dealer's inventory—shaping first impressions, driving long-term customer relationships, and ultimately influencing whether a new player sticks with the instrument. In this roundtable, leading manufacturers discuss what's changing in the beginner trumpet category, from evolving expectations around quality and value to the role of educators, rental programs, and innovation in attracting the next generation of players.

RETAIL

THUNDER ROAD GUITARS DOUBLES DOWN

17

Frank Gross has never been content to think small. Since founding Thunder Road Guitars, he has built the Seattle-based retailer into one of the industry's premier destinations for vintage, boutique, and custom instruments. Now, with the opening of a significantly larger flagship location, Gross is positioning the business for its next chapter.

GUEST EDITORIAL

PIANO BEATS GUITAR BY 61% AND IT'S NOT EVEN CLOSE

21

Last month's issue of *MMR* Magazine took an in-depth look at the increase in home digital keyboard sales. Shifa Ali, lead researcher at Wiingy Research, shares some detailed metrics that support the notion that the embrace of keyboard learning and performance is on the rise.

SMALL BUSINESS MATTERS

NAMM FLY-IN 2026: 20TH ANNUAL ADVOCACY D.C. FLY-IN

22

Award-winning MI retailer, author, and music educator Menzie Pittman shares his thoughts on how, while sales, inventory, and personnel are undoubtedly vital to the success of retail operations in MI, it's relationships that keep the industry vibrant and healthy for both dealers and suppliers.

Departments

Editorial 4

UpFront 5

People on the Move 9

New Products 23

5



17



23



MMR Musical Merchandise Review® (ISSN 0027-4615), Volume 185, Number 7, July 2026, founded in 1879, is published monthly by artistpro, LLC, 7012 City Center Way, Suite 207, Fairview, TN 37062, (800) 682-8114, publisher of School Band and Orchestra Plus and Musical Merchandise Review. Periodicals Postage Paid at Fairview, TN and additional mailing offices. MMR is distributed free to qualified individuals and is directed to music dealers and retailers, wholesalers and distributors, importers and exporters and manufacturers of all types of musical instruments and their accessories, related electronic sound equipment, general musical accessories, musical publications and teaching aides. The publishers of this magazine do not accept responsibility for statements made by their advertisers in business competition. No portion of this issue December be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Copyright ©2026 by artistpro LLC, all rights reserved. Published in USA.



By Christian Wissmuller

We Can't Afford to Wait for the 'Good Old Days'

Selling an instrument is important, but inspiring someone to keep playing is what creates the next accessory sale, the first professional upgrade, the repair appointment, the

private lesson, and the customer who recommends your business to friends and family.

We Can't Afford to Wait for the 'Good Old Days'

Every generation in the music products industry seems to have its version of "remember when."

Remember when school music budgets were stronger. Remember when every town had two or three independent music stores. Remember when catalogs landed in the mailbox, customers walked in carrying handwritten shopping lists, and nobody worried about competing with a retailer halfway across the country — or halfway around the world.

Nostalgia has its place. But it's a lousy business strategy.

The reality is that our industry has always evolved. Vinyl gave way to CDs, then streaming. Acoustic pianos made room for digitals. Recording studios moved into spare bedrooms. Retail shifted online. Through it all, one constant remained: people still wanted to make music.

That's worth remembering.

It's easy to focus on the challenges. Inflation continues to influence buying decisions. School music programs are still fighting for funding in many districts. Recruiting new educators remains a concern. Independent retailers face relentless competition from online sellers, while manufacturers continue navigating fluctuating costs and global supply chain uncertainties.

None of that is insignificant.

But neither are the opportunities.

Walk into almost any successful music retailer today, and you'll notice something interesting. They're not simply selling guitars, keyboards, brass instruments or drum kits. They're selling lessons. They're hosting repair services. They're creating performance opportunities. They're partnering with local schools. They're giving parents confidence that they're making the right investment and giving first-time musicians a reason to keep coming back.

They're building relationships.

That's becoming the industry's greatest competitive advantage.

Let's be honest — almost anyone can sell a box.

The internet has made products remarkably accessible. Customers can compare prices in seconds and have instruments shipped to their front door with minimal effort. Competing solely on inventory or price is increasingly difficult.

Competing on expertise? That's another story.

A knowledgeable sales associate who can steer a parent toward the right student instrument. A repair technician who keeps a saxophone playing through concert season. A retailer who remembers a customer's name—or asks how last month's recital went. Those experiences don't show up in an online shopping cart, but they create something far more valuable: loyalty.

Manufacturers have an important role to play here, too.

The companies making the biggest impact today aren't simply introducing new products. They're providing educational resources, artist support, dealer training, marketing materials and digital content that help retailers succeed long after a shipment arrives. The strongest partnerships recognize that everyone wins when a first-time player becomes a lifelong musician.

And that brings us to what may be the industry's biggest challenge.

Retention.

We spend plenty of time discussing how to attract new customers. Less often do we ask why so many beginners stop playing within the first year or two.

Every student who sticks with band, every adult who rediscovers music after years away, every hobbyist who upgrades from an entry-level instrument to something more advanced: those aren't just sales opportunities — they're the foundation of a healthy industry.

Keeping people engaged should be everyone's business.

Fortunately, there's reason for optimism.

Music remains one of the few activities that genuinely connects generations. Parents who learned guitar in the '90s are now shopping for their children's first instruments. Adults who picked up piano during the pandemic continue taking lessons. Community ensembles, worship groups, school bands and local music scenes remain vibrant in countless towns across the country.

People haven't stopped wanting to make music.

They simply have more options competing for their attention than ever before.

That means our industry can't afford to think only transactionally. Selling an instrument is important, but inspiring someone to keep playing is what creates the next accessory sale, the first professional upgrade, the repair appointment, the private lesson, and the customer who recommends your business to friends and family.

In short, it's what creates sustainability. Perhaps that's why I'm optimistic about where this industry is headed (that or I've taken too many hits to the head...).

Yes, the landscape looks different than it did 20 — or even 10 — years ago. It probably should. Healthy industries evolve. The businesses that continue to thrive aren't necessarily the largest or the oldest. They're the ones willing to adapt while staying true to the reason they got into this business in the first place.

Because despite all the technological change, market disruption and economic uncertainty, the mission hasn't really changed.

We're still helping people make music. That's a pretty good business to be in.

And unlike the "good old days," that opportunity isn't behind us. It's sitting in the showroom, walking through the front door, or clicking onto a website today.

Check out the Q&A with Frank Gross in this issue, or the Roundtable feature with plenty of useful insights on connecting with potential customers for proof!

Christian Wissmuller
christian@mmrmagazine.com

MMR
MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW
Published Since 1879

PUBLISHER
Mike Lawson
mike@artistpro.com

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Christian Wissmuller
christian@mmrmagazine.com

CONTRIBUTORS
Menzie Pittman, Jaimie Blackman

ART DIRECTOR/PRODUCTION MANAGER
Produce Shop Design

ACCOUNTING
Shannon Kebschull Lawson
accounting@artistpro.com

ADVERTISING SALES
Isaac Lawson
isaac@artistpro.com

Visit artistpro.media to gain access to the music products industry with our completely digital-only all-access platform to thousands of retailers, distributors, manufacturers, suppliers, OEM sources and more. MMR and artistpro have the world's only all digital "Bloomberg terminal" for the industry, tracking online marketplace sales, allowing partners to survey and email subscribers, do inventory planning based on real new and used sales, plus market research with over 300,000 sources of data available for music products professionals.

artistpro
PUBLISHING

artistpro, LLC
7012 City Center Way, Suite 207
Fairview, TN 37062
(800) 682-8114

PUBLISHER OF
MMR
MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

S&O
SCHOOL BAND AND ORCHESTRA

artistpro.media
Where retailers and suppliers meet
between NAMM Shows

ARMADILLO DISTRIBUTION ENTERPRISES AND CONCORDIA LLC ANNOUNCE VOLUNTARY CHAPTER 11 REORGANIZATION

Concordia LLC, the intellectual property holding company for the Dean Guitars, Luna Guitars, and ddrum brands, and its authorized operating company Armadillo Distribution Enterprises (collectively, the "Companies"), today announced they have voluntarily filed for protection under Chapter 11 of the United States Bankruptcy Code in the Middle District of Florida. Chapter 11 is a court-supervised reorganization that allows the Companies to restructure financial obligations while continuing normal business operations.

"This is a proactive step to



strengthen our financial foundation and position these iconic brands for long-term success," said Pamela Keris, owner and CEO. "Resolving the financial pressures of recent years allows us to focus fully on growing what we've built.

We remain fully committed to our customers, our dealer network, and our employees. Dean, Luna, and ddrum are strong brands, and this process will allow us to emerge as a more resilient organization."

The Companies have filed customary first-day motions seeking court authorization to continue paying employee wages and benefits and to maintain vendor and dealer relationships without interruption. Concordia LLC retains full ownership of all intellectual property associated with the Dean Guitars, Luna Guitars, and ddrum brands throughout this process. Armadillo wishes to assure both its retail and consumer partners that all existing orders, dealer relationships, and customer commitments will continue to be honored without interruption.

GIBSON ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP TRANSITION; CEO CESAR GUEIKIAN TO MOVE INTO STRATEGIC ADVISOR ROLE

Gibson has announced that President and CEO Cesar Gueikian will step down from his executive position, effective July 31, 2026. Following his departure, Gueikian will transition into a new capacity as a Strategic Advisor to the Board of Directors and continue to serve as a Global Artist Ambassador for the brand.

Anne Rohosy, Gibson's current Chief Commercial Officer, has been appointed Interim President and CEO while the Board of Directors conducts a comprehensive search for a permanent successor.

During his tenure, Gueikian was widely credited with revitalizing the historic brand by prioritizing instrument quality, strengthening artist relationships, and modernizing global operations. Prominent Gibson artists, including Slash, have praised his leadership for successfully returning the company's focus to a "guitars-first" mentality.

The Board expressed gratitude for Gueikian's transformative impact and voiced full confidence in Rohosy's ability to guide the company smoothly through this transition period.



INDEPENDENT AUDIO ANNOUNCES U.S. DISTRIBUTION OF FWS MODULAR PROCESSORS

Independent Audio, the exclusive U.S. distributor for leading professional audio brands including Thermionic Culture, Coles Microphones, CEDAR Audio, and Sonifex, is pleased to announce the U.S. availability of FwS, a new Eurorack-focused brand developed by DACS Audio.

Designed for contemporary modular synthesists, FwS introduces a range of innovative signal-processing modules that combine creative sound design possibilities with practical workflow enhancements for



modern Eurorack systems.

The first two FwS modules, the Bring It On ring modulator and the Break On Through FET distortion & limiter, are now shipping and available from U.S. inventory through Independent Audio and its authorized dealer network. A third module is scheduled for release in July 2026.

Developed by the team behind DACS Audio's respected professional audio products, FwS brings a fresh approach to modular synthesis, emphasizing unique processing capabilities, high-quality engineering, and flexible integration into both studio and performance environments.

The FwS product line targets

musicians, sound designers, electronic artists, and modular enthusiasts seeking new creative tools beyond conventional Eurorack offerings. With growing interest in experimental synthesis and advanced signal processing, the launch marks DACS Audio's entry into one of the most innovative segments of the music technology market.

Dealers interested in carrying the FwS line are encouraged to contact Independent Audio for pricing, availability, and marketing support.

CHRISTIE'S TO AUCTION GUITARS FROM JOHNNY MARR'S PERSONAL COLLECTION

Christie's will present Marr's Guitars: The Johnny Marr Collection, an auction of guitars, amps and equipment from the career of guitarist, songwriter and former Smiths member Johnny Marr.

The auction is scheduled for Sept. 17 in London and will include about 95 lots. Estimates range from £1,000 to £150,000. The collection includes instruments associated with Marr's work with The Smiths, The Pretenders, The The, Electronic, Modest Mouse, The Cribs and his solo career.

Among the highlighted instruments are Marr's 1982 Rickenbacker 330 Jetglo, a 1960 Cherry Red Gibson ES-355, a Roger Giffin Korina Telecaster-style guitar from about 1984, a 1971 Martin D-28, a 1984

Gibson Les Paul Standard and a Fender Johnny Marr Signature Jaguar in Comet Sparkle from 2017.

Christie's said several guitars in the auction were recently used during the recording of Marr's album *The Age Of Everything*, which is scheduled for release Oct. 2. Marr will donate the hammer price of 10 lots to The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and The National Autistic Society.

A free pre-sale exhibition is scheduled for Sept. 9-16 at Christie's headquarters in London. The auction catalog and additional information are available at christies.com/johnnymarr.



NAMM NeXT EUROPE 2026 ELEVATES LEADERSHIP COLLABORATION AND STRATEGIC VISION FOR THE GLOBAL MUSIC PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

By Christian Wissmuller

NAMM concluded NAMM NeXT Europe 2026, its executive leadership summit focused on advancing strategic collaboration, innovation and long-term growth across the global music products industry. Held June 10-11 at the Renaissance Amsterdam Hotel in Amsterdam, the event convened senior executives and industry leaders representing Europe's musical instrument, pro audio, live event, retail, education and distribution sectors.

Building on the success of last year's inaugural 2025 Brussels summit, NAMM NeXT Europe 2026 expanded its role as a premier forum for high-level industry dialogue, bringing together leaders for two days of market intelligence, strategic discussions and collaborative working sessions focused on the future of the industry.

"The continued growth and engagement around NAMM NeXT Europe reflects the importance of creating spaces where industry leaders can collaborate on the opportunities and challenges shaping our global business environment," said John Mlynczak, president and CEO of NAMM. "The conversations in Amsterdam reinforced a shared commitment to innovation and expanding the global community of music makers."

NAMM NeXT Europe 2026 drew participation from leading global and European companies across manufacturing, distribution, retail and live event production, including C.F. Martin Guitar, Henri SELMER Paris, Buffet Crampon, GEWA Music, Roland Europe, Taylor Guitars Europe, Thomann, Gear4music, Adam Hall Group, Audiotonix, Focusrite Group, QSC, Solid State Logic, MUSIK MEYER, ALGAM and Hal Leonard Europe, among others.

"Many have tried to bring Europe's music industry together in one place. None have really pulled it off, until now. NAMM NeXT in Amsterdam made it happen. That's what sets NAMM apart as the global, leading association of our industry: they deliver," said Marcel Messner, CEO of GEWA Music. "Bringing manufacturers and the education sector to the same table — two worlds that, frankly, barely knew each other existed — is where real opportunities for the future are born. The mission is clear: Create more music makers. And with the European Soundmakers stepping up, we're moving in the right direction."

The 2026 summit featured presentations from economic, technology and education experts alongside interactive executive working groups designed to generate actionable business insights and cross-sector collaboration. Discussions focused on global trade and economic trends; artificial intelligence; evolving consumer behavior; the latest developments in retail, manufacturing and live events; and music education advocacy.

Featured presentations included:

- John Mlynczak, President & CEO, NAMM — Welcome and Opening Remarks
- Koen Berden, Managing Director, Trade Impact B.V., and Senior

Fellow, European Centre for International Political Economy — European Economic and Trade Outlook for 2026 and Beyond

- Reinier Evers, Founder, TrendWatching — AI and Consumer Trends
- Finn Schumacker, Executive Director, Association Européenne des Conservatoires; Romain Asselborn, Board Member, European Music School Union; and Benno Spieker, Board Member, European Association for Music in Schools — Strengthening Advocacy Through Education-Industry Collaboration

A central component of NAMM NeXT Europe remained its executive working-group format, where participants collaborated across three strategic tracks: Commercial, Retail and Live Event. These facilitated sessions explored next steps for growing our industry, adapting to disruption and creating more music makers. The groups also encouraged participants to develop collaborative strategies designed to support sustainable industry growth and innovation beyond the summit.

"It was a pleasure to be part of NAMM NeXT Europe and engage with industry leaders on the economic and geopolitical forces shaping our future," said Koen Berden, managing director of Trade Impact B.V. and senior fellow at ECIPE. "During my session, I explored the European geo-economic and trade outlook, highlighting how the weaponized economy with control of chokepoints, evolving trade policies, shifting global alliances and broader economic trends are creating both challenges and opportunities for businesses across the music products industry. As Europe continues to navigate a complex global geopolitical landscape, staying informed, adaptable, and being prepared for the unexpected, will be critical for organizations looking to thrive in the years ahead. I appreciated the thoughtful discussions and exchange of ideas that made NAMM NeXT Europe such a valuable forum for forward-looking leadership."

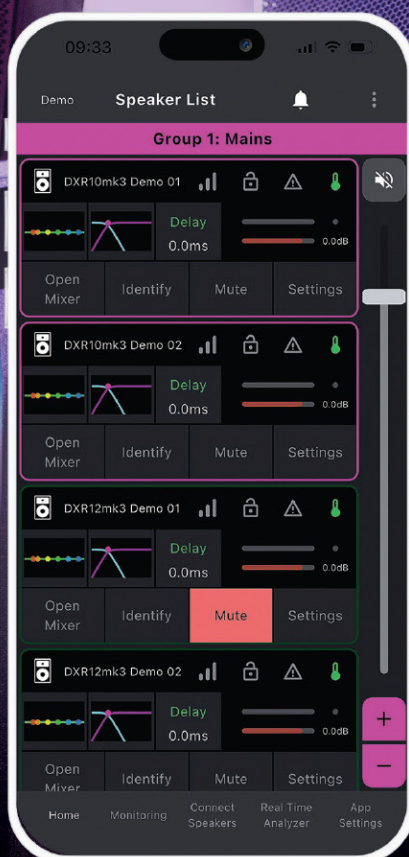
The summit reinforced the growing importance of collaboration between the music products industry and European music education organizations. Education leaders shared updates on advocacy initiatives and explored untapped opportunities to support future generations of music makers and strengthen music education access throughout Europe.

NAMM NeXT Europe 2026 reflects NAMM's ongoing investment in leadership development, global collaboration and long-term industry advancement. Following the momentum of both the Brussels and Amsterdam events, NAMM will continue the NeXT platform as a catalyst for strategic dialogue, business innovation and global industry connectivity. The next NAMM NeXT summit will take place in South America with NAMM NeXT Latin America, taking place in São Paulo, Brazil, in November 2026. Additional details about the 2027 NAMM NeXT event calendar—including programs in the United States and international markets—will be announced at the January NAMM Show.

For more information about all NAMM NeXT events as well as future NAMM events, visit NAMM.org.

POWERED LOUDSPEAKERS

DXR mk3 SERIES



SMARTER SOUND. BIGGER POWER. COMPLETE CONTROL.

DXR mk3 delivers higher output, improved clarity, and smart DSP that adapts to any venue. Built with premium components and rock-solid protection, it's ready for live music, DJs, corporate events, and mobile gigs. When your sound matters most, DXR mk3 brings legendary sonic fidelity, control and power.



**Audition DXR mk3 at your preferred retailer or dealer,
or scan to learn more and find a dealer near you.**



PORTMAN'S MUSIC SUPERSTORE CELEBRATES 90 YEARS AS GEORGIA'S OLDEST CONTINUOUSLY OPERATED MUSIC RETAILER

Portman's Music Superstore, a cornerstone of music retail and music education across Georgia and South Carolina, is celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2026. Founded in downtown Savannah in 1936, Portman's holds the distinction of being the oldest continuously operated music retailer in the state of Georgia — a milestone that reflects nine decades of commitment to musicians, students, and school music programs across the region.

Portman's Music is now proud to be the oldest continuously operated music retailer in the state of Georgia, tracing its roots back to being founded in 1936 in downtown Savannah. Portman's Music grew to be a music retailer and music education resource with locations in Savannah, Ga., Augusta, Ga., Albany, Ga., and Brunswick, Ga., that was recognized by NAMM as a Top 100 Music Dealer in 2022, 2023 and 2025. Throughout its growth and expansion, Portman Music has adhered to the Portman family's original innovative spirit and emphasis on the importance of music education.



GUITAR CENTER SERVES AS EXCLUSIVE LAUNCH PARTNER FOR THE ORANGE AMPS OUTLOWD ES SERIES, DESIGNED IN COLLABORATION WITH ED SHEERAN

Orange Amps has launched the Outlowd ES Series, a new line of acoustic amplifiers designed by Orange in collaboration with Ed Sheeran, and sold exclusively at Guitar Center in the U.S. Three models cover the full range from bedroom practice to professional stage, priced from \$199 to \$1,499. The ES3 and ES60 are available now; the ES100 arrives September 10, 2026.

Each model features acoustic-specific voicing, rechargeable battery operation, Bluetooth playback, and dedicated guitar and vocal channels with streamlined controls built for real-world performance.

Orange is already a top-five guitar amp brand at Guitar Center with product in every store nationwide. The Outlowd ES Series is the first Guitar Center-exclusive product range developed with Orange and marks a new era of acoustic amplification with a fresh lineup. The ES3 and ES60 will be available in all Guitar Center stores; the ES100 launches in select locations later this year.

"Ed Sheeran literally built his career playing an acoustic guitar through an amp on a street corner," said Gabe Dalporto, CEO of Guitar Center. "That's exactly the kind of musician Orange designed this for, and we're proud to be the place where it launches."

Guitar Center will support the launch through experiential activations tied to Ed Sheeran's U.S. tour, running June through November. Activations include pop-up demo stations and fan experiences at select tour stops across major markets. Customers can visit their local Guitar Center to play the series in person.

"Music doesn't start in arenas or on streaming platforms — it starts in bedrooms, youth clubs, pubs, schools, parks, living rooms and street corners. That's where I found my voice," said Ed Sheeran. "I think tiny venues are super important to learn how to perform, and busking teaches you not to sweat the big stuff. I wanted this project with Orange to feel honest to that: celebrating local musicians, local



communities, and the idea that anyone can start somewhere."

Collection Features:

ES3 | 3W Acoustic Mini Amp (\$199)

Designed for bedroom players, songwriters, and casual acoustic musicians. Features built-in reverb, Bluetooth, and up to 12 hours of battery life via USB-C. Leather carry strap included.

ES60 | 60W Acoustic Busking Amp (\$699)

Built for buskers, coffeehouse performers, and mobile gigging musicians. Dedicated guitar and mic channels, individual reverb controls, effects loop, balanced line out, and up to 12

hours of rechargeable battery operation. Gig bag included.

ES100 — 100W Acoustic Amp (arriving September 10, 2026)

The flagship model, built for professional performers and touring musicians. Celestion neodymium 12" speaker with HF tweeter, dedicated guitar and mic channels, effects loop, and balanced line out for stage-ready performance.

The ES3 and ES60 are available now at Guitar Center stores nationwide and at [guitarcenter.com](https://www.guitarcenter.com). The ES100 arrives September 2026 in select Guitar Center locations.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

AUDIX APPOINTS INDUSTRY VETERAN ERIC REESE AS VICE PRESIDENT

AUDIX, the celebrated designer and manufacturer of premium professional microphones for stage, studio, and broadcast use, is pleased to announce the appointment of Eric Reese to the position of Vice President. In his new role within the Videndum Creative Solutions family of brands, Reese will oversee all functions at AUDIX, including Sales, Marketing, Product Development, and Operations.

Reese brings over 26 years of extensive experience in the AV and entertainment industry to his new position. Having started his career as a Reliability Engineer at Peavey Electronics, his unique background spans the entire product chain—from manufacturing and designing integrated AVL systems to global business development and channel management. Prior to joining AUDIX, Reese held key roles at prominent brands, including an 11-year tenure at Sennheiser, five years at Shure, as well as time at Peavey Electronics, Ford Audio-Video, AVI-SPL, and Blizzard Lighting. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Michigan State University and an Executive Master of Business Administration from Marquette University.

Deeply passionate about audio, Reese



also owns and operates Loud and Clear Productions, a live-sound production company, and performs as the frontman for a John Mellencamp tribute band.

"AUDIX has been an iconic, product-focused brand for over 40 years," says Eric Reese. "Its passionate following is due to its dedication to unique products, for engineers and musicians, designed and built by engineers and musicians right here in the USA. Ironically, as a professional live sound engineer, my exposure to the full span of their catalog was limited, aside from their industry-leading drum microphones, which are ubiquitous. Now that I've dug deeper into their products and technologies, I believe that AUDIX is the best kept secret in microphones."

Reese adds, "My goal is to increase the awareness of AUDIX products and technologies with engineers, artists, and system designers, and to challenge more people to take the 'AUDIX Challenge' and listen to what they've been missing for over 40 years. I look forward to utilizing my varied skillset and industry knowledge to collaborate with the team at AUDIX to continue the brand's legacy and usher in a new era of quality audio."

BEYERDYNAMIC NAMES JESSE DEAN MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE AMERICAS

Beyerdynamic, the preferred audio brand for musicians, creators, and studio professionals around the world, today announces the appointment of Jesse Dean as Managing Director of the Americas. In this role, Dean will oversee beyerdynamic's business operations, sales strategy, and brand development across North and South America - carrying forward a legacy that began over a century ago in Germany.

Dean brings more than 25 years of experience across the professional audio, video, creator, and consumer technology industries to beyerdynamic. Throughout his career, he has held a range of leadership roles, including Global Operations Manager, Director of Business Development – Americas, Vice President of Business Development, Vice President of Audio, and Global Vice President of Sales at several highly respected companies in the industry.

Most recently, Dean served as Director of Business Development, Americas at RØDE, where he played a key role in the brand's expansion across the U.S., as well as Vice President of Global Sales at Mackie. He began his career in audio manufacturing while attending Hofstra University on Long Island, New York.

Beyond his commercial career, Dean is a lifelong musician, songwriter, and audio/video engineer - giving him a firsthand understanding of what creators and professionals actually need from their tools. It's that connection to the craft that makes him a natural fit for a brand built on the same passion for sound.

"Jesse brings exactly the kind of experience and passion we were looking for in this role," said Andreas Rapp, CEO of beyerdynamic. "His work helping grow RØDE into a leading prosumer brand speaks for itself - that kind of market-building instinct is rare, and it's exactly what we need to continue accelerating beyerdynamic's growth. Across the Americas, beyerdynamic customers will be thrilled to have him on board."

"What drew me to beyerdynamic was the rare combination of heritage, engineering excellence, and growing opportunity. Early in my career, I worked alongside a software engineer who simply would not use another headphone brand - that kind of trust doesn't happen by accident. The brand has earned its reputation over more than 100 years



of precision engineering, and I'm excited to help build on that. I look forward to bringing beyerdynamic closer to the musicians, creators, gamers, and professionals who make this market so exciting," said Jesse Dean, Managing Director of the Americas at beyerdynamic.

Dean's appointment reflects beyerdynamic's continued commitment to strengthening its international presence and growing its footprint in the Americas. He joins the company as beyerdynamic builds on more than 100 years of audio innovation and continues expanding its portfolio of headphones, microphones, in-ear monitors, and audio solutions for musicians, creators, gamers, and studio professionals.

To learn more, visit <https://north-america.beyerdynamic.com>.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

KHS AMERICA WELCOMES TOM MENSCH AS BRASS INSTRUMENT BRAND MANAGER

KHS America is pleased to announce the appointment of Tom Mensch as Brass Instrument Brand Manager. A seasoned trombonist, conductor, and music educator with over 30 years of experience, Mensch brings a rare combination of performance expertise, product knowledge, and educational leadership to the KHS America team.

Mensch joins KHS America from Whitehouse Independent School District in Texas, where he served as Director of Bands and Fine Arts/Communications Learning Leader from 2017 to 2025. He also currently serves as Artistic Director of the East Texas Youth Orchestra and Adjunct Trombone Professor at Stephen F. Austin State University.

A familiar name in the brass world, Mensch has performed as Principal Trombonist with the Longview Symphony Orchestra and has taken the stage in more than a dozen countries, including Japan, Russia, Finland, Guatemala,

and Scotland. He is a founding member of the Rose City Brass Quintet and performs regularly across jazz, chamber, and sacred music settings.

Mensch's connection to brass instrument development runs deep. He has served as an XO Brass Artist, contributing directly to the development of professional trombone products within the XO line.

"Tom brings an outstanding blend of performance experience, educational leadership, and strong relationships within the music community. His passion for music education and decades of industry experience make him a tremendous addition to our team. We are excited to welcome Tom to KHS America and look forward to growing our brands with his expertise and insight." — Kevin Philbin, Sales & Marketing Manager, KHS America

Mensch holds a Master of Music in Trombone Performance from Stephen F. Austin State



University and a Bachelor of Science in Music Education from Penn State University. He is an active member of the International Trombone Association, Texas Music Educators Association, and Texas Bandmasters Association.

MIKE GABRIEL NAMED DIRECTOR OF SALES - PRO AUDIO FOR JAM INDUSTRIES USA

JAM Industries USA is pleased to announce Mike Gabriel as Director of Sales - Pro Audio. Gabriel brings a balanced approach that blends data-driven decision making with real-world retail perspective to the role.

With a career built on understanding every stage of the business lifecycle, Gabriel has developed expertise spanning retail, distribution, and go-to-market strategy. He began his career with Guitar Center, advancing through leadership positions that included store management in the NYC metro area, Regional Sales Manager in New England, and ultimately National Director of Sales.

"I've always approached the MI business with a competitive mindset, driving growth, challenging the status quo, and finding new ways to win in every channel," stated Mike Gabriel, Director of Sales - Pro Audio at JAM Industries USA.

In addition to his retail leadership experience,

Gabriel has held key positions on the manufacturer side with brands including Gibson, KORG USA/Marshall Amplification, KMC Music, and Casio.

Throughout his career, he has led national accounts, brand strategy, product management, and go-to-market execution, consistently driving growth while managing major portfolios and partnerships with top-tier accounts. In his role as Director of Sales - Pro Audio, Gabriel will work closely with brands including Ashly, CAD Audio, HK Audio, and other professional audio brands.

"Mike brings extensive experience to this role and a passion that truly stands out," said James Tsaptsinos, Vice President Global Sales/GM, JAM Industries US MI Pro. "We are thrilled to welcome him back to the team for this new role and look forward to seeing him drive new strategies, foster growth, and create exciting opportunities for the future."



"What really drew me to JAM is the people. Being surrounded by a team of like-minded, driven professionals who are passionate," said Mike Gabriel, Director of Sales - Pro Audio at JAM Industries USA.

THE MUSIC PEOPLE PROMOTES AUSTIN WAYNICK TO DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC ACCOUNTS TO ACCELERATE AVL GROWTH

The Music People (TMP), a division of JAM Industries and a leading supplier of audio, video, and lighting (AVL) solutions, is pleased to announce the promotion of Austin Waynick from National Accounts Manager to Director of Strategic Accounts.

In his new role, Waynick will expand his leadership responsibilities while continuing to drive key sales initiatives. He will oversee and manage a team of National Account Managers, focusing on strengthening strategic partnerships, identifying growth opportunities, and accelerating the company's AVL business across key channels.

"Austin has consistently demonstrated a strong ability to build relationships, drive results, and add significant value to our customers," said Jeremy Payne, Vice President of Sales. "His promotion reflects both his past contributions

and our confidence in his ability to guide our strategic account efforts into the future."

Since joining TMP, Waynick has played a critical role in developing national account relationships and expanding market reach. His deep understanding of the AVL landscape, combined with his extensive network of strong industry relationships, has made him a valuable asset to both the sales team and TMP's partners.

"I'm proud to take on this role and help shape the next phase of growth," said Waynick. "With ever expanding opportunities in the AVL space, my focus will be on strengthening partnerships, driving performance, and creating long-term value for TMP and most importantly our clients."

Waynick's promotion aligns with TMP's



continued investment in the AVL category and its commitment to delivering innovative solutions and exceptional service to customers nationwide.

SETTING THE FIRST NOTE: THE BEGINNER TRUMPET ROUNDTABLE

By Christian Wissmuller

Every trumpet player starts somewhere, and for most, that journey begins with a beginner instrument. While entry-level trumpets are often viewed as a stepping stone, they're among the most important products in any dealer's inventory—shaping first impressions, driving long-term customer relationships, and ultimately influencing whether a new player sticks with the instrument. In this roundtable, leading manufacturers discuss what's changing in the beginner trumpet category, from evolving expectations around quality and value to the role of educators, rental programs, and innovation in attracting the next generation of players.

What's currently your top-selling model of beginner trumpet? What factors do you think are driving its success in today's market? What features and specifications are most important for dealers, educators, and parents to consider when selecting a beginner trumpet in 2026?

Ruud Corstjens: Our Prologue trumpet is currently our only model for developing players. While we wouldn't describe it as a traditional entry-level trumpet, it is often chosen by ambitious beginners, looking for an instrument they can grow with for many years. We also see that our Sonic, which sits one step higher in the range, is increasingly popular among advancing students.

The success of the Prologue is driven by its balance of accessibility and performance. It offers an easy response, reliable intonation, and the playing characteristics musicians associate with the Adams brand, while remaining straightforward and approachable for younger players. Today's customers are looking for more than just an affordable instrument. They want quality, reliability, and confidence that their investment will continue to serve the student as their skills develop. We believe the Prologue succeeds because it focuses on the fundamentals that matter most



Ruud Corstjens, Marketing & Artist Relations, Adams Musical Instruments

A beginner should not have to fight the instrument. Good valve action, stable intonation, and a free-blowing design help students develop proper technique and enjoy making music from the very beginning. Teachers want an instrument that responds predictably, while parents want confidence that their investment will last beyond the first year or two.

We also believe it is important to look beyond specifications alone and consider what's behind the instrument. In today's market, there are many low-cost options available online, but not all instruments are built to the same standards. Manufacturing consistency, quality control, spare parts availability, service support, and responsible production practices all play an important role in the long-term ownership experience.

Sarah Hollandsworth: Our top-selling beginner trumpets remain the YTR-2330 and YTR-200ADII. Both models have earned the trust of educators, dealers, and families by delivering the consistency, reliability, and playability that are critical for beginning students. Teachers know what to expect from them, repair technicians know how they perform over time, and students benefit from instruments designed to support musical development from day one.

When selecting a beginner trumpet, dealers, educators, and parents should focus on the factors that contribute most directly to student success. An instrument should respond easily, encourage good playing habits, and hold up to the demands of daily classroom and home use. When students can focus on making music rather than struggling with their equipment, they're more likely to stay engaged, build confidence, and continue their musical journey.



Jeremiah True: The PMT-51SP is our top-seller, due to its price-to-performance ratio, availability, and product support. Important features to consider include parts availability, product support, durability, and response.

Tom Mensch: The Jupiter JTR700A in lacquer and JTR700AS in silver plate remain our cornerstone trumpets for the beginner market. The key features that lead to their durability in the hands of young students are what keep them a popular choice. In today's market, educators and parents are looking for an instrument that will not become a barrier to a student's progress, and the consistent quality and reliability of the 700 Series has earned the trust of band directors across the country.

When selecting a beginner trumpet, the leadpipe material matters – rose brass resists red rot more than other alloys at a critical point. Stainless steel pistons are also important, as they are resilient to abuse and inconsistent oiling. The case is worth considering as well, since it needs to fit on school buses and in instrument storage lockers. One other key feature to look for is an adjustable slide ring on the third valve.

Have you seen any notable changes in the entry-level trumpet market over the past few years, whether in customer expectations, pricing, materials, or design?

JT: Parents and educators want familiarity, a fair price, and a “mainstream” instrument that actually plays – not a “trumpet shaped object.”

TM: Music educators who are aware of instrument design changes over the years now expect that entry level instruments incorporate similar improvements. Dealers also need

to have more accurate and instant access to inventory levels in order to serve their customers more efficiently. Instruments are moving towards lighter weight while maintaining structural rigidity, and the balance between those two aspects is crucial in beginning band instrument design.

RC: One of the most notable developments has been the growing availability of extremely low-cost instruments through online marketplaces and direct-to-consumer platforms.

While these instruments can appear attractive from a pricing perspective, we encourage customers to look beyond the initial purchase price. Questions such as manufacturing consistency, material quality, long-term reliability, availability of spare parts, and after-sales support have become increasingly important

At the same time, we see parents, educators, and dealers becoming more informed. They increasingly understand that an instrument is not just a product, but an investment in a student's musical development. As a result, there is growing appreciation for instruments that offer reliable performance, responsible manufacturing, and the support of an established company with a long-term commitment to music education.

SH: One of the biggest changes we've seen is that families are doing more research before making a purchase. Parents want to understand not only the initial cost of an instrument, but also brand reputation and long-term value. Educators and dealers are having more conversations about reliability, serviceability, and how an instrument will support a student's progress over several years.

At the same time, schools and families continue to face budget pressures. As a result, there is greater focus on products that offer lasting quality and dependable performance. In many ways, that has reinforced the importance of well-built instruments that can remain in service for years rather than simply meeting a price point.



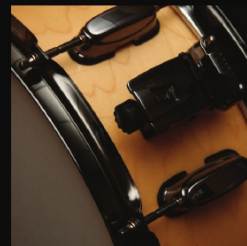
*Sarah Hollandsworth, Product Marketing Manager - Winds & Strings,
Yamaha Corporation of America*

How are you working with music dealers and school music programs to help ensure beginning students have a positive first experience with their instrument?

SH: Creating a positive first experience starts with strong partnerships. We work closely with music dealers, educators, and school music programs to understand



Make Money Renting School Band & Orchestra Instruments



NO STARTUP COST

We'll stock your store, create your website, and mail custom-branded flyers to your schools.

CONSISTENT CASH

Our program offers the highest commission rate in the industry PLUS a per-new account bonus.

NO COLLECTIONS

VIR Affiliates are *never* responsible for customer collections. We handle it from start to finish.

NEVER A CONFLICT

Unlike the others, we don't operate retail stores, websites or catalogs that compete *against* you.

GET STARTED NOW

Scan the QR code and watch our 2-minute video.



www.veritas-online.com
800-578-9724

their needs and help connect students with instruments that set them up for success.

That support includes product education, dealer training, ongoing collaboration with educators, and a service network that helps keep instruments performing at their best. Just as important, we strive to maintain product availability during critical back-to-school periods so that students can begin their musical journey without unnecessary delays. Our shared goal is simple: help students make a great first sound and develop a lifelong connection to music.

TM: As a former music educator for nearly three decades, the issues that keep students from being engaged are ones KHS understands firsthand. As a company, KHS can help through professional development of the music educator via our Academic Alliance programs, as well as offering a quality instrument that will not hold a student back from their development. That experience on the receiving side of the industry is how KHS looks at our solutions to help support young musicians and educators be successful. Educators who choose our products will have a manufacturer in their corner in more ways than providing an instrument.



Tom Mensch, Brass Instrument Brand Manager, KHS America

RC: We believe that a student's first musical experience can have a lasting impact on their relationship with music. That is why we work closely with our dealer network, educators, and school programs to ensure that students start on instruments that are properly prepared, adjusted, and ready to play. Even the best-designed instrument can become frustrating if it is not correctly set up. Beyond the instrument itself, we believe the company behind the instrument matters. Dealers and educators need

a reliable partner that can provide service, technical support, spare parts, and expertise when needed.

JT: St Louis Music, the exclusive distributor of all things P. Mauriat North America, has a band instrument shop with 3 professional brass and woodwind technicians. Every PMR instrument that leaves SLM has been inspected for manufacture quality, playability, and receives a full shop "set up."

Durability and ease of maintenance are critical for first-time players. What design elements or manufacturing improvements have you introduced to address these concerns?

JT: The PMT-51SP features a simple, straightforward design, durable valve-block, and rugged case.



Jeremiah True, Brand Manager, P. Mauriat North America

RC: The Prologue features durable stainless-steel valves, a robust yellow brass bell, and a straightforward construction that makes routine maintenance simple. The instrument is built to withstand the demands of regular practice, school use, and transportation while maintaining consistent performance. Equally important is manufacturing consistency. Every instrument must perform as expected from the moment it leaves the case. Reliable valve action, stable slide fit, and accurate assembly are all essential for beginning players who are still developing their technique.

TM: Besides design elements already discussed, over the years we have doubled down on material science, refining our piston manufacturing process to ensure a tighter fit and smoother action.

SH: Beginner instruments have to withstand years of use in classrooms, rehearsals, performances, and the day-to-day realities of student life, so durability is a key consideration throughout the design and manufacturing process.

For Yamaha, that starts with consistent manufacturing standards and rigorous quality control. Precise valve alignment, robust bracing, and reliable assembly help ensure instruments perform as intended from day one and continue to perform throughout years of student use. We also place significant emphasis on serviceability because schools, dealers, and repair technicians need instruments that can be maintained efficiently and returned to students quickly.

Our commitment to quality extends beyond production itself. Yamaha's limited five-year warranty on wind instruments reflects our confidence in the instruments we build and our commitment to supporting our customers over the long term. It remains one of the strongest warranty offerings in the school music market.

As dealers prepare for the back-to-school season, what advice would you offer to help them maximize beginner trumpet sales and better serve school band customers?

RC: Our advice would be to focus on the long-term musical experience rather than the initial purchase price alone. Parents often appreciate understanding the difference between a very basic student instrument and an instrument that can support years of musical development. Demonstrating playability, reliability, and overall value can be far more effective than discussing specifications alone.

We would also encourage dealers to explain the importance of buying from a trusted manufacturer. Ultimately, the goal is not simply to sell a trumpet. It is to help create a positive musical experience that keeps

students engaged, motivated, and excited about making music for years to come.

TM: My advice to dealers is to focus on the relationship more than the transaction. More importantly, be the "expert in the room" for the parents. For example; explain why a rose brass leadpipe matters and why a molded case is worth the investment. When you help a parent understand that they are buying a tool for their child's success, the sale follows naturally. Serve the band director's needs by being the reliable partner who provides instruments that stay in the classroom and out of the shop.

SH: The most successful dealers position themselves as partners in music education rather than simply sellers of instruments. That starts with building strong relationships with local educators and understanding the specific needs of school music programs. It also means preparing early, ensuring that inventory is available when families make decisions, and helping customers understand the long-term value of a quality instrument.

For many parents, this is their first experience purchasing a musical instrument. Dealers who take the time to educate families, answer questions, and guide them toward the right solution create trust that often extends well beyond the initial purchase. Those relationships benefit not only the dealer, but also the student and the broader music community.

JT: St. Louis Music offers multiple financing and fall dating programs designed to fit every dealer's budget and needs. However, placing orders sooner rather than later is always recommended. I would suggest the dealer contact their dedicated, human, in-house Customer Success Manager (CSM) and work with them to place an order that is appropriate and affordable.



THUNDER ROAD GUITARS DOUBLES DOWN

By Christian Wissmuller

Frank Gross has never been content to think small. Since founding Thunder Road Guitars, he has built the Seattle-based retailer into one of the industry's premier destinations for vintage, boutique, and custom instruments. Now, with the opening of a significantly larger flagship location, Gross is positioning the business for its next chapter — creating more space for inventory, events, repairs, and community while reinforcing the customer experience that has defined Thunder Road from the beginning. In this Q&A, Gross discusses the vision behind the move, the challenges of growing an independent music retailer, and why investing in brick-and-mortar retail still matters in today's MI marketplace.



A New Voice for Classical Saxophonists

The New Rousseau 3.0
Classic RC Series



A new mouthpiece that feels unmistakably Rousseau yet expands the tonal palette available to classical players.

jodyjazz.com

The new space is a major expansion at a time when many MI retailers are shrinking their physical footprint. What gave you the confidence to invest so heavily in brick-and-mortar retail right now?

I grew up in and around guitar shops, and the culture has always been deeply important to me. Since day one, the goal with Thunder Road has been to create a place where people can walk in and truly experience guitars to touch them, hear them, feel them, and connect with them in a way that simply doesn't happen through a screen. Over the years, we've built an environment that not only showcases our curated inventory, but also fosters a real community around the shop. The internet is an incredible tool for us and many in our business, but there's something special about people connecting in person through music and a shared passion for guitars. That belief gave us the confidence to invest in this new space and take what we already do to an even greater level.

You've said Thunder Road is "doubling down" on the in-person experience. What does that mean in practical terms for customers walking into the new store?

This will be the fourth version of our flagship Seattle store. Each time we've moved, it's been for different reasons, but the process of building and remodeling those spaces has generally followed a familiar formula. With this new location, we wanted to completely flip the script and rethink how the store looks, feels, and functions, while being much more intentional about the customer experience we wanted to create. We partnered with a Seattle design firm called Design Well Spent to design the aesthetic, layout, and overall flow of the showroom, and we couldn't be happier with the results. Even if you took every instrument out of the building, it would still feel like an inspiring and thoughtfully designed space, and that's something we hadn't really achieved before. In practical terms for customers, we've also created areas tailored to different types of players and collectors — dedicated spaces for our acoustic customers, vintage enthusiasts, and customers who love pedals and effects. We wanted people walking through the doors to feel like parts of the store were built specifically with them in mind, and we think they'll really appreciate the thought and intention behind it.

How has customer behavior changed since you opened the business in 2011, particularly in the balance between online sales and in-store engagement?

Thunder Road originally started as an e-commerce business and operated exclusively online for the first ten months we were open. Over the years, the balance between online and in-store sales has shifted back and forth, but these days it feels like a pretty even 50/50 split. The internet has always been a huge part of what we do — from social media to selling and shipping guitars to customers all over the world. The guitar market has also become more accessible than ever. If someone is searching for a specific guitar, pedal, or amp, there's a good chance they can find it with a quick online search. During the pandemic, we saw a boom unlike anything I'd experienced before. Demand for vintage and used guitars, along with unique custom shop instruments, absolutely skyrocketed, and it felt like we were selling inventory faster than we could replace it. Since then, customer behavior has shifted again. Buyers today seem more thoughtful and price-conscious. They're taking more time, doing more research, and being more selective with their purchases. Everyone loves a great deal, and it's important to us that we continue offering quality instruments at price points that feel both competitive and compelling for our customers.

Thunder Road started in a one-bedroom apartment with fewer than a dozen guitars. Looking back, what were the key turning points that transformed it into one of the Pacific Northwest's leading independent guitar shops?

If I had to point to three major moments that felt like giant leaps forward for the business and the Thunder Road brand, the first would be opening our first brick-and-mortar location, the second would be opening our Portland store in 2017 with my partner Will York, and the third would be making the jump into carrying new instruments in 2019. Up until that point, we had primarily focused on vintage and used gear. While that is still a huge part of our identity, expanding into new instruments opened up an entirely new side of the business. Over the years we've brought in many of our favorite brands, including Fender, Gibson, Martin, Collings, Rickenbacker, Jackson, Two-Rock, Benson, and many others. One of the things that makes that especially exciting is that we work closely with these companies to create instruments that are either exclusive to Thunder Road or built with specifications you won't typically find elsewhere. It was important to us that even if we carry



Thunder Road Guitars owner & founder Frank Gross (photo: Frank Ashcroft)

brands you can find at larger retailers, our selection still feels curated and intentionally chosen for our customers. Designing unique guitars with some of our favorite companies has become one of the most rewarding parts of the job.

Independent MI retail has faced enormous pressure over the last decade from e-commerce, big-box competition, and changing consumer habits. What do you think independent dealers still do better than anyone else?

I believe personal connection is where independent dealers still have a real advantage. Guitars can be found almost anywhere online today, but relationships are much harder to replicate. At Thunder Road, our staff turnover is extremely low, and many of our team members know our local customers by name. That creates trust and a sense of community that develops over time. We're not focused on simply selling someone a guitar — we're focused on helping them find their guitar. That level of attention and customer experience is something independent shops can do exceptionally well, and it's something we've always tried to build Thunder Road around.

Your inventory combines carefully selected new instruments with vintage guitars sourced through extensive travel and guitar shows. How important is curation to Thunder Road's identity and success?

Curation is a huge part of Thunder Road's identity and has been since the beginning. We originally started as a vintage and used business, and vintage gear has always been part of both my personal DNA and the store's foundation. My business partner, Will York, and I travel to a number of vintage guitar shows around the country each year to hand-pick inventory for both stores. Not only is it a lot of fun, but it also allows us to create an experience in the shop that feels unique. We're always searching for cool, unusual, rare, and sometimes truly unexpected

instruments that customers may not have the chance to see elsewhere. We'll often return from these trips with 40–50 guitars, and our local customers always get excited to see what came back with us. For me personally, as someone who has always been a vintage guitar junkie, it's one of the most rewarding and enjoyable parts of the job. The curation side of the business is what gives Thunder Road its personality and helps make the experience feel different.

What role does community play in your business model, and how are you designing the new space to strengthen that connection?

Community plays a huge role in what we do and has always been a core part of Thunder Road. Our new location is right in the heart of West Seattle, where I live and grew up. We've been part of this neighborhood since our inception, and over the years we've built relationships with so many of our local customers that we truly consider many of them friends. With the additional space in our new showroom, we're excited to create more opportunities for people to gather and connect. We plan on hosting events with some of our favorite industry partners, musicians, and other local businesses. Our goal is for Thunder Road to be more than just a place to buy guitars — we want it to be a local hub for musicians and for the community as a whole. We want people to come in even when they're not shopping for a guitar. If the shop becomes a place where people naturally want to spend time, connect, and share a passion for music, then we've done our job.

What have you learned over the years about creating a retail environment that appeals to both serious collectors and everyday working musicians?

We've always tried to have a little something for everyone who walks through our doors, whether that's a 13-year-old kid and their parents

searching for a first electric guitar or one of our musician clients looking for a very specific guitar, pedal, or amplifier. While it's impossible to carry everything, we work hard to maintain a versatile selection so that just about anyone can find an instrument that fits what they're looking for. One of the fundamental things we've learned over the years is the importance of staying true to what we know and genuinely care about. We don't try to be everything to everyone. We don't stock drums, PA equipment, keyboards, and every category under the sun. We're a guitar shop, and we focus on the gear we know, use, and are passionate about as musicians and guitar fans ourselves. I think people can feel that authenticity. Whether someone is a serious collector or a working musician, they want to walk into a place where the people behind the counter genuinely understand and care about the instruments they're selling.

The guitar market experienced dramatic highs during the pandemic boom and some cooling afterward. What trends are you seeing now in customer demand and the vintage market?

During the height of the pandemic, we saw a level of demand for guitars that I had never experienced in all my years doing this. We'd attend vintage guitar shows in 2021 and 2022 and it felt like an absolute frenzy. A lot of instruments were selling faster than we could replace them. Around 2023 things began to cool off, and the market as a whole felt like it was going through a bit of a "commerce hangover," so to speak. Since then, I think things have normalized and are now more in line with where they were before the pandemic. That said, vintage guitars continue to be very strong. What we're seeing now is that customers are generally more selective and informed in their buying decisions. If we're sourcing vintage guitars that are clean, original, and priced appropriately for the current market, we're still able to find them great homes in a relatively short amount of time.



How do you balance maintaining the culture and personality of an independent shop while scaling to multiple locations and a much larger operation?

That's a great question. Despite having multiple locations and carrying many of the major guitar brands in the industry, we still very much feel like a smaller shop compared to some of the larger retailers out there and I think that's okay. We've never set out to become the next Guitar Center or Sweetwater. At times this industry can definitely feel a little like David vs. Goliath, but I've always had a lot of confidence in what we do and in our approach to guitar retail. Any growing business has to evolve, and there are certain systems and processes you naturally have to implement as you scale. We've absolutely made those changes over the years, but I think we've been intentional about making sure growth doesn't come at the expense of who we are. At the end of the day, I still believe Thunder Road has the same heart and soul it had when it all started. For us, growth was never about becoming bigger for the sake of being bigger. It was about creating more opportunities to do the things we love and hopefully do them even better.

What impact do you hope this move will have not only on Thunder Road Guitars, but on the broader conversation around the future of independent music retail?

We put a tremendous amount of thought into the look, design, feel, and flow of this new location because we knew this would be our forever home. I'm not moving the store again! Our hope is that our growing customer base embraces the new space and that it creates an environment people genuinely enjoy spending time and shopping for guitars in. We've always believed that creating a great customer experience starts the



moment someone walks through the door, and the space itself plays a huge role in that.

On a broader industry level, I hope our colleagues at shops around the country and around the world see what we're doing and see that it's still possible. It's still possible to invest in brick-and-mortar retail, and it's still possible to carve out your own identity in an industry that can sometimes feel crowded or oversaturated.

With the grand opening that just took place June 6–7, what can customers and industry peers expect to see in the new space that reflects where Thunder Road is headed next?

The new store is definitely a bit of a departure from the look and feel of our current location. With our existing space, we created a clean, minimalist environment that allowed the inventory to really take center stage and bring the room to life. From day one with this new location, our goal was to take that idea to another level. I believe we've created a place that feels beautiful, inspiring, and engaging even before a single guitar is added to it. We really went the extra mile with this build-out, and I think customers will feel that the moment they walk through the doors or even when they see it through our social media. Beyond the design itself, we've also been stashing away some really exciting vintage and used pieces over the last several months that we've been waiting to unveil, along with a great selection of guitars and amps from some of our favorite industry partners. More than anything, I think what people will see is a reflection of where Thunder Road is headed: a deeper investment in experience, community, and creating a place people genuinely want to spend time in. I'm really excited to start merchandising the space and finally see it come to life.

PIANO BEATS GUITAR BY 61% AND IT'S NOT EVEN CLOSE

By Shifa Ali



Shifa Ali, lead researcher at Wiingy Research.

Last month's issue of *MMR* Magazine took an in-depth look at the increase in home digital keyboard sales. We just received the results of a study that looks at this development.

The most popular instrument in America's bedrooms used to be the guitar. The data says it is not anymore.

Piano pulls 61% more learning searches than guitar.

TOTAL MONTHLY US LEARNING-INTENT SEARCHES BY INSTRUMENT CATEGORY

Source: Wiingy

Across the top 20 songs Americans most want to learn on piano, total monthly search volume comes to 1,152,970. Across the top 20 on guitar, it is 714,190. A gap of 438,780 searches a month, or 61%, for songs of equivalent cultural weight.

Short-form video rewards piano covers more than guitar covers. TikTok and YouTube Shorts favor melody-forward content on a vertical screen. A piano cover does that cleanly. A guitar cover does not.

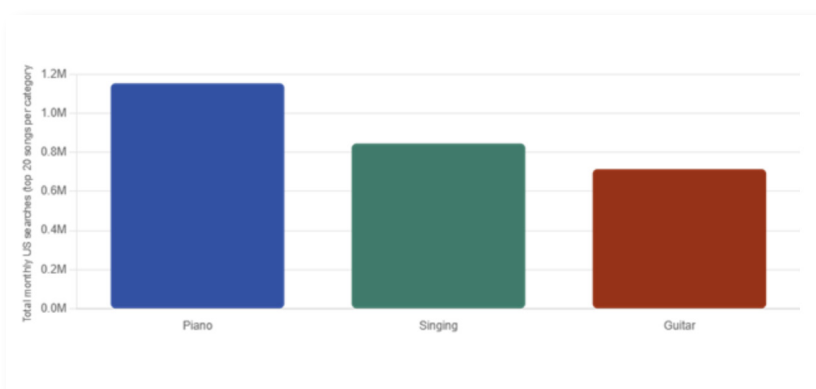
The entry barrier has collapsed. A 49-key MIDI controller now costs less than a decent acoustic guitar. AI piano apps like Simply Piano and Flowkey listen to what you play and correct you in real time. No tuning, no callouses, no amp.

The top songs are keyboard-led. Golden, Ordinary, Die With A Smile, BIRDS OF A FEATHER all open with piano hooks, not guitar riffs. Learners reach for the instrument that's featured on their favorite tunes.

The bedroom guitarist is not extinct. Pink Pony Club, Manchild, and Riptide still pull serious six-string volume. But in the first year of our tracking, the bedroom pianist is the dominant figure of an American summer.

HOW WE FOUND THE SONGS AMERICANS ARE TRYING TO LEARN

We analyzed twelve months of Google search data on 2,077 learning-intent keywords across 40 candidate summer songs. Streaming volume measures listening. We measured the opposite: what Americans are walking over to the piano or picking up the guitar to actually play.



Song Selection

The 40-song shortlist was drawn from three independent sources: Spotify's 2025 and 2026 summer playlists, Billboard's Songs of Summer charts, and Rolling Stone's all-time and decade rankings. Each song received a pre-search composite score out of 70: multi-source presence (30), learnability across three instruments (30), and trend bonus (10).

Data Collection

Average monthly search volumes from Google Keyword Planner, United States, April 2025 through March 2026. The twelve-month window smooths short-term news cycles and captures seasonal patterns.

Limitations

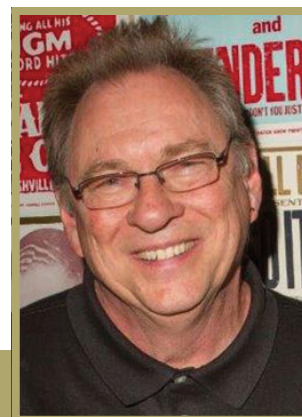
Search intent is not the same as completed learning. A search captures the decision to learn, not the finishing of a tutorial.

Online search captures online learners only. Printed sheet music and in-person teachers do not show up.

Shifa Ali is lead researcher at Wiingy Research. She holds a triple major in Computer Science, Mathematics, and Statistics and has a strong interest in data analysis and trend tracking. Outside of work, she enjoys reviewing movies, traveling, running, and swimming, and is always on the lookout for great classic rock and indie music.

Relationships: the Lifeblood of the Music Industry

By Menzie Pittman, Author of *The New Musician*



As teachers we meet a variety of developing musicians, but admittedly, there are certain students who stay in your life as close friends because the connection has been in place for so many years.

The Music Industry: it is all about relationships

No doubt, everyone agrees that the music industry is unique. One reason for that is the foundation of the music industry depends on a combination of specialized knowledge, artistic expression, and relationships.

While other professional business models may have those components woven into their foundation, in the music industry, “artistic expression” is the core principle of the job. So, not only do we have to master our crafts, but we must also master the ability to display our craft passionately in front of large crowds or worse yet, an empty bar with patrons that are not supportive of our performance. Even in that environment, we must execute our music with the same passion and conviction as if we were playing to a crowd of thousands. Talk about a tough job!

However, there is no reason to worry because in schools, educators teach music business practices; oops breaking news... due to multiple time constraints, lack of interest, and larger class sizes, the music business formula is not taught in most high schools; yet it is a core principle of success in today’s music industry. Therefore, unless you go to a magnet school or a specialized university, which not everyone can afford, where do you learn this critically important skill set?

This is where the key role of music stores, with excellent music lesson programs, enters the conversation. They play a key role in today’s music education, and the success of that role comes down to one important word: relationships!

Lasting relationships in the music industry are the “secret lifeblood” of success

Once a music student finds an inspiring instructor or mentor, the opportunity develops for a long-lasting, creative relationship. These types of music students are

hungry, driven, and they are very resolute and focused on success. It is our job as educators to illuminate the path that is best suited for them. We are fortunate in that sense because at this point in their lives, they are the cubs, and we are the veteran lions. Tomorrow (if all goes according to plan) they will be the leaders in the discussion.

As teachers we meet a variety of developing musicians, but admittedly, there are certain students who stay in your life as close friends because the connection has been in place for so many years. In the process you become close to their families. Take for example the following story about a young lion I met years back.

I first met Alex Williams in 2014 when he and his father Tracy, a bass player, and Chief of Military Police for the National Capitol Region, stopped into the latest music store in town, Contemporary Music Center. Alex was then 12 years old. As time passed, he, his family, and my family remained friends.

Talented and dynamic, energetic, and driven, Alex experienced every role imaginable at CMC; after graduating from high school, his music school of choice was Berklee College of Music. He ventured out, and for the duration of his college experience, when Alex returned home for the summers, he took a role as a teacher for CMC’s summer Rock Camps. Time moved forward. Alex now lives in Los Angeles, California. He and his wife Rachael Williams own Allegra Music Academy in California, where Alex is Director of Education. He has relationships with PRS, Fender, Gretsch, and has partnered with NASCAR teams as well, and Alex is also the guitarist for musical artist Forest Frank. And this is where the fun just keeps on coming. In June Forest Frank played Jiffy Lube in Virginia. It was a home coming show for Alex because his folks still reside here. It was a true joy to read the lively texts surrounding Alex’s appearance at Jiffy Lube! Seeing this fantastic young artist play to a sold-out audience of 28,000, which included his closest friends and family too, is a genuine reminder that relationships are the life blood of the music industry.

Drums & Percussion

Mapex Releases the Artist Collection Aquiles Priester 'PsychOctopus' Snare Drum

As a recognized titan of progressive and power metal, Aquiles Priester has spent decades pushing the physical and technical boundaries of heavy music. The Mapex "PsychOctopus" Artist Collection snare drum stands as the ultimate physical embodiment of that relentless drive, celebrating an enduring collaboration between the legendary drummer and Mapex. Crafted specifically to meet the exacting demands of his intense playing style, the drum is built around a massive 14" by 8" deep, 11-ply Maple/Padauk hybrid shell. This unique combination of tone woods and oversized dimensions delivers a profoundly deep, thunderous sonic profile with an unforgiving tone. It is engineered to have immense low-end projection, guaranteeing that every strike cuts straight through the heaviest walls of guitar and the densest live mixes.

"I love this snare," states Aquiles Priester. "The luxury PsychOctopus badge gives it my personal touch, and it has an amazing presence with a beautiful full-bodied volume for my powerful playing style."

The drum delivers a striking appearance, finished in tough matte gun metal grey and fitted with stealthy black brushed hardware which perfectly frames this ominous instrument. The PsychOctopus 3D printed badge is the mark of Aquiles himself: perfectly matching, molding and connecting both the sound and look into a dark, powerful, uncompromising character.



EVANS Hybrid and Sunhouse Launch New Sensory Percussion eKit System

EVANS Hybrid and Sunhouse announce the launch of the Sensory Percussion eKit System, offering drummers an electronic drumming experience that feels, sounds, and looks natural. Featuring powerful multi-zone Drum Sensors and groundbreaking electronic Cymbal and Hi-Hat Sensors that work with real low-volume and acoustic cymbals, Sensory Percussion eliminates the long-standing barriers of unnatural response and limited nuance in electronic drumming.

For decades, drummers have been frustrated with electronic cymbals and hi-hats due to their unnatural feel and lack of nuance. The combination of the new Sensory Percussion Cymbal and Hi-Hat Sensors, the included EVANS dB One Low-Volume Cymbals, and Sunhouse's Sensory Percussion 2 software preserves the rebound and subtle nuances of acoustic cymbal playing while keeping volume levels 80% quieter than standard cymbals.

Sensory Percussion is designed to work with low-volume and acoustic cymbals and drumheads and is compatible with standard drum hardware. The result is an authentic, musical experience that bridges the gap between acoustic feel and digital versatility. It's the best choice whether you're practicing quietly, recording, or performing onstage.

Key Features

Unmatched cymbal and hi-hat feel: Experience authentic rebound and dynamic response across every part of your cymbal and hi-hats with superior nuance and fluid open/close control.

Every gesture captured: More zones mean that everything from rimshots and cross-sticks to stickshots, hi-hat foot splashes, chokes, ride bells, cymbal pings, and more are all captured when you play them.

Better for learning: Realistic response builds proper technique instead of bad habits.

Your setup transformed: Sensory Percussion is compatible with most hardware, drums, cymbals, and drumheads. Whether you're playing low volume or fully acoustic, make your setup look and feel exactly

how you want.

Melodic and hybrid possibilities: Unlock a new sonic universe with a modular system that expands into hybrid and experimental setups and plays nicely with other electronic drumming gear.

Driving Innovation

"Through the unrelenting innovation efforts of our EVANS Hybrid team, we are proud to introduce a breakthrough electronic cymbal and hi-hat technology solution percussionists have long sought, helping complete our vision for the next generation of electronic drum performance," said John D'Addario III, CEO of D'Addario & Company, Inc.

"Our new Cymbal and Hi-Hat Sensors mark the latest evolution of Sensory Percussion," said Tlacaél Esparza, Co-Founder of Sunhouse. "From the beginning, we set out to bring electronic sound to the drumset by harnessing the full expressivity of how drummers naturally play, unlocking new dimensions along the way. The new electronic cymbals have the level of finesse, control, and expression that makes them feel as responsive and inspiring as acoustic cymbals. I'm excited to see how drummers take their playing to the next level with Sensory Percussion."

Loved By Artists

"Sensory Percussion gives me a lot more compositional opportunities," said Glenn Kotche of Wilco. "I can make it react like a regular drum or cymbal, control effects, or create completely new sounds. It's really limitless."

"I'm in awe," said Michel'Le Baptiste (Lizzo, Normani, Adam Lambert). "I'm blown away."

Availability & Price

The EVANS Hybrid Sensory Percussion eKit System retails for \$1,999.99 in the US and is now available at major retailers or through D'Addario's website: ddar.io/ekit-pr



Fretted

Iconic Meets Modern: The New Charvel American San Dimas

Charvel debuts two timeless guitars crafted in the USA: the American Neo-Classic™ San Dimas® Style 1 SD1 HH FR MPL and the American Neo-Classic™ San Dimas® SD1 HH HT MPL. Rooted in the iconic San Dimas model that defined the sound of the 1980s, these instruments marry timeless design with modern performance to deliver uncompromising tone and playability. A true celebration of Charvel's California heritage, the brand born as a guitar repair shop in SoCal and named after the San Dimas factory where Grover Jackson built its legacy, the American Neo-Classic San Dimas series is built for players who demand professional-grade sonic excellence at an attainable price point.

"Charvel was born in California and so was this guitar. The American Neo-Classic San Dimas is a direct line back to where it all started, the shop, the craft, the obsession with making instruments that players actually want to play," said Jon Romanowski, VP of Product, Charvel. "Building it in Corona feels like coming full circle. The JB/'59 pickup pairing delivers on every level, and the finishes feel as iconic as the guitar itself."

From the stages of the 1980s to today's most innovative players, Charvel has always stood behind the artists who define music. The American Neo-Classic San Dimas series is the next chapter in that story, a USA-made instrument built in Corona, California, that delivers the premium quality Charvel is known for, now at a price point that puts it within reach of more artists than ever before.

Key features include:

Versatile Pickups – The Seymour Duncan® JB/'59 pickup combination covers a wide tonal range. The neck '59 is warm and articulate for leads and rhythm work, while the bridge JB has the output and edge players need for high-gain playing.

Performance Frets – Stainless Steel Jumbo Frets offer a fast, smooth playing surface with exceptional durability, maintaining consistent feel and playability through years of heavy use.

Premium Bridges – The SD1 HH FR MPL's Top-Mount Floyd Rose® Double Locking Bridge handles the most aggressive tremolo use while maintaining perfect pitch, and the SD1 HH HT MPL's Charvel Hardtail Bridge delivers reliable tuning stability and maximum resonance, both paired with a single volume pot and 5-way blade switch for intuitive tonal control.

Electric Finishes – Available in a striking palette of colors including Robin's Egg Blue, Ivory Blitz, Gloss Black and Racing Red for the SD1 HH FR, and Gloss Black, Racing Red, Velvet Midnight and Ivory Blitz for the SD1 HH HT.



Accessories

DEFENDER launches with LINKMATE in the USA

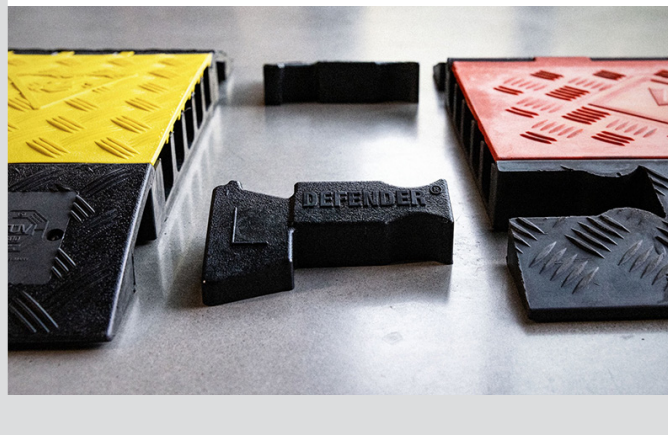
DEFENDER, an Adam Hall Group brand, announces its entry into the US and Canadian markets. With its new DEFENDER LINKMATE, the cable protector manufacturer from Germany is expanding its portfolio with an adapter solution that has been specially developed for the American market. LINKMATE allows common cable protector systems to be used in conjunction with the company's in-house MIDI cable protector system. DEFENDER therefore enables seamless and professional cable protection, even for mixed system inventories, without having to change existing workflows at events, in studios or on construction sites.

Whether on tour, at festivals or in industrial applications, cable protectors can vary depending on the area of application. DEFENDER LINKMATE is fully compatible with the 5-channel systems widely used on the US market and thus ensures uniform cable protection, even with different systems from several manufacturers. The result is clean, safe and at the same time flexibly expandable cable routing that offers a high degree of planning reliability.

With LINKMATE, users in the USA and Canada can combine the advantages of the DEFENDER MIDI series with their existing cable protection portfolio. With its sophisticated system, the MIDI covers a wide range of indoor and outdoor applications. Available in two versions – with four or five cable channels – the systems offer an axle load of 22,000 lbs and are suitable for a wide range of applications, such as events, festivals, sporting events, broadcast studios, shopping centres, trade shows, warehouses, heavy traffic on construction sites and many more. In addition, the MIDI 5 2D modular system with its low incline of 6° enables optimum accessibility for wheelchair users, among others, and ensures high slip resistance thanks to the innovative DEFENDER 3D Lasergrip surface.

Like all DEFENDER cable protectors, LINKMATE is based on an extremely stable TPU (thermoplastic polyurethane), which is mainly made from recycled plastics and guarantees maximum durability in event and industrial applications. The cable protection systems also impress thanks to their patented self-cleaning hinges and a tool-free Easy Lock system that protects against accidental opening of the cover. In addition to an operating temperature range of approx. 22°F to 140°F, all DEFENDER cable protectors have a UL94 V-2 HB flammability rating and are resistant to oil, acid and petrol.

DEFENDER places great emphasis on sustainable manufacturing. In this context, 90% of DEFENDER's materials are recycled in-house – from shredding to granulation. The materials are sourced entirely from Germany, exclusively from certified companies. This ensures that DEFENDER products contain no environmentally harmful PVC. Like all DEFENDER solutions, LINKMATE is manufactured entirely in Germany and comes with a 5-year warranty.



EHX Percolator

Electro-Harmonix has released the EHX Percolator, a modern take on the incredibly rare Interfax Harmonic Percolator, an old-school fuzz drive famously utilized by Steve Albini on stage and in the studio. EHX has taken this very unique circuit and adds an ever useful bias control as well as a secondary clipping mode that lifts diodes for enhanced versatility.

Based on even-order harmonic clipping and capable of tones ranging from raunchy overdrive to ripping heavy fuzz, the tone of the EHX Percolator can be both rich and brash with plenty of boost on tap. Adjust the HARMONICS control to set the input gain of the circuit and the BALANCE control to set the overall output level. The Bias control adjusts the bias of the gain circuit to achieve ripping gated sounds and enhanced sub-octave content. The FUZZ/DRIVE switch toggles between standard clipping operation (FUZZ) and lifted diode mode (DRIVE). In FUZZ mode, the EHX Percolator produces heavier fuzz tones while DRIVE mode makes the pedal act like a transistor drive with a raw, organic character. These controls are all interactive and the circuit reacts dynamically providing its wide range of tonal possibilities.

The EHX Percolator features True Bypass and a footswitch with Latching/Momentary action. Clicking the footswitch produces a normal latching function. A press and hold of the footswitch results in a momentary change between bypass states for a burst of fuzz and an instant change back to bypass when you lift your foot, or vice versa.

This ode to a true overdrive original ships with a 9 Volt battery, is available now and has a U.S. Street Price of \$99.



Cases & Stands

D'Addario Launches New Backline Electric Guitar and Bass Cases

D'Addario unveils all-new Backline Electric Guitar and Bass Cases: premium transport solutions designed to deliver superior instrument protection, user comfort, and accessory organization, all without the bulk of a traditional hard case.

Ideal for rehearsals, gigs, sessions, and travel, Backline Electric Guitar and Bass Cases are ruggedly built, with climate-smart tech and thoughtful storage features, in a single streamlined design that moves like a gig bag. The detachable Breakaway Bag with Auto Lock security keeps accessories organized and close at hand so you can easily move essential gear to and from the stage, while water-resistant materials, reinforced construction, and shock-absorbing padding help protect instruments from just about anything a life on the road might throw at you.

At the center of the design is a Humidipak™ Climate-Control Neck Cradle, which houses integrated two-way humidity control to help keep guitars and basses performing at their best while in transit or storage, no matter what environment you're playing in.

With balanced ergonomic straps, a cushioned back panel, and premium protection throughout, Backline Cases are built to go wherever musicians do.

Key Features

- **Rugged Water-Resistant Exterior:** Built to withstand the demands of travel, gigs, and everyday use.
- **Humidipak Climate-Control Neck Cradle:** Patent-pending two-way humidity control helps keep your instrument in peak playing condition.
- **Plush Interior with Tear-Resistant Panels:** Soft-touch protection where it matters, with added durability in high-wear areas.
- **Breakaway Bag with Auto Lock Security:** Detachable accessory bag keeps essentials organized and securely attached.
- **Balanced, Ergonomic Straps & Cushioned Back Panel:** Designed for comfortable carrying from the practice room to the stage.

The D'Addario Backline Electric Guitar and Bass Cases are available now through authorized D'Addario dealers and at daddario.com. An acoustic guitar version is expected to follow.



Find the new sound

Redefining the Saxophone Experience



CHATEAU WINDS USA, INC.

2300 S. Reservoir St. Suite 208 Pomona, CA 91766
TEL : (909) 248-0679 | Email: sales@chateauwindsusa.com
www.chateau-wind.com



Get More Information



Piano & Keyboard

Yamaha Introduces New ARIUS Series Digital Pianos, Blending Traditional Piano Experience with Modern Living

Yamaha has announced the launch of its refreshed ARIUS Series 88-Key Weighted Digital Pianos, designed to bring the refined touch and sound of a grand piano into the home. The lineup includes full-size models YDP-146 and YDP-166 and compact models YDP-S36 and YDP-S56, offering versatile options for a wide range of players and living spaces.

For over a century, Yamaha has crafted the pianos played on the world's greatest stages. The ARIUS Series brings this heritage and innovation into the home, with instruments designed for beginning players as well as those returning to the piano after time away. Each model delivers the natural feel and resonance of an acoustic piano, paired with features that support learning, creativity and musical growth.

ARIUS digital pianos are designed for everyday living, with refined aesthetics and space-conscious options that are ideal for apartments, living rooms and other shared environments. Available in both traditional upright and slim designs, the series blends into a variety of home settings without compromising performance.

"Today's players want an instrument that complements how they live, not just how they practice," said Alan Vargas, product marketing manager, Electronic Keyboards at Yamaha. "The ARIUS Series was designed as an instrument that fits naturally into the home, blending seamlessly into everyday spaces. Whether someone is starting fresh or rediscovering music, it's about making that experience expressive and supporting the player's musical growth."

The ARIUS Series features 88 weighted keys that replicate the touch and response of an acoustic piano, along with the brand's CFX Concert Grand Piano Voice and VRM Lite technology for rich, resonant sound. A newly developed keyboard and enhanced speaker system further improve playability and clarity, creating a more immersive experience.

Beyond sound and touch, ARIUS digital pianos include modern tools to keep practice engaging and productive. Bluetooth® MIDI and audio connectivity enable easy music streaming and device integration, while compatibility with the Smart Pianist app provides guided learning, intuitive control and practice support. With recording capabilities and a range of expressive Voices, players can explore their creativity and make music a consistent, rewarding part of their daily routine.

The ARIUS Series is available now at authorized Yamaha dealers and online. Pricing starts at \$1,199 for the YDP-146, with the YDP-S36 at \$1,299, the YDP-166 at \$1,599, and the YDP-S56 at \$1,699. For more information, visit: yamaha.io/ARIUS



Sound Reinforcement

RCF introduces EVOX V15

RCF introduces EVOX V15, a high-output 3-way professional column system making its global debut at InfoComm 2026. Designed for premium corporate events, hospitality, live performance, mobile productions and high-profile installations, EVOX V15 combines powerful full-range performance with fast deployment and discreet visual integration, and is available in black and white versions.

EVOX V15 brings a new level of output and acoustic refinement to the EVOX family. Its true 3-way architecture uses dedicated transducers for each frequency range, combining a 1.75-inch neodymium compression driver on a 120° × 40° True Resistive Waveguide, ten 4-inch neodymium midrange transducers and a 15-inch RCF Precision low-frequency woofer. Powered by a 3500 W Class-D amplifier with built-in DSP, the system delivers up to 133 dB SPL in a clean vertical format designed for professional environments where sound quality, coverage, and aesthetics are equally important. The system combines a lightweight composite column with a precision-tuned plywood subwoofer enclosure, offering the power and throw of a larger system in a refined form factor. With fast mechanical setup, onboard presets and complete system optimization, EVOX V15 is built for users who need high performance without the visual footprint and setup complexity of larger systems.

"EVOX V15 is a significant step forward for the EVOX platform," said Alessandro Manini, director of R&D, RCF. "It delivers higher output and extended low end in a system that is fast to deploy and visually elegant. We designed it for professional applications where both sound quality and presentation matter."

When extended, impactful low-end is required, RCF ACE-enabled subwoofer models, starting with the SUB AX Series, include dedicated integration presets for EVOX V15, ensuring perfect tuning at the touch of a button. RCF's Advanced Crossover Engine (ACE) precisely adjusts time delay and phase to optimize system power and low-frequency impact.

EVOX V15 includes a premium padded transport bag for the column array, helping protect the system during storage and transport. For high-mobility deployment, optional protection and handling accessories are available, including a padded subwoofer cover with access openings, a protective transport sleeve, and a transport cart for easier movement across venues and stages.

EVOX V15 expands the EVOX lineup, following EVOX J9, EVOX J11 and EVOX JMX9, bringing the series into a higher-performance category for professional applications.



RCF launches ART 8 Series

RCF introduces the ART 8 Series, a new line of portable active loudspeakers launching exclusively in the Americas. ART 8 is designed for musicians, DJs, rental companies, venues, houses of worship and event professionals who require clear sound, high output and rapid deployment in a compact, accessible system.

"Our new ART 8 line is built to perform, easy to set up, and versatile enough for any gig, all with the sound quality and design RCF is known for," said Justin Brock, vice president of strategic sales accounts & operations, RCF USA. "ART 9 active loudspeakers didn't just enter the professional market; they became the standard. Performance, reliability and exceptional sound, all in one. With ART 8, we're bringing RCF to more users, and we're very excited about its potential in the U.S."

Available with 10-inch, 12-inch and 15-inch woofers, each model features high-grade transducers, True Resistive Waveguide technology, 1400 W Class D amplification and advanced DSP. FIRPHASE processing ensures coherent-source behavior with 0-degree linear phase, enhancing imaging and vocal clarity. XBOOST provides additional low-frequency depth when needed, activated directly from the rear panel.

In line with the ART point-source loudspeakers' deployment flexibility, RCF ACE-enabled subwoofer models include integration presets for ART 8, enabling fast system tuning from the subwoofer interface. Starting with the SUB AX Series, RCF's Advanced Crossover Engine (ACE) precisely adjusts time delay and phase to optimize system alignment, power and low-frequency impact.

ART 8 enclosures are based on the proven ART 9 Series design, featuring reinforced composite construction, M-Brace internal bracing, a steel grille, ergonomic handles, a 35 mm pole socket and M10 rigging points. ART 8 models function as main PA, fill speakers or stage monitors.



HERE COMES THE SUN



MAP \$189 MAP \$189 MAP \$189 MAP \$199 MAP \$189 MAP \$189 MAP \$189 MAP \$189

Amati
GUITARS

IN STOCK & 
READY TO SHIP



AMATI GUITARS
CATALOG

www.amatisonline.com

1 (888) 262-8471

AFTER SEVENTY YEARS, IT'S AS IF THE MUSIC IS JUST BEGINNING.

In 1956, a group of Chinese craftsmen gathered in a Guangzhou side street shed no larger than a single-car garage to pursue a dream. Their ambition was considered impossible: building a piano from scratch that would someday compete with the best in the world. By the end of the first year, these brave entrepreneurs had sold thirteen instruments, and Pearl River would soon become one of China's first domestic piano manufacturers.

Today, the Pearl River Piano Group has grown to be the world's largest piano manufacturer and one of the world's largest musical instrument makers. Besides our 3.2 million-square-foot facility, where Pearl River, Ritmüller, and Kayserburg pianos are crafted, we have expanded into producing guitars, violins, drums, brass, and woodwinds. Seventy years later, Pearl River is still guided by the same belief that started it all: the next great instrument is always ahead of us.



1956



**PEARL RIVER
PIANO**

Celebrating Our 70th Anniversary



2026