

# MMR

## MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW



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Upfront Q&A:  
FMIC's Billy Martinez



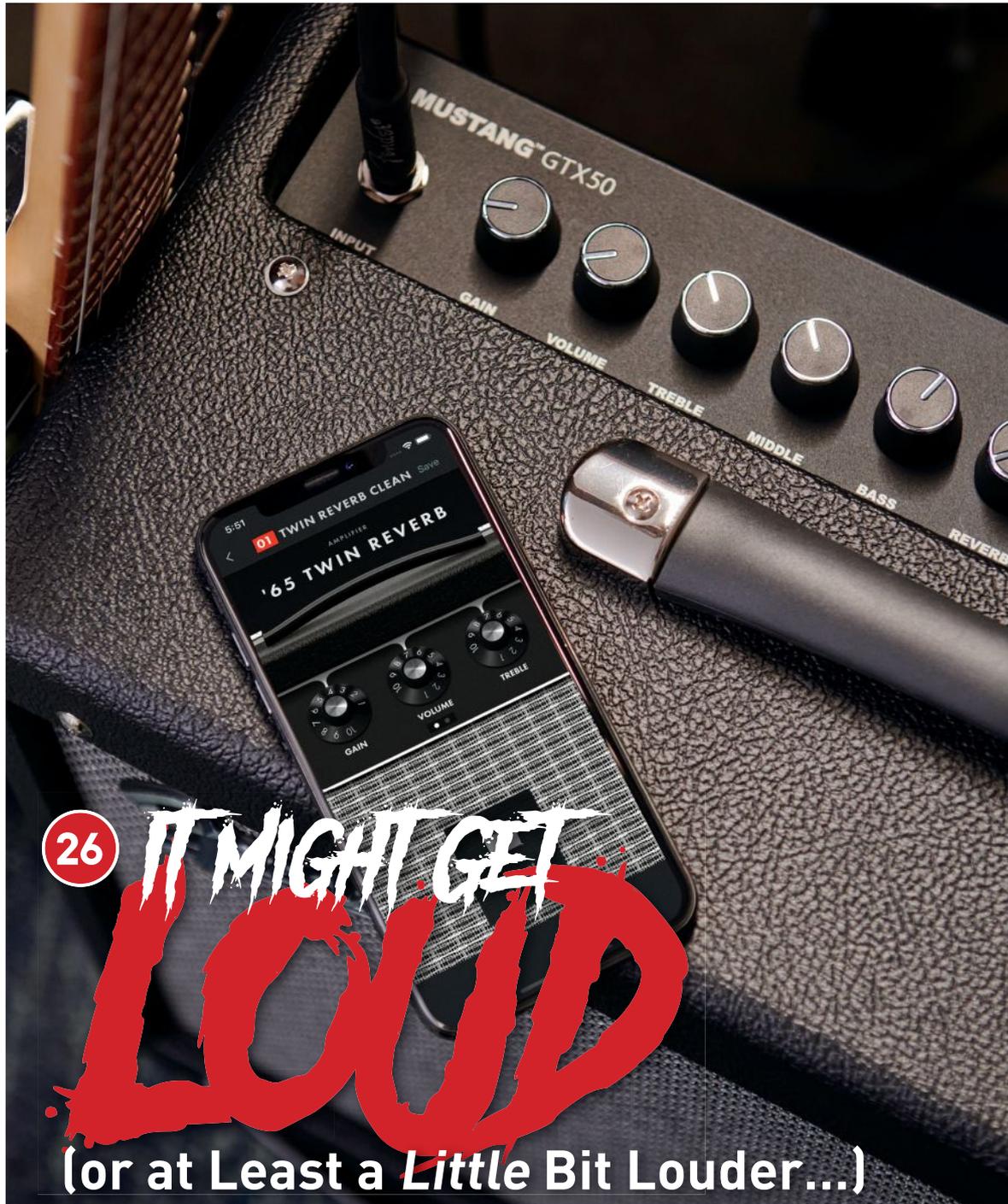
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# IT MIGHT GET

# LOUD

## (or at Least a Little Bit Louder...)

*Trends in Guitar Amplifier Sales Reflect an Altered Reality*





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- (3) Masterpiece Concert Ukuleles
- (6) Matching padded bags



DISPLAYS AVAILABLE



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# Silver Lining? Maybe?

By Christian **Wissmuller**



**"S**ales of Instruments and Music Gear Are Soaring. Will Quarantine Spark a Renaissance?" reads the headline of a late April article in *Rolling Stone*.

As many MI retail operations have been struggling due to forced closures, it would certainly provide some welcome counterpoint to think that, when we do finally emerge from this mess, we'll be welcomed by a slew of new music makers. In the meantime these "soaring" online sales during lockdown could provide a lifeline.

Reverb's David Mandelbrot tells me, "People are buying from sellers on Reverb now more than ever. Compared to this time last year, sales in April were up more than 50 percent, with many of our sellers seeing order volumes among the highest they've ever been." He points to new players as the driving force behind this phenomenon: "We've seen a dramatic influx of first-time buyers and a sharp increase in the amount of new gear being purchased on Reverb. This is encouraging because it points to both new players picking up an instrument for the first time and players shifting more of their gear purchases online."

Sweetwater Sound's Chuck Surack concurs, saying, "We have been fortunate to see an uptick in sales during the pandemic. There are customers who are now finding time to pick up a new hobby, so they're buying their first guitar or keyboard. There are those who are quarantined so they're upgrading their home studios and creating new music. It's exciting to watch and to be able to play a part in it."

Sammy Ash of Sam Ash Music Corp., however, doesn't attribute the spike in online sales to first-time buyers, alone. "Yes, internet sales jumped, but not so much because of a 'huge influx of beginners' I keep hearing [about]," he says. "We did see a spike of new customers and beginner business online and over the phones, but I think it had more to do with 1,000 or so music stores being shuttered over a seven-day period. Just because you crimp the hose it doesn't mean the pressure isn't there. The real surprise was the amount of high-end guitars we sold. We are almost out of our higher-end Martin,

Gibson, and Fender Custom instruments. We sold several guitars over \$10,000 in the thick of all of this. As soon as people heard the factories were closing, they got nervous plus a lot were people treating themselves to a really nice instrument – 'to wait out this storm,' as one of my customers put it ,when purchasing a Martin D42."

Of course, it's not all great news. How could it be?

"Honestly, we didn't see a huge uptick in band & orchestra instrument sales during the shutdown," says George Quinlan, Jr. of Quinlan & Fabish. "From my friends in the industry, it seems like the B&O sector didn't enjoy the big gains that ukcs, keyboards, recording equipment, et cetera enjoyed."

It's not surprising that not all market segments are benefitting during these times. After all, a person stuck at home in a tiny apartment is more likely to want to strum an acoustic guitar than decide to learn to play the trumpet. However, to whatever degree online sales have helped some stay afloat during these first few months, and with the potential of creating a whole new population of dedicated music makers, maybe there's a very real light at the end of this messy, frustrating tunnel. 📺📺



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# Industry News

## D'Angelico Guitars Acquires Supro USA and Pigtronix

With a shared heritage as reignited legacy brands, D'Angelico Guitars and Supro have collaborated as a guitar and amp pairing in their marketing efforts for years. "We have always had a deep appreciation for Supro's products and brand," says D'Angelico chairman John Ferolito Jr. "When the opportunity to acquire the brand arose, we didn't think twice."

"This is going to make all three brands even stronger," says CEO Brenden Cohen. "I can't wait for our customers to see what we have in store for them."



Along with Supro, D'Angelico Guitars has also acquired Pigtronix. Both Supro and Pigtronix were previously owned by Absara Audio, located in Long Island, N.Y. "All three companies having a home base in New York just amplifies the harmony these brands already share," says D'Angelico COO Jimmy Lovinggood. "The last few months have been an extremely challenging time for businesses across the country and around the world – New York City especially. We began this acquisition many months before COVID-19, and although this is a challenging time for every industry, we truly believe in these brands and decided to move forward in full confidence."

Though the acquisition is now complete, the brands will enter a transitional phase, developing a new company structure and revised product plan for 2021. "We could not be more excited for what's to come," says Cohen. "This is the company I have been envisioning."

- Industry News
- People on the Move
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- Trade Regrets

## Regarding The 2021 NAMM Show

From NAMM:

*Thank you for your feedback and support as our industry navigates the unprecedented challenges of the past few months. We have been focused on providing members with important lobbying and education regarding financial relief and also sharing the best peer-to-peer ideas for survival.*

*Of course, the responsibility of producing the global industry's show has likewise weighed heavily. Some have suggested we sit January out and wait until 2022 when the picture will be clearer. However, the majority have shared the importance of getting the trade together to help the industry rebuild and recover. We believe one of the most important things we can do as your association is to connect and unify. It seems that NAMM Chair Chris Martin might have said it best, "Now as much as ever, we need to plan on having our gathering of the musical faithful at The NAMM Show in Anaheim. In 2021, the experience may seem different – indeed, life is different – our need to connect is more important than ever!"*

*No one can really say what the world will look like next January. We are working with the city of Anaheim and the state of California to enable us to use the Anaheim Convention Center. We are also working with federal, state and local health agencies and have retained a medical doctor on our planning team to ensure that we take every possible precaution and follow all known best practices for social distancing, hygiene and enhanced facility cleaning.*

*As with this past year's show, we will do everything in our power to ensure a global gathering of buyers, key influencers and media through our Crossroads strategy. Education through NAMM U, TEC Tracks, and*

*the wide range of additional sessions will provide invaluable incentives for retail buyers, distributors, facilities managers, audio and video installers, recording, live sound, staging and lighting professionals. Rounding out our musical ecosystem, the event will once again attract music educators, artists and leading content creators and the thousands of music business students who are the leaders of tomorrow.*

*We also understand that for some, attending The NAMM Show will just not be a possibility this time. We are building out a digital trade show experience that, while of course not the same as being there, will run concurrently with The NAMM Show and provide opportunities to launch new products, gain media exposure and feature enhanced match-making and customer meetups.*

*We are working with all of our exhibitors on extending deposits and booth payments. Many will want to reconfigure their exhibits to reflect their economic realities, and we are here to help. Your account rep will work with each of you individually to ensure that, regardless of your level of participation, we will have a solution that fits your unique situation.*

*We believe that an industry that comes together to face adversity head-on will be more resilient in the face of the many challenges ahead. While The 2021 NAMM Show will be different than this past year, it is an important step in helping our members and the industry grow and thrive in the future. It won't be easy, but as it was once said, "doing the easy thing isn't always right and doing the right thing isn't always easy." With your support and leadership, we know that we can and will succeed together!*

## GC Cuts Ties with Fulltone

Guitar Center (GC) has ceased stocking Fulltone products both in-store and online, after Fulltone founder Mike Fuller's disparaging online comments in early June (since deleted) regarding the ongoing protests against police brutality.

The news was confirmed in a tweet from GC, which read: "We are no longer doing business with Fulltone and are moving quickly to remove all Fulltone products from our stores and websites."



## D'Addario Foundation Announces Second Annual College Scholarship Fund Recipients

The D'Addario Foundation has announced the second round of recipients of their College Scholarships. Ten students from Foundation grantee programs – nine of them being the first generation in their family to attend college – will be supported for four years with a scholarship that helps cover the cost of college expenses. This brings the total number to 20 students benefiting from this initiative.

The recipients of the College Scholarships are a diverse group of students that have participated in robust instrument programs across the U.S. including Up-Beat NYC, OrchKids, Merit School of Music, New City Kids, Harmony Project Phoenix, Phoenix Conservatory of Music, and Laby Harmony Project of Ventura County. Re-

cipients have been a part of their local music programs for most of their childhood, attending multiple days per week and benefiting from leadership development as peer mentors to younger students.

For over 30 years, the D'Addario Foundation has been dedicated to partnering with community programs that are using music education as a vehicle for positive social change. Offering this scholarship

fund to students in Foundation-supported programs nurtures their continued success and encourages higher education to break cycles of poverty.

The D'Addario Foundation College Scholarship Fund is made possible by a generous donation from the Rita & Herbert Z. Gold Charitable Trust. To learn more and make a donation to this fund, visit [ddar.io/scholarship](http://ddar.io/scholarship).

### NAMM U Virtual Summit to Present Fresh Business Strategies to Meet and Succeed in New Realities Across Business, Audio, and Technology

Beginning Tuesday, July 7 through Friday, July 10, NAMM will present The 2020 NAMM U Virtual Summit: four days of career and business-enhancing webinars and strategies designed to help businesses take advantage of new opportunities and supercharge their future. Presented by NAMM U, TEC Tracks, and A3E (Advanced Audio + Applications Exchange), the free, online Summit will offer a suite of sessions across three unique tracks, Business, Audio and Technology. The sessions will cover topics ranging from online marketing strategies to the future of music technology, presented by experts in each area. Session presenters include Doug Stephens ("The Retail Prophet" and best-selling author) and Scott McKain (customer experience expert); and Mark Frink (sound engineer), Mr. Bonzai, and Mindi Abair, Leland Sklar and Russ Kunkel, among many others.

The Summit will feature one webinar per day, per track, for a total of 12 sessions. A NAMM.org account is required to register; please visit [NAMM.org](http://NAMM.org) to log in or create a new account before registering. The NAMM U Virtual Summit is free and open to all industry professionals.

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## Supplier Scene

### Fender Custom Shop Master Builders Team Up to Create Guitars Benefiting Crew Nation

Fender has unveiled five one-of-a-kind Fender Custom Shop Master Built guitars, as well as a select number of exclusive signed guitars by Fender Signature Artists, that will be available for sale on Reverb to benefit Live Nation's Crew Nation – a global relief fund for live music crews. The Official Fender x Crew Nation Reverb Shop has launched, with 100 percent of the net proceeds going towards extending a helping hand to touring and venue crews who depend on live shows to make a living.



The five Fender Custom Shop Master Built guitars

The five exclusive Masterbuilt Custom Shop guitars were built in teams of two by the esteemed Fender Master Builders, a never-before-seen collaboration from the collective. Each guitar's neck plate will be engraved with a commemorative logo to celebrate the one-of-a-kind guitars and special collaboration. Both Master Builders will also sign the back of the headstock they worked on. All Master Built and artist signed guitars are available for sale in collaboration with Reverb.

Live Nation launched Crew Nation in April to help support touring and venue crews through this temporary intermission while COVID-19 puts concerts on pause. Live Nation has committed \$10 million to the fund – contributing an initial \$5 million, then matching the next \$5 million in donations, dollar for dollar.

## Guitar Center Music Foundation Launches Relief 4 Musicians Online Fundraiser Event Series

To provide needed funding relief to musicians and music programs suffering loss of resources as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Guitar Center Music Foundation (GCMF) announces the launch of Relief 4 Musicians, its first-ever streaming event series fundraiser. The series began on June 23 with Grammy Award-winning recording artist, producer and philanthropist Sheila E.

These online events will be free with an opportunity for viewers to make donations during each event as well as bid on collectible artist-signed items. Throughout the series, 100 percent of the funds donated will go to support musicians in need and struggling music education and music therapy programs. Additionally, funds raised through donations and auction items will help these programs with the much-needed funding for musical instruments and gear, remote learning capabilities, scholarships, and more.

Each event will feature a known artist who is passionate about music, music education, and music therapy. The events will also include a question-and-answer session, performance, auction item sign-

ings and discussion on issues relevant to the music community.

Viewers will be able to donate to the Relief 4 Musicians fund directly through Facebook, as each artist will initiate a donate button for each event. Additionally, text R4MSE20 to 44-321 and Give Lively will also provide fans the opportunity to make donations via smartphone.

Auction items available for bidding will include an LP percussion drum set that Sheila E. will be playing and will sign during the event, a Cordoba 55SCE Negra classical guitar signed by all of the members of the Gipsy Kings, and much more. BetterWorld will host the auctions. Each auction will close before the next event launches.

Any musicians in need may apply for relief funds generated from this program by applying via the Relief 4 Musicians Grant application, which will be activated via a link posted during each event. Funds raised by the Guitar Center Music Foundation during this event will be available to any working musician as long as funds are available, who may be struggling to maintain their livelihood due to loss of income as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

## Gator Launches Donation Campaign to Fight Racism and Discrimination

For every donation over \$25 that is made to NAACP Legal and Defense Fund, Center for Economic Inclusion, ACLU, Equal Justice Initiative, or Color of Change, Gator will give a free, special-edition Levy's guitar strap to each donor, while supplies last.

With this mission, Gator partnered with artists Beatriz and Bianca Williams to create a unique strap that will be given away with donations to organizations leading the charge. The goal is to raise money and awareness for these organizations' missions and create a strap as a conversation piece for musicians to wear and drive dialogue with.

"The design of the strap represents our nation and the values we should live by – justice, respect, kindness, peace, unity, equality, and love for all, no matter the color of your skin," said artists Beatriz and Bianca Williams. "It provides an abstract



Gator's special new strap

view of a deconstructed flag, demonstrating how our nation is pulled apart by racism. The inspirational words on the back highlight the values and actions that will bring our nation together in solidarity and strength."

"This affects every human being, regardless of race, and we have a responsibility to ourselves and others to be better," said Crystal Morris, Gator founder and CEO. "Gator is committed

to being part of the change. We do not want to sit on the sidelines as observers. We want to use our voice to spark conversations that lead to change. We all have a choice. Let's choose to rise together."

To claim a free strap, first donate to NAACP Legal and Defense Fund, Center for Economic Inclusion, ACLU, Equal Justice Initiative, or Color of Change. Then, complete an order form with contact details.

## L-Acoustics Accelerates Plans for Blended Training with Online Education Platform

As many countries slowly lift confinement restrictions, L-Acoustics will re-open in-person education programs this month. Simultaneously, to complement in-person training and to offer the greatest flexibility to users, L-Acoustics is pre-launching a new Online Education Platform. The first program on the platform is a complete, but remote, version of its renowned System Fundamentals training, a prerequisite for all other L-Acoustics training modules. In 2019, L-Acoustics hosted training courses in 60 countries, completing 670 training days and awarding 6,000 certificates. Of these, 240 training days and 2,400 certificates were for the Systems Fundamentals course.

The online Systems Fundamentals course provides an overview of what an L-Acoustics system is, including electronics, loudspeakers and software, and puts them into the perspective of a global project workflow. The course is structured around the full, in-person training, and grants participants the exact same industry-recognized certification. The course is personalized, beginning with a virtual class, followed by several days where participants complete e-learning courses and practical exercises on Soundvision and LA Network Manager. During this week, participants access an online community room to exchange with classmates or pose questions to the instructor. A second virtual classroom closes out the program, with the trainer correcting the exercises submitted by students, followed by tips and feedback.

"The online System Fundamentals course is a great oppor-



tunity for us to try new collaborative and interactive learning methods for the L-Acoustics Education program," explains François Montignies, head of Education Programs at L-Acoustics. "It allows us to continue offering the same level of industry-leading training to the widest possible audience, and to meet the evolving needs of our users."

In-person training will recommence at the company's Marcoussis, France and Westlake Village, California headquarters, as well as at partner locations where local legislation permits. All in-person classes will follow a strict sanitary protocol to ensure the safety of instructors and participants, including adjustments to group size and agenda, as well as supplying masks and hydroalcoholic gel for all participants.

Registration for both online and in-person trainings is accessible on the L-Acoustics website.

## Gig Gear Teams with Indiesigns to Create Line of COVID-19 Signage & Decals Exclusively for Music Retailers

Gig Gear LLC — manufacturer of accessories designed for musicians, roadies, AV techs, and live event and entertainment production professionals — has partnered with Indiesigns, a New York-based firm offering custom-designed COVID-19 signs and decals created by a network of independent artists.

Through this new partnership, Gig Gear has created specific designs intended for music retailers that will help customers socially distance, keep lesson rooms safe and communicate how instruments/showrooms have been sanitized. The MI signage and decals will be available for customization and available for order at <https://indiesigns.co/collections/music-industry-signs>

"We're very excited to be partnering with Indiesigns," said Danny Shatzkes, Gig Gear's founder and owner. "At Gig Gear, we know that music retailers will have particular challenges compared to other retailers when it comes to keeping their stores and lesson rooms safe and sanitized. We want to provide signage that complies with all of the recommended guidelines but still carries the correct vibe and messaging that a music shop needs. Indiesigns is absolutely the company to work with on this as it's known for its beautiful designs that can't be found anywhere else. It just makes sense to team up with a company that exists to support artists by providing signage to the retailers that help create new artists."

"Gig Gear is known in the industry as a leader in product design and customer service — two core priorities at Indiesigns — so this partnership was natural," said Ari Grazi, president of Indiesigns. "Gig Gear's pre-existing distribution channels and relationships will get our safety signage into retail stores sooner, letting them open both safely and stylishly."



## Alfred Music and MakeMusic Create Educator Toolkit

Alfred Music and MakeMusic, creators of SmartMusic, are fully dedicated to supporting music educators. As fall plans are still being determined, both companies are committed to providing a broad range of content and essential tools to assist with planning for the unknown.

The newly-developed Educator Toolkit includes resources on funding for classrooms, proposals for presenting to administrators and parents, music education advocacy, teaching remotely, purchasing SmartMusic and more, making it a one stop shop for educators.

Some key features of the Educator Toolkit are: a presentation for administration; funding information; remote teaching tools, such as ideas, articles, and podcasts to support the ongoing evolution of remote teaching; and advocacy resources.

The Educator Toolkit can be found at [smartmusic.com/educator-resources/toolkit](https://smartmusic.com/educator-resources/toolkit).

# Peavey Commercial Audio Launches New Website



Peavey Commercial Audio has launched its new website at [www.peaveycommercialaudio.com](http://www.peaveycommercialaudio.com). Supporting all desktop and mobile platforms the new site offers a more streamlined user interface, improved navigation, and the latest news and products from PCA's top-selling brands: MediaMatrix, Crest Audio, and Peavey.

The enhanced functionality allows customers and dealers to find what they're looking for faster and more accurately. Visitors to PCA's previous website will immediately notice the improvements in site navigation, content organization, and search functionality. The revamped search function helps to ensure accuracy by calling up small thumbnail photos and SKUs, enabling users to quickly make the right selection.

If users wish to browse instead, the Brands dropdown allows them to select MediaMatrix, Peavey, or Crest Audio, and redirects to that brand's product-focused page. The product "Compare" tool has been redesigned to offer more information in an easier-to-read format. For instance, if users want to easily compare powered PA speakers, they would simply check off the yellow "Compare" button under each item and then click the blue master "Compare" button (bottom-right of page) to call up the comparison chart. To add products for comparison, click the box with a plus sign, or to remove products, simply "x" out the photos or select "Remove All" by clicking the red trash can icon.

Back on the homepage, Peavey Commercial Audio's company updates are presented in a clickable slideshow with photos and links to "Read More." PCA also reorganized its most important news under the Media menu tab, which has dropdowns for News & Press, Case Studies, Videos, and History. Downloads, which includes Software/Firmware, Catalogues/Brochures, and Whitepapers, also offers a simpler reorganization. Further prioritizing the user experience, the Support tab's "Where to Buy" allows users to select International Distributors or U.S. Sales Reps to help refine their dealer search. Support also includes links to MediaMatrix's Training and Knowledge Center.

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# Music China 2020

The 2020 edition of Music China will take place from October 28 to 31 at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre. With the ease of anti-coronavirus measures in many parts of the world, businesses across a wide variety of sectors are targeting a resumption of normal economic activities. Music China, Asia's largest trade fair for musical instruments, will be the last major event of its kind for the last quarter of 2020. A number of the world's renowned brands have already confirmed their participation at this October's event, which is expected to play an important role in pulling manufacturers, suppliers, agents, buyers and music enthusiasts back together, to do business and mingle in one of



the world's most vibrant commercial hubs – Shanghai.

After months of economic downturn in cities around the globe, the importance of a large-scale, well-recognized industry trade fair such as Music China has never been higher. The organizer, Messe Frankfurt (HK) Ltd, is optimistic about this year's show. Ms. Judy Cheung, the deputy general manager said: "When the circumstances ease, Music China will play a crucial role in helping speed up a recovery in the musical instruments industry. While looking forward to the 2020 edition with a positive outlook, we are monitoring the situation closely and will take timely action to adapt to changes in the situation."



## International Brands Demonstrate Confidence in Music China

During this challenging year, stakeholders from across the entire industry are eagerly looking for opportunities to expand their business and grow their networks. As early as June, many leading brands had already confirmed their participation at Music China – reflecting both their trust in the fair, as well as their expectations for an economic rebound. Some international brands already confirmed to appear include BAM, Bergerault, Casio, Kawai, PianoDisc, Saga, Samick, Schimmel, Seiko, Steinway, Taylor, Thomastik, Yamaha, Yanagisawa, and many more.

Domestic brands such as Beijing Shengshi Zhongze Yueqi, Guangzhou Digital Music Element, Ningbo Hailun Piano, Hebei Jinyin Musical Instruments, Hsinghai Piano, Parsons Music, Guangzhou Pearl River Piano, Shanghai Music Publishing House, and Yantai Kingsburg Piano will also join the 2020 show.

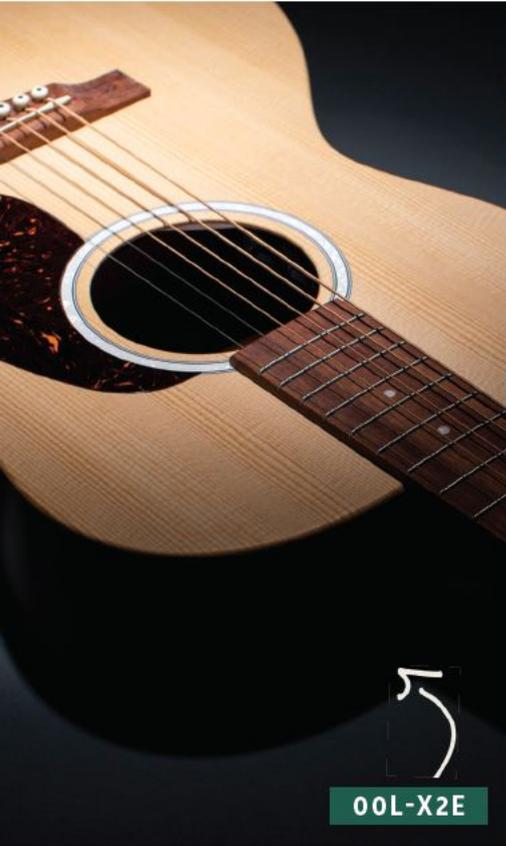


During the recent AES Virtual Vienna Convention, the Journal of the Audio Engineering Society Best Paper Award 2019 was presented to (top, L-R) Benoit Alary, Archontis Politis, (middle, L-R) Sebastian Schlecht, and Vesa Välimäki. The Convention's Best Student Paper Award was presented to (bottom, L-R) Annika Neidhardt and coauthor Boris Reif

### AES Virtual Vienna Presents Paper Awards Before a Worldwide Audience

Winners of the *Journal of the Audio Engineering Society* Best Paper Award for 2019 and the AES Virtual Vienna Convention Best Student Paper Award were announced on Tuesday, June 2, at the AES Virtual Vienna Convention. The awards highlight outstanding research paper contributions from authors around the world covering a wide range of the latest audio science research topics and innovations. The awards were presented during the opening ceremony of the AES Virtual Vienna Convention. The opening ceremony, along with complete convention proceedings and its technical program, is available for viewing through June 30 by AES Virtual Vienna attendees and new registrants at AEEurope.com.

The 2019 Journal of the Audio Engineering Society Best Paper Award was presented by JAES editor Bozena Kostek and was awarded to Benoit Alary, Archontis Politis, Sebastian Schlecht and Vesa Välimäki for their paper "Directional Feedback Delay Network."



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# Trade Regrets

On June 6, NAMM's Dan Del Fiorentino sent the following:

*It is with great sadness that we mark the passing of our longtime member Bob Rockley. Bob passed away on Tuesday at the age of 76.*



*Bob took over the music store that his parents had started in Denver, Colorado. Bob, along with his wife Nina, expanded the products they carried while he focused on growing the guitar department. The store remains in the building that his father built and even as a kid Bob contributed to the business, including designing the store's logo. Over the years he noticed with pride that the store became a hub for guitarists and students alike. With the third generation running the store upon his retirement, Bob was proud of the staying power of the business as well as the passion of his family.*

Dan Del Fiorentino passed along this sad news on June 3:

*Today I received a call from Juliana Holcombe informing us that her father passed away on Sunday. Don Holcombe was a very special person who was a longtime supporter of NAMM and more recently our Oral History program.*



*Don owned and operated several music stores during his long career. Among the most noted stores were those he opened with fellow salesman Russell Lindquist in and around Houston under the name Holcombe-Lindquist Piano and Organ. The stores played a big part in the home organ boom of the 1960s and 1970s with several successful advertisement campaigns. Don served the industry in several ways including as a member of the NAMM Board from 1968 until 1971 and as the secretary for the NAMM Executive Committee from 1971 to 1973.*

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# ON THE MOVE

**Jeff Bauer**, manager for **Keyboard Concepts** in Santa Monica, California has been appointed vice president of sales by Denis Hagerty, founder and president. Bauer will augment current vice president Jeff Falgien's sales management role until he leaves the company in approximately six months, then will work in tandem with another future addition who will handle operations.



**Hal Leonard** has hired **Gregory Roman** to be the general manager of their online general music program, Essential Elements Music Class. In this new role, Roman will oversee content development, curriculum, sales, and more.



"We are excited to have Greg join our team," said Jeff Schroedl, executive vice president of Hal Leonard. "We were lucky to find someone with the combination of extensive music and business background to oversee Essential Elements Music Class. We look forward to him leading EEMC into its next phase, especially at this time when online learning is more important than ever."

**Renkus-Heinz** has appointed **Graham Hendry** to the position of vice president of strategic development. The role places Hendry in a position to develop and execute the creative vision in both product and market development – a key role as the company continues to expand and constantly innovate to help partners place sound precisely where they want it.



Hendry's professional background encompasses engineering, product management and customer facing roles – a unique blend that has allowed him to take on the responsibility for both developing product lines and bringing them to market.

"Graham brings a wealth of experience and he will play a critical role in both our strategy development and the execution of that strategy," said Matt Czyzewski, president of Renkus-Heinz. "He will be heavily involved in product development and market development. We're excited to have him on-board."

**Gold Tone Music Group** has announced a new hire in the company's sales team. **Michael McGregor** joins the organization as sales manager for the Northern Territories of the USA.



"I'm excited to join this fantastic family," McGregor says. "I am truly looking forward to spreading the word about Gold Tone Music Group's innovative products."

McGregor brings more than 30 years of experience in the music industry. From musical instrument retail to performing recording and touring, 15 years in product development at Fender Musical Instruments stewarding Charvel and, most recently, Squier.

# FMIC's Billy Martinez



Billy Martinez, FMIC's VP Category Management, Acoustics & Squier



**The Fullerton line obviously draws upon the shapes of many iconic Fender guitars. To what extent do you think having a uke that resembles, say, a Strat or a Jazzmaster makes these instruments perhaps more accessible or appealing to players who maybe haven't yet "taken the plunge" with respect to ukuleles?**

The Fullerton Ukes have a unique appeal in that most electric players own either a Strat, Tele or Jazzmaster. This gives them a chance to have the familiarity of the look, which tends to entice "the Plunge" you mentioned. It also allows us the chance to use iconic Fender colors in other areas of the brand.

**Obviously we're all experiencing a very unusual, unprecedented reality right now. In the sense that these Fullerton instruments are both relatively affordable and also that the learning curve for ukes is pretty forgiving, it would seem that – completely not by design – now is an especially good time for both dealers and players to have this new line available, wouldn't you agree?**

I agree and with our Fender Play app at their fingertips, it is easier than ever to learn how to play the ukulele. The response to our three month giveaway of Fender Play has been tremendous, which just furthers the idea that people do want to learn how to play more than ever!

**It's still quite early stages, but what particular models have been generating the most buzz since the introduction at NAMM**

The Jazzmaster seems to be the winner out of the gate, but the Butterscotch Blonde Tele is making a name for itself rather quickly!

**Expectations for this line and this market segment in the coming months?**

With a color palate so extensive in the Fender brand, don't be surprised to see some fun new options in the ukulele world! 🎸🎸

**T**he "Ukulele Craze" that began back in 2007, and which many predicted would be a short-lived fad, never really went away. These days, with more folks staying at home in response to concerns regarding the pandemic, people are embracing the entertainment options provided by these relatively low-cost and easy to learn little four-string (usually) instruments.

Billy Martinez, Fender's VP Category Management, Acoustics & Squier, recently discussed Fender's newly introduced Fullerton line, which draws upon the brand's many iconic and widely recognizable body shapes, with *MMR*.

**Can you talk about the catalyst behind the new Fullerton ukulele line? What prompted Fender to go in this direction?**

We love to embrace our rich history in all we do at Fender and these ukes were no different. We love the idea of using our iconic body shapes in a unique and fun new way. And what better space to do that than in the ukulele world?

**Starting way back in the recession of '07/'08, the "uke craze" really took off. At the time, I recall talking with dealers who predicted that it would be short-lived trend, that it was driven specifically by economic factors. Why do you think ukuleles continue to be so popular?**

Ukuleles appeal to a broad base, from first-time beginners to touring musicians and everyone in between. They are a great way to start your musical journey with how easy they are to learn on and play. We also know that the lifestyle aspect of them can be an outward extension of the players personality, so it's become more than an instrument.



**"Ukuleles appeal to a broad base, from first-time beginners to touring musicians and everyone in between."**



## Note From Zach

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# Introducing the NAMM U Virtual Summit

## The online event adds to a suite of member resources as we navigate the new “next.”

This March, we amped up our webinars as COVID-19 brought the world to a standstill. The idea was to deliver vital education for you, the NAMM member, when you needed it most. We also wanted to provide a forum to convene like-minds—even virtually—at a time when we all craved connection with peers more than ever before.

What we didn't expect was the member response, though. And it could be summed up as ... “More please!”

And so we introduce the NAMM U Virtual Summit—an all-new education experience.

Held July 7–10, this free, four-day online summit will feature a series of super-sessions to help you navigate the new “next.” With three unique tracks (Business, Audio and Music Technology), NAMM U Virtual will appeal to everyone in the music products and sound industry, no matter your organizational role or industry segment. You'll discover new ways to win and amplify your success, right from the comfort of your home or office.

Covering everything from new marketing strategies to the future of music technology, these webinars will be presented by NAMM U, TEC Tracks and A3E (Advanced Audio + Applications Exchange). We know you're busy, so we're featuring one webinar per day, per track—for a total of a dozen sessions. We're also scheduling sessions without overlap, so you can watch them all.

You can view the full schedule and register for the NAMM U Virtual Summit at [namm.org](http://namm.org). But just to give you a taste of the program, we're kicking things off with “The Future of Retail in a Post-Pandemic World.” In this opening session, NAMM President and CEO Joe Lamond will interview Doug Stephens, founder of Retail Prophet, on the future of consumer and employee behavior, physical retail and online commerce. And that's just the first webinar!

Get ready for powerful education that you won't find anywhere else. Register yourself and your team now. See you online!

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# Stepping Out in *SoCal*

## San Diego MI Operations Benefit from an Active, Saturated Music Scene

By Victoria **Wasylak**

**T**here's a reason why San Diego was once labeled "America's Finest City." Often hailed as the birthplace of California, the SoCal city is one of the most populous in the country, with a substantial music scene to match.

When compiling our annual market profile this summer, stores were understandably more reluctant to participate after being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic for months. As such, this year's profile is a bit shorter than usual, but still offers a vibrant vision of San Diego. From a music scene packed with Norteño and Ranchero groups, to the area's rich population of budding music students, San Diego is clearly one of America's finest *music* cities, too.



**Neil A. Kjos Music Company**  
Karl Kjos, Sales Manager

Situated at 4382 Jutland Drive, the Neil A. Kjos Music Company has been rooted in San Diego for decades, after relocating from their original home of Chicago, Illinois. Since the 1970s, the music publisher has witnessed the bloom of the San Diego music and arts community.

"We have a vibrant arts community in San Diego with not only talented dedicated musicians, music teachers, and music stores, but creative visual artists and designers as well," shares Karl Kjos, sales manager. "Our local retail partners do an excellent job engaging students, schools, and musicians of all levels and we couldn't be happier to be in an area that has so many

great opportunities. Our local music community is not only an excellent business network for our publishing company, but also gives our team members an outlet to create and perform around San Diego."

According to Karl, the most notable challenge of being located in San Diego is hefty shipping costs for mailing cross-country orders.

"Shipping and travel from San Diego can be a challenge, especially going across the country to the Northeast," he explains. "We are constantly negotiating the best rates through our freight vendors, and work toward optimal logistics solutions for those whose shipments have a greater distance to travel."

After quickly adapting to the challenges of operating in the era of COVID-19 this spring, Karl shares that the Kjos office is already running again, and that their warehouse is once again operating all full capacity (while maintaining state-mandated safety measures, of course). As a city, he says, San Diego acclimated to the new rules and restrictions quickly.

"Our hearts go out to everyone across the country and around the world, as we continue to work in the new reality constructed amid the COVID-19 crisis," Karl says. "San Diego has reacted to the pandemic and new restrictions as well as can possibly be expected. As a company, we could see the rapidly changing situation at the beginning of March would likely require some type of closure. We moved quickly to ensure that our team was ready to start teleworking before the 'stay-at-home' edict was issued from the California state government. As guidelines and best practices were formulated, we promptly established procedures and plans that would allow our various teams to safely continue work. Our warehouse is now safely running at full capacity, and we were able to reopen our office while following city and state regulations."

He adds: "We started out 2020 strong, and we're not where we'd hoped to be at this time, but no one is. We all just have to push forward, be creative in all facets of our business, and work harder than ever to achieve our goals for the year."

While Karl predicts that the city will experience more bumps as the pandemic continues, he's confident that San Diego's pros outweigh any disadvantages coming their way, citing the area's wealth of growing populations.

"San Diego as a community will have a challenging period," Karl says. "A lot of the local economy is based on tourism, which will likely have a slow recovery. On the positive side, we are a military city with several bases, we also have a large healthcare industry, and tech community which continues to grow. San Diego's population increases each year with people moving to enjoy our beautiful weather and take advantage of our job market. We hope continued growth will create an even larger local music community for Kjos Music and our retail partners. In turn, that will further expand opportunities for students and teachers achieve excellence in music for years to come."



**Nick Rail Music**  
Cody Minder, Manager

Over at California-based MI chain Nick Rail Music, manager Cody Minder holds the fort at the Sabre Springs Parkway location in San Diego.

For Minder, the best part of his job as manager at Nick Rail Music is setting up children with their first-ever instruments, preparing them for a lifetime of music-making. Actually, business with local schools makes up a huge portion of the store's responsibilities, thanks to the especially large number of students in the area.

"I see more schools adding music as both a mandatory requirement and an optional elective to students each year," Minder says. "We have the opportunity to open so many doors for new students going into band and orchestra. We also have the added benefit of the San Diego

Symphony. Not only do we have the San Diego scene, but also all of the other music programs and musicians that help feed into San Diego. Even with the current situation revolving around the Coronavirus pandemic, I believe that we will find a way to get back to our 'musical norm' and our music scene will continue to thrive. San Diego has so many schools with music programs that we get to work with and open the door for all of those students who are beginning music."

If there's anything that Nick Rail Music customers have in common, it's the fact that many – if not most – of them have part of their music journey rooted in the store. Because San Diego is rich with venues and clubs of all kinds, including the San Diego Symphony, the inspiration to pick up an instrument abounds.

"There are plenty of venues all over San Diego that offer live music and gigging musicians in San Diego, who are part of who we cater to," Minder adds. "Band



The San Diego Nick Rail Music storefront

directors and their students are a big chunk of what we service on the day to day, but we see customers of all ages and skill levels in the store. From those beginning students who are entering music for the first time, to high school students getting ready for college, and retired folks who are looking to keep themselves busy or just want to continue their music for the pure love of what they do."

Still, even for an area rife with musicians, venues, and MI stores, Minder says the biggest challenge of operating a brick and mortar store right now is the popularity of online shopping, especial-

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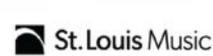
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ly during the COVID-19 pandemic. “So many consumers today with their busy schedules find it easier to shop online than come into the stores, and we have to be able to adapt to that trend, even more so with the growing uncertainty revolving around COVID-19,” he explains. “One way we’re working to keep the music going during these times is by offering curbside and contactless service to our customers.”

Similarly, with restrictions still in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the venues and schools that fueled so much of business for Nick Rail Music are currently shuttered. Still, the people of San Diego keep playing – even if it has to be from home. “With the current situation of COVID-19 a lot of things have been put on hold,” Minder says. “Schools are closed, venues have closed down, and performances have been cancelled. But, even with all of this people are still finding ways to keep music going. We see a lot of customers turning to music and we’re happy to be able to be there for them.”

“San Diego is a vast, dense area with so many opportunities for musicians from local gigs, the San Diego Symphony, or working in the retail industry,” Minder concludes. “We have many amazing music shops around. I’m glad to be able to be a part of it every day!”



**Sam Ash**  
Brett Manjarrez, General Manager

According to Sam Ash San Diego general manager Brett Manjarrez, the city’s music community is unparalleled when it comes to support and inclusion. Since opening a storefront at 3418 College Avenue in 2015, the Sam Ash staff quickly admired San Diego’s thriving, “strong” music scene and culture, which stems from the region’s “best of both worlds” situation: It’s a big-name city that feels much more intimate.

“The biggest upside is San Diego’s strong and supportive music community,” Manjarrez says. “The ‘big city/small town’ feel of San Diego, as well as its geographic location, leads itself to having an almost secluded yet inclusive environment.”

Being located in Southern California, Manjarrez notes that many musicians think there’s a promise for a better selection of gear and instruments in Los Angeles, which often can take business out of town – at least until they realize that whatever they’re looking for is already in stock in their own hometown.

“While there is no doubt that San Diego has a unique and thriving music scene, every SoCal city is inevitably compared to L.A.’s historic music scene,” he explains. “Players may make the trek to our L.A. music shops under the assumption that they will find a wider selection or more unique gear. That is, until they walk into our San Diego location and realize that we have just as wide and unique a selection! Especially our used gear!”

Manjarrez also agreed that San Diego-based music stores benefit from the area’s robust music programs, which are bolstered by the San Diego Sam Ash Learning Center. In just six years, the organization has become one of the strongest Sam Ash Lesson Centers in the country: “Between healthy school music programs, support from parents for private instruction, and a strong live-music scene – we are proud to be part of such a rich community! San Diego’s school music programs are some of the strongest in the state.”

In addition, Sam Ash takes an active role in San Diego’s live music scene with their own in-house stage, especially during their annual “Thank-a-Palooza!” customer appreciation and blood drive event, which brings San Diego acts on board for a day of chow and free goodies.

“Each year we say, “Thank you!” to our customers by throwing a massive party including giving away tons of free gear, grilling up hot dogs, and hosting live music from our local scene – all the while running a blood drive in partnership with the San Diego Blood Bank,” Manjarrez elaborates.

Because there isn’t a “typical” San Diego customer at Sam Ash, Manjarrez says the store makes a conscious effort to stock items that are priced for every type of customer, from beginners and students, to more seasoned pros who are seeking pricey top-shelf gear.

“Because of these wide-ranging demographics, we offer the same in wide-ranging price points in all our product categories,” he notes. “Our ‘Guitars of Distinction’ high-end selections are as plentiful as our mid to entry-level assortments and the same can be found in our pro audio, recording, drums, and band & orchestral departments.”

As the city begins to rebuild life after the strictest parts of quarantine, Manjarrez remains confident that the San Diego music scene will fully recover after the COVID-19 pandemic.



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"Regardless of the genre or area of town, San Diegans reward authenticity above all else," he concludes. "Since our opening, we have employed, supported, and served the local music community, which goes a long way in such a supportive town. Our customers are our family and we feel the love!"



**Harper's Music Store**  
Xavier Prieto, Assistant Manager

At Harper's Music Store, variety is the spice of life. The Chula Vista shop honors and recognizes the especially rich musical tradition of Southern California, which partially stems from San Diego's proximity to Mexico. With that kind of cultural richness in town, the shop stocks its shelves appropriately.

"You have a lot of Norteño and Rancharo type groups, Mariachi as well," shares assistant manager Xavier Prieto. "We have to tailor our inventory and stock just to try and meet everybody's needs, so it's not just guitar, drums, and pro audio stuff that we typically sell at the store. We also sell a lot of accordions and Rancharo type instruments, Mariachi stuff, as well as band and

orchestra [items]."

The San Diego area also packs in a high density of breweries, venues, casinos, and nightlife-centric clubs, which serve both the city's musicians and local music enthusiasts. Cover bands, Prieto says, do especially well.

Unsurprisingly, Prieto also notes that half of the store's clientele is music students, and that Harper's Music serves about 15 different school communities. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, he noticed that there was an uptick in school music program participation, which directly resulted in more business for Harper's Music. As such, Prieto describes the shop's "typical customer" as a beginner musician, usually between the ages of 10 and 13.

"The way we see it is we're not really competing with any of the other mom and pop shops. We've found our niche and we've really tried to stick to that, and that's offering rent-to-own, new and used gear, and a quick turn around repair department," he explains. "We try to carry reasonably priced, quality products in our store from entry level to professional. Our most popular guitar that we sell is a basic \$100 acoustic guitar, or a \$50 ukulele for someone who's just trying to get into music. That accounts for the majority of our clients, helping someone who's just getting started. Being in the South Bay of San Diego, our demographic isn't just the professional - it's also going to be the hobbyist, the enthusiast, the student, or someone starting out. We have a lot of local

schools we work with."

Prieto notes that the biggest upside of operating an MI business in San Diego is the sheer legacy of Harper's Music Store itself. Founded in 1965, Harper's Music has been a community staple for 55 years, even though it adopted new management around 10 years ago.

"Our customers know the name," he explains. "My aunts and uncles have shopped there. I have clients who have their grandsons are shopping here, and they started shopping there when they were children. I would say the most important thing for us, the one thing that keeps us busy and keeps us in business, is the fact that we are tailored to our community."

In a similar vein to what Brett Manjarrez from Sam Ash mentioned, Prieto also says that one challenge of running an MI store in San Diego is that many of the local musicians are tempted to move to elsewhere, eyeing the Pacific Northwest. Prieto himself even considering moving to Seattle years ago, but Harper's Music owner Steve Gouthro dissuaded him. "He made a great point and he said, 'Well, why can't you do it here? You have every retail outlet basically at your fingertips.'"

On a grander scale, Prieto has noticed a shift away from buying and selling electric and acoustic guitars, and more towards electronic music and home production, especially with more folks creating from home in the recent months.

"That's definitely something that's taken the place of a lot of sales in other departments," Prieto explains. "We have plenty of people who are video game streamers or people just looking to start an online talk show or a podcast. We get a lot of those, too, and we can still provide them with good quality, professional audio and home recording products."

Due to the initial onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, Harper's Music was closed for six weeks earlier this spring. Fortunately, Steve secured a small business loan, and was one of the first music stores in the area to reopen. As Harper's Music continues to weather the storm of 2020, their sights are set on expanding their inventory for band & orchestra students, now stocking items like trigger trombones, mellophones, and alto clarinets.

"Since then [reopening], business has been good," Prieto says. "We were still doing full service, so repairs, school rentals and everything. Our website has even picked up. We're just trying to keep the norm." 

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# IT MIGHT GET LOUD (or at Least a *Little* Bit Louder...)

Trends in Guitar Amplifier Sales Reflect an Altered Reality

By Christian **Wissmuller**

**G**uitar amplifiers represent a market segment uniquely impacted by COVID-19: Sure, many individuals are finding solace in playing, writing, and recording music, but who needs a half-stack if you're quarantining in a 700 square-foot apartment? However, as much enjoyment as acoustic instruments provide, there's something about plugging in and turning up – even if it's not quite stage volume – that can't be duplicated by anything else.

*MMR* recently connected with reps from six major guitar amp suppliers to get their take on the current state of the market, as well as thoughts on what the future may hold.

**What are currently your top-selling guitar amplifier models?**

**Chris DeMaria:** Loudbox Mini, Loudbox Artist, and Loudbox Mini Charge.

**Brian Piccolo:** Some of our best-selling models have been smaller-format, low-wattage products such as our all-tube, 5-watt, 1x12" combo, HT-5R MKII. One of its unique features is

a USB out, which works as an interface for any DAW and allows for easy direct recording. The combination of the HT-5R MKII being a tube amplifier and the USB feature makes it an excellent choice for home use. It also has a very accessible MAP of \$499.

Our 3-watt, battery-powered FLY 3 models continue to be very strong for us as well. It is compact, battery-powered, and it sounds great. They're perfect when you want to sit outside and jam. And they're also available in a bass version. (We didn't forget about you bass players!) We can't keep them in stock!

**Shane Nicholas:** In this time of quarantine and social distancing, all of our smaller amps are selling well. Mustangs, Champions, and a few of the Rumble amps are actually outperforming last year. I am assuming this is partially due to a big wave of people learning to play while they are stuck at home. We're also doing great with smaller tube amps like our various Princeton models, Super-Champ, '57 Champ, and others.

**Yoh Watanabe:** The top-selling guitar amplifier models for Yamaha are the THR10II and THR30II WL, both



“In this time of quarantine and social distancing, all of our smaller amps are selling well... I am assuming this is partially due to a big wave of people learning to play while they are stuck at home.”

– **Shane Nicholas**, Director of Product Development – Amplifiers, FMIC





“We have seen sales of smaller 10W, 15W, and 25W combos, as well as acoustic combos rise – mainly products in lower price ranges for home use.”

– **Craig Glover**, International Sales Director,  
Marshall Amplification



of which are a part of our THR-II series of desktop amplifiers that launched in September 2019. They produce a realistic tube-amp tone and feel, come with a multitude of guitar, bass and mic model sounds, and support guitar tone editing through the easy-to-use app, THR Remote. These little amps are loud and a lot of fun to play through.

**Jeff Slingsluff:** We are blessed that the Katana amp line is being so well received by the marketplace – all the way from beginners to professionals. The Katana 50 MKII is doing exceptionally well.

**In the past year or so, what trends with respect to features, sizes, et cetera have you been noticing when it comes to guitar amps?**

**Craig Glover:** We have seen sales of smaller 10W, 15W, and 25W combos, as well as acoustic combos rise – mainly products in lower price ranges for home use. Surprisingly, large backline sales have been unaffected. The demand for UK product is incredible. We would also expect to see an increase in this product category as venues all over the world start to reopen.

**YW:** There is an uptick in smaller combo amp sales that coincided with the fact that many people are homebound.

**JS:** The trend seems to be volume-conscious players. They want the feel and tone of a cranked amplifier. In rehearsal they need it to be loud. On stage and at home they need to control the volume, but don't want to give up the feel, tone, and character of playing a cranked-up amplifier. All of the recent Roland/BOSS guitar amplifiers use Tube-Logic and are exceptional at providing loud feel and tone at any volume. And for those who love the traditional tube amps they already own, we now have a Reactive Load attenuator called WAZA-TAE that will allow them to control their live speaker volume while maintaining the natural feel of their amplifier through the live cab and/or direct out. It even provides effects and presets through the live cab as well as the direct output.

**BP:** Those smaller, lower-wattage amplifiers continue to trend upward. And we've seen a lot of success with our Silverline series of digital modeling amplifiers. The 20- and 50-watt models are the most successful. But they come in a variety of sizes up to a 100-watt head and 2x12" combo version.

We also see increasing demand for products with expanded I/O options, such as USB audio out, speaker-emulated out, impulse response capabilities, and power reduction.

**SN:** There has been a general trend towards smaller, lighter amplifiers over the last several years. There's also an increasing number of options for a guitar or bass player to create their sound on a quiet stage or in the home studio. Some companies offer software apps or digital hardware solutions for this. At Fender we recently addressed this need with our new Tone Master amps, which have been extremely well-received.

**CD:** Bluetooth, rechargeable battery operated, portability.

**There are plenty of signature amps out there or high-profile partnerships with well-known musicians. How impactful do you feel artist endorsements are to guitar amp sales?**

**JS:** For our Blues Cube and WAZA Amplifier line, we offer Tone-Capsules from artists like Eric Johnson, Steve Vai, Robin Ford, Keith Fletcher, Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, and several others. There is great value in artist relationships, from product sales to the wealth of experience shared with the engineering team.

**SN:** We've been very pleased with the success of every artist model amp we've released. There haven't been that many of them, but when we do them, it creates a big buzz and incremental sales. Some have a fairly short life-cycle, and others like the George Benson Hot Rod Deluxe stay in the line for many years. It's great when people buy the amp or guitar not just because they admire the artist, but because the product stands up on its own. Besides the obvious artist models, I'm sure we sell as

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“There is an uptick in smaller combo amp sales that coincided with the fact that many people are homebound.”

– Yoh Watanabe,  
Director of Marketing, Guitars,  
Yamaha Corporation of America



many “regular” amps as we do because you see them played by artists every night.

**YW:** While it’s not always easy to tie sales of our core products directly to specific artist associations or endorsements, we feel confident that artists do play a significant role in creating awareness of our gear. When you combine our brand and product marketing that also includes collaboration with channel partners, an artist’s use of gear can often give consumers extra confidence in their buying decisions. Most signature products are specific to the artist’s needs, and THR has something for everyone.

**CG:** I feel the artist endorsements are one of, if not, the most important part of our sales. For years, artists and musicians have been inspiring people to pick up and play the guitar. Plus, these inspired musicians are always interested in which gear and brands their favorite artists are using. When an artist chooses to endorse a brand, it not only impacts their sound, but also their image and people like to be a part of that. That said, signature amps are very rare nowadays and not many people ask for them.

**CD:** Not really sure. It probably has some impact in the electric amplifier category but acoustic amplifiers are all about transparency and pure acoustic tone. We want the instrument’s natural acoustic sound to be heard without coloration.

Electric guitar amplifiers, particularly artist models, strive to capture the artist’s unique tone.

**BP:** Partnerships with well-known artists are always welcomed and beneficial, but we have seen a change in traditional artist endorsement. Now more than ever, we see a trend of “silent” stages where there might not be amplifiers onstage at all. This limits our visibility in both live performances and in capturing video content for later use.

But because content platforms continue to evolve, today’s influencers and artists can reach people around the world without playing live, going on tour, or being on the cover of a guitar

magazine. If a dealer like Andertons Music or a popular YouTube influencer spotlights our product, momentum and buzz begin to build. And sometimes it’s more than if an artist were using the product.

That being said, having an artist represent and stand by your products is invaluable. Artists who are aggressive and active about their social media presence become influencers in their own way. That’s still a huge benefit to brands.

**It’d be absurd to not at least briefly mention the current situation with respect to the pandemic and the temporary, near-total shutdown of most “non-essential” commerce. While it’s a safe bet that the fallout from COVID-19 has been significant to the entire MI market, how have guitar amplifier sales been impacted, specifically? Are certain models or types of amps selling more during this time?**

**CG:** There has been a dramatic increase in product registrations during the pandemic. This goes hand in hand with more people starting to play guitar or getting back into playing after many years. Either way, we seem to have created more music makers during this difficult time. I think the access to online tuition has also encouraged more people to start or resume playing.

**BP:** We see a slowdown of higher wattage amplifiers, which are primarily for live performance. Now consumers are opting for smaller, low-wattage products to keep occupied while at home. Thankfully, Blackstar has a very diverse offering, so our business has been very strong despite the current obstacles. And we are very thankful for the support that our dealers and consumers have shown during this challenging time.

**JS:** The pandemic has been difficult for many retailers. During the pandemic, customers have still been purchasing, but shifting their buying habits both from how they buy to what they buy. For guitar amplifiers, the need for cranked feel and tone, but at a low volume at home is especially important right now.



“For guitar amplifiers, the need for cranked feel and tone, but at a low volume at home is especially important right now.”

– Jeff Slingsluff,  
BOSS Strategic Product Manager





“Some of our best-selling models have been smaller-format, low-wattage products such as our all-tube, 5-watt, 1x12” combo, HT-5R MKII.”

– **Brian Piccolo**,  
Director of Guitar Brands for Korg USA (Blackstar)



As mentioned before, this is an area where the BOSS amplifiers really shine. Guitar amplifiers is one area where the trend before the pandemic happens to be the overarching need during the pandemic. Katana Amplifiers with their cranked-up feel at any volume and products like WAZA-TAE have been great solutions for guitar players during this time.

**CD:** Loudbox amplifiers are selling well, relatively speaking. Obviously we've been impacted by the temporary closing of brick & mortar dealers, but our e-commerce business remains strong. The Mini has been in the top sales spot for many years, so we're fortunate to have an established product line with a history of strong sales and market demand. If we had just introduced the line this year, then I'm quite sure it would have been more of an uphill battle.

**SN:** Small Fender amps of all feature-sets and prices are doing well, as you can imagine many people are playing from home or starting their learning journey from home. That being said, there has been less interest in bigger, heavier amps, and PAs because people are not playing live with bands right now. The good news is that our brand is as strong as it's ever been, and we've inspired nearly a million players to learn how to play during the pandemic by giving away three months of free lessons on Fender Play, our digital learning app for guitar, bass, and ukulele.

**YW:** Given that people are staying home more, consumer behavior has shown that there is a trend towards smaller combo amps, which are great while being at home – all the reason why people would buy a THR-II amp, for example.

**Thoughts or expectations for this market segment in the coming months?**



“Obviously we've been impacted by the temporary closing of brick & mortar dealers, but our e-commerce business remains strong.”

– **Chris DeMaria**,  
VP of Marketing & Artist Relations,  
Fishman Transducers



**CD:** I honestly can't say. Our hope is that people will continue to use music to express themselves and their creativity at a time when social distancing is the norm. With summer here, people are itching to get out and play on an outdoor patio or a backyard cookout, even if they can't gig at their usual local venue. Everyone I've spoken to – in and out of the industry – says the same thing: “I miss live music.”

If the acoustic-electric guitar category stays strong, then we have a chance of maintaining good sales numbers.

**JS:** I would expect a lot of the same. Amplifiers that have great feel and tone, but controllable volume are becoming more of the norm. And when artists do return to the stage, that's also majorly the case with the in-ear live experience. From amplifiers like the Katana and Nextone, to solutions for your tube amplifier like WAZA-TAE, or an all-in-one amplifier and multi-effect solution like the GT-1000, we've got options for where the market seems to be heading more and more. And all of these offerings provide an exceptional feel and tone while providing a controlled volume experience. I can't wait to hear what artists do with them.

**SN:** In the history of our company, we have experienced various periods of major market correction followed by a significant rebirth. I assume and hope that we will eventually look back on this era the same way. Music is too important to ever think we'll stop needing the tools to make it.

**BP:** We are expecting the segment to continue leaning toward smaller, low-wattage products, as well as utility products designed for home recording.

**CG:** For the MI industry, along with loads of other market segments, these are uncertain times. However, looking at the current market trends and our plans for the future, we are optimistic for all elements of our business. We will continue to support our distributors, retailers, and end-users. **PARLES**

# Santa Monica Music

## Their Story Could be Your Story



By Menzie Pittman

**W**hat could be worse for any business to experience than the pandemic?

Lately, when you visit the websites of most music stores, you will see a pinned notice that pertains to the recent dilemma of COVID -19, and the effects it has had on that business. We have all had that in common, but as hard as it is to fathom, Santa Monica Music (SMM) has encountered a much more difficult fate. The message on their site reads as follows:

*On May 30<sup>th</sup>, this fifty-year-old family run business that has been serving the Santa Monica-Malibu school district was looted. Everything in the repair shop was stolen, and all the operational equipment, computers, printers, transaction equipment was either stolen or destroyed. Please consider contributing to our GoFundMe.*

After you have suffered the financial devastation of an ordeal like COVID, your lesson programs have been devastated by that truth, and your sales have been cut off at the knees, you never really expect a second major event to impact your business – especially after only being reopened a few days. However, for Santa Monica Music, a very bad second storm was on the horizon.

As minority business owners, Lana Fernandez Negrete, her husband, and her father Chico Fernandez certainly had empathy for the killing of George Floyd. As we all did, they watched the story unfold on national news, and were aware riots could erupt in their area. Realizing civil tensions were mounting and trouble was brewing, on the day when the violence and looting did, in fact, erupt, Lana and her husband moved as many instruments as possible to locked rooms upstairs. Then they braced for the worst. Even though they had taken steps to protect their business, no one could have prepared for what occurred. Carloads of organized looters were dropped off with guns and they began to attack and pillage their store as a destination target. Clearly, a definite plan had been scripted and put in place by the looters.

Lana recounts that after smashing the windows, the looters began helping each other get inside; they held up the window curtains for each other to enter. Then they began to take violins that had been set aside as donations for the kids in the store's nonprofit program. The looters cavalierly threw instruments out the window and onto the sidewalk. They were very frenetic and fast and worked in teams. They stole just to steal and destroyed without conscience. None of the looting seemed to have any relation to George Floyd's death. There was no regard for anything, not property or people.

Earlier that day, prior to the arrival of the cars teeming with thieves, Lana and her husband and a few more friends stood in front of the music store dissuading would-be looters with a bat, but then things changed dramatically. The carloads of looters descended on the store in one massive troupe. It was at that point that Lana and her husband knew they no longer could stop them. Within minutes the couple faced gunpoint. The two fled for safety amid the sickening sound of shattering glass from

their storefront window. In Lana's words, "It was so violating; it shook me to my core."

The couple hid in bushes across the street and attempted to film the violation of their life's work. The two terrified business owners watched as vehicles nonchalantly drove by the invasion. Yet cars continued to pull up in front of the store and group after group discharged to pilfer. What seemed to be a lookout texted additional looters, and the entourage of bandits continued. For Lana and her husband, it was like a scene out of an apocalyptic movie. It was evident that these bandits were exiting from the freeway and were not part of any protesters. These individuals had one focus: to destroy any and everything they could.

To add to the devastation of the assault and aggression on their business, the owners of Santa Monica Music still had the responsibility of attempting to put their world back together. They called their insurance company to ask a few questions. If you are not sitting down, you need to sit down for the initial response. They were told by their insurance company since this type of event is an "Act of God," they are not liable! Rest assured, with time and, I would venture to say, multiple complaints, they have changed their posture. But after reading about what happened to SMM you begin realizing that this, too, could happen to any one of us.

**A closing message:** No one saw the COVID crises coming, and it has crippled every business to extraordinary levels. Many music stores may not recover, but what Lana and her father Chico and all the people at Santa Monica Music have just undergone reminds me of the four days of riots in 1968 that Chuck Levin endured. It was a period of civic uprising following the assassination of civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968. Unfortunately, the justified protests were overshadowed by the criminal element who chose to destroy and loot. Washington Music Center was a victim of that disobedience.

On the heels of the Pandemic struggles, the recent protests initiated with the public killing of a citizen by a police officer. Again, as in 1968, those who are choosing to exercise their right to protest are once again eclipsed by those who have nothing to do with the protests but who have chosen to commit transgressions against innocent businesses. It took decades for Chuck Levin, but like a Phoenix from the ashes, Washington Music Center reshaped 30 minutes from the original location and continues today as a family-owned business, and a leader in the music industry. The difference between 1968 and this time is that SMM was already hit with the challenge of a lifetime: COVID-19. It is my hope that the music industry will rally, however we can, to lend a hand. Maybe that's a good idea in general. 

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



# Amro Music: The First 100 Years

By Jaimie **Blackman**

**I**n 2021, Memphis Tennessee's Amro Music will be celebrating its centennial. It is rare for a company to survive ten decades. Less than 50 percent of U.S. firms are over 100 years old. To get a taste of Amro's secret sauce, you need to dig below the surface, where you'll find some hints. I recently had this opportunity when Mr. Averwater agreed to be my guest on "The Sound of Money Live" which premiered on June 16 ([fb.com/mmrmagazine](https://fb.com/mmrmagazine)), and which I hosted.

For those who are connected to the NAMM community, Chip Averwater needs no introduction. If you need a memory-jogger, here it is: Averwater is past chairman of Amro Music and part of the third-generation of Amro Averwater retailers. He's also a former chairman of NAMM, a frequent keynote speaker on music education and retail, and author of *Retail Truths*.

Although *Retail Truths* was published in 2012, this book provides a complete "how to" roadmap for your post-COVID playbook. Just add "Health" and "Safety" as additional factors to address and you'll be all set.

What prompted a recent re-read for me was the term Averwater used for his subtitle: "The Unconventional Wisdom of Retailing."

Unconventional wisdom often means fresh insights or out-of-the-box thinking. What makes this unconventional for Averwater is the belief that retailers do best when they directly learn practical insights and techniques on the frontline. He says: "Negotiating with suppliers, choosing among job applicants, setting profitable prices, resolving employee disputes, sending messages to competitors, designing motivational incentive plans, firing employees, attracting bankers. We learn these one-at-a-time, in the trenches, under-fire, and with considerable costs and consequences."

Chip Averwater possesses a unique collection of leadership qualities. Here's his short-list:

**Modesty:** The original bio Averwater sent me was clearly understated. I had to go back to him a few times and ask, "Can I use this? ...and what about this?" I think he finally acquiesced only because of my persistence.

**Focus:** Chip believes we can do one thing (or a few things) well, but we can't do *everything* well. Decide what you want to do, and do it profitably.

**Trust:** "I think you have to assume the best about people. Make them prove you're right or wrong. Act like you want them to become. If you think you have a good person, usually they will live up to that trust."

**Patience:** "I remember I had an employee who came to my office one time, and she was shaking. She said, 'I'm afraid you're going to lose your patience.'" Chip asked if she ever heard him lose his patience. She said, "Yes, two years ago, I heard you speaking with an employee and you lost your patience." He laughed when he told me this story, saying you slip up once, and your team will find out.

**Innovation:** I was curious how Averwater promotes a culture of

innovation, so I asked him. He and his team came up with an idea to better engage Amro's band directors so a Board of Directors was created. "We would invite a half-dozen band directors to lunch, and they would come back with great ideas that we didn't know."

**Training:** With passion, Averwater talks about the extraordinary skills required to become a world-class sales professional. The salesperson has literally a few seconds to transition the conversation into a relationship, through caring and active listening. He told me that the sales profession is one of the most unappreciated skills, requiring relationship development, product expertise, genuine caring, and powerful listening skills: "A successful sales professional has a lot of skills, and they deserve to get paid well."

“We can do one thing (or a few things) well, but we can't do *everything* well. Decide what you want to do, and do it profitably.”

I asked Chip Averwater what some of the biggest mistakes retailers make are. He said, "One of the biggest mistakes is trying to do too many things. We can't do everything well. It's kind of like juggling plates. If we are juggling more than we can handle, we will start dropping one or two."

Averwater said the second biggest mistake retailers make is opening too many stores. For example, let's say you have two stores: "The second store is never as profitable as the first store." He calls this "the diffusions of efficiency." The further you get away from the store, the less efficient it becomes. One day you realize you have so many stores, you are no longer making a profit.

Chip Averwater's brother Pat is Amro's current chairman and the baton has already been passed to the fourth generation of Amro Averwaters. C.J. (Chip's son) is president and Nick (Pat's son) is band department manager. With two grandchildren tuning up, the fifth generation is well positioned to debut their own symphony.

You can view the entire conversation on [fb.com/mmrmagazine/videos](https://fb.com/mmrmagazine/videos). 

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



## Accessories

### Black Diamond Strings' Core-Bond VT 'Virtual Tone' Series

Black Diamond Strings' Core-Bond VT "Virtual Tone" Series strings feature a new string design that has wonderful clarity, sustain and volume, which will also hold its tune in perfect pitch through its Core-Bond core-to-wrap locking process. Tone loss is when the wrap and core coupling is compromised either through mechanical degradation from the vibration of the string or galvanic corrosion due to the dissimilar metals used in the manufacturing. Core-Bond addresses this issue by effectively "locking" the relationship of the core and wrap wire as "one."



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

### Tri All Multiple Purpose Trial/Training Tool from RS Berkeley

The Tri All Multiple Purpose Trial/Training Tool from RS Berkeley is for beginning band students and was designed in the USA for individual use. This one device works for flute, trumpet, trombone/baritone, clarinet, and saxophone, and includes an individually wrapped reed. The tool promotes good hygiene while reducing exposure to germs.



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

### Whirlwind's pcDI Dual Channel Stereo Direct Box

The Whirlwind pcDI, a dual channel stereo direct box, is perfect for interfacing the outputs of CD players, computer sound cards, iPods/MP3 players, tape decks, and the like with professional, balanced, low impedance equipment such as a mixing console. This unit contains two separate DIs – input your signals with one 3.5mm (1/8") mini TRS stereo jack, two sets of color-coded RCA phono type input and through jacks or 1/4" TS input jacks. Output is via corresponding color coded XLRs. The 3.5mm and RCA jacks are wired as loop-through connections. The 1/4" inputs disconnect the other input jacks to provide complete left and right ground isolation. Features a STEREO/MONO switch to combine stereo sources into a mono signal and a 20dB PAD switch for connecting to "hot" signal sources. Separate ground lift switches for each output help eliminate hum and buzz.



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

### Face Masks from Henry Heller

These face masks from Henry Heller are reusable and designed for daily wear. The masks feature a bendable nose adjustment and 3-inch pocket opening to add filter material if desired. Made of 2-ply cotton. \$7.50 each.



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

### New Packaging from JodyJazz

JodyJazz's new packaging is designed to boost in-store product appeal with a more elegant and contemporary design. It will be featured on JodyJazz's popular Super Jet series, Giant series, and new HR Custom Dark series. The new packaging is constructed from a more substantial material and features a two-piece design that can accommodate soprano, alto and tenor models. The new look is achieved using a high luster gold foil on top of a deep, rich black box. The new HR Custom Dark tenors, Giant tenors, and all Super Jet series models (except baritone) are shipping now in the new packaging.



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

### Fender's MTG Tube Tremelo

Fender's MTG Tube Tremelo brings the hypnotic sound typically found in vintage amps and places it in a stompbox based on a genuine U.S.-made NOS 6205 preamp tube. The pedal features level, intensity, and speed controls, three different waveform modes via the Wave knob, and a dedicated tap tempo which allows access to various note subdivisions.



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

### The Black Mountain Thumb Pick

The Black Mountain Thumb Pick offers an innovative design that combines the feel and familiarity of a traditional flatpick with a patented, spring-loaded thumb ring, providing an easy, comfortable fit from the moment it's put on. The flat pick component is a modified 1.5 millimeter nylon pick with a beveled edge, providing excellent speed, string-feel, durability, and tone. The patented spring-mounted thumb ring is ergonomically sculpted to provide a universal fit while enabling the flat pick to flex along with the picking motion.



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

### RockBoard MOD 4

The RockBoard MOD 4 - All-in-One Wireless System Receiver + Patchbay for Pedalboards offers an easy-to-use wireless connection between your instrument and your pedalboard, featuring digital wireless technology that delivers incredible audio quality, a simple setup procedure, and reliable use for any gigging musician. The wireless system works in the 2.4 GHz ISM band for unlimited worldwide use and offers a full 20 Hz - 20 kHz frequency range with only 5 ms of latency. The patchbay module is designed to route connections from underneath your pedalboard to its front, giving you a central access point and tidying up your connections.



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

## Accessories

### KHS America's Wind Instrument Try-Out Kit

KHS America's Wind Instrument Try-Out Kit is a durable, compact, and affordable trial pack that is an ideal tool for introducing school band instrument mouthpieces to prospective incoming band students. Including components to test for aptitude and gauge interest in flute, clarinet/saxophone, trumpet, and trombone, the kit provides a convenient solution for many possible testing scenarios. The components are easy to assemble, and can be cleaned in a dishwasher or with soap and hot water.



[www.khs-america.com](http://www.khs-america.com)

## Pro Audio

### Aston Microphones' Black Spirit Bundle

Aston has announced the Black Spirit Bundle, a limited-edition release of only 1500 individually numbered pieces. The box set is centred on the multi-pattern, high performance Spirit mic, and the bundle includes a black textured version of the Spirit, plus the Aston Swiftshield pop filter and shock mount set. MAP: \$499.



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

## Piano & Keyboard

### Kawai's CA49 and CA59 Digital Pianos

The CA49 and CA59 are the latest high-performance additions to the popular Concert Artist series of premium digital pianos from Kawai. The CA49 and



CA59 incorporate technologies developed in collaboration with premium Japanese audio equipment manufacturer, Onkyo. Both instruments feature new motherboard and amplification hardware designed for richer, higher quality sound, and 4-speaker delivery systems that reproduce the sound field of a grand piano. The latest models use improved cheekblock control panels that incorporate modern OLED graphic displays, while the CA49 boasts a new interface for easier, more intuitive operation. The updated CA49 and CA59 feature enhanced Shigeru Kawai grand piano sounds, providing a more natural and realistic playing experience, while the CA59 includes a new Shigeru Kawai SK-5 studio grand sound and additional Virtual Technician parameters for even greater tonal variety. Both instruments include Bluetooth MIDI connectivity, with the CA59 also boasting Bluetooth Audio, with aptX support providing high quality wireless audio with minimal latency. The new CA49 and CA59 possess updated cabinet designs, adopting the taller body and rounded edge details of the flagship Concert Artist models, for a more impressive, premium appearance.

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

## Fretted

### Loog Pro VI Acoustic

The Loog Pro VI Acoustic is Loog's first full-sized six-string guitar marketed to kids and adults 12 years old and up. It comes bundled with flashcards and an app that helps students play songs on their guitar from day one. The app includes video lessons, a tuner and a digital songbook with hits by The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Taylor Swift, Bruno Mars, and more. The Loog app also has an augmented reality feature that uses the selfie camera on any device. Available in six different colors for \$149.

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



### Dean Guitars' MD 24 Select Models

Dean Guitars' new MD 24 Select models are built with satin necks, easy-access heel joints, and exclusive direct-mount Seymour Duncan pickups. An optional Floyd Rose tremolo system is also available. Dean offers four unique models. The MD 24 Select Floyd Classic White and MD 24 Select Flame Top Floyd Trans Cherry are built with the high-end Floyd Rose 1000 Series tremolo system at the bridge and Floyd Rose R3 nut (1 11/16" width). The other two models, the MD 24 Select Classic White and MD 24 Select Flame Top Trans Cherry, offer the reliable Tune-O-Matic hardtail bridge with Dean's exclusive Cadi tailpiece for ease and sustain.

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

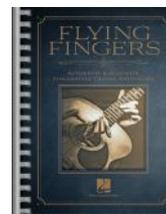


## Print & Digital

### Flying Fingers from Hal Leonard

*Flying Fingers* from Hal Leonard covers an expansive variety of styles and techniques – including recent innovations like percussive gestures, right-hand string-stopping, two hands on the fingerboard, and partial capos – through its 50 accurate transcriptions. Beginning fingerstyle guitarists will find suitable arrangements, and as they progress, they will continue to find new and exciting titles to attempt. Recordings of the specific versions included in the book can be located easily and are specified at the beginning of each tune. All transcriptions are shown in standard notation and tab. \$40.

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



### Flexcel from Excelcia Music

Flexcel is a flexible concert band and orchestra series with high-quality pieces designed to be used with smaller ensemble sizes and any combination of wind, string and percussion instruments. Each piece is arranged in five-part writing by transposed keys, rather than by instrument, providing endless options. The works can be performed by as few as five players plus percussion. Included in the purchase of each set in the Flexcel series is unique photocopying permission from the publisher as well as access to digital copies for remote learning.

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





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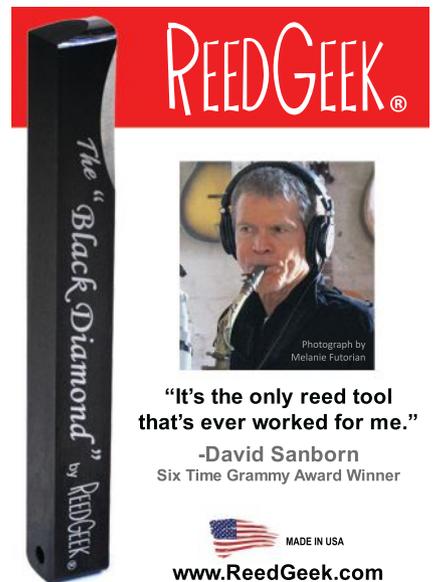
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By Dan **Daley**

# Coming Back from the Edge



**T**he COVID-19 virus is going to be around for a while, varying only in its intensity. That means there are some new realities that have to be integrated into our thinking. As retailers begin to reopen after local governments pull back on their lockdowns, MI shop owners will face some specific challenges particular to this business.

First and foremost, COVID-19 puts into stark relief exactly how social an industry this is. An MI store's leading advantage over online sales is its ability to offer a tactile experience to shoppers. Literally everything in the store is meant to be handled, touched, felt, picked up, poked, and fondled. Suddenly, this central pleasure of musical instruments has become a potential point of infection. So in addition to cleaning and disinfecting all of the surfaces in the store, its inventory has to undergo the same constant cleaning, after each customer places fingers on it.

That can get rather specific. Guitars are cradled and strummed, exposing their largest sides to contagion, and an alcohol wipe needs to be applied as soon as an axe is put down. But that also needs to be followed immediately by a dry wipe, lest the alcohol mar the finish. Plus, a prospective buyer will want to tune every guitar, so each peg also needs to be cleaned.

Brass and woodwind instruments are perhaps the most intimate ones. They can be cleaned with warm, soapy water and a purpose-made instrument brush that will get any debris out of the horn, to prevent cross contamination. Mouthpiece hygiene is essential. Clean the mouthpiece with warm hot, soapy water and a mouthpiece brush. The UK's Music Industries Association recommends to not use bleach or any sterilizing fluid as this can damage the mouthpiece.

NAMM has a fairly comprehensive tutorial for this process up on its website now (including a useful distinction between isopropyl and rubbing alcohol). It also emphasizes a practice that's unfortunate but likely necessary: quarantining instruments between test rides. It's still a bit of a guesstimate as to how long the virus can exist on various types

of surfaces: estimates include one to four hours on metal surfaces, 24 hours on cardboard and paper, and a couple of days on plastic and other hard surfaces. So in addition to cleaning the instruments, they should be set aside for at least a few hours, if not a few days.

Obviously, stores need to keep plenty of sanitizing materials on-hand for customers and staff. These are necessary not only for personal hygiene but also for a shop's financial well-being, as a signal to shoppers that you have their best interests at heart.

At this writing another Federal stimulus package is being cobbled together by Congress, and it may or may not include another critical component for retail: a liability waiver that could hold store owners and other vendors and service providers harmless in the event customers become ill as a result of interacting with them. Given COVID-19's widely variable gestation period of anywhere from a few days to two weeks, it will be difficult to pin a contact to any particular location. However, that is not going to stop a lawyer from trying to, and by nature they will go after whatever target presents the best combination of legal vulnerability and financial return. (While I'm no fan of the legal profession in general, my personal hope is that this particular stipulation is included in the bill but is limited to small business, to avoid large corporations from doing with it what they did with the Payroll Protection Program.)

There is also a fairly high-tech option that more retail stores are deploying: UV-C LED germicidal lamps. Using the light spectrum between 200 and 280 nanometers, the science is straightforward and it works: hospitals and medical facilities have been using UV-C for decades. However, be advised that since the onset of the virus plenty of online UV-C LED products have popped up that claim to be authentic.

Coming back from lockdown is going to be an intricate and stressful proposition from a number of angles. The biggest goal, though, is reassuring customers that it's OK to come and play. And buy. Make that the priority for reopening. 

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