

M M R

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW



84



Anniversary:
East Cambridge Piano at 40

86



Spotlight:
The New Stomping Ground

88



Heir to the Throne: Peavey's Courtland Gray



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44 *Chuck Surack*

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C O N T E N T S



MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

42



94



FEATURES

Vol.177 JANUARY 2018 No.1

Upfront Q&A:

Messe Frankfurt's Michael Biber 42

Messe Frankfurt group show director Michael Biber talks to *MMR* about the ongoing modifications to the yearly industry gathering and its importance to the global MI market

Chuck Surack of Sweetwater Sound: 2018 Recipient of MMR's Annual Don Johnson Industry Service Award 44

MMR chats with and honors Sweetwater Sound founder and president Chuck Surack, winner of the 10th annual Don Johnson Industry Service Award

2018 Winter NAMM Buyer's Guide 50

Our annual guide to the hottest new products that will be on display at Winter NAMM this month in Anaheim

Boutique Microphones:

Adding a touch of personalization to a burgeoning mass-market sector 76

How unique, retro microphones are adding some spice to a familiar MI recipe

Road Test:

Audix Performance 40 Series Wireless 78

Product Spotlight:

Royer Labs R-10 Ribbon Microphone 80

Acing Accessibility:

Virgin Musical Instruments on their Mission to Make Music Simple 82

From backpack bundles to ultra-light keyboards, Virgin Musical Instruments is paving the way for more accessible music in 2018

East Cambridge Piano at 40:

Adapt, Evolve, Succeed 84

Digging into the history and evolution of Boston-area piano & keyboard retailer, East Cambridge Piano

The New Stomping Ground:

Stomplight Brings Top-Notch Lighting Effects to Performances of All Types with Ease and Versatility 86

Stomplight founder Michael Ahern discusses the origins of Stomplight, and how interested dealers can come along for the ride

Heir to the Throne:

A Chat with Courtland Gray of Peavey Electronics 88

MMR's Q&A with Courtland Gray, stepson of Peavey founder Hartley and heir to the Peavy legacy, about the company's roots and the importance of making products in the U.S.

Fort Pitt Piano Company:

A Family Tradition of Encouraging Family Tradition 89

Fort Pitt Piano Company's mission is to help customers invest in a classic treasured heirloom: the family piano

Reinventing Rentals:

Instrumental Music Center Gives Tucson the Rentals It Needs 90

How one MI dealer in Arizona changed – and continues to change - the local landscape of instruments rentals for the better

Retail Reimagined:

Village Music Wellington Redefines What it Means to be an MI Store 92

Inside Village Music's new approach to fostering a community music center, from cafés to public performance spaces

Small Business Matters:

The Ideal in Service 94

Menzie Pittman breaks down how great service isn't an action - it's a philosophy

Sounds of Money:

Exiting? A Buyer's Perspective 95

Jaimie Blackman explains the different ways that retail owners can approach selling their business

Departments

Editorial	6
UpFront	8
Supplier Scene	22
MMR Global.....	32
Trade Regrets	38
People on the Move	40
New Products	96
Classifieds.....	97
Ad Index	99
The Last Word	100

MMR Musical Merchandise Review® (ISSN 0027-4615), Volume 177, Number 1, January 2018, founded in 1879, is published monthly by Timeless Communications Corp., 6000 South Eastern Ave., Suite 14J, Las Vegas, NV 89119, (702) 479-1879, publisher of School Band and Orchestra, Choral Director and JAZZed. Periodicals Postage Paid at Las Vegas, NV and additional mailing offices. MMR is distributed free to qualified individuals and is directed to music dealers and retailers, wholesalers and distributors, importers and exporters and manufacturers of all types of musical instruments and their accessories, related electronic sound equipment, general musical accessories, musical publications and teaching aides. **POSTMASTER:** Send all UAA to CFS. **NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES:** send address corrections to Musical Merchandise Review, PO Box 16655 North Hollywood, CA 91615-6655. The publishers of this magazine do not accept responsibility for statements made by their advertisers in business competition. No portion of this issue may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Copyright ©2017 by Timeless Communications Corp., all rights reserved. Printed in USA.



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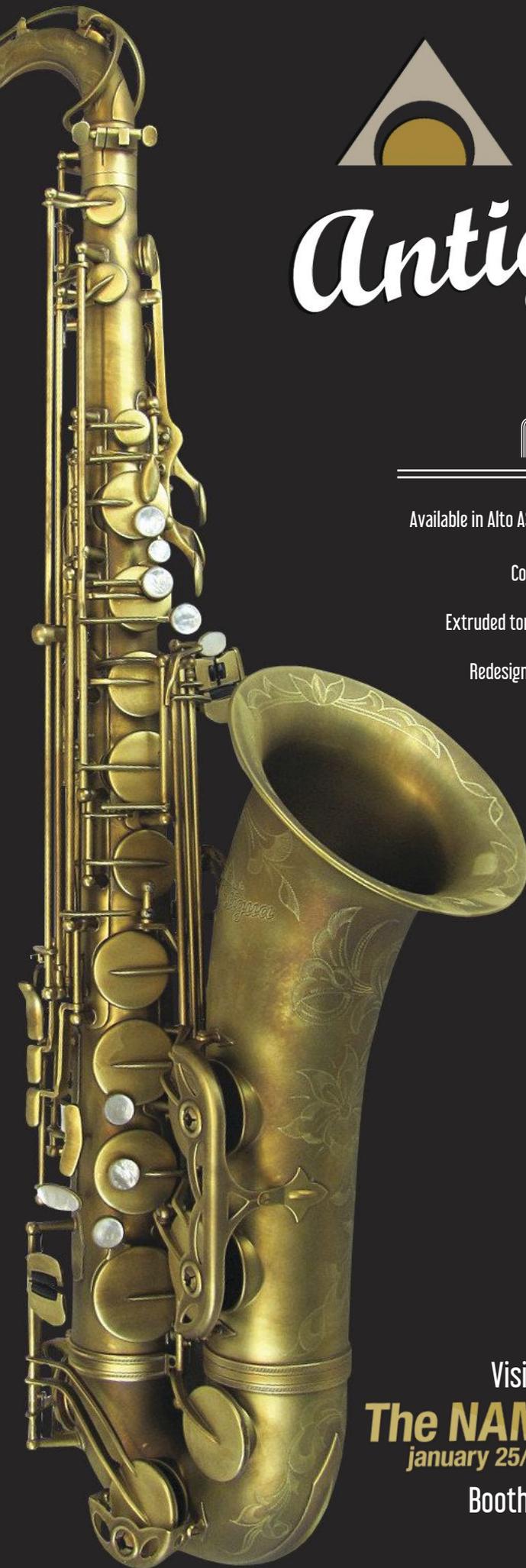
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You've Gotta Be In It To Win It

In early January it was confirmed that Gibson Brands would not be attending the 2018 Winter NAMM Show in Anaheim. Rather, the organization is focusing on the Consumer Electronics (CES) show, which takes place in Las Vegas just before the NAMM Show.

Now, to be clear, I am not slamming Gibson. I'm the very satisfied owner of no fewer than four Gibson guitars and I grew up dreaming of owning a Les Paul. I also don't have an ownership stake in the company, I don't work there, I'm not privy to the specifics behind why Gibson opted to be a no-show at this year's NAMM convention in any way, and I'm really not qualified to judge their decision fairly.

I just think it's a little sad is all. I mean, if you were an car buff (or worked in that industry) attending the North American International Auto Show and you found out that Ford or BMW had chosen to sit this year out, you'd probably be bummed, right?

Gibson is certainly not the first – and likely won't be the last – "big name" to bail on a prominent MI trade show. A number of long-time exhibitors chose to give the Summer NAMM gathering a pass in the years when the show departed Nashville (though many have since returned). The same can certainly be said for the now much-smaller Frankfurt Musikmesse (although, again, some have begun to exhibit once again).

I recently had a brief chat with Hap Kuffner of Kuffner International, Inc., who feels strongly that participation in industry events is a must. "Put it this way: I haven't missed a NAMM Show since 1974 on either coast," he says. "I haven't missed the Frankfurt show since 1980, and I've only missed one Music China in the past 15 years. You really need to

go to these shows. It's that simple. You should be going. The buyers deserve that respect. It's an expense, yes, but it's well worth attending all of these shows. As the New York lottery used to say, and I've used this quote many times before about trade shows: "You've gotta be in it to win it."

NAMM president and CEO Joe Lamond has this to say: "The purpose of The Show is bigger than any one company; it's about the gathering of the music industry and its many tribes. It seems to me that people have been coming together in these kinds of pilgrimages since the dawn of human history, and while I imagine there are many reasons for this, as time goes on, those reasons evolve, as well. For me, the NAMM Show has been the one constant; the steady, reliable platform, and usually the only time I get to see so many of my friends and peers from around the world in one place. We do business with each other, we learn from each other, we laugh with each other, and we mourn when a member of the tribe passes on – things I value more and more every year."

Aside from Kuffner's and Lamond's very valid – to my mind, anyway – observations, whenever a heavy-hitter bows out of one of these significant annual industry gatherings, it feels like a conscious choice to not really be an active part of the MI community, to not support and engage in the culture.

And, like I say, that's a bummer.



by Christian Wissmuller

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Industry News

Paiste Appoints U.S. Distribution to Hal Leonard

Paiste announced that as of January 1, 2018, Hal Leonard will serve as the premier distribution and marketing partner for Paiste instruments and related accessories in the United States. The announcement came from Erik Paiste, CEO of Paiste, and Brad Smith, VP of MI Products at Hal Leonard.

Paiste, in business for more than a century, specializes in the creation of cymbals, gongs, and other idiophones from various copper alloys. Headquartered in Switzerland, with subsidiaries in Germany and the United States, Paiste boasts an impressive lineup of endorsement artists, including Patrick Carney, Nick Mason, Larry Mullen Jr., and Alex Van Halen.

Long known as the world's largest publisher of music education materials, songbooks, and sheet music, Hal Leonard is now also a leading distributor of musical instruments with a diverse lineup of products. Hal Leonard-distributed brands include Gretsch drum sets, Gibraltar hardware, Tycoon Percussion, and many others.

Paiste says, "We are very pleased to enter into a partnership with Hal Leonard, a company with traditions and values similar to ours. A mutual desire for collaboration in building brand strength quickly became apparent. The resulting marketing-oriented spirit clearly transcends a mere distribution relationship."

Smith added, "Hal Leonard is thrilled to be working with Paiste. Our sales and fulfillment team are ready to offer these world-class drum instruments. We also now have options to bundle cymbals with our complimentary drum lines like Gretsch, Gibraltar, and Vater allowing us to provide complete solutions that will support our dealers and their customers."

Retailers interested in stocking Paiste instruments can call the Hal Leonard E-Z Order Line at (800) 554-0626.

➤ Industry News

➤ Supplier Scene

➤ MMR Global

➤ People on the Move

➤ Trade Regrets

Sam Ash Execs Visit D'Addario HQ

On December 14th, several executives from Sam Ash Music visited the D'Addario headquarters and factories in Farmingdale, New York.

They included Richard Ash, president and CEO of Sam Ash Music, Barry Horowitz, SVP sales & merchandising, and Lee Mendelson, band & orchestra buyer, among others. It was an opportunity to meet with D'Addario executives and sales team members and

take a tour of both D'Addario's string factory, as well as Evans Drumheads facility. Both Sam Ash Music and D'Addario have a great deal in common, as both are family businesses based on Long Island and the event was an opportunity to connect and learn.

"While Sam Ash and D'Addario as companies are very different, they are strikingly similar as family businesses. I thoroughly enjoyed sharing stories about the humble beginnings of both businesses and our family's long-standing connection, dating back to when our CEO Jim D'Addario was a young boy shopping in one of their original Sam Ash stores in Hempstead," says John D'Addario III, president of D'Addario & Co.



Jim D'Addario (right), CEO of D'Addario, shows Richard Ash (left), president and CEO of Sam Ash Music, an example of custom printed Evans Drumheads

Reverb Launches the Reverb Foundation

On November 28th, Reverb launched the Reverb Foundation. The nonprofit, in coordination with Reverb, will create more musicians by supporting programs and initiatives that increase access to music education, gear, and opportunities to play.

"At Reverb.com, we've created a platform that makes it easy and affordable to buy and sell music gear and, as a result, we've helped get more instruments into the hands of musicians all over the world," said David Kalt, founder and CEO of Reverb Holdings Inc. "The Reverb Foundation will enable us to further our mission to make the world a more musical place by supporting the people and programs that are making music a possibility for aspiring musicians from all walks of life."

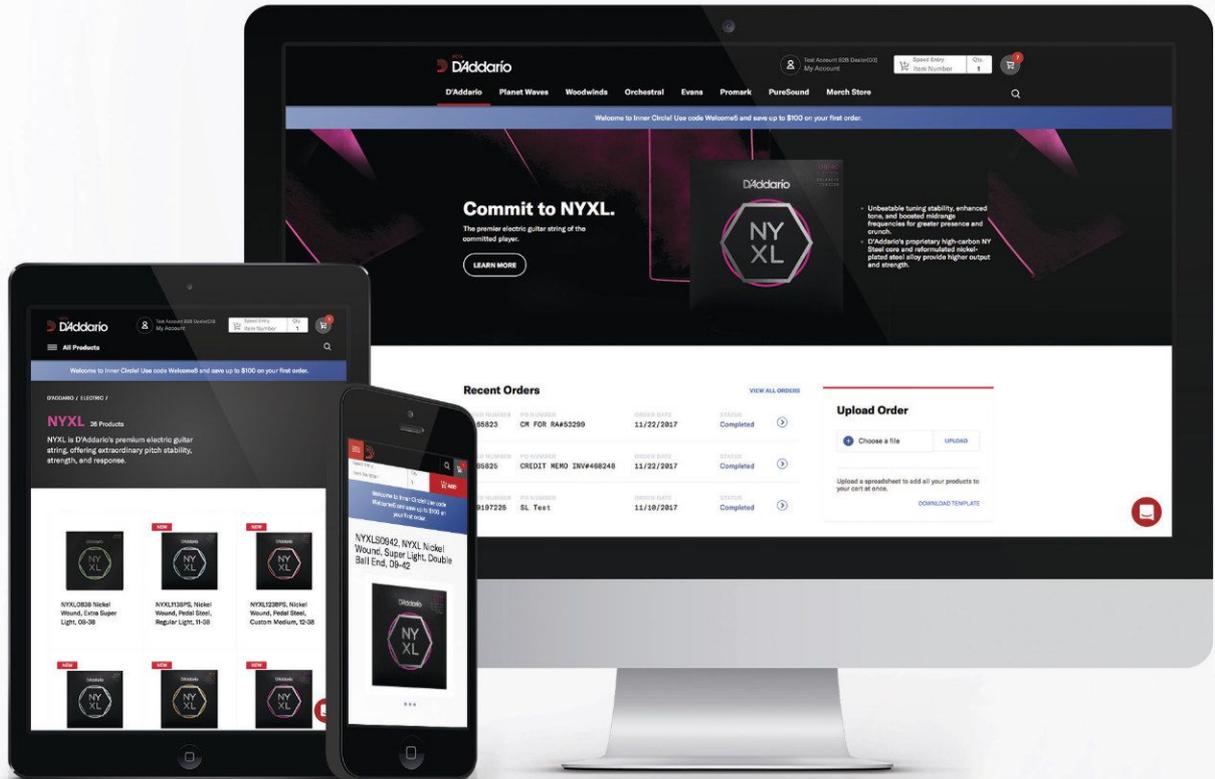
The Reverb Foundation will utilize the Reverb platform and community to raise money for programs that put instruments into the hands of aspiring musicians and create opportunities for everyone to learn and experience the benefits of music. Beginning in January 2018, the Reverb Foundation will accept grant applications, giving organizations working to increase access to music the chance to apply for funding.

To lead the launch and day-to-day operations of the Reverb Foundation, Reverb has hired Molly Fannin as director. Fannin brings nearly ten years of experience in fundraising, donor relations, and more, having previously worked at the YMCA and DePaul University. As a company, Reverb has supported nonprofits ranging from Guitars for Vets to Girls Rock! Chicago and under Fannin's leadership, the Reverb Foundation will continue supporting the music community on a larger scale.

"We're excited to become a resource for the amazing nonprofits, education organizations, and other peers that work every day to make the world more musical," said Fannin. "There are endless studies and stories around the positive impact that music can have — it's an incredible tool for happiness, healing, confidence, growth, development, and so much more. We want to help more people experience it."

If you're a nonprofit, educational, or after school organization offering programming that is making the world more musical, or you simply want to learn more about the Reverb Foundation, visit www.reverbfoundation.org.

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Solid State Logic Joins Audiotonix Group

Audiotonix has announced the acquisition of Solid State Logic (SSL) as part of its expanding group that already includes leading audio brands DiGiCo, DiGiGrid, Calrec, and Allen & Heath. The deal brings together the top flight of the world's mixing consoles companies.

James Gordon, CEO of Audiotonix, comments: "We are growing the Audiotonix Group with professional audio brands that have exceptional technology, committed people and a real passion for what they do. With their incredible history and reputation, their enthusiasm and loyal customer base, SSL is ideally placed to be the next partner in the group. The whole group will benefit by having SSL as an integral part of the team going forward. Having their help to further expand our international reach, technology and customer base will be a lot of fun."

Antony David, MD of Solid State Logic, added: "I am very proud of the achievements our team have made to date with the expansion of SSL. To reach our full potential we need the support and resources of a larger group to help us achieve our aspirations. In Audiotonix we have found a partner that is as fiercely obsessed about audio, products and customer service

as we are. Audiotonix' success in investing in and nurturing similar audio focused businesses was crucial to us. Once we got talking, we quickly discovered that this was something we both wanted to happen."

Peter Gabriel, the majority shareholder in Solid State Logic, becomes an investor in Audiotonix as part of the transaction. He added, "My relationship with SSL began as a user, a customer and then as part owner. SSL has always made wonderful innovative equipment that encourages creativity and I got involved because I never wanted to imagine a world without SSL. It is obvious with this sale that there are many in this growing Audiotonix group

that are as nuts about new tech and good audio as we are. Each manufacturer has their own particular markets, strengths and idiosyncrasies but through collaboration, there will be a lot of opportunities to spread knowledge and skills to benefit the group as a whole. I am also excited by what could be created by all these new potential synergies so I have chosen to use a chunk of the sale money to invest in this newly expanded version of Audiotonix. I wish Audiotonix and all who now sail in her, every success."

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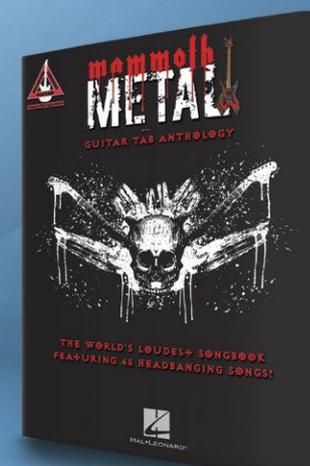
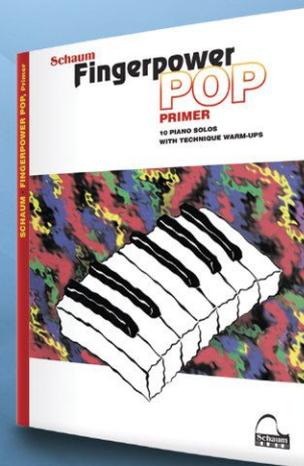
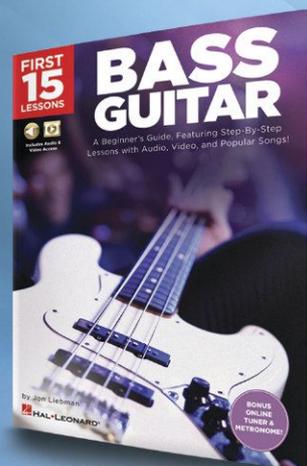
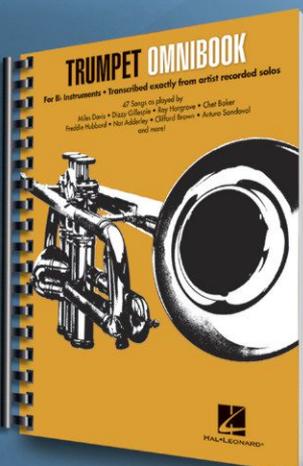
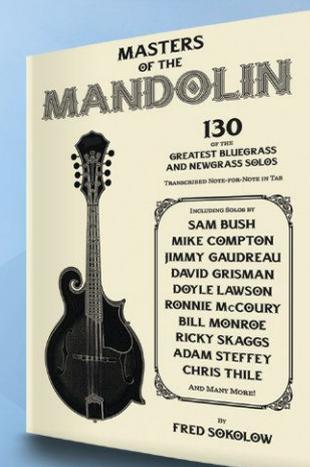
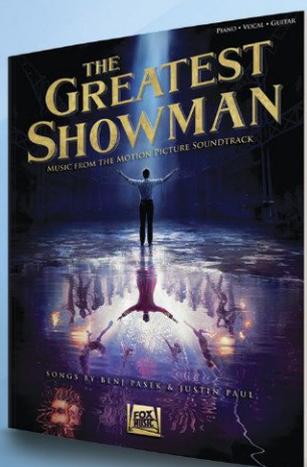
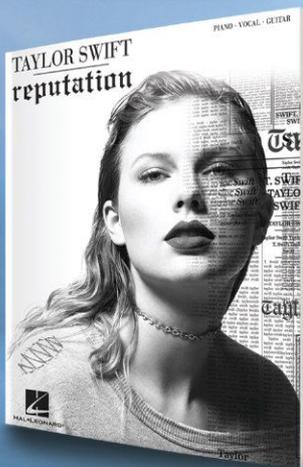
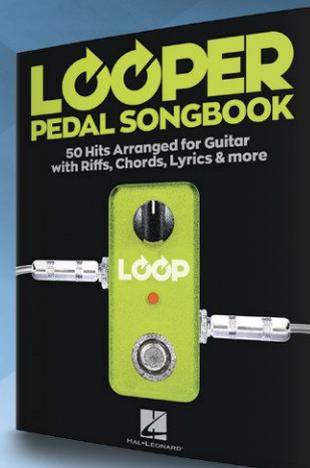
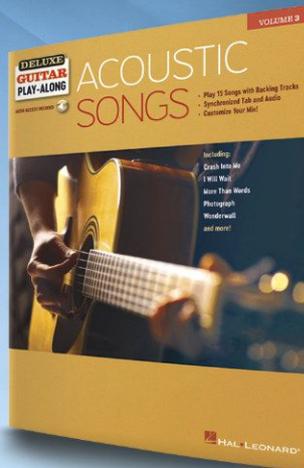
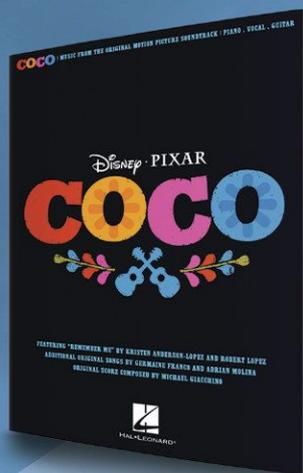
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Moody's Downgrades Guitar Center's Ratings to Caa1

In late November, Moody's Investors Service again downgraded Guitar Center's ratings. S&P Global Ratings also downgraded GC's credit rating further into junk territory at CCC-. The full report from Moody's is below:

New York, November 28, 2017 - Moody's Investors Service (Moody's) today downgraded Guitar Center Inc.'s (GCI) rat-

ings. The downgrade and negative outlook reflect Moody's continued concern regarding GCI's significant and relatively near-term debt maturities. Excluding the company's \$375 million asset-backed loan facility, approximately 65% of the company's long-term debt matures in April 2019.

GCI's Corporate Family Rating was downgraded to Caa1 from B3, and its

Probability of Default Rating was downgraded to Caa1-PD from B3-PD. At the same time, GCI's senior secured first lien notes were downgraded to Caa1 from B3 while its unsecured notes were downgraded to Caa3 from Caa2. The rating outlook is negative. This concludes the review for downgrade that was initiated on Sep. 28, 2017.

"The downgrade considers that despite Moody's expectation that GCI will generate relatively stable earnings and positive free cash flow, a significant majority of the company's debt matures in less than 18 months," stated Keith Foley, a Senior Vice President at Moody's. "GCI's cash flow on its own will not be enough to materially reduce debt and improve leverage within the time frame the company has to address its debt maturities," added Foley.

Downgrades:

- ..Issuer: Guitar Center Inc.
- Probability of Default Rating, Downgraded to Caa1-PD from B3-PD
- Corporate Family Rating, Downgraded to Caa1 from B3
-Senior Secured Regular Bond/Debtenture, Downgraded to Caa1(LGD4) from B3(LGD3)
-Senior Unsecured Regular Bond/Debtenture, Downgraded to Caa3(LGD5) from Caa2(LGD5)

Outlook Actions:

- ..Issuer: Guitar Center Inc.
-Outlook, Changed To Negative From Rating Under Review

RATINGS RATIONALE

GCI's \$375 million asset-based credit facility (not-rated) matures on April 2, 2019. The company's \$615 mil 6.5% senior secured 1st lien notes mature on April 15, 2019. GCI's \$325 million 9.625% senior unsecured notes do not mature until 2020.

Although GCI is currently in negotiations to refinance its outstanding debt, and still has time to refinance these debt obligations, Moody's believes the more compressed that time period becomes from this point on, the more challenging it will be for GCI to address its debt maturity profile particularly in light of the key challenges faced by the company. These challenges include the company's high leverage -- debt/EBITDA on a Moody's adjusted basis is about 6.2 times -- and limited revenue visibility regarding the retail environment for musical instruments.

See GUITAR CENTER, page 14

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Guitar Center *continued from page 12*

The negative outlook reflects continued concern on Moody's part with respect to the GCI's ability to extend its debt maturity profile and obtain terms and pricing terms that will enable it to compete in the specialty retail environment over the longer-term.

GCI's ratings could be lowered if, for any reason prior to maturity, the company executes a refinancing in a manner that involves impairment to existing lenders -- an event that Moody's would deem to be a distressed exchange -- or if it appears that the company will not be able to refinance its near-term debt maturities by the end of March 2018, approximately one-year before the company's \$615 mil 6.5% senior secured notes come due. The degree and timing of any downgrade depends on Moody's assessment of GCI's refinancing plans and opportunities at various points going forward.

The rating outlook would be revised back to stable if GCI is able to push out its debt maturities prior to maturity without any impairment to creditors. A higher rating is possible over the long-term, but would also require that GCI, materially improve its credit metrics -- achieve and maintain lease-adjusted debt/EBITDA of at least 4.5 times and EBIT/interest at or above 2.5 times.

GCI is the largest retailer of music products in the United States based on revenues. GCI is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Guitar Center Holdings, Inc. The company has three reportable business segments, comprised of Guitar Center, Musician's Friend and Music & Arts. GCI is a private company and does not publicly disclose detailed financial information.

The principal methodology used in these ratings was Retail Industry published in October 2015. Please see the Rating Methodologies page on www.moody's.com for a copy of this methodology.

REGULATORY DISCLOSURES

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GC Acquires Audio Visual Design Group

Guitar Center (GC) has announced the acquisition of the San Francisco Bay Area-based Audio Visual Design Group (AVDG).

AVDG will serve as a key element of Guitar Center's Business Solutions Group and expansion into integrated solutions.

The announcement was made today by Doug Carnell, Guitar Center vice president

of business solutions and further underscores Guitar Center's strategic business plan to expand and position itself for ongoing growth in the coming years. AVDG has distinguished itself in the industry by offering system design and installation in both corporate and residential market sectors, providing Guitar Center an important channel to serve these markets as it contin-

ues its outreach into the world of B2B solutions. AVDG will operate as a dedicated arm of the Business Solutions Group, expanding the scope of personalized, account-based services offered by the division.

According to Carnell, "Guitar Center has been seeking opportunities to bolster our Business Solutions Group and we have found an ideal partner in AVDG. This mutually beneficial relationship will provide AVDG's team the vast resources offered by Guitar Center, while opening up Guitar Center's Business Solutions Group to opportunities in the commercial and residential market sectors."



Robert Scharffer, AVDG's CEO, states, "We are excited to join the Guitar Center organization as part of the Business Solutions Group. We believe that AVDG offers all of our clients more than just AV integrated solutions; we have become their trusted advisor and business partner. Just as Guitar Center is not your typical musical instrument retailer, AVDG is not just another integrator, and as such we want to continue and grow what we have built. Guitar Center will give us access to additional financial and operational resources, offering new avenues of growth and new opportunities to better support our clients."

Founded in 1996, and with home base locations in both San Rafael and San Jose, California, AVDG is a leading design-build firm specializing in audio-visual systems for commercial and residential spaces worldwide. AVDG has a world-class technical staff considered to be among the best in the industry, uniquely qualified to deliver sophisticated systems that are elegant yet simple to use. The firm has made it its mission to design and install systems tailored to its clients and to provide unparalleled ongoing services and support of these systems. Over 80 people make up AVDG's staff, which includes programmers, installers, design engineers and technicians from such diverse sectors as gaming, high-tech, financial, legal, health care, education and hospitality. In 2014, AVDG was acknowl-

See AVDC, page 20



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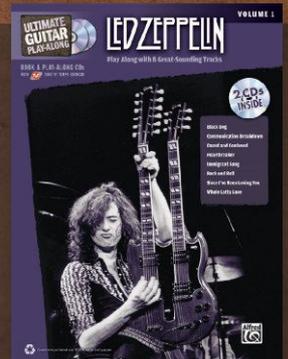
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Fulcrum Acoustic Appoints Audio Source as a Regional Sales Representative

Fulcrum Acoustic, creators of high-performance professional loudspeaker technologies, has appointed Audio Source as their exclusive sales representative for Northern California and Northern Nevada. The appointment comes as Fulcrum is experiencing a significant increase in brand recognition and product sales in key markets.

"Fulcrum Acoustic's innovative loudspeakers provide technological advantages that are unrivaled in their price/performance category," states Audio Source president Richard Gibson. "We pride ourselves in providing high-quality representation for some of the finest brands in the AV industry, and are thrilled to partner with Fulcrum to help facilitate their continued growth."

"Audio Source brings considerable market knowledge and experience to the table, as well as a customer-centric attitude consistent with our own," explains Fulcrum Acoustic Western U.S. sales manager Jon Sager. "We are excited to have them on board to expand our distribution throughout Northern California and Northern Nevada where we see significant opportunity for our technology-driven loudspeaker systems."



Coffin Expands and Joins Ace Products Group

Coffin, the original creator of coffin guitar cases, officially announces their new partnership with Ace Products Group, along with expansion plans for the Coffin brand.

Ace Products welcomes Coffin to their growing family of brands, and collaborate on new coffin-inspired accessories to debut at the 2018 Winter NAMM show.

Founded in 1996 by Jonny Coffin, the Coffin brand was brought to life with the creation of a single, handmade case. As a guitar player, designer, silversmith and entrepreneur, Jonny built both that



first case, and the legacy of Coffin. Now looking ahead, "The future of Coffin is growth, and evolving with the latest trends in alternative and underground subculture," says Jonny. As an established, trend-setting brand, "Coffin is a great addition to the Ace brand family – we share a vision for the future of the music products industry," says Ace vice president Dave Andrus. Expect a new website, and all-new Coffin products rolling out in 2018.

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*Products from Vic's new 2018 line shown above:
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EMD Music Reaches Distribution Agreement with Nady Systems



EMD Music Inc. and Nady Systems Inc. have announced a new distribution partnership for 2018 covering the U.S. and Canadian markets.

EMD will join the existing distributor network in the States with exclusivity in Canada.

EMD operations manager Andrew Swift said, "Nady Systems has been a pioneer and market leader for decades and we're very excited to add such a quality product to our distribution portfolio."

"Nady Systems is excited to partner with EMD Music as a new distributor of Nady products. This partnership with EMD will expand on our goal to offer quality, affordable wireless and pro audio gear to the Canadian market in addition to building upon our well-established U.S. market. We share EMD's creative vision and commitment to excellence and look forward to a bright future together," says director of sales, Edward Van Waes.



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Janicek Picks Name Osiamo Exclusive Distributor for U.S.



Janicek Picks have named Osiamo their exclusive distributor for the U.S.

"The quality of D-GriP surpasses all of our existing products. The D-GriP is simply the best nylon pick in the world," says Petr Jankele of Janicek Picks.

"We're really happy to add D-Grip picks to our family of brands," adds Osiamo's Ed Matthiack.

Janicek Picks are engineered and manufactured in the Czech Republic.

AVDC *continued from page 16*

edged as one of the fastest-growing private companies in the San Francisco Bay Area.

"The business-to-business channel has always been an important sector for our company, and now, with the changes in the marketplace, we've decided to apply additional resources to expand our presence to service clientele who are looking for system design and installation of audio, video and lighting solutions and beyond," said Ron Japinga, president and CEO of Guitar Center. "With this in mind, we are excited to have AVDC join the Guitar Center family and will be looking for other opportunities to grow our brands in the future. This is a natural growth path for our company, because we are unique in being able to leverage our experience in these different product sectors to offer turnkey solutions to our clients."



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Supplier Scene

D'Addario Foundation Presents Grant Checks to Six California Nonprofits

The D'Addario Foundation held a special ceremony to award six Los Angeles-area nonprofits grant support for their impactful efforts to deliver transformative music education in underserved communities.

The presentation took place at 1p.m. on Wednesday, December 6 at the Nick Rail Music store in Agoura Hills, California.

Suzanne D'Addario Brouder, executive director of the foundation, presented the checks alongside Nick Rail, owner of Nick Rail Music. Recipients included The Harmony Project, Neighborhood Music School Association, SAPPA (Scholarship Audition Performance Preparatory Academy), Fender Museum of the Arts Foundation, Pasadena Conservatory of Music, Richardson Prep Hi/San Bernadino Teen Music Workshop and Elemental Music. The Foundation presented \$18,000 to these organizations and has additionally given away over \$78,000 to a diverse range of organizations in California dedicated to providing access to quality, immersive music education this year.



Suzanne D'Addario Brouder and Nick Rail

Roland Announces First Apprenticeship Program

Roland Corporation U.S. has announced the launch of its first apprenticeship program in affiliation with The Los Angeles Film School (LAFS).

The paid, merit-based, multi-phase apprenticeship at Roland's U.S. headquarters in Los Angeles is the first program of its kind, offering hands-on experience in the music products industry to recent film school graduates. Highlights of the program include engagement with Roland product strategy managers, the marketing and communications team, and artist relations; market research; customer interaction; field projects; content creation; and more, with the goal of providing real-world knowledge and experience. The two-phase apprenticeship also affords a unique residency-like opportunity for a select group to pursue advanced activities.

The first phase of Roland's new program introduces apprentices to Roland's product divisions (electronic percussion, keyboards and synthesizers, BOSS guitar products, dance and DJ, piano products, and more) during a two-week period, and provides broad exposure to Roland management, creative teams and product staff. Twelve apprentices selected for this initial phase may also join immersion experiences within artist promotions, webcasts, and product launch events. Apprentices selected for merit-based advancement into phase two then join a ten-week program that adds direct involvement with Roland market research, project development, and content creation. The second phase offers those selected a much deeper understanding of the music products industry and its influence in the total music industry.

Recent LAFS music production and entertainment business program graduate Dillon Weiss was part of Roland's inaugural group of apprentices select-



ed in November to begin the new program.

"Roland's new apprenticeship program has exceeded all of my expectations," he said. "I helped manage the stage during a live holiday gear webcast and left feeling so inspired that I set up a V-Drums kit at home later that night. The team at Roland is giving me lots of hands-on time and a cool perspective on the value of having passion for what you do."

"LAFS is proud to be involved and applauds Roland's dedication to bringing higher education and the entertainment industry together like this. They've essentially created their own passionate farm system for encouraging entry-level rookies who can learn from within and help represent Roland's brands and flourish," said Dave Phillips, special advisor at The Los Angeles Film School.

"It was clear from the very first day that the apprenticeship program was special. All of the apprentices were passionate, driven, and pleasantly surprised by the two dedicated audio and video production spaces in our building," says Brian Allie, Roland Corporation vice president of Artist Relations and Business Development. "There are endless opportunities on the music product side of the business for individuals with an LAFS education and skill set, and we're happy to help them jumpstart their careers here with unique Roland experiences."

Paiste Adds Alexandru-Zorn to Artist Family

Paiste has officially welcomed Florian Alexandru-Zorn to their artist family. Alexandru-Zorn has written *The Complete Guide to Playing Brushes*, *The Brush Secret*, and *The Brush Revolution*.

Alexandru-Zorn has been invited to numerous renowned professional events, like PASIC, as a clinician, and is also the founder of the online music school onlinelessons.tv. To enhance his personal sound, he uses Paiste Masters, complemented by models from the Signature Traditionals and PSTX series.

"I'm really happy to announce my new cymbal endorsement. I'm now officially playing Paiste Cymbals!" said Alexandru-Zorn.

"I've checked every major brand on the market and was truly surprised by the unique sound of Paiste. I've always thought they were mostly suitable for rock and pop music but with their Masters series they offer an unbelievable sound for jazz, singer-songwriter and world music. I am very happy to be a member of the Paiste family!"



F. E. Olds, Phaeton Brass and Sax Dakota Announce Merge of Products

F. E. Olds, Phaeton Brass and Sax Dakota recently announced an agreement to merge their exclusive lineup of premier brand name products.



David Benedetto, president of F.E. Olds, and Peter LaPlaca, president of Phaeton Brass and Sax Dakota, have reached an agreement for F. E. Olds to acquire both Phaeton Brass and Sax Dakota brand names.

"Peter has an amazing and successful track record in the Band & Orchestra industry" says Benedetto. "Working with Pete continues to be very rewarding. His passion for our industry, even after nearly 50 years is very inspiring."

"David and I have been both very close friends and business associates for many years," LaPlaca adds. "His impeccable business acumen is, without a doubt, a major factor in our agreement to reach this consolidation of three major band instrument brands under one banner. I feel totally confident that his leadership will add considerable value to our future business plans."

"Phaeton Brass and Sax Dakota enjoy a distinctive position in the marketplace," Benedetto concludes. "With an extensive roster of endorsing artists, these superbly built instruments offer musicians tremendous sound and versatility. Combined with their unique finishes, these instruments provide today's musicians with outstanding value and optimum performance."

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Music & Arts Names Cumberledge 'Educator of the Year'

Music & Arts has named Christine Belle Cumberledge as the winner of its 2017 Music Educator of the Year award.

Cumberledge was selected from among approximately 1,500 nominees nationwide for the annual distinction, which offers recognition to a full-time music educator for his or her outstanding achievement in music education.

Cumberledge is currently the head band director for 250 students at Central Junior High School in Euless, Texas. She has been an educator for 20 years, and has received numerous accolades from her district and other educational organizations, including TMEA. Cumberledge was selected for her successful track record in measurable program growth and superiority in performance, and for her strong leadership and influence in the community. She is also a champion for her students—who come from diverse and often difficult backgrounds—mentoring and motivating them to become the most productive citizens they can be.

Cumberledge was honored at the annual Music & Arts Midwest Gala Reception during the Midwest Clinic International Band & Orchestra Conference in Chicago, Illinois on December 21, 2017.

"We are so excited to honor Ms. Cumberledge as this year's winner," says Steve Zapf, the president of Music & Arts. "Just as important as her professional qualifications, we were struck by her personal interest in striving to help each student be the best they can be, as well as her desire to win the award in order to pay tribute to her students, in turn, for their hard work and efforts."

"Each day I work to motivate and inspire my students, and this award will be a daily reminder of how important they are! I want

to help create great people," Cumberledge shares. "I want to make an impact on my students that lasts long beyond my teaching career. Often, I have to dream bigger for my students than they ever have — until they believe it for themselves."

The awards committee, consisting of former music educators and music industry affiliates, has also selected 2nd and 3rd place winners: Matthew Koperniak of Riverwatch Middle School, Suwanee, Georgia, and Kenneth Poe from Old Donation School, Virginia Beach, Virginia, respectively. First, second and third place winners each receive monetary awards that can be applied toward educational resources, publicity opportunities, and additional prizes.



Christine Belle Cumberledge

Ibanez Hosts Rock & Rebuild Charity Fundraiser



This holiday season, Ibanez launched the Rock & Rebuild charity fundraiser.

The fundraiser ran from December 1, 2017 to January 6, 2018 to raise funds for the American Red Cross.

Steve Vai worked with Ibanez on this initiative, and not only provided a promotional video for the campaign, but also signed one of his signature Ibanez JEM77 "Woody" guitars to give away to one lucky donor.

"We would like to say thank you in advance to everyone who donates. Your actions will be making a difference in people's lives this holiday season, and we are very appreciative," states Ibanez.

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Peavey Donates Facility to the Newton County School District

Hartley Peavey has given a 125,000-square-foot facility in Decatur to the Newton County School District.

"My public education in Mississippi opened opportunities for me to explore my interest in electronics and woodworking," said Peavey, founder and CEO of Peavey Electronics Corporation. "Those skills were crucial for building the amplifiers and sound systems that put my company on the map 52 years ago and led to creating thousands of jobs right here in Mississippi."

Peavey presented the facility and 38 acres of land with lighted parking, valued at over \$3 million, to the Newton County School District at the property, located directly adjacent to Newton County High School. The company worked with state and local officials lead by Senator Terry Burton of Newton to complete the donation. The facility will be called the Peavey Annex.

"I am grateful to the Peaveys for being willing to make this generous donation," said Senate President Pro Tempore Terry C. Burton. "I've spoken with Hartley and Mary about this effort for a while now and appreciate their decision. Mississippi is a better place because of generous corporate citizens like the Peaveys, and the students of Newton County schools will benefit for many years in the future."

"Successful school districts depend on strong support from their local communities," added Dr. Carey Wright, state superin-



Mary and Hartley Peavey

endent of education. "Peavey Electronics' donation to the Newton County School District speaks volumes about the company's commitment to public education and its commitment to the children in the district. This donation is an investment in Newton County and the future of its students."

"Innovation happens when students have the tools to pursue and achieve their dreams," said Peavey. "The highest purpose of educa-

tion in our society is to provide a vehicle for these young minds to discover their own talents, and to gain the skills needed to realize their potential. This facility will be an asset to Newton County schools and students for many years to come."

"I would love to see a renewed investment in arts education as a result of this donation," said Mary Peavey, president of Peavey Electronics Corporation, who has served on the Mississippi Arts Commission and the board of directors of the National After-school Alliance in Washington, D.C., an initiative focused on the importance of afterschool programs for students throughout the U.S. "Music, literature and visual arts are the cornerstones of our state's creative economy, which spans from the earliest blues musicians and writers through the hitmakers and visionaries of today. Arts inspire the innovation our state needs to compete in the global economy and insure Mississippi thrives for the next generations."

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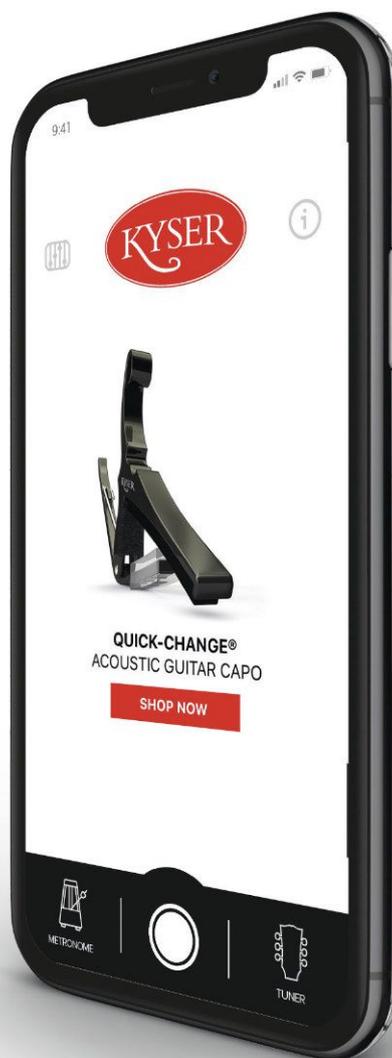


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NAMM Foundation and Collings Guitars Announce Memorial Fund for Collings Founder

The NAMM Foundation and Collings Guitars have announced a memorial fund in honor of legendary luthier and longtime NAMM member, Bill Collings. Collings was the founder and leader of Collings Guitars.

The memorial fund aims to both honor Collings' legacy, as well as to foster the next

generation of guitar players and teachers through The NAMM Foundation's beneficiary organizations.

Steve McCreary, general manager of Collings Guitars, first met Collings in 1980 after he moved to Austin from Houston where he had been repairing and building guitars.



He reflects: "Bill had an engineer's mind, a machinist's hands, a designer's eye and an artist's heart. He even had his own math, we called it 'Billgebra.' When he had a concept brewing in his head or a tool near at hand, whether it was a chisel or a CNC mill, he was a creative machine and loved the marriage of art and industry. He had an innate understanding of how things worked and he tirelessly pursued ways to make things work 'better.' He always pushed the envelope to offer the most he could to a customer, a friend or someone he was mentoring. He helped a number of high school students build instruments for school projects and got deeply involved in a long-term project with a group of fourth year architecture students to design and build twelve extremely custom guitars. He was brilliant, funny, demanding and generous. He was also a bit insecure, and I think he would be very embarrassed but humbly honored by this memorial as a way to preserve and promote the 'art' of guitar. I sincerely thank NAMM and Chris Martin for making the decision to do this. It is a very fitting tribute for a very deserving cause."

The fund is led by the efforts of Chris Martin, chairman of The NAMM Foundation board of directors, and CEO of C.F. Martin & Co., Inc.

Martin fondly recalls his first meeting with Collings: "I noticed a small booth diagonally across from the Martin booth. There was one guitar on display. I was curious because it looked like a new Martin Dreadnought. I walked over and a scruffy looking character popped up from behind the guitar and gave me a quizzical look. He said, 'Chris Martin.' I smiled and said 'yes,' and complimented him on the quality of the guitar he had on display... Bill was a master luthier, a somewhat reluctant business man and a real character. Every time Bill and I talked was a memorable discussion; I miss that wise guy."

"When the NAMM Foundation was established, it was our earnest hope that it could be a means to honor people like Bill who was a beloved and inspiring member of NAMM," said Mary Luehrsen, executive director of the NAMM Foundation. "We are honored to establish this fund in Bill's memory that will be part of his legacy in the music products industry."

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Sennheiser Announces Collaboration with MouthMedia Network

Audio specialist Sennheiser has announced a collaboration with MouthMedia Network, the premiere podcast network covering the business of various lifestyle industries.

The collaboration coincides with MouthMedia Network's launch of two new podcast recording studios in New York City, both powered by Sennheiser's audio solutions.

The new studios are intended to function as podcast hubs, where approved third party podcasters can book time for free with their guests to utilize the high-quality professional recording environments to create podcasts on a variety of topics, including a podcast this Wednesday that focuses on 3D audio. The MouthMedia Network studios will feature Sennheiser experience areas where studio hosts and guests alike can try Sennheiser products and obtain special discounted podcasting bundles on microphone / headphone combinations.

"Sennheiser is excited to collaborate with MouthMedia Network — starting in New York City," says Stefanie Reichert, director trade marketing, retail, Americas at Sennheiser. "MouthMedia Network has created an engaging platform with the most influential and authentic voices in lifestyle podcasting. For Sennheiser, we see tremendous synergy and potential as we look forward to success through our combined efforts."

The idea for a collaboration resulted from a successful series of three live podcasts recorded by MouthMedia Network at the Sennheiser SoHo pop-up store in New York City during its run between

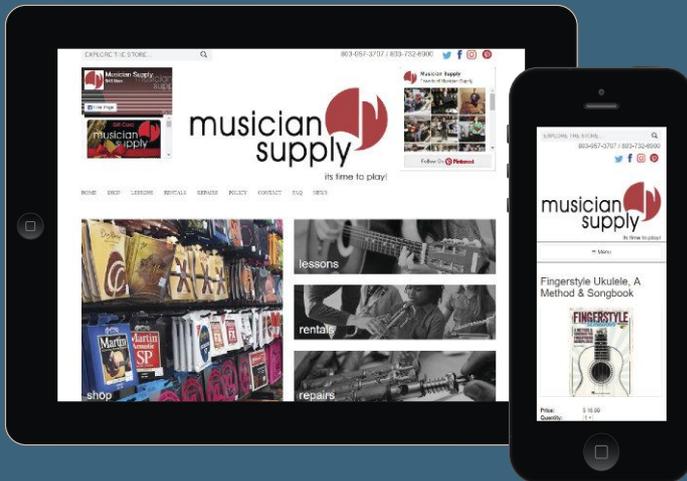
October 2016 and February 2017.

"From our first live podcast recording at the SoHo pop-up store, we knew that Sennheiser was an ideal collaborator for MouthMedia Network," says Pavan Bahl, Vision and Strategy for MouthMedia Network. "Podcasting is a medium that relies exclusively on audio, so clarity and fidelity are of paramount importance. With Sennheiser's heritage of innovation in audio technology it is a privilege to have our new studios powered by Sennheiser. Bringing together our community of high-engagement influencers with Sennheiser's audio prowess is likely to result in increased awareness for both brands."

"With a selection of our lifestyle products available on-site at the MouthMedia Network studios, content creators not only get to experience Sennheiser's superior quality but will have the ability to take that Sennheiser experience home with them," says Reichert. "This includes the AMBEO SMART HEADSET for 3D audio recording, our HD1 Wireless and PXC 550 Wireless headphones and other models."



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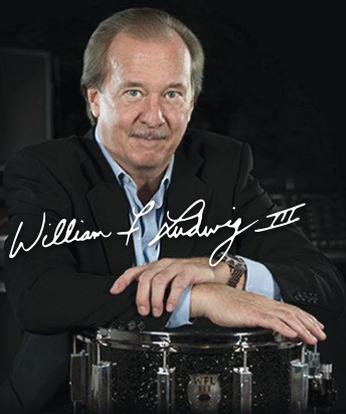
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MMR GLOBAL



by Ronnie
Dungan

This Time, It's Personal

My local town motto, which I was completely unaware of until recently, says "The heart of a town lies in its people." Which brings two observations from me. Firstly, it must have taken all of 30 seconds for someone to come up with it, and secondly that it reminds me of the town motto of Springfield in "The Simpsons": "A noble spirit embiggens the smallest man."

Thanks to your President, I believe embiggens has now officially entered the lexicon. Bigly.

If the motto of Stevenage, in Hertfordshire (yes, where hurricanes hardly ever happen) where I reside, is accurate, then one look around our town center on any given Saturday tells you that it is doomed and has a heart condition.

But it did get me thinking about whether the same logic applies to a company – that its success lies mostly within the people working there. I can testify that of course it does. I used to work at a brilliant publishing company, full of talented, clever, people, which was bought by New Bay Media. All but one or two of them have now left and I believe the place and what it creates is much the poorer as a result. Sometimes so poor that those products simply don't exist anymore. It simply isn't the same company.

And, by extension, the same must apply to a brand. Particularly in this market, where designs and creations are the product of a personal vision or arrived at through constant use, tweaking and changing until the design is the best for the player or user.

When it comes to a luthier or luthiers, how much are they, essentially, the brand? If there's no Patrick James

see *PERSONAL* on page 34

German Retailer Musik Produktiv Cedes Control

PartnerFonds has made further investment in German retailer and distributor Musik Produktiv, taking a majority 60 per cent stake in the company.

Following the deal, the two companies are aiming to increase awareness of the brand Musik Produktiv and grow online sales. The current management team will remain in place and the new growth capital is intended to further expand the Musik Produktiv warehouse and to enable investment in its IT infrastructure.

"We are delighted with the decision of PartnerFonds AG to join us as the majority shareholder on our future growth path. The company's performance in the past financial year and the current demand for our product range is very pleasing, and our scalable e-commerce sales are now around 68 per cent of total sales, and this is where the potential for future revenue increases lies, where our megastore and our employees ex-

perience customer satisfaction on a daily basis. The appreciation for professional advice and the opportunities for experiencing rehearsals with high quality musical instruments comes through the loyalty of our customers and Suppliers," said Günter Zierenberg, managing director of Musik Produktiv.

Oliver Kolbe, board member of PartnerFonds added: "In the past financial year 2016/17, revenue increased from € 16.9 million to € 20.9 million compared to the same period of the previous year. The company's growth was realized at a profit, and we, like the management of Musik Produktiv, are optimistic about the current financial year and are therefore very pleased to be able to actively participate in the successful growth path as a majority shareholder."

Following the deal, the company said it is now aiming to achieve sales of approximately €30 million in two years.

Dispute Sees Manuel Rodriguez Quit Family Firm

A dispute with the Sostenible Group, which owns part of Spanish classical guitar specialist Manuel Rodriguez, has led to its eponymous boss departing the company, leaving behind the brand name, which he says he hopes to eventually recover.

The dispute seems to center around design and quality control and has led to the departure of company chief Manuel Rodriguez III, whose grandfather originally started the company. In a detailed and impassioned statement released to the trade, he explained:

"Over 110 years ago, my grandfather, Manuel Rodriguez I, driven by his vocation and perfectionistic ambition, started the hand-crafted manufacturing of the most beautiful Spanish guitars which my father, Manuel Rodriguez (II) then continued, both during his long-term residency in the U.S and also in Spain. Bearing witness to this, we as children inherited his love for the guitar-making profession as well as being let into the secrets that would enable us to continue manufacturing guitars of the utmost quality.

"No one is able to take over this tradition which spans three generations of the



Manuel Rodriguez III

Rodriguez family, nor are they able to deprive us of our pride about the fact that our instruments have been used and played by artists of incredibly high calibre; Andrés Segovia, Narcisco Yepes and Carlos Santana - to name a few. Neither are they able to deny us the honor and pride that it was, and has been, to be able to present guitars to none other than the Queen of Spain herself, former President Jimmy Carter and 44 other heads of state from other parts of the world; encounters of which you are all well aware due to the photos that I have been sending over the past 15 years.

"Three years ago, the desire to enlarge our family business led me to enter into the

see *RODRIGUEZ* on page 36

Rotosound in Good Shape at 60

British string manufacturer Rotosound, is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year and has reached the landmark while undergoing a significant period of expansion to its distribution business.

Formed in 1958 by James How as a UK-based, family-owned and operated company, the firm has become an icon of the British music industry and continues to manufacture its high-quality range of strings in the UK.

The brand was championed early on by music icons like Jimi Hendrix, John Entwistle, and Geddy Lee and Rotosound strings are synonymous with the British Tone. Rotosound is the home of legendary products such as Swing Bass 66 strings, created in collaboration with Who bassist, Entwistle.

"I'm so proud that the company my dad started way back in 1958 is not only still recognized and loved by musicians all over the world, and still manufacturing and innovating in the UK to his same exacting standards, but is also entering an exciting new chapter which will see us grow the business in new directions, finding yet more ways to excite musicians everywhere," said Rotosound chairman, Jason How.

As well as success as a manufacturer, Rotosound has greatly expanded its distribution business over the last 12 months, taking on

UK distribution for Dutch music distribution giant, The Music Alliance (TMA), with access to its full range of instruments and accessories, totaling more than 17,000 products.

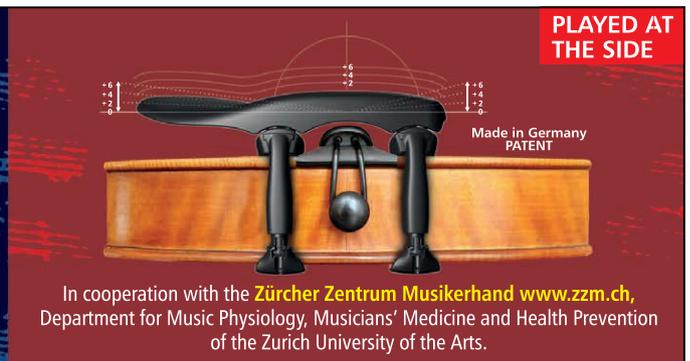
Central to the offering is the online Parts Doctor which is a dealer-friendly way to order multiple parts for electric, bass, acoustic and classical guitars. Simply click on the area of the guitar you want the part for and the site will generate a list of thousands of Boston brand guitar accessories to select from.

TMA boasts a central warehouse of 110,000 square feet situated in The Netherlands and reaches 4,500 stores. The range covers 29 exclusive brands with over 60 additional brand names available. New products are continually added to the line-up.

The new website enables UK customers to order online have access to prices, special offers and stock information, as well as all the TMA products Rotosound strings and

accessories are also online, making the website a one-stop shop for dealers.

The range includes Richwood Guitars, Hayman drums and percussion, Mayson Guitars, Boston Guitar Parts, Orla Italian electronic keyboards, Wilkinson replacement parts, and Salvador Cortez classical guitars, among others.



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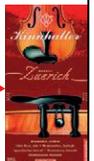
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More New Pedals from TC

Four new pedals are on the way from TC Electronic, described by the firm as offering “iconic vintage tones.”

First up is the Gauss tape echo, said to recapture the sound of vintage tape echo machines but also useful for '50s slapback effects. Second is the Vibraclone Rotary

which, as the name suggests, simulates the sound of a Leslie rotating speaker cabinet. Third is the Drip Spring aimed at delivering the heavy spring reverbs characteristic of surf music. And lastly, the Fluorescence is an homage to Brian Eno, delivering early '90s “ambient” reverbs.



Ten Reasons Why Dakota and Phaeton Are These Artists' #1 Choices

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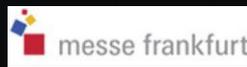
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PERSONAL

continued from page 32

Eggle involved in producing the guitar that bears his name, for instance, how authentic can that product be regarded to be? Are the Faith guitars that he is now involved with actually the real deal, even though they do not bear his name?

Are Manuel Rodriguez classical guitars still Manuel Rodriguez guitars if the company's third generation eponymous boss is no longer involved in them?

That said, there are no Benz' or Mercedes' involved in Mercedes-Benz now, and haven't been for a long time, but everyone knows what the brand stands for. I doubt, however, if either were individually responsible for some of the brand's classic designs and beyond their initial innovation, the brand's values were developed by teams of designers and engineers.

But in MI, as ever, things are done differently and product design can be an entirely personal thing and the where and how it is manufactured and by who, is vital, and it matters. Furthermore, it matters to customers too. Which is something the industry and those who find themselves getting involved in it, would do well to remember.

A straight line is not
always the shortest path



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RODRIGUEZ *continued from page 32*

Capital Group ‘Sostenible’ under the premise that I would always be the one to continue focusing on the design and, above all, the quality control of the guitar manufacturing so that the guitars would always carry the unmistakable stamp of the Manuel Rodriguez dynasty.

“This collaboration, however, has not worked as well as we had all hoped, and as time has gone on, there have been rather serious discrepancies between us. It has reached the point where the ‘Guitarras Manuel Rodriguez & Sons, S.A. Society’ will disappear as such, being consumed by the ‘Grupo Sostenible, S.A.’: a society that has bound together courses of action of a most diverse nature by means of a business policy with which I cannot agree. The build up of such courses of action has resulted in my complete disconnection from the company although it is able to continue using the ‘Guitarras Manuel Rodriguez’ brand (against my wishes), for a certain period of time until I am able to recover it as its owner and licensee. It makes no sense that they would continue to use my name (and the name of my father and grandfather) if I am not longer present in the company; a matter which I hope to resolve as soon as possible.

“I want to thank all distributors, clients and providers – and, definitively, friends – who have kept in touch over the years; for the warm reception you have always given me as well as the trust that has always been granted. I want to assure you that it is my intention, wherever possible, to restart the family tradition and to begin manufacturing the genuine ‘Manuel Rodriguez’ guitars once more;

the main reason being due to the fact that, based on everything my father learnt from my grandfather, it could even be said that the knowledge of the matter at hand is something inherently genetic belonging to our deepest roots and no-one will ever be able to take that over under the guise of mere denomination.”

In response, Manuel Rodriguez (the company) said: “The process of reorganization and strengthening of our company has involved decisions of a professional nature, which as you know, are inevitable in certain circumstances in any business organization, although unfortunately it is not always possible to prevent this type of situation from happening.

“Our experience is based on process, machinery, facilities and, essentially, the work of our colleagues the luthiers, many of which have been with us for more than two decades. All this, even though our company, like any business organization, has gone through severe difficulties because of the evolution of the market or our own ability to be adapted to increasingly competitive and demanding environments.

“The transition from family business to business organization of MR guitars began in 2015 with the entry of new partners into ownership, which has allowed us to increase our production capacity and to bring the manufacture of our guitars and cajones (sic) back to Spain. Here is where we produce already the 100% of our instruments. Likewise, we have been able to substantially improve the quality of the final product thanks to the investments made in the modernization of our factory, in the production process and in qualifications and increase of our team.”

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Rebrand for Bucara Percussion

Bucara Percussion, the African percussion specialist supplied to UK schools and colleges for over 10 years, has rebranded itself with a new logo and new product packs.

The rebranding covers its large range of djembes and doums, as well as the new Coco Shakes pack of nine educational coconut/wood percussion. A selection of small Brazilian instruments also features in the range.

UK distributor, Soar Valley Music said, "Handmade in Ghana from African cedar wood, Bucara djembes provide the warmth and tone expected from an authentic African drum. The drums' sound projection is ideal for classroom and workshop purposes and each model in the Bucara range boasts fine quality rope and a traditional goat skin head".



New International Sales Manager for Warwick

Warwick Distribution has appointed Jason McNamara as international sales manager, taking over from Florence Wilfer-Riboud.

McNamara is based in Tokyo, Japan and will be handling sales on Framus, Warwick, and also the RockBoard and RockGear product lines. He has long-term experience in the MI Industry with 15 years on the retail side of our business working in both Australia and Japan plus having traveled to many countries around the world as a working musician.

"Through his retail experience, especially in Japan, he has become very well connected in the industry. We have no doubt that with him on our team, together we will elevate Framus & Warwick along with our family of brands to new levels," said the firm. "We feel confident we have found the right person for this integral role within our company."



Shure Opens Austrian Office

Shure has changed to direct distribution in Austria, opening a new office in Schwaz, near Innsbruck.

It is responsible for all sales within the systems and consumer divisions in Austria, with the aim of bringing Shure closer to its Austrian customers and providing direct points of contact for all technical support and distribution-related matters in the country.

While systems- and consumer-related activities will be the responsibility of the new Tirol-based office, Shure Distribution's pro audio business in Austria will remain with the company's existing Austrian distribution partner, Kain Audio, based in Salzburg and Vienna.

"We would like to thank Kain Audio, our long-standing partner in Austria, for the excellent work it has done to promote all aspects of Shure's business for more than 20 years, and we're delighted that they are continuing as our business partners in the Austrian pro audio market," commented Marco Weissert, managing director of Shure Distribution. "Christian Kain and his team have an unblemished reputation for excellence in the Austrian pro audio market, and knowing that they will continue to apply their considerable acumen to supporting our live sound business in Austria makes it possible for us to concentrate on further developing the Systems and Consumer markets."

The new Shure Austria office is led by Gerd Kostial, who has run Shure's market development office in the country since 2015.

"We took the decision to move to a di-

rect distribution model in order to cultivate more direct, more personal relationships with our Austrian customers in the future," explained Kostial. "By offering our Systems and Consumer products locally, we can serve our customers and their projects more quickly, comprehensively, and flexibly. We can also recognize and respond to their needs faster, feeding their practical requirements into our product development cycles more rapidly."

Shure applications engineer Christian Thöni, already well known throughout the Austrian Events and Installation market for his extensive experience, will continue to provide customers with support through Shure Austria. Gerd Kostial and his staff at the new office are supported by the 30-strong Shure Distribution team in southern Germany.

"We became Shure's distributor in 1995 and have enthusiastically promoted and developed the brand in Austria since that time," added Christian Kain, managing director of Kain Audio-Technik. "We learned of Shure's decision with heavy hearts, but change is always healthy in a business, and nothing stays the same forever. We are also delighted to continue as Shure's representative for the pro audio market in this country. Our slogan at Kain is 'Your Partner In Sound,' and that is exactly what we continue to be for Shure's live sound, rental, and professional customers in Austria, as well as the many small dealers throughout the country."



Gerd Kostial

Trade Regrets

On January 2, we received the following from NAMM's Dan Del Fiorentino:

Longtime piano man **Dan Hall** passed

away in Louisiana on December 21. In a very special moment during his 2015 NAMM Oral History interview, Mr. Hall became emotional when describing that he knew on his very first day in the piano business that this was what he wanted to do for his career.

It was that sentiment that endeared many people to Mr. Hall, including me. Although he lived to the ripe old age of 91, we are sad to see him leave us because our industry was made better because he was a part of it!

Mr. Hall was the founder of Hall Piano Company, located on David Drive in Metairie, Louisiana. The store was opened in 1958 just after Dan had moved from Beaumont, Texas, where he began his career as a piano retailer. His interesting story in the music industry began by a chance meeting with his brother following World War II. Dan began working in his brother's piano store, which is where Dan discovered he loved the craft of tuning and repair. The Hall Piano Company continues to serve the Metairie and New Orleans areas of Louisiana to this day with Dan's nephew, John Wright Jr. and John's partner Steve Kincher as co-owners.



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To learn more about how we can work together to move your business forward, visit cdf.wf.com/mmr or give our music team a call at 1-844-202-8237.

ON THE MOVE

Korg USA has hired Nick Spadafora as the company's new videographer and content producer.



Responsible for the creative focus of product and brand videos, as well as its execution, editing and producing, Spadafora joins the team as a seasoned photographer and digital media creator.

Starting as a production assistant in 2013 at D'Addario, Spadafora worked his way up to content producer, where his role consisted of creating content for social media, working on the main website, and assisting the graphics team on product photography for advertisements and brand catalogs. For four years, Spadafora was a dedicated employee, assisting the director of photography, interviewing and photographing famous bands and musicians alike and providing expertise as an audio engineer. A graduate from Five Towns College in 2011 with a degree in business management and audio recording technology, Spadafora is also a dedicated guitarist and bassist and currently lives with his band in Queens.

Korg USA has also added integrated graphic designer, Norm Morales to the company's marketing department. Responsible for the implantation and execution of creative design campaigns, Morales joins the team after many years of developing creative advertising strategies for a variety of companies, designing and maintaining agency ad website content and running a production art studio.

Prior to joining Korg USA, Morales spent 16 years working at The Napoleon Group, a high-end production house based in New York City. Starting out as an assistant art studio manager, Morales worked his way up to creative director before leaving the company in 2016. He has worked with a variety of reputable brands such as Lego, Burger King and Aflac, as well as with Saatchi and Saatchi, Grey and McCann NY ad agencies.

St. Louis Music and **Alvarez** welcomes back an old friend, J. Hayes, as brand development manager for Alvarez Guitars.



Hayes is an accomplished and professional guitarist with decades of industry experience as a musician, teacher and product manager, and worked for SLM for many years prior to 2005.

Hayes has travelled the world extensively as product support manager for Paul Reed Smith Guitars and Blackstar Amplification. In his new role as Alvarez brand development manager he will be traveling with the outside sales team, visiting dealers and executing in-store training programs. Hayes will also be assisting in dealer and consumer feedback and using his vast guitar and performance expertise to create additional digital content for the brand.

Yamaha Corporation of America (YCA)

has appointed Brett Armstrong to the position of house of worship resource manager. He will report directly to Roger Eaton, chief marketing director, YCA.



Armstrong serves as the point person for the company's house of worship initiatives across all Yamaha product divisions. In this role, he will create content that supports worship leaders and musicians while providing solution-based training and education designed to elevate the performance and enjoyment of worship services and activities.

"It's a pleasure to have Brett on the Yamaha team to continue our support of the house of worship community," Eaton says. "Creating strong and authentic worship 'community' – connecting leadership and musicians – is a very important facet to our work here at Yamaha. Brett has vast experience in professional audio and a true understanding of the needs of a worship environment to provide a one stop solution of Yamaha quality products."

The son of a pastor and evangelist, Armstrong has maintained worship as a significant part of his entire life.

Most recently, Armstrong was president of Display Works, a commercial video display company. Prior to that, he was the national sales manager for Guitar Center Professional, the nation's largest provider of pro audio, video, lighting and sound installation services. Between 2008 and 2015, he was president of Integrated Display Technology, a provider for all types of video display systems – from projection to video walls.

Armstrong, who plays guitar, bass and piano, lives in Simi Valley with his wife of

37 years. They have three children and five grandchildren.

Samson has appointed Branislav Zivkovic as vice president of global sales.



In this new role, he will be responsible for growing and overseeing global sales and marketing initiatives for Samson and its distributed companies.

An accomplished international executive, Zivkovic's experience includes both business-to-consumer and business-to-business with expertise in industries such as technology, lifestyle, audio equipment and music instruments. He is a multilingual professional with success in growing brands both domestically and in multiple channels and international markets.

"We're very excited to have Branislav join the Samson family," added Jack Knight, president of Samson. "His extensive experience in growing some of today's leading brands is the perfect fit to help take our global sales initiatives to new heights."

D'Addario has announced the appointment of James Smith as key account manager - Western U.S., reporting directly to Chris Scialfa, director of sales, North America.



Most recently, Smith was a marketing consultant/owner of NetPro, based in Los Angeles. During his time there, he helped companies develop end-to-end marketing campaigns, sales training programs, and special projects. Prior to NetPro, James held a series of progressively higher level roles at Guitar Center where he developed a very successful career spanning over 15 years. After working at the retail level, James elevated to the corporate office where he held various titles from associate product manager, promotions manager, director of Merchandise Operations and finally the director of Marketing and Business Development.

In his last role, Smith managed a team of seven employees, which were split between marketing and sales. As one of his achievements, he led his sales team to revenue growth of \$1.5 million in a span of 2.5 years. Furthermore, James was responsible for managing B2B sales while he directly managed some of Guitar Center's largest accounts, including D'Addario.

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Messe Frankfurt's *Michael Biver*

By Christian **Wissmuller**

For some long-time attendees, Musikmesse Frankfurt has appeared to be "in decline" in recent years. A handful of big-name exhibitors have opted not to participate, attendance was seen to be dwindling when compared to past shows, and the perception (again, for some) was that less actual business was being conducted at the annual gathering.



messe frankfurt

Prolight + Sound. Thus, visitors from the music and entertainment sector have the chance to discover the latest trends in the merchandising segment. Additionally, the Musikmesse Festival will be more closely linked with the fair and include evening concerts at the Exhibition Centre itself.

What's your response to feel that the Frankfurt gathering is "less important" or somehow less valuable than, say, ten years ago?

There are several factors that continue to emphasize the high degree of relevance of the fair. Together with Prolight + Sound, the last Musikmesse attracted around 100,000 visitors from 144 countries. According to our polls,

more than half of trade visitors to Musikmesse attend no other fair. There is no comparable event in Europe.

Musikmesse reflects the changes in the musical instrument market, which is characterised by consolidation on both the manufacturing and retailing sides. The online trade is growing at a disproportionately high rate and many brick-and-mortar retailers are fighting for survival. Moreover, some major manufacturers are currently suffering from a decline in sales and, therefore, reconsidering their participation in trade fairs.

Naturally, fairs themselves are also facing increased competition from digital marketing channels. Fewer new products are being launched specifically at a fair. Instead, the process is being spread throughout the year.

How do you strike the right balance between fielding a truly successful "trade show," while also staging an event that's open to the public?

The musical instrument trade continues to be the most important target group for Musikmesse. Nevertheless, reaching out to other players in the value chain is an integral part of a successful trade show. This includes professionals from the handicrafts and musical instrument making segments, for whom Musikmesse is an important contact platform and source of inspiration. It includes key communicators from the fields of media, culture, and education. And, of course, it also includes musicians. At the fair, they can exchange ideas and information, prepare long-term purchasing decisions, cultivate their relationships with brands and, nowadays, become brand ambassadors in their communities via smartphones and tablets. All these groups comprise trade visitors relevant to Musikmesse.

Fairs are important figureheads for their industry. Accordingly, we want Musikmesse to exercise a power of attraction reaching far beyond the Exhibition Centre and draw attention to the sector. Music making is fun. Music connects people. Music is a basic need. Our aim is to communicate these messages – from which the whole industry profits. And this is only possible if we give consumers the chance to see the sector's products for themselves. Therefore, we open the fair to all music lovers on the Friday afternoon and all day Saturday. And, especially on these days, we offer a great program of events with appearances by international artists.

Finding the right balance between addressing trade and private

A revamp of the fair's layout and schedule was implemented in the spring of 2017, meeting with near universal acclaim, however, attracting over 100,000 visitors – and more changes are in store for 2018.

MMR recently caught up with Michael Biver, group show director, entertainment, media & creative industries, for Messe Frankfurt to discuss recent and ongoing modifications to the show and its importance to the global MI market.

While it's been pretty well covered in *MMR* and elsewhere, can you briefly summarize some of the changes that were implemented to the Frankfurt show in 2017 and the reasons behind the moves?

A fair needs to develop continuously if it is to remain relevant in the long term. For 2017, I would like to emphasise four points.

Firstly: closer ties between Musikmesse and Prolight + Sound. With a new sequence of days for Musikmesse – Wednesday to Saturday – the two shows ran concurrently on three days. Secondly: program highlights for different communities. New features, such as the Guitar Camp and the Sound & Recording Lounge, were given a very warm reception by many visitors. Thirdly: less noise in the halls. We succeeded in this by introducing an acoustic curtain between the individual product segments. And, fourthly: a broader thematic spectrum. For example, we expanded the music education and music therapy segments.

What additional changes can exhibitors and attendees expect to see this April?

We are sharpening the profile of the fair as a source of inspiration for professionals from the musical instrument, music education and music business segments, and for musicians. Accordingly, we are further intensifying our efforts to reduce noise levels in the halls and orientating the focus on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday morning to an exchange of ideas and information between these professionals.

Also new is the centralisation of the "Audio, DJ & Recording" product segment in Hall 4.1. Previously, exhibitors from this segment were spread over several Musikmesse and Prolight + Sound halls. Hall 4.1 will be part of both events. Moreover, there will be further improvements to the hall layout.

For the first time, "MerchDays," the meeting place for event merchandisers, will be held within the framework of Musikmesse and

visitors is an on-going process, for which we keep our ear close to the ground. This was one of the reasons we decided to introduce trade visitor days in 2018. The professional character of the fair has priority.

In a global context, how do you view trade shows such as Musikmesse evolving to adapt to changes in the market – online sales, the ability of vendors and retailers to connect easily via email and social media, et cetera?

As I mentioned, fairs are no longer the only opportunity to gather information about new products. Today, buying products or entering into agreements with just a mouse click is an everyday occurrence. However, no website or data sheet can replace the experience of holding and playing real instruments. And, regardless of how many digital channels there are, direct contact to new and existing customers is still an important factor for success. We aim to support this with a matchmaking programme that brings together suitable manufacturers and retailers.

Of course, the digital revolution is forcing the sector to rethink things. And this also affects us as fair and exhibition organizers. However, change also means new opportunities, for example, when it comes to maximising the impact of a trade-fair presentation. If you enter "Musikmesse 2017" in YouTube, you will find tens of thousands of videos that have been viewed millions of times. In other words, the products exhibited are not only seen by visitors to the fair but also by numerable other users around the world. What happens at the Exhibition Centre is relayed worldwide via the social media.

For this reason, too, the fair offers a host of opportunities to present products in an emotional context. For example, an exhibitor who

not only shows his instrument on the exhibition stand but also has it demonstrated by a top endorser at one of the event areas – to an audience of journalists, vloggers and other influences – can reach an enormous number of potential customers.

Generally speaking, fairs are moving away from being pure product shows, towards being content providers who generate value added for their target groups. However, this only works if the sector plays an active role.

What are your expectations – both for Musikmesse and the for the MI market, in general – in the coming years?

As a keen musician, I am positive that anyone who loves making music will always be willing to invest in his or her passion. Sales channels may well change. However, there will always be a demand for instruments – a demand that transcends national borders, as well as age and income differences.

Naturally, the musical instrument business is always dependent on the climate of consumption in the individual market. In the EU it has developed very well and the world's second-biggest economic region is growing at the fastest rate for the last ten years. Despite the process of concentration in the market, more than half of the world's top musical-instrument retailers are headquartered in the EU – another reason why a strong fair in Europe is so important.

A strategic goal for the coming years is to further strengthen the synergistic effects between Musikmesse and Prolight + Sound – after all, almost all leading musical instrument retailers also sell event technology. The benefits are evident. The joint exhibition hall in 2018 – Hall 4.1 – is another step in this direction. 




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Chuck Surack of Sweetwater Sound



2018
DON
JOHNSON
Music Industry
Service Award

Sweetwater

2018 Recipient of MMR's Annual Don Johnson Industry Service Award

By Christian Wissmuller



Lisa and Chuck Surack

Chuck Surack is, of course, best known as the founder of Sweetwater Sound (although he's involved in a number of other business ventures, as well), but he's every bit as notable for his philanthropic efforts. While he and his wife, Lisa, don't limit their generosity *only* to music-related organizations and causes (more than 600 nonprofit organizations are supported by the Suracks, annually), their contributions in that area are nearly unmatched. The Voices of Unity Youth Choir, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, Arts United of Fort Wayne, and the Fort Wayne Philanthropic Orchestra are just a handful of the groups that benefit from Chuck and Lisa's magnanimity.

The goal and spirit of the Don Johnson Award are well expressed on the trophy, itself: "In Recognition and Appreciation for Outstanding Advocacy and Support for Music Education at the Community and National Level." In other words, we look to honor folks in our industry who go beyond simply running a good and successful retail or MI supplier business, but who care passionately about the culture of music-making and how it benefits individuals, families, and communities – basically, good men and women from all corners of MI who embody the best attributes of our industry.

Chuck Surack is unquestionably one of those individuals.

MMR is proud to present Chuck with the 10th annual Don Johnson Industry Service Award. He joins a truly elite group of MI industry heavy-hitters whose dedication to the advancement of, and advocacy for, music education has helped keep the culture we all treasure alive and progressing.

Congratulations to Mr. Surack for an honor richly deserved.

We recently had the pleasure of speaking with Chuck about his life as a musician, engineer, entrepreneur, family man, and philanthropist....

Okay so let's just dive right in. You know, let's start at the beginning. Can you talk a little bit about your own background in music? When did you first start playing? When you first started taking lessons? What was your first instrument that you started playing? Who were the some of the kind of early mentors that really nurtured your interest?

Y'know, I never took a lesson – I tried [*laughs*]. But I started in Fifth Grade playing saxophone. And I wanted to play trombone, but

my dad was a frustrated accordion player and I don't know if he was trying to live vicariously through me or what. He said, "Oh, no. You don't want to play trombone – you never get the solos! You want to play saxophone." So my dad basically made me play saxophone and bought me a tenor sax in a pawnshop in Columbus, Ohio.

You say you never had any lessons, not even at school?

Well, *at school* with the band director, yes, but never private lessons I guess I should say. I was so excited to play saxophone, too, with my teacher in Southern Ohio where I was born. I said, "Listen to this!" and he looked at me and I played some awful note. He looked at me and he says, "You have the mouthpiece on upside down..." So I started with the mouthpiece upside down, but played all the way through high school. In seventh grade my family moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana and in eighth grade I had a very, very inspirational teacher. He was the principal tuba player in our orchestra for nearly 50 years. He just retired last year. But he also played upright bass and trombone – low brass stuff – and what really inspired me was walking in a classroom one day and he said, "What is this instrument playing?" and I said, "Well, clearly its trumpet" and he said "No." I explained that I knew what a trumpet sounds like, yes, that's a trumpet and we went round and round and he eventually showed me that it was actually him playing a trombone into a reel to reel tape recorder and he sped the recorder up and played it back twice as fast. And when it played back twice as fast it also jumped up an octave. Because he was a low brass, guy he was able to play trombone, but he couldn't play trumpet, necessarily. And so he got me into the whole music and technology sort of thing and he was just a very good teacher. He played a lot of pizza places and things you could get into as a kid. His name is Sam Gnagey.

Very cool. Now you're still, as I understand, an active performer. What is it about playing music that means so much and still resonates with you still to this day?

Well you know it's my root, that's how I started, and I do enjoy playing music. I play several times a month. I play in two different bands. One's a little trio with a lot of technology and the other is a nine-piece rhythm and blues band with some just absolutely amazing superstar players who all happen to work in Fort Wayne – now in Sweetwater, but we brought them in from all over the country. Music is just a great relief from my day job and its really why I got into everything, so it's just its fun to be able to connect with the other players, it's fun to be able to connect with the audience and share and play what's really on your mind and on your heart.

What was the initial catalyst behind starting Sweetwater and how did things get to where they are today?

Right! Immediately after high school I took the year off thinking that I was going to come back and go to medical school or music school. I wasn't sure which, but I wanted to be a pediatrician, a children's doctor, as much as I wanted to do music. And so I went away thinking I would, you know, play for a year and come back. Well, I loved playing on the road so much that I didn't come back for several years, actually. And when I came back I came back with my literally very beat-up old VW bus that my parents had given me – the only thing they gave me, frankly. My mom had wrecked it, so I filled it in with two gallons of Bondo and I painted it with 99-cent cans of K-mart blue spray paint. And I put two tractor-supply headlights on the front – like big fog lights, you know?

This needs to be a movie.

Yeah, exactly [laughs]. And I would take that VW bus after being on the road with it and on the road I always taught myself all the newest technologies. Back then, a lot of recording didn't happen in a recording studios, it happened in radio stations. And so I always was the guy who knew how to run the mixer from the side of the stage. I could run the equipment in the radio stations and when I came home I'd gather a few, very modest pieces of recording equipment, but I would take my little four-track, reel-to-reel recorder, throw it in the VW bus, and I would go to the local school or nightclub or church whatever it was and I would mic the band or the choir or the speaker or preacher whatever it was and I would record them in the VW bus. And then I would take those recordings out of the VW and take them to the living room of my very modest 12' by 60' mobile home, then edit them and put reverb on, and make them sound better. And my goal always was to add value to try and make the music better than it even was, or make the artist sound better than they really were, and that's the part that I've always loved and, to this day, we try and add value to everything we do. And that's probably one of biggest Sweetwater differences; we don't just sell the same product that all of our competitors do. We find ways to add value to it, either with technical support or with additional sounds with the keyboard or tools to set it up, and all those sort of things.



Humble beginnings. Chuck's beat-up VW bus: the first Sweetwater "headquarters"

After having the mobile recording in my VW bus and working in the living room of my mobile home, eventually around 1979-1980 I bought my first little 1,000 square-foot house on the west side of Fort Wayne and I built a recording studio there I was mainly still a studio. But what really changed my business was, in 1984 I was invited by a friend of mine here in town that had a music store to go to Chicago to see a big show. I got to see a prototype of the Kurzweil K250. And, frankly, I was going back and forth between that and the Yamaha DX1, trying to figure out which big synthesizer I wanted to put in my studio and when I saw the Kurzweil K250 I thought, "Wow, that would replace my grand piano, plus provide 39 other sounds." And so I bought a very, very early one and when they came out the next year, I reversed engineered it. I had to teach myself electronics, computer stuff, and so I'd already been working on mixing consoles and amplifiers and that sort of thing, and it wasn't a stretch for me to start digging into this Kurzweil to figure out how it works. So I reversed engineered it and eventually designed my own set of sounds that were going in and my own computer software and I kind of became "the guy" around the country, around the world, that knew the K-250 pretty well. And I became friends with folks like Stevie Wonder and Kenny Rogers and all their band members, and Dolly Parton and anybody that could afford an instrument like this back in the mid-'80s. And, next thing, my friends were asking me to help them put the latest sounds on their machines or send them my sounds because, having a recording studio, I recorded a lot of my own stuff. And I remember when I started selling them additional machines, I sold them parts first. I became a parts dealer and

then I sold them additional machines and by this point I'm going, man! \$20,000 for a Kurzweil back in those days – why would you buy a second one? Well, famous musicians were putting them in their green rooms and on their buses and their lake homes and all of that. And it got to the point where Kenny Rogers had like 14 of these K250s on the road and Michael Kamen, the very famous composer, who died a few years ago had, like, 30 of the machines, and Paul Shaffer – until he went off the air a few years ago – was still playing a Kurzweil K250 on the air every night with David Letterman.

And I became the guy that knew the machine well and the next thing you know my friends are calling me back going, "You helped me with the Kurzweil, but I understand now there is music software that you can run on the computer." I said, "I know how to do that because I'm already doing that in my studio." So I started selling them software for their computers and then they wanted recording equipment and by the very late '80s my business had changed from being just a recording studio to helping my friends with recording equipment to being relatively famous all over the country and all that sort of thing. In 1990 I moved into my very first 5,000 square-foot commercial building with five employees that who been coming and going all hours of the day out of my home before that. In '91 we added another 5,000 square feet on and 20 more employees and we were in that location for the next 17 years.

That's really impressive when you think about it – how this relatively brief this span of time, since that first commercial build-

ing lease in 1990-91 to get where you are now... I mean, wow! Well done.

Thank you. I feel very fortunate, very blessed. We moved out of that building on Bass Road only because we ran out of land in 2006. We moved over to our current building and we had 200 employees. You fast forward to today, 11 years later, and we have now 1,300 employees in our building and we continue to grow 20 to 25 percent a year. And in less than four years it feels kind of like we've doubled in size and we're kind of doing that still... it's crazy! But it's all founded, it really is all founded on just honest-to-goodness customer service skills, treating people the way they want to be treated. I grew up as a Boy Scout and Boy Scouts are not real popular today, but a Boy Scout's oath is that a scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. Those are amazing principles to live by, professionally. I think they're also basic principles to live by, personally, and that's how we operate our business. I teach all the employees to always, always do the right thing for the customer. Don't worry about whether we're making money today or tomorrow – just do the right thing for the customer and ultimately the money takes care of itself.

I've got to interject here that I purchased a guitar from Sweetwater – a Joan Jett signature Melody Maker – back in 2007 and it always catches me off guard that my Sweetwater sales rep still calls every few months to see how I'm doing with that purchase and is there anything else I might have questions about, or other gear needs.

The goal is that we call every customer, depending on their interests and buying patterns. Some we call everyday, some every week, some every month – at least twice a year – that's the goal. We just want to stay in touch and if we can help in any way that's great.

Everybody is always talking about how the way to compete is to provide customer service and everybody is aware of that, conceptually, but I don't really see as many people actually enacting that so much. There are way more people who pay lip service to that philosophy. Very few organizations actually embrace that stance and actually do it, so hats off to you guys.

Thank you. We would actually follow through and implement it. It's a whole an-

other thing and, you know, we can spend hours talking about what we do to truly provide customer service. There are probably 30 people that are doing technical support right now. "How do I use my Apple computer with pre-sold software in this particular set-up?" And we don't charge anything for that – it's completely free. None, zero, none of my competitors offers that. You know, maybe the sales guys will help do some tech support, but I know for a fact many of the retailers simply say, "Call the manufacturer." You can't call Apple and ask them how to use PreSonus software. Try calling Microsoft and ask them something about music and stuff. You know it just isn't going to happen. We provide that type of service completely, 100 percent free and it's just a value that we offer and its back to trying to always add value to everything we do.

There's a clear culture around Sweetwater and their customers, and there's a reason why people go back and there's a reason why you guys have had this sort of explosive growth.

Absolutely. We fit a real neat niche. I don't mean this to be in any way derogatory to other dealers. There's 8,000 other music stores across the country and a lot of them do a phenomenal job and are working really hard, but it's no secret that many of the bigger ones today have minimum-wage employees or close to minimum-wage employees who are kind of there to like... you know, they're playing a gig or something like that. And you have Amazon at the other end [of the spectrum] who does a really good job at overnight or same-day or two-hour delivery – or soon to be drone delivery – but you don't call Amazon and talk to a human being and ask them again how to use an Apple computer with PreSonus software or "What do you recommend I buy?" And so we fit neatly between the traditional, old music store who doesn't have the inventory today, doesn't have necessarily the expertise, and Amazon who has great delivery systems, but don't have the personal expertise you need. That's one of the reasons we're growing is we fit neatly between those two. And so, as long as we're honest to our customers and offer true integrity and of value to them, we think our business is going to be strong for a long time.

Well, not to over simplify it, but just the notion that it really just comes down

to customer service and providing the person you're trying to connect with the sort of respect that is meaningful to them and makes them repeat customers is key.

And that you have to run the business in a modern, professional sort of way. As an example, one of the companies that I own is called Mynett Music. It started in 1933 and they sell band instruments. That's something we didn't do at Sweetwater. In fact, I don't know if we ever will or won't. I'm not sure about that, but they were good local stores, they called on all the high schools and middle schools, and had the road reps and all that. I'd taken my saxophone to them for 49 years through the original founder and then the son of the founder and then even just another technician that have all done phenomenal work on the horn, so I've always gone there for that kind of stuff. And the current owner had gotten really sick and I said, "Well, I hate to see your business go away because I think it's important for the school systems and for local musicians," so we acquired it. When I acquired it he didn't have a point of sale system, everything was a hand-written invoice. Inventory control was three-by-five cards, which would fall out of instruments as you picked them up off the shelf. You can imagine what the rest of the place was like. So we went in and we did put an inventory control system in and a point of sale system in and we cleaned the stores and painted the bathrooms and put nice new signs up and put the employees in a better position – improving their health insurance and did all kinds of things that a modern business really needs to do. But it's been going since 1933. It's kind of operating the business the same way. So it's that kind of stuff.

Let's now talk a little bit about yourself and your wife Lisa and your philanthropy. Your spirit giving is near legendary at this point. Why is this important to you both to give back to the community, to the area, to the country?

As I told you, my mom and dad gave me a beat-up, wrecked VW bus. My mom had wrecked the front of it and she blew the engine up so I learned how to rebuild engines and I rebuilt the engine. I mean, I was given enough. I can't tell you I lived completely poor. My dad was an engineer, but it was a normal, middle wage sort of family and we didn't have much. Lisa's dad was a plumber and her parents divorced

early and we both had nothing and we were able to build this ourselves without help from family. I can't we haven't had help from friends and very loyal customers and great employees and all those sorts of things, but we feel incredibly, incredibly fortunate, incredibly blessed and we just we know we can't take it with us and we know we're in a position today to help others. We love that we can help others, whether it's our own employees or the other 600 non-profit organizations that we support around here and across the country. It just feels like a personal responsibility. We want to do it and hopefully we're trying to encourage others to want to do the same. I mean, how sad would it be to go through life and die with a bunch of money and you didn't help others that you know are in need? And there are people that are still truly suffering.

Again, we are all human, we do make mistakes, but we try and do the right thing and if we make a mistake we say we're sorry and we make amends and move on correctly.

We're talking about the generosity of you and your family and your wife, in general, but specifically, you guys support music and the arts quite extensively. Why do you believe music education, music advocacy is important to our society?

There are two things that we support really aggressively and that is one: music and music advocacy. The other thing is we're very involved in a human welfare sort of way is... We live in a country that's considered by many to be "the best country in the world," but people are still living homeless or still hungry or still have medical needs and issues so that's an area of great importance to me.

The fact is, you can't do everything for everyone. For example, we help do a lot with sports and I have nothing against sports – I think sports are great – I just don't have enough money to support everything, so we draw a line there unless, you know. If it's our employees' kids that are in little league, we support all those. But if it's just an adult hockey league, I'll tend to say no, unless that adult hockey league is raising money to help homeless people or something else of the sort. And so that's the only place we draw the line. Otherwise almost everything else... if there's individual person with a cancer story or a heart attack story or something like that, we'll try and even help there at a



Gear ready to be shipped to Sweetwater customers

“How sad would it be to go through life and die with a bunch of money and you didn't help others that you know are in need?”

personal level if we can.

We've just have been incredibly blessed. Back to music programs, I know what the music programs did for me, personally, and it's pretty easy to connect the dots today. There have been so many studies done about how learning to play an instrument does all these things – not only was helping you with education and math scores and all those sorts of things – but listening to yourself and working on getting better at critiquing yourself, which is a great skill to have. Being in an ensemble, whether it's a band or a rock band or concert band or an orchestra, listening to others around you and knowing how to play softer when it's their solo time or how to play louder when it's yours... These are all great things and great skills, whether you play music for the rest of your life or not. You'll clearly be a better artist or be able to appreciate the arts, but I would argue that those skills you learn as a musician, whether being in an ensemble and listening to others and getting along or developing great skills, benefit you in a church meeting or a being in a club or in your neighborhood association. If we had more musicians down in Washington D.C., things would probably be a little bit better.

There are also all kinds of physical and medical benefits that happen through playing an instrument and I use this fact. There are things going on with the brain that we can't even begin to understand to-

day and I can tell you, personally, that I can have a cold, I can have an upset stomach, I can feel bad and, believe it or not, I play the saxophone for a little bit and all of a sudden those symptoms are all gone and something has shifted in my brain and I'm in much better shape after I played just for a little bit.

I think arts is just as important as the other subjects and skills that we're teaching our kids today.

Absolutely agreed. You and your wife have received many acknowledgements, awards, and accolades for all your charitable efforts. Do any of those many stand out as being particularly meaningful and, if so, why?

Well I don't want to be under-appreciative of this award and all of the others.

No, totally understood.

We are really humble, down to earth people and I'm embarrassed to get awards. I'd like quite often to say, "No I don't want the award."

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Inside Sweetwater in Fort Wayne, Indiana

awards is we just hope that it would encourage others. There are no specific awards, but there have been some highlights. We've made donations to our local Easterseals Arc [of Northeast Indiana] several years ago put a whole music room into the facility. And I heard later that one of the clients of Easterseals Arc had never spoken and the staff didn't even know if he could speak. And they walked in one day and he's playing the drum set we donated and he's singing words to songs.

Wow, that's powerful stuff. Since the bulk of MMR's readership are MI retailers, like yourself, are there any observations or advice that you would want to share with your colleagues in the world of musical instrument retail?

It's actually really simple. Just do the right stuff. You already hit it right on the head. People can say "customer service," but you *can*

really do it. You kind of put as much energy and effort into that as into figuring out which guitar to order or which piano to stock. And, you know, I have a person here who is dedicated *just* to customer service at a vice president level. Back to the advocacy thing: I think as an industry – and we're getting better at it and, clearly, awards like this help – we have a responsibility and I think we've been a little lax, historically. Maybe that's because our industry as professional as some other industries for a long time.

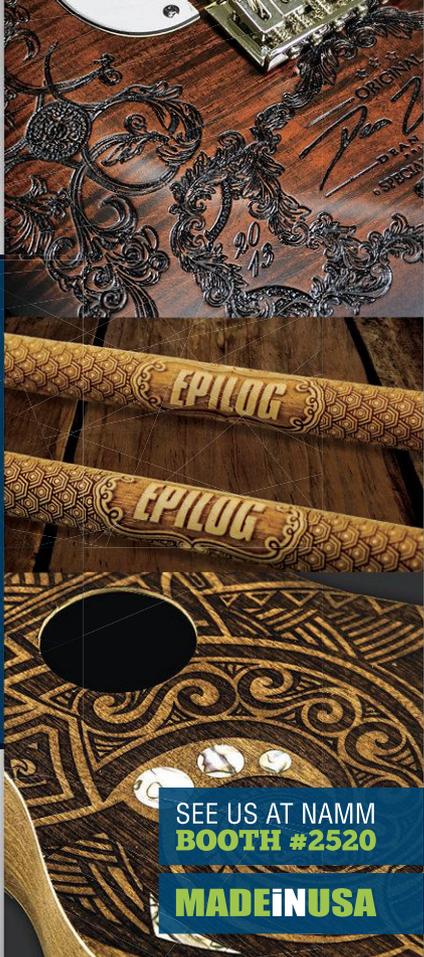
If you look at the automobile industry, they're putting millions and millions of dollars into not only local communities, but into growing tomorrow's dealers and into all kinds of things to help the community because they know if their community's not healthy they're not going to sell more cars. It's that simple. I think, as music dealers, we do have a responsibility to grow and educate tomorrow's musicians, not necessarily to fill our pocketbooks at the stores, but to make better human beings. And, actually, I was asked to be on the inaugural NAMM Foundation board with four or five other really great people and we're going to try and communicate to the music industry how it's important to put money into this foundation so we can do more things to get more people playing music. I guess that is one thing I would say: actively support the NAMM Foundation. There's just no downside to it. There's just all kinds of upside. I think about the conflicts going around the world and if everyone played a little more music – whether there were musicians that were involved – I just think they would negotiate better, get along better, they'd find more peaceful ways to resolve things. PHOTO: SWEETWATER

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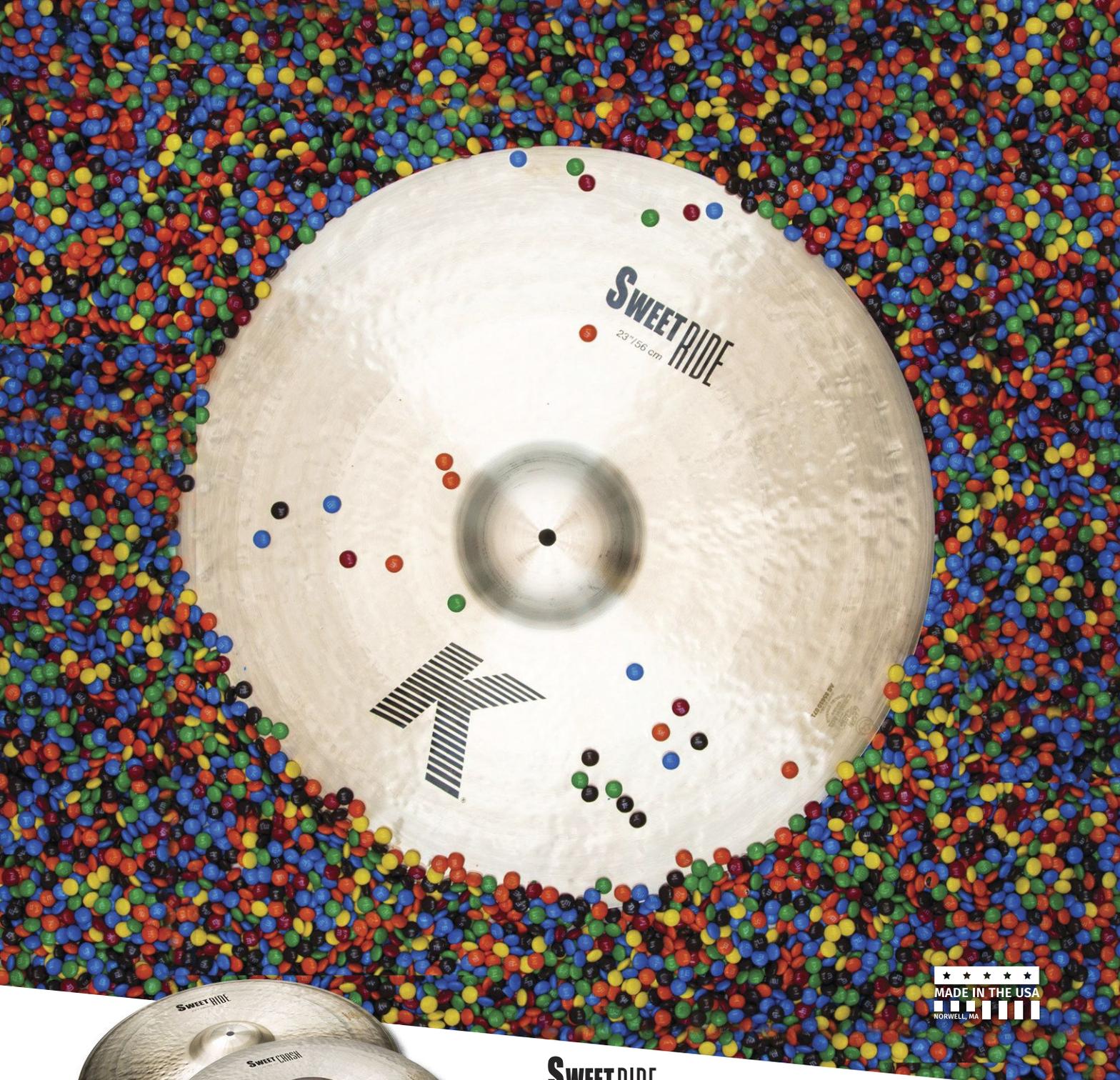


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2018 Winter NAMM[®] Buyer's Guide

Take a peek at some of the hottest items hitting the Show floor this year.



DJ & Lighting

New Gear from Numark

The NS6II from Numark is an all-new 4-channel DJ controller with dual USB ports, two built-in 2-inch high-res display screens, and the full version of Serato DJ. The NS6II is a DJ controller that enables two laptops to be connected simultaneously, each engaging Serato DJ, for seamless DJ hand-offs. With a push of a button, both DJs can switch between the two laptops and play at the same time between four channels. In addition to the dual USB ports, the NS6II contains a standalone mixer to connect turntables and external media devices. Users can connect two media devices to the RCA line/phono inputs and instantly switch between them.



Boasting a built-in sound card and Serato DJ Intro, the DJ2GO2 is the smallest full-featured DJ controller around. It's perfect for performing small gigs, prepping for gigs, and it makes a perfect backup for those "just in case" moments. A built-in sound card with master gain, headphone output for cueing and channel gain knobs makes DJ2GO2 the ultimate portable pocket DJ controller. It has two channels with a crossfader and pitch faders for easy blending. All the controls are at the DJ's fingertips: simply plug in the headphones and connect the speakers through the master output. DJ2GO2 comes pre-mapped with Serato DJ Intro and is upgrade-ready to the full version of Serato. Play blends, mixes and transitions on the fly. Control with quick access to cues, auto/manual loop, and sampler. DJs can also map the DJ2GO2 with other popular DJ software.



www.numark.com

Booth: 206B

New Releases from Chauvet Professional

The new Freedom H1 from Chauvet Professional is a compact and wireless battery-operated LED wash light with a built-in D-Fi transceiver and a single hex-color (RGBAW+UV) 10W LED to produce a rainbow of realistic accent light colors. This compact fixture can be mounted virtually anywhere, even on most metal surfaces, thanks to its magnetic base. Multiple units can be remotely controlled simultaneously via stand-alone mode, wireless DMX or IR. User-friendly, it also features an easy-to-read digital display. The system includes four fixtures, four diffusers, a carry bag, multi-charger and IRC-6 remote.



The GigBAR Flex adds even more of these user-friendly qualities to the original GigBAR 3-in-1 Pack-n-Go lighting system. A versatile lightshow-machine, the new product features two LED Derbys, RGB+UV LED Quad-color pars and strobes. For added versatility it has a pass-through mounting hole for use with various stage and speaker stands, as well as adjustable leg brackets.



The Wash FX2 is a multi-purpose effect light has 18 Quad-color (RGB+UV) LEDs that can be used as a regular wash light or as an eye-candy effect with six chasing zones. An on-board dimming feature adds to its capabilities, and the unit's powerful UV LEDs can be used to create a psychedelic black light effect in addition to delivering brilliant color-mixing.



www.chauvetprofessional.com

Booth: 11133

Amplifiers

MVX150 Head and Cabinet from VOX

The MVX150 is the first amplifier equipped with Korg's acclaimed Nutube technology in both the preamp and power amp. Coined as "NuPower," it uses Nutube in a push-pull configuration, borrowing circuit design techniques from some of history's best vacuum tube amps, resulting in both a pure clean tone, as well as a modern high-gain sound, with a powerful low end. These carefully constructed amps contain two channels with two modes for each channel, resulting in a diverse range

of sounds. The passive tone circuit, with the addition of bright and fat switches, produces warm, tonal quality, reminiscent of a supreme boutique amp. The MVX150 series will be available February 2018 for \$849.99 and \$999, respectively.



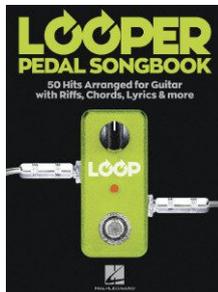
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Print & Digital

New Releases from Hal Leonard

The *Looper Pedal Songbook* from Hal Leonard is the first-ever songbook designed to help guitarists play songs using live looping. Once a novelty tool in music, looping pedals are now used by some of the most popular artists in the world. Even though their popularity has grown, very little has been written for beginners about how to perform using them. It features 50 songs that will put players' looping skills to good use, and are designed to be played with even the most modest looper on the market. Each arrangement is written for performance by a single acoustic or electric guitar, but also allows for some experimentation to ensure players can take their looping to new heights. This book teaches how to start and end a loop, overdubbing, common routing directions, and loop setup. Regardless of looper-use skill level, the *Looper Pedal Songbook* will help expand a player's looper knowledge and vocabulary. Songs for this songbook were carefully selected, specifically for their repetitive structure that make them perfect to perform using a pedal. Songs featured in the book span multiple genres, from classic rock hits like "All Along the Watchtower," "Born on the Bayou," "Twist and Shout," and "Hey Joe," to modern rock-pop favorites like "Happy," "I'm Yours," "Shape of You," and "Viva La Vida." Price: \$14.99



The *Hal Leonard Drumset Method*, by acclaimed educator Kennan Wylie with drummer extraordinaire Gregg Bissonette, will help all beginners kick-start their drum lessons. The book is designed for anyone just learning to play the drum set. It is a comprehensive and easy-to-use beginner's guide that includes lessons on drum setup and fundamentals, tuning and maintenance, basic music reading, grips and strokes, coordination and basic techniques, half-time grooves, syncopation, jazz drumming, drum soloing, and much more. In addition to the great lessons, each book includes hours of audio tracks for demonstration and play along, plus video lessons from Bissonette. The audio and video tracks can be accessed online using the unique code inside each book and can be streamed or downloaded. The audio files include PLAYBACK+, a multi-functional audio player that allows you to slow down audio without changing pitch, set loop points, change keys, and pan left or right. Players also have access to downloadable PDF files with extra practice material for each book. The *Hal Leonard Drumset Method* series is launching with three books: *Hal Leonard Drumset Method-Book 1*, *Hal Leonard Drumset Method-Book 2*, and *Hal Leonard Drumset Method Complete Edition*. Book 1 and Book 2 retail for \$16.99, and the complete edition retails for \$27.50.



The *Deluxe Guitar Play-Along* series from Hal Leonard gives guitarists the ability to play along with interactive sound-alike backing tracks and each volume will feature nearly double the songs from the original *Guitar Play-Along* series. The books include unique codes that let users go online to access an interactive audio interface with backing tracks for each song. The audio tracks are professionally recorded by a live band to emulate the original recordings as closely as possible. In addition to letting players see and hear the score as it plays, the interface lets users customize the tempo and pitch, loop passages, and isolate instruments. The tracks can be streamed or downloaded and played offline. Each book includes notes and tablature for fifteen songs. The songs are carefully arranged to consolidate multiple guitar parts from the original recordings into one full-sounding yet playable guitar part. The *Deluxe Guitar Play-Along* series is launching with seven volumes: *Acoustic Songs*, *The Beatles*, *Classic Rock*, *Really Easy Songs*, *Red Hot Chili Peppers*, *Ed Sheeran*, and *Top Rock Hits*. Each volume retails for \$19.99.



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Note From Joe



An Industry Unites Around Music

The Music Begins Here. The Future of Music Begins with You.

Thank you for being a part of the passionate music community of NAMM members and industry colleagues who have made The NAMM Show an important part of their new year's success strategy.

Whether you are on your way to Anaheim, in the thick of the show experience, or headed back home, we want to express our sincere thanks for your support. (And, if you were unable to make it this year, please know you are missed!)

Our annual family reunion once again brought friends and peers together, from all segments of the trade and around the globe, as if it were our own musical United Nations.

We have members who focus on serving the music education market, others on music technology and still others that want to view the latest innovations in virtually every instrument category imaginable. And if that weren't enough, we have a growing part of our membership expanding into the event technology market, including live sound, theatrical lighting and video.

I imagine many of our members have found success in specializing in just one area, while others are diversified in many of these products and services. Regardless of your business strategy, we all contribute to how music is made, experienced and enjoyed and, what I believe, is a force for good in this world.

Bringing everyone together in Anaheim to launch new products, improve our professional skills through the best education offered anywhere, and to immerse ourselves in the endless options to network with peers in a fun and inspiring musical environment, helps strengthen our industry; a fundamental part of NAMM's mission. But just as essential to this mission, is

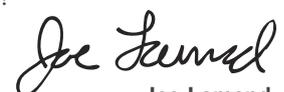
funneling trade show revenues back into market development and music education, or what I call our "Circle of Benefits" business model.

Your participation in The NAMM Show not only helps drive your professional success, but also helps create more music makers, impacting millions of people around the world year-round, including some of our most at-risk youth for whom access to music education can make all the difference.

The NAMM Foundation invests these funds to maintain and grow our industry for generations to come, using a multifaceted approach. It provides funding for emerging programs that serve as our industry's venture capital fund as well as grants to deserving students—the future industry leaders of tomorrow. NAMM and our members lobby our policy makers to make the \$600 billion public education spending pool more accessible and to increase funding for music and arts education. Funding is also being used to research the benefits of music on the brain as a way to measure the value of music in our lives. None of this would be possible without your attendance at The NAMM Show.

We gather in Anaheim, representing virtually every aspect of the music, sound and event technology ecosystem—truly *the music begins here*. While we come from different parts of the industry, we can learn and grow by working together on our vision of a more musical world—a vision that begins with each and every one of you.

Wishing you much success in 2018!



Joe Lamond
NAMM PRESIDENT AND CEO



View show highlights, live stream broadcasts; photo and video galleries online at namm.org

The NAMM Show

january 25/28 2018 ^{california}

We envision a world in which the joy of making music is a precious element of daily living for everyone.

Through our **Circle of Benefits** business model, trade show revenues are funneled back into market development programs and support of music education. Your participation in The NAMM Show not only helps drive your success, but also (perhaps as importantly) powers NAMM's year-long efforts to create more music makers.



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that fund music making service programs for people of all ages



Advocacy

to ensure policies, funding and support for music learning access at every stage of life



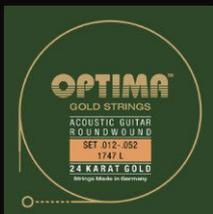
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Buyer's Guide

54 JANUARY 2018 • mmmagazine.com

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New Releases from Alfred Music

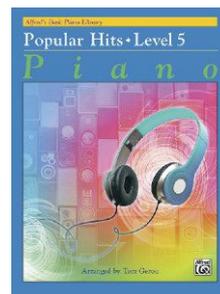
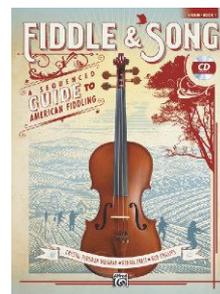
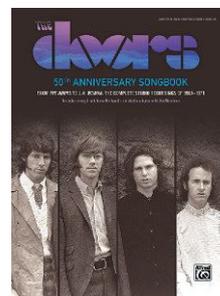
The Doors: 50th Anniversary Songbook from Alfred Music is a comprehensive guitar TAB hardcover edition featuring the complete studio recordings from 1967–1971. It features authentic transcriptions with guitar TAB, lyrics, vocal melodies, and signature keyboard and bass parts of all 62 tracks from the band's six studio releases with legendary frontman Jim Morrison. This highly collectible songbook also includes an introduction from *Guitar World's* Jimmy Brown, a color photograph section, and a select band discography. Price: \$54.99.

Fiddle & Song, A Sequenced Guide to American Fiddling is intended to be used in tandem with other string methods such as Suzuki and Sound Innovations. *Fiddle & Song* is carefully sequenced in a step-by-step way to accompany beginning instruction. A collection of beloved standards from traditional American fiddling, it will introduce young players to an aspect of string playing that is motivational, fun, and pedagogically appropriate. The left-hand pages of the book are for students. The right-hand pages have information for the teacher, parts for advanced students, and easy ensemble parts. Each tune includes melody, breaks, back-ups, kick-offs, tags, guitar chords, ensemble parts, and creative exploratory activities. Piano accompaniments are available. *Fiddle & Song* for violin, viola, cello/bass, and piano accompaniment are available for \$10.99–\$14.99.

Alfred's Basic Piano Library: Popular Hits, Level 5 is correlated page-by-page with Alfred's Basic Piano Library: Lesson Book 5. When pieces from the Popular Hits book are assigned in conjunction with the material in the Lesson Book, new concepts are reinforced in a fun and motivating way, increasing the student's interest in piano study. Arranged by Tom Gerou, this series answers the often expressed need for Broadway, pop, and movie music to be used as supplementary music for students. Soon after beginning piano study, students can play attractive versions of favorite classics as well as the best-known melodies of today. Price: \$8.99.

Sound Innovations for String Orchestra: Creative Warm-Ups, is a companion resource to *Sound Innovations: Sound Development for Intermediate String Orchestra* and *Sound Innovations: Sound Development for Advanced String Orchestra*. It emphasizes four aspects of string performance essential to the refinement of musicianship and skill at the intermediate level.

Consistent with the Sound Innovations structure, the book is divided into flexible levels that can be used in the order that is best for your students' development, whether that means as individual warm-ups or as structured units. Students will develop high-level listening skills through practicing intervals, chord tones and balance, major/minor/diminished/augmented chord qualities, drones, and extended hand patterns—including cello extension pedagogy. Students will also learn to analyze, audiate, and perform rhythms that create rhythmic independence and develop large-group rhythmic ensemble playing. Bowing fluency exercises will lead students to play with all parts of the bow, start in different points of the bow, use expressive bow strokes, and execute fluid string crossings. A groundbreaking sequence of exercises and repertoire help students develop a toolbox of material to use while improvising in distinct styles: classical, jazz, Latin, rock, and over a drone accompaniment. *Sound Innovations: Creative Warm-ups* is available for \$8.99 (Teacher's Handbook for \$34.99).



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SPD-SX Special Edition Sampling Pad from Roland

The SPD-SX Special Edition from Roland offers all the functionality of the standard SPD-SX with greatly expanded onboard storage capacity. Users can store up to 16 GB of samples on board, eliminating the need to carry external memory. It also includes an Ableton Live Lite software license to maximize music production and sample creation workflow with the instrument. It supports real-time sample capture via its exclusive Multi-Pad Sampling function. With its expanded memory, the SPD-SX Special Edition supports up to 50 hours of mono sample storage. Integrating the SPD-SX Special Edition with the included Ableton Live Lite music software forms a highly flexible production and sample creation setup. Sounds played in Ableton Live Lite can be sampled in the SPD-SX Special Edition, and sounds played on the pads can be recorded into the software. It can also be used as a MIDI pad controller for recording expressive MIDI tracks in Ableton Live Lite or any popular DAW. Connecting the sampling pad to a computer requires only a USB cable. It also comes with Roland's SPD-SX Wave Manager software.



www.roland.com

Booth: 17218

Armory Drum Series from Mapex Drums

The Armory drum series now offers two new color upgrades. Using beautiful olive exotic veneers, Mapex is releasing the colors desert dune and black dawn. These new finishes are being applied to the Armory Series Hybrid shell, which is constructed of birch/maple/birch, in a 6-ply, 7.2MM thickness. With this latest finish addition, all current Armory finishes now feature this exotic olive veneer. The Mapex SONIClear bearing edges allow for a direct transmission of sound, reducing unwanted frequencies and provides a strong fundamental pitch and effortless tuning experience, especially at lower tunings.



www.usa.mapexdrums.com

Booth: 7280

Lounge Series Drum Set from British Drum Company

The new Lounge series drum set from British Drum Company features a blend of mahogany and birch with a 30 degree bearing edge for a vintage tone and a stunning look. The hardware features the Art Deco style Palladium lugs that complement the shells beautifully. All BDC drums feature multi-ply cold pressed shells for stability, longevity, and a focused sound. The set is available in three different finishes: Kensington Crown, Windemere Pearl, and Wilshire White.



www.EMDMusic.com

Booth: 7410

Reflection Series Marimba by Majestic Percussion

The Reflection Series Marimba presents a revolutionary new design, featuring a central truss system with modular frame design that enables quick and easy setup and agile movement through any door. Integrated bar geometry in combination with newly designed free-floating bar posts provides for an extremely responsive feel to each tone bar. Further enhancements include a single side "Uni-Lift" height adjustment with an optimized gear ratio insuring smooth unassisted operation by the player.



www.majesticpercussion.com

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Drums & Percussion

New Products from Zildjian

The new Zildjian K Sweet Collection has been crafted to meet the versatile demands of today's popular music with a new direction of tonal colors that are dark, sweet and responsive. The K Sweet Collection comprises 9 models including 16" – 20" Crashes, two larger sized Rides (21" & 23") and larger-sized HiHats (15" & 16"). The Crashes and HiHats feature unlathed bells for greater tonal spread and additional sound frequencies while the two K Sweet Rides are darker versions of the popular A Zildjian Sweet Rides.

The new and improved versions of Zildjian's popular 5A and 5B drumsticks now feature a reduced tip size, increased neck size, longer tapers and an improved balance, response and durability. In addition to the physical changes, all 5A and 5B models will feature a new graphic design and stick sleeve that brings a fresh look to the collection.

The new Zildjian City Pack cymbal set is designed to deliver the legendary Zildjian sound for smaller-sized drum kits and percussion setups. The pack features cymbals from the A Zildjian Family, including two new cymbals: the 18" A Zildjian Uptown Ride and 12" A Zildjian New Beat HiHats. The City Pack also includes a 14" A Zildjian Fast Crash.



www.zildjian.com

Booth: 7222

Piano & Keyboard

IPiano1 from Hailun Pianos

The hybrid educational IPiano1 from Hailun Piano is a high quality acoustic upright piano that integrates interactive usage through an iPad and bluetooth connection. With this bluetooth connection you can connect your piano with the Hailun Intelligent Piano App on your iPad. The Hailun Intelligent Piano App gives you various modes: learn a new piece, practice, and it allows you to create your own music. The IPiano 1 provides students with feedback on rhythm, dynamics, notes, and overall performance steadiness. You can download your favorite songs and also upload and send your recorded songs through the iCloud to your friends and family.



www.hailun-pianos.com

Booth: 352

Aria Pro Piano from Lowrey

The Aria Pro piano upholds the Lowrey tradition of elegant design and natural wood cabinetry that adds warmth and prestige to the home. Adding to a huge collection of dynamic setups and varied styles are new features that enhance Lowrey's famous "touch and play" ease of operation. Starlight ABC's makes finding the notes to play easy, and also illustrates the notes played, as well as the added notes of Lowrey easy play chords and harmonies. Not only can the player hear the notes of an accompaniment chord, or an upper keyboard harmony, they can see them, and learn how they form.



www.lowrey.com

Booth: 300A

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Pro Audio

Whirlwind Power Link PL2 Stringers with Power Management



Whirlwind has added its new UL-listed ROK Remote Outlet Kontroller technology to its line of rugged Power Link PL2 Stringers, that distribute multiple circuits of AC power to multiple locations. Now you can turn power on and off for remotely located equipment that consumes power even while not in use. This is ideal for controlling power to lighting fixtures, powered loudspeakers, projectors, video displays, etc. ROK1 switches are used for single-phase 120 VAC; ROK2 is used for switching single-phase 240 VAC or two legs of 208 VAC three-phase. Both devices are rated for switching 20-amp AC branch circuits; both control six circuits per box.

www.whirlwindusa.com

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Jensen Jet Raptor



The Jensen Jet Raptor is a powerful speaker with a smooth and warm sound. It has excellent definition in the upper midrange. When presented with overdrive distortion, it exhibits a silky, full sounding lead tone. The Raptor's 100 watts of power and its ceramic magnet make it a real workhorse.

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Buyer's Guide

62 JANUARY 2018 • mmmagazine.com

Pro Audio

New Releases from Yorkville Sound

The EXM-Mobile is Yorkville Sound's first Canadian designed and manufactured battery-powered PA speaker. Boasting a 5.5 hour runtime at full output power and a standby battery life well in excess of 48 hours, this speaker is capable of getting you through a variety of gigs where AC power is not an option. The EXM-Mobile uses two high-quality 6.5-inch woofers and a studio monitor quality soft dome tweeter to deliver high-fidelity sound in an ultra-portable package. The built-in three channel mixer allows you to connect microphones, media players, and instruments with ease and Bluetooth streaming audio enables the ultimate portable playback experience.



The newest additions to Yorkville Sound's elite series of subwoofers are the ES12P and EF10P. The ES12P is an impressive 12-inch based subwoofer that dials up the watts to produce an astonishing amount of low-end output. The EF10P is a 10-inch 600watt powered loudspeaker with 1.5" titanium diaphragm. Together this combo will provide massive amounts of fidelity in a portable package. The EF10P and EF12P can also pair with a free Bluetooth enabled App available on both iOS and Android devices, to help users fine-tune the EQ and limiter settings. These new additions join the EF12P, EF15P, ES15P and ES18P, featuring significant upgrades, delivering maximum performance while maintaining a portable profile.



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Pro Audio

JBL by Harman 3 Series MkII Powered Studio Monitors

The JBL by Harman 3 Series MkII powered studio monitors offer stunning detail, precise imaging, a wide sweet spot and impressive dynamic range that enhances the critical listening capabilities of any production space. JBL 3 Series MkII monitors are available in three configurations to meet the requirements of any audio environment, including the 305P MkII (5" woofer), 306P MkII (6.5" woofer) and 308P MkII (8" woofer).



The 3 Series MkII delivers deep, accurate and tightly controlled bass thanks to long-throw woofers and the patented JBL Slip Stream low-frequency port, while woven-composite 1" Neodymium tweeters offer soaring, immaculately detailed highs. For MkII, JBL refined the low frequency transducers for greater linearity and lower harmonic distortion and fine-tuned ferrofluid damping in the high frequency transducers for faster transient response. Dual, integrated Class D power amplifiers, custom designed for each transducer, offer generous dynamic range for any project. A new Boundary EQ setting attenuates the low-end boost that can occur when monitors are positioned directly on the desktop or near walls, plus a 3-position HF Trim switch allows users to adjust the high-frequency response.

www.harman.com

Booth: 14811

New Products from Korg

The new Volca Mix from Korg is a four-channel analogue performance mixer equipped with two mono and two stereo input channels (including aux in), low/high-cut filter per-channel and an analogue stereo expander and compression (including sidechain). In addition to the four channel mixer, the new Volca is equipped with master effects powered by an allanalogue circuitry. New to the line is a specialized sync out jack that acts as a master clock, allowing the user to connect the Volca mix to a variety of Korg gear, thus creating the ability to simultaneously start and stop sequences on multiple synch units. The new addition also allows for connection to more than just Korg's Volca line, allowing users to mix and match all sorts of gear with their Volcas, a first in Korg's line of analogue products. Price: \$169.99.



The Prologue is Korg's newest multi-voice, multi-timbre, multi-engine polyphonic analogue synthesizer. This fully-programmable, fully-featured professional synth is Korg's long-awaited



full-sized polyphonic analog flagship, equipped with a full 49 or 61 keys, powerful discrete circuitry, a newly developed opensource multi engine, and stunning DSP-based effects. The Prologue is available in either 8 voice (49 key) or 16 voice (61 key) models with multi-timbral zoning options, as well as multi-effects presented with an intuitive interface, improving on its predecessors, plus Korg's best full-size synth action. The new Prologue is a two-timbre synth that allows two different programs to be played simultaneously. In addition to layer and split, the Prologue provides four voice modes: poly, mono, unison or chord, allowing the user to freely combine the 16 or 8 voices for performances. The dual effects section includes mod and delay/reverb, each with areas for user-created algorithms. Perhaps the most impressive component to the new model is the user-creatable oscillators and effects, for a never-before-seen level of customization and sonic possibilities. Users can program their own oscillators and effects or download fresh and exciting code created by others to use on their own Prologue.

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Pro Audio

New Gear from Hear Technologies

With improved audio quality, system performance, and overall ease of use, the Hear Back OCTO revolutionizes monitor mixing on-stage or in the studio. This affordable system is perfect for headphones, wired and wireless in-ear monitors, and/or conventional floor monitors. With the addition of both a 1/8 and 1/4 headphone jack, fitting the OCTO to anyone's needs is now easier than ever.



M8RX is a personal interface to be used for live sound or recording, and a multi-channel headphone monitoring system. Compact in size to fit any situation, the M8RX gives individuals choices to use it in multiple ways like having mini recording studio setup, or a simple communication system. Individuals can hang it from a belt, mount it on a mic stand, or set it on a table thanks to the unit's sleek design. Hear Technologies will be manufacturing the M8RX in the U.S. to keep the quality customers have come to expect.



www.heartechnologies.com

Booth: 10612

ProStudio 9625i 2x48 TT Audio Patchbay

The ProStudio 9625i 2x48 TT audio patchbay is designed to make Bittree's renowned quality and engineering excellence affordable to all levels of users in the pro audio and musical instrument markets. The PS9625i offers 96 TT (bantam) jacks in a high-density 2x48 configuration, with DB25 rear interfaces for Avid ProTools and Tascam connectivity. The unit's metal front panel and sturdy, fully-enclosed, seven inch-deep chassis provide superior durability, while its full-frame jacks, gold cross-bar switching contacts and internal digital AES wiring deliver solid connectivity, lower noise, and the cleanest possible signal paths. Circuit normaling, grounding and bussing on the PS9625i can be easily reprogrammed via internal, professional-grade shunts accessible by opening the top of the 7.6-pound units. Front designation strips over each row of jacks ('over/over' orientation) enable easy circuit identification. The designation strips can be reconfigured to 'over-under' orientation, revealing silk-screened numbering between the rows, or augmented with an optional third strip.



www.bittree.com

Booth: 10614

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Cases & Stands

New Keyboard Cases from SKB Cases

SKB has released seven new iSeries Keyboard Cases with Think Tank Interiors, all of which are fully customizable to accommodate virtually all popular keyboard sizes and setups, from Nord, Yamaha, Korg, Kurzweil, and more.

The new cases feature dense Vexel-covered foam blocks in different sizes with high quality hook-and-loop that provides secure attachment to the base and lid of the case, creating the perfect custom fit for every keyboard. As these foam pieces are easily repositioned, having a deluxe, custom-fit case no longer means being locked into one setup.

All seven new SKB iSeries Keyboard Cases with Think Tank Interiors are injection molded of ultra-high-strength polypropylene copolymer resin, and feature a waterproof, submersible design that is resistant to corrosion and impact damage. Other standard features include in-line wheels and a tow handle for easy transport, a molded-in hinge, patented "trigger release" TSA-retrofitable latches, comfortable snap-down rubber over-molded cushion grip handles, automatic ambient pressure equalization valve, and resistance to UV, solvents, corrosion, and fungus.



www.skbcases.com

Booth: 8202

New Stands from On-Stage

The MSA2700 Multi Mic Holder from On-Stage is constructed of lightweight, black powder-coated aluminum, the MSA2700 accommodates up to seven wired and/or wireless handheld mics, all securely cradled by black silicone inserts at each 38mm diameter station. The standard 5/8"-27 threading and removable 3/8" adapter accept virtually any mic stand, while an attractive, space-saving 6.75" x 8.75" semi-elliptical profile positions your compliment of microphones for optimal space-saving and accessibility.

The DPT5500B Percussion Table provides the ideal platform for all your percussion accessories and can be used as a tabletop for laptops, mixers and other electronics. The table comes complete with an EVA surfaced deck for vibration-dampening security, and can be height-adjusted from 27.5" to 40.5". The DPT5500B's high grade aluminum construction features a brace-reinforced tripod base with non-slip rubber feet and safely supports up to 25lbs. of gear, while the 18.5" x 18.5" (2.4' square) platform tilts from 0-90 degrees for easy access. In addition, the DPT5500B boasts folding legs for ease of transportation and a black powder coat finish sure to compliment any kit.

The KB9503B height-adjustable piano bench is designed around a smooth, super secure hydraulic height adjustment system. Easily height-adjusted by levers discreetly located beneath either side of the premium tufted seat, the steel-constructed, black gloss-finished KB9503B combines unparalleled comfort and performance with concert hall visual elegance.



www.tmpopro.com

Booth: 10713

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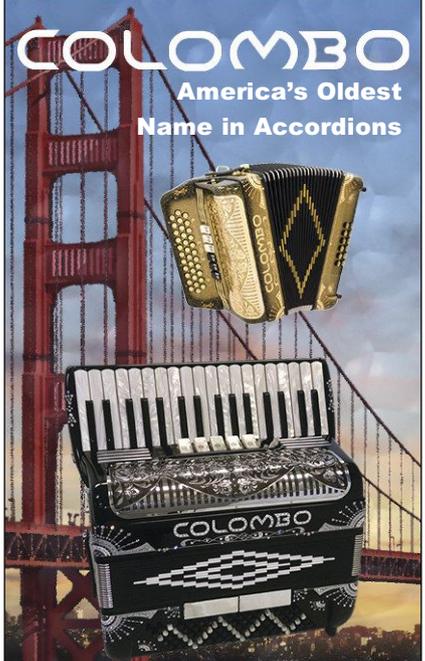


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Fretted

New Ukuleles from Kala Brand Music

The Shark Fin Gray and Sea Urchin Purple Concert Sharks are the newest additions to the Makala Shark Collection of ukuleles from Kala Brand Music Co. Great for beginners and advanced players alike, the concert size is perfect for those with larger fingers and hands. Other features include a mahogany neck, walnut fretboard and bridge, Aquila Super Nylgut strings, and a matte finish.

The Striped Ebony U-Bass Collection has a deep brown color with reddish-brown striping that is contrasted and helped to stand out by the maple binding. The collection comes with the updated output jack endpoints and a beveled headstock. The Striped Ebony U-Bass is available in right-handed fretted and fretless models, the fretted model is also available with optional Kala Round Wound strings. Other features include a mahogany neck, walnut fretboard and bridge, GraphTech TUSQ nut, composite nut, and a satin finish.

The Ziricote Baritone Ukulele joins soprano, concert, and tenor sizes for a fantastic new option for baritone uke players. The chocolate brown ziricote wood is accentuated by the honey blonde sapwood running through the middle and along the sides. The sound is crisp and bright, with a sharp attack and good note separation. The baritone size is growing in popularity with uke players and is great for guitarists looking to learn ukulele as the tuning is the same as the four highest strings on a guitar, giving baritones a fuller and deeper sound. Other features include a mahogany neck, walnut fretboard and bridge, black binding, Aquila Super Nylgut strings, GraphTech NuBone nut and saddle, and a gloss finish.



www.kalabrand.com

Booth: 4804

Cases & Stands

My Case from Jupiter Music



The Jupiter "My Case" for the 700 Series Student Instruments is a new lightweight case that features upgraded hardware including captive hinge pins, durable, stylish and light-weight scratch resistant ABS material, ability to stack, and interchangeable decals to allow students to customize their case to match their personal style. With the ability to change the look of your case as often and as many times you want, the new My Case offers over 400 designs to choose from to reflect a student's current style or interest. Students can now decide what they want their case to look like and change it up when they change their mind.

www.mycase.jupitermusic.com

Booth: 7820

New Stands from Hercules Stands



The GS414B Plus and the GSP38WB Plus guitar stands feature a wider mounting area to better accommodate extended range instruments (up to 2.05" nut width), an upgraded height adjustment clutch, and upgraded rubber feet for increased stability. Included with these stand and hanger is the new Hercules accessory, N.I.N.A., (Narrow Instrument Neck Adjustment) which is designed to increase the thickness of the AGS yoke so that it can accommodate instruments such as ukulele, mandolin and banjo (as small as 1.1").

www.herculesstands.com

Booth: 7820



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Fretted

New Models from Breedlove Guitars

The Oregon Concertina E Myrtlewood guitar from Breedlove Guitars offers bigger, bolder sound than traditional parlors with this new body shape made exclusively Breedlove. This guitar has the pronounced waist and thinner body for playing comfort. With our Sound Optimization technology applied to the power of the all myrtlewood body, we have designed a delightful small body instrument that is a joy to play and will make your music sound fantastic. Features a Solid Myrtlewood top, back and sides. LR Baggs EAS VTC electronics, 19.08" body length, 10.828" upper bout, 8.64" waist, 14.75" lower bout. 1.75" nut width, 25.0" scale length and 18 frets



The Stage Concerto Mahogany guitar offers a sound chamber as large as dreadnoughts, but with a defined waist and tapered body depth to produce a more complex, fuller sound. This Breedlove guitar features African ebony fretboards and bridges and mahogany necks, as well as factory-installed LR Baggs EAS VTC electronics.

www.breedloveguitars.com

Booth: 2503

Flame Maple Series Ukuleles from Lanikai

The new Flame Maple series from Lanikai features a satin flame maple top, back and sides with rich bloodwood rosette, and binding on the fingerboard and body. Lanikai Flame Maple series includes an acoustic concert and tenor sizes and as acoustic/electrics with a cutaway. The electric models are equipped with a Fishman Kula pickup with a convenient onboard tuner. Like all Lanikai ukuleles, the easy playing neck profiles are accented by a wider nut for added player comfort. Other features that highlight this series include chrome open back tuners, Nubone XB nuts and saddles for increased tone and projection, a walnut fingerboard and bridge, and D'Addario strings are standard. Comes with a deluxe Lanikai 10mm padded gig bag and a limited lifetime warranty.



www.lanikaiukuleles.com

Booth: 7820

Fender American Original Series Guitars

The Fender American Original Series Guitars are new line of American-made electric basses and guitars, all designed to look and feel like Fender's classic '50s, '60s and '70s models. An update of the American Vintage Series first introduced in 1982, this new line boasts 13 models, 30 SKUs in 13 colors, including: Aztec Gold, White Blonde, 2-Color Sunburst, Olympic White, Candy Apple Red, 3-Color Sunburst, Butterscotch Blonde,



Fiesta Red, Lake Placid Blue, Surf Green, Ocean Turquoise, Natural and Black. Classic style now meets modern features with the American Original Series – combining vintage-style design cues with player-friendly features, such as modern fingerboard radii, vintage-tall frets and modern switching. Other key features include vintage-style hardware, body radii and neck shapes, lacquer finishes, original-spec pickups, classic Fender colors and vintage-style cases. Prices range from \$1,799.99 to \$2,099.99.

www.fender.com

Booth: 300E

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Band & Orchestra

New from Buffet Crampon

The new Légende professional clarinets from Buffet Crampon feature a cylindrical bore design and is considered the top model in the Tradition bore family. The Légende has silver-plated keys with gold-plated posts and tenon rings, as well as a gold-plated emblem on the upper joint designating the model. The body is available in either premium unstained African blackwood or Green LinE material, and both body types also feature Green LinE tone hole inserts in the upper joint. The pads are a combination of GT and cork and, like the Tosca and Divine models, the Légende also features a low F correction key on the lower joint. A compact case and stylish case cover complete the outfit.



The new ICON bass clarinet necks and bells are available in both Prestige and Tosca designs and are made from red copper with a clear coat of lacquer. The necks are a two-piece design and have an immediate effect on the sound and response of the bass, providing better flexibility crossing the break and playing between intervals. ICON bells provide improved projection while still creating a warm sound.



The B&S MBX Heritage B♭ trumpet offers so many new facets of sound, identity, harmonics, body, and ease. The new design features an innovative bore from the lead pipe to the valve block which enhances precision, stability, and intonation, a lightweight gold



brass bell with French bead for better projection, innovative 3rd slide stop mechanism, "fast-threaded" top caps for easy and fast access to the pistons, and two full sets of finger buttons and top and bottom caps.

The B&S 3137 Challenger I trumpet is a professional B♭ trumpet with classic and familiar ergonomic features.



It features a one-piece, hand-hammered bell made in the traditional way. This allows the trumpet to be full of rich colors and resonate freely with a wide array of characteristics. It also features a medium-large 0.459" bore, hand-lapped Monel pistons, gold brass lead pipe and main tuning slide, first slide thumb saddle, and third slide rod stop.

The Powell Sonaré PS-705KT is Powell's premiere intermediate flute, equipped with a sterling silver Powell body, and a handcut Powell Signature II KT headjoint made from 9K Aurumite. Aurumite is a unique material that combines a layer of 9K gold with a layer of sterling silver by extruding the layers together, resulting in a tube that is gold on the outside and silver on the inside. Unlike gold plating, 9K Aurumite is about 35 times thicker than a traditional gold dip. Aurumite can be engraved, polished, buffed, all without the risk of the gold layer flaking off. In addition to the durability and stunning appearance of rose gold, the 9K Aurumite KT headjoint offers a rich, warm, smoky sound, an interesting alternative to the standard brightness of sterling silver. The combination of gold and silver offers a wide range of tone color, dynamics, projection, and overtones.



www.buffet-crampon.com

Booth: 9320

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www.huntermusical.com

Booth: 8930

Accessories

Tony Iommi Signature Pedal from EMD Music



The TI-BOOST, the new Tony Iommi Signature Pedal, is handmade in Laney's UK Black Country Custom shop, and commissioned by the renowned Black Sabbath guitarist. The TI-BOOST recreates Tony's original sound from his Range Master that "disappeared" in 1979. The TI-BOOST pedal emulates the front-end boost used on all the early Black Sabbath recordings, with the addition of more gain and EQ options.

www.EMDMusic.com

Booth: 7410

Hohner Super 64 and Super 64x Harmonicas



These two new models from Hohner offer individual adjustment of slide spring tension, while the construction of the new SilentSlide is exceptionally airtight and almost completely silent in operation. In addition, the comb chambers are optimized to ensure fastest possible reed response. The Super 64X boasts double thickness reed plates over the entire range, offering a massive boost in volume. Both models set new standards in durability and ease of maintenance. The reed plates are mounted with screws, without contact to the covers, reducing reed wear.

www.hohner.de/en

Booth: 7820

Low Profile Motorized Slide Potentiometer from Bourns

Bourns' new low profile motorized slide potentiometer line is specifically designed to meet small space constraints, longer product life and repeated automated console adjustment requirements. Offered in 100 mm and 60 mm versions, the Bourns Model PSL measures just 25 mm high, enabling audio, broadcast and lighting console engineers to reduce the surface height resulting in a slim and sleek console design. With the Model PSL, Bourns is answering the current trend for lower profile solutions that also meet increased power efficiency demands while maintaining high performance characteristics. Bourns designed its latest motorized slide potentiometer with a power-saving 5 VDC Mabuchi motor so it can be used with more energy-efficient circuits. The new product line also utilizes a highly durable contacting carbon resistive ink element.



www.bourns.com

Booth: 12506

New Guitar Straps from Levy's Leathers

Levy's Leathers has introduced the Paige guitar strap (model MS317PAI), available in black, rust, purple, and indigo, all inspired by the beautiful and intricate art of East Indian henna designs. These straps come to life in color and with the contrast of the leather detailing layered over top of the suede.

Levy's new Lawless guitar strap (model MS317LWS) is available in black, brown, navy, and burgundy. These straps offer a patchwork design with earth tones, inspired by the art of the North American indigenous Navajo tribe.



www.levysleathers.com

Booth: 5202

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Accessories

New Accessories from D'Addario

The DIY Pedalboard Power Cable Kit from D'Addario Accessories offers the ultimate solution for custom wiring the DC cables of your pedalboard. D'Addario cable kits are as simple as cutting the included cable to length, placing the power cable into the plug end, and securing the set screw to produce flawless custom-length power cables. This proprietary cable has 3 times the amount of copper over standard cables for superior voltage transfer and reliability, and the plugs configure for straight or right-angle connections. The kit also includes a cable tester to easily check the cables for proper connection before installation. Making up to 6 cables, the DIY Pedalboard Power Cable Kit (PW-PWRKIT-20) includes 12 Solderless Plugs, 20' of Power Cable, a screwdriver, a mini cable cutter, and a cable tester. MSRP: \$152.00



Ascenté from D'Addario Orchestral is a new synthetic violin that offers violin strings specifically designed to help players advance their craft with elegance and consistency. The synthetic core strings have a wider tonal range, excellent pitch stability and longevity, as well as D'Addario-level durability. The set is available in three sizes: 4/4, 3/4, and 1/2, medium tension only, and individual strings or sets can be purchased starting July 17.



D'Addario Accessories' new Cradle Capos are quick and easy to position with a stainless steel, self-centering design. This cradle-style capo centers behind the neck of your instrument automatically, assuring horizontal string-pull for perfect tuning and intonation. Its adjustable micrometer lets you dial in the perfect pressure, allowing the freedom for quick transitions while conveniently storing behind the nut when not in use. MSRP: \$99.95



D'Addario's Universal Strap Lock gives the certainty and peace of mind that your instrument and strap are firmly locked in place. With tool-free, no-hassle installation, these strap locks make it quick and easy to connect and remove your strap, leaving you free to move about the stage with confidence. Strap buttons are available in black, gold and nickel, and vary in price based on the strap buttons selected.



The NS Clip-free Micro Tuner features a full-color display and metronome in a housing that blends with the aesthetics of any instrument. For the ultimate in discrete tuning, the included clip-free mount attaches directly to your instrument's tuning machine (screws included, no additional holes needed) so your tuner is always at hand and visible only to you. Price: \$34.95.



www.DAddario.com

Booth: 7002

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www.drumdot.com

Booth: 6840

Accessories

FireGrain Drumsticks from Promark by D'Addario



Promark by D'Addario has released the new FireGrain line of drumsticks, a series of drumsticks that uses a heat-tempering process that transforms ordinary hickory drumsticks into durable precision tools. These FireGrain sticks allow drummers to hit harder and play longer without any excess vibration and keeping with the original weight, balance, and feel.

www.DAddario.com

Booth: 7002

UV1 Series Drumheads from D'Addario Percussion



The UV1 series is the number one solution for drummers who are tired of flaked, chipped, and worn out coatings. The patented UV-cured coating provides unmatched durability and consistency of texture, making them extremely responsive for brush playing, while the unique 10mil film delivers exceptional strength and versatility for a full range of musical applications. Combined with Level 360 Technology, the UV1 is the most versatile and durable 10mil drumhead drummers have ever laid their hands on. The UV1 Bass series will feature a 10 mil, single-ply bass drumhead as well as popular EQ4 and EMAD variations, available from 16" to 26". The UV EQ4 features a fixed internal overtone control ring that focuses the tonal response of the drum, while the UV EMAD heads have the benefit of adjustable damping for added attack and focus. The UV1 Bass series ranges from sizes 16" - 26".

www.DAddario.com

Booth: 7002

New Drumsticks from Techra

Techra has introduced new low-noise E-Rhythm drumsticks for acoustic and electronic drums sets. Using a process called Chembond, the rubber tips of these drumsticks are seamlessly chemically bonded to the tips of the sticks, and include a rubber tip placed at the bottom to help vibration absorption. While the E-Rhythm sticks are the same weight as regular wooden drumsticks, they produce 25 percent less noise and have more rebound. Increased comfort and stiffness offers drummers the perfect low-noise drumsticks for warming up or using electronic drum sets.

The new Hammer of the Gods drumsticks from Techra are the most powerful and durable drumsticks for hard hitters and heavy metal drummers. These drumsticks are 25 percent heavier than wooden sticks and seven times more durable, and also include a rubber tip at the bottom of the sticks to help absorb vibrations. A higher sound volume and smoother rebound cap off these new drumsticks as the perfect fit for hard rockers.

The new XCarb drumsticks are the company's fastest and lightest drumsticks ever, made for recording sessions that require intense precision. These carbon drumsticks weigh 20 percent less than classic wooden sticks, and feature a central cavity that makes them perfectly balanced. While the rebound on the XCarb drumsticks is the same as that of wooden drumsticks, the XCarb sticks generate a higher sound volume and last up to four times longer because of their technopolymer composition.

Techra Carbon Pro Drumsticks have the same weight of the wooden one, but have 20 percent less rebound, and are three times more durable. These drumsticks are slightly front-weighted to improve power and speed, and perfectly balanced with a higher sound volume than classic drumsticks. More comfort and grip are provided for in the Carbon PRO Supergrip edition whose handle has a rubber covering to enhance the grip and avoid any slippery effect.

www.techra.it/en

Booth: 7535



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Accessories

New Products from Sound Synergies

Sound Synergies has introduced maintenance product lines focusing on music electronics, sound stage and video, cine and broadcast, percussion, winds, stringed instruments and their component parts. Each product is specifically formulated for the areas of application depending on use and environmental factors. Using the application of barrier film technology in the area of musical instrument care and maintenance, Sound Synergies products offer versatility unmatched as a maintenance product. Dealer sales and repair departments of new or used instruments and gear should be fully prepped and serviced before going out the front door. Using value added maintenance products insures maximum instrument performance. Bundling maintenance products with new and used instrument and gear sales also boosts your bottom line, and builds customer goodwill.



www.soundsynergies.net

Booth: 8534

Foundations Bass Strings from S.I.T. Strings

The Foundations line of electric bass strings are built with a newer, stronger core material to create a string that very bright and flexible. The Foundations were designed to be a lower tension string and are therefore very responsive to the touch. These strings will not replace the current lineup of S.I.T. bass strings, but rather complement the line. In addition, the strings inside the Foundations bass sets are also sealed in an airtight VCI corrosion resistant pouch to keep the strings fresh. The Foundations are available in both nickel and stainless in the following gauges: 40-100, 45-105, 40-120 (5-String) and 45- 125 (5 String). 6-string sets and additional gauges will be available early 2018.



www.sitstrings.com

Booth: 5633

Fathom Reverb from Walrus Audio

The Fathom is a feature-rich reverb with 4 different customized reverb algorithms to choose from. Featuring four main algorithms, Hall, Plate, Lo-Fi, and Sonar, the Fathom can cover some serious ground in the world of reverb. The Hall algorithm is wide, open and vast with decay that ends with high-frequency rolloff. Plate uses a fully body reverb with a smooth decay. Lo-Fi is a filtered reverb with decay ranging from warm, to thin AM-sounding radio. Sonar is reverb fed with both a high & low octave with the ability to blend the octaves with the X knob. With other features like our smart bypass switching, and sustain mode, the Fathom provides endless creative opportunities.



www.walrusaudio.com

Booth: 3344

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Matrix Scarab 3D Tuner



The Matrix Scarab 3D tuner takes the traditional clip-on tuner to the next level, putting a new modern twist on the traditional “needle” style pitch display with an all-new 3D display that provides the user with better visibility from multiple angles. Not only is the Scarab 3D tuner a great looking tuner, its clip design, accuracy and chromatic tuning functionality makes it perfect for almost any instrument, including guitar, bass, ukuleles, bowed instruments, and wood and brass wind instruments.

www.kmcmusic.com

Booth: 6810

Accessories

New Releases from Mojotone

Mojotone's new Pre-wired HSS Quiet Coil Pickguard assembly was designed for Strat style players who require tonal versatility out of their guitar without any hum. Incorporating their '58 Quiet Coil set with a custom vintage output '58 Clone Humbucker, Mojotone gives players access to noise free vintage Strat style tone with single coil clarity in the neck and middle positions and creamy P.A.F. tones in the bridge that cut through the mix with authority and unparalleled articulation.



Mojotone's new addition of the Hot P90 to their popular Quiet Coil series of noiseless pickups offers a meaner P90 tone with more output and sustain. Ideal for use in the bridge position, the Hot P90 Quiet Coil delivers elevated growl and snarl while keeping annoying 60 cycle hum at bay. The new Hot P90 is available as a single piece for bridge position or as part of a matched set with the '56 Quiet Coil P90 for the neck position.



www.mojotone.com

Booth: 3234

New Accessories from On-Stage

The new WCB100 Cajon Brushes feature extended length, 8.5" solid maple wooden handles for superior handling and feel, while rubber rings adjust spacing along the 6" premium nylon bristles for precise dynamics.



The new TBM7000 Straight Trombone Mute is the ideal practice mute for students and professionals alike, the brushed aluminum TBM7000 features high grade cork for a perfect, scratch-free seal that greatly reduces volume while preserving accurate intonation.



The CM200 Cable Management system is designed to provide efficient access to headphones, guitar straps and, of course, otherwise often-entangled cables, the CM200 features four free-sliding, slotted extrusion, independently space-adjustable hooks. Effortlessly mounted to virtually any surface, the all-aluminum, black powder-coated CM200 makes an attractive, highly useful addition to any stage or studio.



www.tmpopro.com

Booth: 10713

Cleartone EQs from Cleartone Strings

Cleartone Strings has released their Cleartone EQs in two brand new gauges: 10-47 & 13-56. Designed to mimic a perfect EQ setting, Cleartone EQs take the guesswork out of 80/20 vs. Phosphor Bronze, and squeezes every last bit of tone out of your guitar's natural sound. Cleartone Strings use 99 percent copper on the low E for its extended bass response and high frequency roll off. Phosphor Bronze is used on the A & D because of its warm, well balanced characteristics and finally an 80/20 on the G for its accentuated treble and ability to cut through the mix.



www.cleartonestrings.com

Booth: 3834

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Adding a touch of personalization to a burgeoning mass-market sector

By Dan Daley

Microphones are big business. NAMM's sales statistics for 2016 show the overall category is the fifth largest overall in revenue, just behind fretted and wind instruments, pro audio, and the catch-all "general accessories" bucket, with \$549 million in sales and climbing.

But much of that goes to the biggest brands in the sector – Shure, Sennheiser, AKG and Audio-Technica – that provide the products that have long comprised the foundational elements for musicians' and vocalists' microphone collections, such as Shure's SM57 and SM58 dynamic mics, and Sennheiser's 414 condensers. Those brands dominate the market at the MI level, with a thin stratosphere at the top occupied by high-end condenser and ribbon microphones – many from that same handful of manufacturers, plus some fabled names like Neumann – aimed at the professional studio business.

Ear Trumpet Myrtle

Recent Vintages

But boutique microphones are another story, though one with almost as much of a cinematic narrative as the legendary German and Japanese brands, many of which pulled themselves together in basements and windowless factories in bombed-out postwar cities after WWII. The boutique microphone business is of considerably more recent vintage, dating back to the early 1990s, as the bottom was being knocked out of the commercial studio business by rapidly improving and ever-cheaper home-recording technology products. As the big recording studios began to falter, so did the capital to support the high-end mic business, and the values of vintage German and Austrian microphones began to tumble throughout the decade. Collectors scoured the newly freed Baltic states, picking up treasures like Neumann U-47 condenser mics, which once commanded several thousand dollars in almost any condition, for as little as a few hundred bucks.

Around that time, Skipper Wise and some partners were starting up Blue Microphones, one of several new brands, such as Soundelux and Royer, which sought to leverage demand for quality, classically designed transducers but at prices geared to the new populism of music production. "It was literally a movement at the time," says Wise of the era.

Since then, boutique microphones have become a prolific, if hard to quantify, subcategory. Like the many boutique guitar amps they aspire to be placed in front of, they hold the potential to offer retailers some differentiation at a time when sellers and customers are being bombarded with new mass-market and niche products and brands. But also like those amps, retailers have to pick carefully.

Ready to Take a Chance

No matter how big or small the pro audio department of a typical MI retailer is, it still has to stock the standards: the Shure 57s and 58s that will survive even the punkiest of live stages, and the most affordable core studio mics, such as an E-V RE-20, and one large-diaphragm condenser microphone, such as the Audio-Technica AT2035, as the go-to vocal mic. The list of tried-and-true transducers can be lengthy, but as Anthony Thompson, pro audio specialist at Alto Music in Middletown, New York points out, "When someone is putting together a studio, they don't want to have to buy their microphones piecemeal, at a bunch of different places. They want one-stop shopping for that."

But, Thompson continues, a few unique microphones add some spice to that familiar recipe. The trick is choosing ones that will develop followings. "We look very hard at the reputation a microphone or a brand is getting, but we also have to love the way it sounds ourselves," he says. "You don't want to sign on to a \$7,000 microphone that just sits there; it has to have some traction in the market already."

At the same time, retailers have to be ready to take a chance. Thompson recalls how the store's owner encountered the then-new Heritage Audio brand at a Musikmesse show in 2012 and was taken by the company's \$2,000-plus remake of the mic-pro from the Neve 1073 console. "We became the first Heritage Audio dealer in the U.S. after that," he says. Another similar story but on the other end of the price spectrum was U.K.-based Aston Microphones, whose \$300 median price for designs that evoke classic condenser looks have made them consistent sellers for Alto. "They sound great and we move a ton of them," he says.

Another route for boutique microphones and the retailers who might carry them is to appeal to the still ardent desire for classic and vintage microphones, in the form of often remarkably good re-imaginings of them. An example is the Peluso 22 251, which was inspired by the classic Telefunken ELA M 251E, itself a variation of AKG's even more legendary C12 microphone, both of which approach the \$10,000 mark on used sites like Reverb.com. While still priced over \$1,000, the Peluso 22 251 manages to achieve what *Sound On Sound* said in its review was "95 percent of the sound character [of an original ELA M 251] for a small fraction of the cost of a vintage model," thanks to accessories and metalwork for the microphone and capsule from Chinese suppliers, a provenance no longer regarded as suspect in microphone circles. Examples of similar recreations abound, offering a level of implied familiarity that can break the ice on a potential sale.

Going Live

Like indie bands that show up on record labels' doorsteps with fully formed followings eager to buy their music, boutique microphones that have already etched a clear niche in a market are music to a retailer's ears. Ear Trumpet Labs founder Philip Graham will be the first to tell you his strategy for doing so wasn't calculated, but he acknowledges he was fortunate that the focus of his condenser line of microphones intended for live music applications coincided with live music becoming the leading revenue generator for a music industry where recordings had become little more than loss leaders for ticket sales. It also fit well with the six-year-old company's strategy of focusing its retail efforts – which accounts for about a quarter of its annual sales – on shops that emphasize acoustical instruments.

"We go where musicians buy and play acoustic instruments and who would prefer to use a very good microphone rather than install a pickup," he explains. His retail outlets include Elderly Instruments, whose Lansing, Michigan location is considered by some to be a folk music megastore; and Morgan Music, a noted vintage banjo dealer in Missouri's Ozarks region, a bastion of bluegrass. The synergy between

the type of musician who prefers to use microphones on stage and Ear Trumpet Labs condenser mics, which cost about \$600, that were designed specifically for those applications, creates an affordable attraction for retailers who already thrive in that particular nexus.

"There are so many [microphone] brands out there that if we were to just say we have a great condenser mic that anyone can use on anything, we'd be lost in the crowd," says Graham. "I know – that's how we approached our marketing for the first year. We would not be a good fit with a typical music store."

Alto Music has also discovered that certain boutique microphones sell well for live applications, including mics from DPA and Earthworks. "They tend to be relatively expensive, compared to what you can buy for home recording," says Anthony Thompson there. "But more people are looking for better quality on stage as live music becomes more important."

Larger chains have established protocols when it comes to boutique products, be they amplifiers or microphones. Anthony Cardelli, who works in the pro audio department at Guitar Center's Nashville location, says his store has considerably more microphones, including boutique models like Cascade Microphones' Fat Head ribbon mic, than the average GC shop, with demand driven by the area's dense mix of recording studios and tech-savvy houses of worship. The chain has region-specific SKUs that allow some regionalized diversity of products that can be listed as available and ordered by customers. But most boutique products have to follow the same protocol as the mass-market ones, with employee recommendations sent to corporate HQ, where decisions are made about what can be carried in inventory. "We do sell a lot of microphones here, and while boutique mics make up a very small part of that, they are definitely part of the retail mix," he says.

Boutique microphones now come in enough different flavors – price points, performance types, quality of construction and materials, et cetera – and numbers that they could constitute a conventional MI category of their own. However, compared to the market dominance and ubiquity of the major brands, they're almost certain to stay a market demi-monde for years to come. But as their quality increases and prices decrease, they're also becoming a more accessible product type. Blue Microphones veteran Skipper Wise, who started up the Neat Microphones brand for Gibson last year, says a key selling point for both boutique microphone manufacturers and MI retailers is to emphasize the sector's big increases in quality at lower price points – "When you can spend \$500 on a great new condenser instead of \$5,000 on a refurbished U-87, you can spend the difference on other things in the store," he says. And if one-off guitars and amplifiers have taught a lesson in recent years, it's that novelty combined with quality can make for a potent sales force. 



Ear Trumpet Josephine



Cascade Fat Head



AKG C12



Peluso 22 251

Audix Performance 40 Series Wireless

At a Glance

Solid, Affordable Wireless

Combining pro features, world-class capsules and easy to use frequency selection/navigation, this new entry in the low-UHF bands from Audix offers a combination of near-hardwired performance and affordability that should appeal to a wide range of users.

Audix Performance 40 Series Wireless

PROS

- Solid RF Performance
- Wide range of transmitters
- Easy setup, frequency settings
- Affordable

CONS

- Wall wart external power supply
- Battery orientation a slight issue

STATS

Operating Principle	Single-tuner, antenna diversity
RF Frequencies	522 MHz to 554 MHz (A Band); 554 MHz to 586 MHz (B Band)
Frequency Response	45 Hz to 18k Hz
Max Range	300 feet
Battery Life	14 hours
Pricing	AP41 with OM2, \$399; AP41 with OM5, \$499; AP42 with two OM2's, \$799.
Manufacturer	Audix
More Info	audixusa.com



Audix 40 Series Family

By George Petersen

Before I get started, I should confess that I have been a fan of Audix gear since day one, especially its popular OM- and D-Series microphones. These have always yielded solid, dependable and great sounding results, making them a real favorite in my book. That said, I have no experience with the company's wireless mics, making this outing with the new Performance Series RF systems a venture into some new territory, and I was anxious to check these out first-hand.

Enter the AP41 and AP42

The 40 Series is offered in two versions, with either the single-channel/half-rack-space R41 receiver (Model AP41) or the 19-inch/dual-channel AP42 with its R42 receiver. Both are diversity designs operating in the low-UHF "A" band (522 MHz to 554 MHz) or "B" band (554 MHz to 586 MHz) — thankfully, well out of range of the dreaded 600 MHz spectrum. Other than channel count and physical size, both systems are operationally identical and share a similar feature set.

The latter include a 32 MHz-wide tuning spectrum, 106 pre-coordinated frequencies, AF and RF gain control, high-contrast LCD displays for each channel, rear-panel BNC antenna mounts, 300-foot operating range and the ability to operate up to 16 unique channels in simultaneous usage. Outputs are balanced analog XLR and unbalanced 1/4-inch, and a ground lift switch is provided. Both receivers operate from an external 12 VDC "wall wart" supply. The half-rack version can be rack mounted and

the dual-channel full-rack R42 includes a kit for front-mounting the two antennas, if desired.

One of the strong suits of the Performance Series is the array of available transmitters. Among these are the B60 bodypack, useable with a wide variety of lavalier, headworn and instrument (guitar/bass) inputs and built into a tough, rugged metal housing. Perhaps more interesting is the H60 handheld transmitter, which fitted to accept Audix interchangeable heads, such as the top of the line VX5 supercardioid condenser capsule and the venerable OM5 and OM2 hypercardioid dynamics. All Audix Performance Series transmitters will work with any Performance Series receivers.

Features common to both the bodypack and handheld models include 64 MHz-wide spectrum operation, AF and RF gain control, selectable 10 mW and 40 mW RF power, all-metal housings, 14-hour run time on two AA batteries, a high-contrast LCD display with group/channel/battery indicators, and a soft mute switch. The latter doubles as a "cough" switch on the bodypacks, which I found very useful — the placement of the switch on the handhelds could accidentally be enabled by an overly energetic vocalist, making it less useful on the handheld models. Both use a "hold for two seconds" press to power off, which is easy to use and essentially prevents inadvertent triggering.

One impressive facet of the Performance Series is the wide array of available options and add-ons for the system. Beyond the three interchangeable mic capsules for the handhelds, accessories include

rack-mount kits, wideband active directional antennas and an antenna distribution system than can combine four two-channel systems.

Goin' Live!

The systems actually include a printed manual (a rarity these days), but setup is relatively straightforward. One of my main stumbling points in getting started was actually figuring out the up/down orientation when inserting the two AA cells. Here, the artsy black-on-black scheme of the +/- battery direction didn't help much, but once over that, this was a lot easier. Also, I believe this is the first handheld transmitter I have ever used where the batteries are inserted with the "plus" terminals facing downwards. I guess I can get used to that...

One of the key design goals in creating the Performance Series was making channel assignments into a simple operation. Audix refers to this as "Scan-Sync-Play" and definitely succeeds in this regard. The process involves enabling a hot key on the receiver to scans for open frequencies. In five to 20 seconds, depending on users of nearby wireless operations, the system will choose a clear band from pre-coordinated internal frequencies.

Next up, you simply hold the transmitter near the receiver's front-panel Sync light, which will lock the transmitter to the same selected frequency. The process is then repeated with any other Performance Series system(s) being used.

Despite a small number of front-panel controls, navigation within the menus and operational setups is fairly easy and intuitive. Soft keys control output levels, squelch, pilot and lockout functions, and

the LCD panel not only offers quick access to menu parameters, but also affords real-time monitoring during performance of RF and audio levels, battery life and more.

All About Audio — and RF

While ease of setup is important, audio reproduction is paramount to any wireless system. Here, the Performance 40 Series really stepped up to the plate. The sound of the system rivaled the sound of a hard-wired OM5 or VX5 with no audible companding artifacts.

The transmitters were shipped preset at the 40 mW output level, but I experienced excellent results at the 10 mW setting, particularly in smaller venues, although it's nice to know that some extra "horsepower" is available for very large venue/long-throw applications or simply cutting through in difficult RF areas. I checked out the units in an RF-congested, heavily populated urban area with multiple airports, nearby freeways and ample shipping/rail traffic — and did not encounter any interference issues. And although I did not have a chance to try the optional active antennas, the stock units performed nicely, with no dropouts or RF anomalies.

With system prices starting at \$399/street for a single-channel AP41 OM2 handheld system, the Audix Performance 40 Series wireless is definitely a worthy contender for anyone in the affordable RF market.

This Road Test was originally published in the January 2018 issue of MMR's sister magazine, Front of House.

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Royer Labs R-10 Ribbon Microphone

By George Petersen

It's hard to believe, but it has been nearly two decades since 1998, when innovator David Royer launched Royer Labs, a mic company dedicated to creating modern ribbon microphone designs. The first product was the R-121, which employed a patented (U.S. #6,434,252) proprietary offset ribbon technology based on a pure aluminum ribbon and neodymium magnet structure. The result was a smooth, warm sound in a compact and rugged design that quickly found favor with audio engineers everywhere.

Well, almost everywhere. The R-121 and the more ruggedized R-121L version optimized for live applications both currently carry a \$1,295 street price, which limits access to these to many live users. That said, Royer ribbons found their way onto Broadway shows, as well as tours with artists such as Aerosmith, George Strait, Brian Setzer, Pearl Jam, Kenny Chesney, Shania Twain, Maroon Five, Ben Harper, and dozens more.

Royer responded with the R-101, which shares the patented offset ribbon design of the company's other mics, yet at a more affordable \$799.

Enter the R-10

The latest entry from Royer is the R-10, a passive ribbon microphone design intended for critical studio and live performance applications.

The R-10 has a street price of \$499 (\$1,048 in matched pairs) and, quality-wise, no corners were cut. The mic is 100-percent assembled in the Royer plant in Burbank, California, and shares the 2.5-micron ribbon element (the same used in the R-121) and has a custom David Royer-designed transformer for high overload threshold — up to 160 dB @ 1 kHz. The transducer's flux-frame design and rare earth neodymium magnets create a powerful magnetic field that increases sensitivity while reducing stray magnetic radiation.

The mic element is protected by a multi-layered windscreens, and the ribbon transducer is internally shock-mounted. The layered windscreens provides protection from air blasts and plosives, and also reduces proximity effect, so guitar



cabinets and acoustic instruments can be close-miked with less bass build-up. And, speaking of protection, the R-10 is covered by a five-year warranty, which includes one free re-ribbon. As another plus, the R-10's ribbon transducer is wired for humbucking to reject electromagnetically induced noise.

The R-10 is more compact than Royer's other mics, being just 5-7/8 inches long and just 13 ounces. It ships with a swivel mount, carry case and foam mic sock.

The Sound

Like all other Royer microphones, the R-10 has a figure-8 directivity pattern and is suitable for electric and acoustic guitars, drum overheads, percussion instruments, brass/horns/strings (individual and sections), acoustic piano and vocals.

The R-10's patented offset-ribbon design positions the ribbon element towards the front of the transducer, which allows for the higher SPL handling of the front (logo) side and the option of a brighter response when capturing lower-SPL sound sources on the back side.

Compared to the R-10, the R-121 has tighter bass and more high end, although the R-10 still exhibits a respectable frequency response of 30 Hz to 15,000 Hz (+/- 3 dB). The differences are a function of the R-10's transformer and body style. The R-10's custom-designed transformer gives 5 dB less output than the R-121 in

Royer R-10

STATS

Design	Electrodynamic pressure gradient ribbon
Element	2.5-micron R-series ribbon
Polar Pattern	Figure-8
Frequency Response	30 Hz to 15,000 Hz (±3 dB)
Sensitivity	-54 dB, 1 V/Pa
Max SPL	160 dB @ 1 kHz
Impedance	100 Ohms
Price	\$499, including case and swivel mount
Manufacturer	Royer Labs
More Info	royerlabs.com

order to give the mic more headroom on high-SPL sound sources.

Royer ribbons have been said to take equalization extremely well. The company actually encourages using EQ to dial in more highs when desired, such as opening up 12 kHz on acoustic instruments and vocals. EQ'ing an R-10 can be particularly useful on live electric guitars if the FOH engineer wants more bite in the highs, but wants to use only one microphone on the guitar cabinet to avoid phase-related issues brought on by multi-miking.

The End Game

At \$499, Royer may have a real hit on its hand with the R-10, offering a combination of great sound, durability and affordability — all of which should offer ample appeal to the sound reinforcement community. Visit royerlabs.com for more info. 

This Product Spotlight was originally published in the October 2017 issue of MMR's sister magazine, Front of House.

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Acing Accessibility

Virgin Musical Instruments on their Mission to Make Music Simple By Victoria Wasylak

Keyboardist Jordan Ruddes using the Xkey

Virgin Musical Instruments has a motto - "Keeping music simple" - but making music easy and accessible for other people in real life is by no means any small feat. Fortunately, Virgin moves in particularly large strides and just happens to be partnered with one of the larger electronic musical instrument factories in the world.

Formed in August 2013, Virgin Musical Instruments started by selling just a few different digital piano models and Xkey Controllers, but in 2017, the company offers their brand-named models: Artesia digital pianos and keyboards, Artesia Audio, Hitman Electronic Drums, Xkey MIDI controllers, and Xkey Bluetooth controllers. Don't look for any instruments with "Virgin" carved into them - they don't brand anything under the Virgin name.

"We got the music bug pretty early, and never left it. Everyone on our staff has the same kind of feeling - just hooked on the industry," Virgin M.I. CEO Matt Harpster says.

Harpster first got hooked in the music industry by working as an electronic engineer, and working for Sony and Lockheed Martin before splitting to the music industry, working in product design and development for over 20 years in M.I. until he started Virgin Musical Instruments and partnered with the factory in China. His own love for music sprouted from learning to play the piano at age 10, and then going on to perform in bands in high school and college.

As of 2017, Virgin has a factory in China and two warehouses in California (20,000 square feet in San Diego and 50,000 square foot flex capacity warehouse in Southern California for Q4

sales promotions), with plans to implement a third warehouse in Tennessee. Virgin's products are also distributed in 34 countries throughout Asia, South America, North American and Europe. And while a lot of MI companies claim to be on the cutting edge of technology, Virgin M.I. actually is, vending the newest innovations in what it means to be a musician. From a keyboard that weighs in at under 2 pounds, to electronic drum kits, Virgin M.I. represents what it means to be a MI company in 2018.

The Branches of Virgin M.I.

Since the Virgin M.I. name doesn't appear on any of their products, it's important to break down the products in Virgin M.I.'s wheelhouse.

"Our three biggest markets/ sales channels are consumer electronics, of course MI, and music education, so those are the three we concentrate on," Harpster says.

Virgin offers their Artesia brand digital pianos and keyboards plus their Hitman Brand of Electronic Drum Kits, which the company designs and develops themselves, as well as microphones, headphones, monitors, and other audio components under the Artesia name. The Xkey keyboards from CME, in contrast, are something that Virgin brought on board from China to distribute in the United States. The Xkey also features a new Bluetooth version.

"It's very different from anything else on the market and it reaches a lot of niche spots that Musical instruments don't normally sell in," Harpster adds.

Looking forward, Virgin is constantly upgrading current models with the latest features and tech while working on the Zen piano and drum, for all three sales channels, another step into the world of technologically advanced instruments.

Under all three names – Artesia Pianos and Keyboard, Artesia Audio, CME, and Hitman – Virgin carries products for musicians of all skill and are competitively priced to further make all the products accessible for every budget. Currently, the different products are available nationwide through Music Stores and various online vendors such as Guitar Center, Sweetwater, Apple, and more.

The Art of Simplifying Music

In the new millennium, technology has presented itself as a double-edged sword in the MI world – while technological advances have helped to create new and more fun formats for learning how to play an instrument, there's also a whole new world of games and distractions that can draw students and their interest away from learning how to play. On top of that, big box stores and the ease of ordering online from sites like Amazon has further challenged the industry – and Virgin M.I. is keen to all of that.

Harpster describes the inundation as a “flood of technology,” that all companies will have to adjust in order to survive in.

“I think the industry is still kind of absorbing how to get technology integrated in a way that brings more musicians to the market. It's definitely transitional, but at the same time, that's the beauty of it and its opening so many more doors. There are so many more fun and attractive ways to learning music than there was previously,” he says. “We know there's a large demographic who may be intimidated by music stores because they're not a musician and as a result, the industry is missing out on all those uncommitted people.”

Virgin's answer to that, of course, is their online approach.

“What we mean by making music simple is, we all know that everybody who is interested in playing music has an excuse for not playing an instrument – but we also know that everybody to a certain level can,” Harpster explains. “What we try to do is break through those barriers by putting something together that can be fun, engaging and affordable. There are great advantages to playing an instrument for all different ages and stages, and we want as many people as possible to take advantage of that.”

He cites things like accessibility, time constraints, and money all as issues that Virgin keeps in mind when designing instruments that can be for anyone.



The Artesia Backpack Bundle

“To make music simple as possible for the general public, you have to be able to get people quality instruments at a price point that they can afford,” he adds.

The most unique aspect of Virgin's approach to their mission of simplicity is making sure that patrons can enjoy their instrument right away – that is, that they can get to a point where they are confident in what they sound

like while playing as soon as possible, so that they don't lose interest because they feel they sound “bad” as a beginner.

“For instance, a digital piano that has a built-in tablet, or a tablet that comes with it, full of software on it, and can be for anybody – whether it's a first-timer learning how to play piano or it could be for the trumpet player who wants to learn how to play piano better, or any kind of musicians that may have experience on another instrument,” Harpster said. “But we packaged everything onto that tablet so that they can go easily, step by step at their own pace at whatever age or skill level they may be at coming into this.

“That's our making music fun – having products that have everything turnkey, so whether it's you or whoever it is who doesn't have experience with the music, they can start to enjoy some level of it right away. Getting that first step – sounding good or at least being able to enjoy it right away. Once that happens they are hooked just like the rest of us,” he added.

The Magic of Mobility

A major factor of Virgin's dedication to simplicity is their focus on mobility; namely, the portability and tour-ability of the Xkey. The ultra-thin mini keyboard, which weighs less than two pounds, plugs into phones, tablets, and laptops has been a huge development in the keyboard market.

“The Xkey is truly a revolutionary instrument, not only because of its mobility and professional features that it has, but also because of its design and how it can be sold outside of the music industry,” Harpster says.

In particular, the Xkey has been widely popular with touring musicians, who are able to practice and record with the Xkey when they are on the road.

“They can't be around their rig all the time, and so when they're on the tour bus, they can go over a certain arrangement together or talk about idea they have for a certain song, or changing a progression when they're all together, where normally you have to go to your 88 note piano or 61 note piano, this is 6/10 of an inch thick, 1.3 lbs, and with you wherever your backpack is,” Harpster explains.

This focus on niche markets has helped Virgin MI prosper.

“Tech users may buy them as iPad or iOS accessories, tablet accessories, things like that – that's an interesting departure from the normal MI sales,” he adds.

Considering how frequently musicians are on to the go – for tours, gigs, band practices, and other jam sessions – the mobility of the Xkey is a huge benefit for active artists. Similarly, the Artesia backpack mobile studio and mobile performing bundle sandwiches everything artists need to lay down a track and feature a variety of pro audio and musical instrument configurations. All of the recording bundles include the Bitwig 8 Track Studio, a digital audio workstation that can be used for producing, and designing sounds. Even with a bundle and keyboard, these bundles all can fit into backpacks, weighing less than three pounds and not requiring AC power.

Factors like these are how the many different pieces of Virgin M.I. comes together – from the three different brands that the company has developed, to the many different ways that Virgin M.I. pushes to make every user's musical experience to be simple, satisfying, and stress-free – proving Virgin M.I. to be an umbrella of innovation. 



CEO Matt Harpster



East Cambridge Piano at

40 Adapt,
Evolve,
Succeed
By Christian
Wissmuller

As it happens, this particular location is a mere three blocks from yours truly (and lies along one of my regular routes for walking my dog), so it made good sense to take the (brief) journey. When I met with Nicoloro in the summer of 2017, he noted that the store was “Going on our 40th anniversary, but not there yet!” Cue to the present – the first month of 2018 – and we can now officially congratulate James and his team on having reached that impressive milestone. The business offers new and used pianos, digital pianos, tuning and repair, restoration, and rentals, as well as consignment sales. Currently East Cambridge Piano has two part-time employees in addition to Nicoloro – one of whom, Reed Cournoyer, is Nicoloro’s trusted technician who began working in the shop back in 2008.

Growth and Change

“I just outgrew where I was,” he explains when discussing the relocation to Medford Street a quarter-century ago. “The first store was small. It was 1,500 square feet, or something like that – small. This is probably about 3,500 [square feet]. I have space spread out over a few rooms. In the back is another workshop where we do primarily electronic work.”

The piano market, overall, has changed drastically in the past four decades. As Nicoloro notes, “We’ve moved, the world, and I’m not sitting still. This [segment] is going digital. I’ve been at this a long, long time. I mean, let me just tell you the landscape back when we moved in here: We had three piano stores in the immediate area. We had Broadway Piano down on Broadway, and then Garfield Piano was on Garfield Street, which is right off of Broadway over here... What I’ve done – and I don’t claim to be a genius or anything – but I saw what was going on and I adapted. I mean, the piano dealers that wanted to just stay strictly acoustic have all gone out of business, but I’ve taken on digitals in a big way. The point is, if you want to stay in a business you’ve got to change with it. I have done just that and now I am getting a big piece of the shrinking pie for sure, you know?”

First things first: Massachusetts’ East Cambridge Piano – one of the oldest piano dealers in the Boston area – is *not* located in the city of Cambridge, but rather in neighboring Somerville.

“Well, we started out in East Cambridge,” explains owner and founder James Nicoloro. “My family is an East Cambridge family and I took over a small storefront in the neighborhood back in 1978 – that’s how we got started.”

More specifically, the business began when Nicoloro, then a student at Berklee College of Music, was working as an apprentice piano technician and tuner. Initially, East Cambridge Piano primarily revolved around reclaiming and reconditioning neglected acoustic instruments and selling them as lower-priced student pianos. “Restoration is minor now, though,” he says of the present-day operation. “I mean, we used to maybe do one piano [restoration] a month. Now we’re lucky if we get one or two a year.”

However, 25 years ago, the business had grown to the point where Nicoloro had to uproot and move to East Cambridge Piano’s current spot at 343 Medford Street in Somerville’s Winter Hill neighborhood. The showroom is on the third floor of a quirky, ornate building built by “The Knights of Malta,” as a decorative copper exterior feature proclaims to this day.



James Nicoloro in the store's workshop



Electronic keyboards in for repair

“The piano dealers that wanted to just stay strictly acoustic have all gone out of business.”

The store's current inventory includes restored Steinway, Yamaha, and other brand's grand pianos and upright acoustics, as well as a number of Korg digital and Casio Hybrid pianos.

Embracing 'the New'

"I came across the Casio at NAMM a couple of years ago, the Hybrid," explains Nicoloro. "This [Celviano Grand] Hybrid line is huge now. For the Hybrids, I jumped in with both feet and they've been selling. It's really a great instrument, developed in collaboration with Bechstein, and the features, size, and price make it ideal for urban living – people in this neighborhood and surrounding cities in the Boston area. I call those 'the ultimate urban piano.' You've got the volume control, the headphones, and best of all the versatility. We're slamming with them. I'm telling you, it's the best thing that's happened to this shop recently. I've got them all over the place – the Seaport Hotel just bought one, I recently wound up selling three in the new Millennium Tower residences downtown."

As evidence of the store's success with these consoles, East Cambridge Piano was named "Casio's 2016 Digital Piano Dealer of the Year."

The store isn't immune to other, drastic changes to commerce, overall. "Years ago, to shop, people had to get in their car, drive around, and compare this and that. Now they get on their phone and comparison shop – right in front of you, too! A guy just left the store a few minutes ago and that was a warranty job for an Amazon purchase. I didn't get the sale, but I got the service job. And *that's* another

reason I like the Casio. It's a protected territory, so you can't buy that online."

A Successful Model for Today and Tomorrow

The current business model sees a fairly healthy spread across service areas. "Tuning keeps me busy, but revenue-wise I'd say probably maybe 20 percent or something like that," Nicoloro says. "Another 20 percent would come from Reed back there doing digital repairs, with retail taking up the remaining 60 percent."

With 40 years under his belt as a piano dealer, James Nicoloro has witnessed trends come and go, weathered economic upheaval, and seen his own business change focus at times. His perspective is unique, but his business philosophy and advice is rooted in the basics: "I'm telling you, I've been doing this a for long time and I've dealt with tons and tons of companies, and seen tons of changes. You change with the times, adapt, and provide the best customer service possible and that's the key." PHOTOGRAPH BY [unreadable]

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Dawn McMahon and Michael Ahern
of StompLight International

StompLight Pal

StompLight Brings Top-Notch Lighting Effects to Performances of All Types with Ease and Versatility

By Christian Wissmuller

It seems like such an obvious idea – the upsides are clear for all to see – you’d assume that folks must have developed this sort of thing decades ago: A versatile, portable, sturdy lighting effects rig that musicians and artists can control with ease via foot-controlled peripherals, just like stomp box effect pedals. But it took Michael Ahern and his team over at StompLight to perfect this technology earlier this decade – and right out of the gate the products have been a hit with end-users.

Ahern, himself an accomplished and celebrated musician, scientist, educator, and broadcaster (seriously, the guy can seemingly do anything and everything), recently spoke with *MMR* about his life in music,

the origins of the StompLight story, and how interested dealers can come along for the ride.

Let’s start by briefly going over your own professional background and your background in music. How did you, personally, get started in all of this, Michael?

I held my first guitar, a Martin D-18 at age 12. I grew up near San Francisco with neighbors that had moved from West Virginia. There were four boys in their family, each had a Martin guitar along with their father, Burl. The older boys also had a turntable stereo. Their house was filled with music: Creedence, The Beatles, Zep. My father and mother were avid readers and enjoyed watching the big three networks on television each evening. When they listened to music it was Johnny Cash records. On the rainy days when we could not play sports we moved inside and goofed around on the guitars. “My Sweet Lord” was the first song I learned. Soon thereafter I asked my mom and dad for a guitar. On my 12th birthday I became the proud owner of a Yamaha FG acoustic. In 1973 I saw a poster at Swain’s House of Music announcing that Led Zeppelin was to perform at Kezar Stadium in San Francisco. My father had been taking me to 49ers football games there, so I knew where it was and I talked an older pal into driving me to the show. They opened with “Rock and Roll” and closed with “The Ocean.” I was spellbound and inspired. I came home and declared to my parents. I want to play rock and roll for a living. You can imagine how that went over.

These days I regionally tour with the Michael Ahern Band playing rock music. I also have the good fortune of being an Emmy-nominated singer, songwriter, and guitarist rooted in rock music and

Americana. *Rolling Stone’s* Ben Fong-Torres described me as, “a singing, picking, shredding embodiment of American music.” My latest studio album, *DRIVE*, is an all-original collection of blues, modern country, rock, and Americana. The title track (“DRIVE”) aired on radio stations in 26 countries supported with a music video. “DRIVE” is also available for play in the “Rock Band” gaming space. I am a member of the San Francisco chapter of Grammy.com, director of entertainment for the Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival, NAMM member and president and janitor of StompLight, an innovative performance lighting company.

I also hold degrees in environmental and systematic biology (Cal Poly, SLO) and a secondary teaching credential in education. I completed graduate work in natural history and education at Northern Arizona University, Humboldt University as a teaching fellow and at Stanford University. I worked as a NASA Mission Specialist working alongside the science unit of the Kuiper Astronomical Observatory. I am an award-winning California public school teacher working in the field of at-risk secondary science education. Before entering into the classroom I worked in the field of outdoor education for the Yosemite Institute before founding the Nature Explorers Summer Science Camps. I also wrote and produced “Nature Speaks,” a science program that aired on American Public Radio.

That’s quite the background! Now, how about the genesis of StompLight? How did the project come about?

StompLight was born from the repeated annoyance of hauling around bulky and poorly built stage lighting products. I first had the idea in a pal’s dimly lit studio session in Berkeley, California in 2012. I looked down at my pedal board and was struck by a remarkable idea. Could stage lighting be added to a musical environment with the convenience of an effect pedal? I recall thinking how my friend spent all this money on audio gear and acoustics and nothing really on lighting. As a working musician, band manager, and music festival producer I was keenly aware of the impact that performance lighting has on a production. Add that these days booking agents expect live performance video along with a strong presence on social media. You absolutely want your fans to be grabbing video and photos of the band and posting them while you play. I noted that when we gigged without stage lighting there were fewer postings and we looked like crap in the video. Up until StompLight, carrying lighting around, staging and striking it, and constantly having to repair it was a big hassle. I was sick of it. All that experience led me

to the moment when I looked down at my pedal board, noted the different types of effect pedals and thought why not lighting effect pedal?"

At present, how many employees does StompLight have?

Ten: Michael Ahern, president and janitor; Michael Jordan, operations; Richard Vaughan, sales associate; Dawn McMahon, sales associate; Stephen Wilson, sales associate; Cherie Cordellos, art director; Bob Rosenbloom, director of engineering; Allen Burge, engineering; David Barry, director of manufacturing; Matt Dougherty, marketing director; and Kelli Baldwin, bookkeeper.

Where are the company's facilities located?

StompLight facilities are split between Menlo Park, El Granada, and Sonoma, California. We assemble in the USA and source our components globally.

You currently field products that can appeal to acoustic or electric musicians, DJs, schools, street performers, and more. Do you have a notion who your "primary customer" is?

Acoustic solo performers and working bands, pro audio contractors, theatrical performers, magicians, street performers, video and production houses, recording studios, Worship Houses, mobile DJs, and schools.

Of your current models and bundles, what's the top-seller?

StompLight DMX Lighting Effect Pedal – Professional Model with Matte Black Finish

How do interested MI retailers go about partnering with StompLight?

To date we have relied on the NAMM shows, MI trade magazines,

and our sales reps to introduce StompLight to MI dealers. In 2018 we are looking to add more sales reps in key territories including California, Texas, and the Mid-West. We also would like a sales rep in Canada.

In 2017 we grew to 56 active StompLight Authorized Dealers including Canada and the U.K. Interested MI Retailers are encouraged to contact Michael Ahern through the StompLight website and meet with us at the Winter and Summer NAMM shows.

What's your distribution model?

MI brick-and-mortar stores, online MI stores, MI and ProAV print catalogs, and through our website. In 2018 our products will be available in through Musician's Friend, Zorro Sounds, American Music Supply, and Sam Ash. We will continue to work to protect MAP in each of these ecosystems.

Are there any new product introductions or other developments of note on the horizon?

Yes, we have added three product bundles as described on the website and the attached Sell Sheet. We also have engineered a nifty Power Bank mic stand holder and will be showing that off at Winter NAMM.

Expectations – both for StompLight and the industry, in general – for 2018?

The expectation I have for my company is to continue build innovative products, grow and support our customer base, support live music and the working musician, and conduct business with grace and integrity. We are also committed to protecting MAP and improving dealer margin in 2018. 

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Peavey Electronics Corporation is an American MI icon – one of the world's largest audio equipment manufacturers and suppliers, and the brand behind a number of legendary amplifier and sound reinforcement lines that remain industry standards for many, to this day.

Hartley Peavey, the company's well-respected founder and CEO, has long determined the direction and tone of the organization that bears his name, but in recent years major moves have been in place to transfer that power to his stepson, Courtland Gray.

We recently spoke with Gray, the heir-apparent to the Peavey legacy, about his own history within the company, the state of this significant transition of leadership, Peavey's commitment to its American employees, new product developments, and what else the future holds...

Courtland, before we talk about your current and evolving role at Peavey, let's start at the beginning: Can you tell our readers when you first started working at the company and how your duties have changed over time?

I joined Peavey about 16 years ago. At that time, Hartley wanted our finance company, PVF, to lease sound systems to churches and businesses and I was working for a commercial finance and leasing company. We began this program for PVF; it became extremely successful and I took over the management of PVF shortly thereafter. I am a graduate of SMU [Southern Methodist University – Ed.] in communications, but I could see the need to delve further into managing globally and strategically. In 2003, I was accepted into the Advanced Management Program at Harvard Business School. It is truly a highly immersive and a fully integrated program. It gave me the mindset for the change we needed to sustain our competitive edge. As I became more involved in the various sectors of our business, and after four years, Hartley announced my promotion to chief operating officer.

Taking over stewardship of such an iconic brand – from such an iconic individual as Hartley, no less – puts you in a rare position. What are your thoughts on the transition and how do you plan to stay true to Peavey's roots and legacy, while also keeping the brand "current" and reacting to emerging trends, both in the MI market and popular culture?

Walking in Hartley's footsteps is not something anyone else can do. His experience and legacy are second to none and I am not Hartley Peavey and never will be. On the other hand, I have the privilege of leading a dynamic team that has been put in place by both Hartley and me. These are highly talented and experienced individuals whom we believe can collectively continue the 52-year legacy of Peavey.

Peavey has long striven to do as much as it can, in terms of design and production of instruments and gear, domestically – and specifically in Meridian, Mississippi. Why is "made in the U.S." so important to you and why do you think it's of such significance to many consumers as well?

Heir to the THRONE



A Chat with Courtland Gray of Peavey Electronics
By Christian Wissmuller

I believe Peavey has always been strongest when it comes to MI/audio manufacturing in the U.S. Certainly no others have invested as much in plant, property, and equipment over 52 years. As you know, the cost of U.S. manufacturing is greater than the rest of the world. We work especially hard to be as efficient as possible, as cost effective as possible, in keeping as much as we can here. Why? Because our people here at Peavey are so good at what they do, and besides that, they are the "salt of the earth" here – great people! In fact, most of the engineering behind our entire line of products is done right here in Meridian. There are many who are as passionate about "made in the USA" as we are, but most players also have a budget, and to be able to stay in the game, Peavey must always remain competitive.

The transition of leadership from Hartley to you, new product introductions – there's a lot going on at Peavey! Are there any other developments, changes, initiatives, or new instruments/gear on the horizon that you'd like to share?

To remind you, Hartley is here most every day and he and I, as well as our team, are working with great focus on new products, both hardware and software. While we are all very excited about the new applications and their potential, it would be premature for me to detail here these multiple programs that are in various stages of development. I will mention, however, that among other things, we are making changes to the Composite Acoustics guitar line, adding a new Trace Elliot preamp we recently designed, and we will also be adding to the Elements weatherproof speaker line that is made in the U.S.

What's your take on the overall state/health of the MI market?

I think the MI market is experiencing a great deal of distortion (no pun intended!). More and more competitors are scrapping it out for a place on the floor or a position on a banner ad. The customers are often not getting a clear message on individual products and their capabilities. At Peavey, after all, it is our responsibility to exceed expectations and thrill the player. We are determined to get our message through to the dealers, customers and distributors regardless of all the choices. More than ever, training is key, and we are always available for training on our products. Dealers who have been to a Peavey seminar know the value of this.

For Peavey, specifically, what are your expectations for the coming months?

I'm glad you mentioned "expectations," but let me also expand on that to include the words hope and trust. Our hope is that our customers recognize Peavey's unique products and approaches to a rapidly changing marketplace.

We trust that many of our loyal customers appreciate that, over the past half-century, Hartley has made many changes in response to the realities of the marketplace. We expect to continue to refine our products and programs in response to today's market, while our prime directive remains, "to be the best at what we do." 



Fort Pitt Piano Company

A Family Tradition of Encouraging Family Tradition

By Jenn Lombari

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania's newest and most luxurious piano retailer, Fort Pitt Piano Company, celebrated their grand opening on November 1, 2017. Local business owners, musicians, music teachers, and residents celebrated the new business by visiting the new store at 8872 Covenant Ave.

To say Fort Pitt Piano Co. has set the bar high for luxury products matched with luxury customer service would be an understatement.

Fort Pitt Piano Co. is owned by Joe Ravita, 38, a resident of Mt. Lebanon. Ravita has also owned Empire Music in Mt. Lebanon for the last 15 years. Empire Music is known for lessons, repairs, and carrying high-end guitars by brands such as Taylor, Martin, Fender, Gibson, and more. Joe's father, also Joe Ravita, 62, has been in the local retail music business specializing in customer service and repairs for decades, and is now the manager of Fort Pitt Piano Co.

Baby grand and full grand Steinways fill the 3,500 square foot space alongside the smaller Steinway models, Boston, and Essex. They even stock the newer Steinway model, The Spiro. The Spiro is a full-sized Steinway grand player piano that connects to a tablet or iPad. An app allows you to play back performances from famous pianists as if they are sitting at the piano in your home performing for you and your guests.

\$500 guitars, you can buy that anywhere. I love making our business into a space that is clearly defined. When people walk in, they know what you're doing is paramount! You walk into the piano store and you get a vibe that we're going to give you premium service, business on the high-end, even though everything is not the most expensive, we don't provide the cheapest either. So if you want to buy a \$10,000 piano, we can service you, but we're going to treat you like you're buying high-end. We're aiming for high-end. Sometimes people treat down to a price range. We want you to feel like you just walked into the nicest hotel or the nicest restaurant you ever walked into. We can't do that with low end products. We'll carry the best \$5,000 upright you can find. When a customer is treated well, it makes them feel like they are part of it – an experience so good that the customer feels like they owe us money!" he laughs. He compares it to a time he and a friend bought tickets to see The Rolling Stones. If you've ever looked into



buying tickets to see the Stones, you know that the costs can amount to well over thousands of dollars. Ravita and his friend bought the tickets with the intention of selling them and later getting seats they could actually afford. Well, even though they weren't in the front row and the tick-

ets they ended up with weren't the most expensive, the experience was so incredible and unforgettable that they felt like they owed the band money. It was a "life changing experience," he says. He wants his customers to feel that, too. Ravita says, "If you leave like that, you're not thinking of how much money you just spent. You have this amazing new piano and a place that will take care of you, that won't hang you out to dry. Hospitality comes first – everything else works itself out later. Super premium, one-on-one service with the customer is most important, so that the customer can enjoy the whole experience of buying that luxury item."

"A piano is a generational investment," explains Ravita. "Our customers aren't looking for a \$500 piano or something that may be offered for free on Craigslist. These are customers that want to make an investment that will become a family heirloom – something that will be passed on from generation to generation. We're offering them the finest choice at a professional level. People who are at the higher end of the income chain are shopping for the best cars, the best watches; they have a nice house... They don't want to put just anything in their home, they want an heirloom piece for generations." A piano can last over a hundred years if it's taken care of properly."

As Steinway & Sons are about to celebrate their 165th year in early 2018, dealers like Fort Pitt Piano Company are ensuring the brand's impressive legacy will continue for the foreseeable future. 

The experience upon entering Fort Pitt Piano Co. is extremely important to owner, Joe Ravita. When you walk into the store, you have entered an environment that has been purposely prepared for music lovers to feel comfortable: a place to get acquainted with the pianos. High ceilings, chandeliers, and polished concrete floors offer a lush and vibrant feel to the showroom. Ravita likes to visit other music stores while traveling or on vacation and he truly believes that presentation just isn't enough. He explains how he feels that businesses struggle because they think it's all about the instrument, but it's really about providing the best product in a high-end environment: "You can have the perfect item and the environment and presentation can 'dumb it down.'" Ravita feels a lot of independent dealers struggle with this and if they started here, it would really make a big difference.

Ravita goes on to passionately explain that, "The most important thing across both of my businesses is, we're doing what I think everyone else is afraid to do. If you walk into a store and there's a bunch of

reinventing RENTALS



Instrumental Music Center Gives Tucson the Rentals it Needs
By Victoria Wasylak



Instrumental Music Center of Tucson, Arizona didn't start strictly with a love of music, but rather a love for music in their community. You could, in fact, track the entire store's existence down to an interaction like owner Michael Faltin's interaction with one kid and a banged-up violin.

It all started when Faltin, a former band director, spotted a music student with a violin with bad strings.

"I said to the kid, 'so, you own that thing?' and the kid said 'well, we're renting it from the store.'" And so the seedling – or one of many seedlings – was planted in his mind.

"When you see bad things, sometimes you're inspired to create something better," he said. "We never wanted to own a business, we never wanted to do what we ended up doing, but we just kind of ended up there." Faltin and his wife Leslie started IMC in 1999, and most recently, have celebrated the opening of their newest store in. But their interest and business tactics differ from most.

"A lot of people open a business to make money, but we do it to service a community," Faltin says.

Taking Matters into their Own Hands

In 1999, things felt bleak for Faltin as he worked as a band director and had to scrap together instruments for his students to use. In an era where Amazon wasn't the go-to, he had to go to all the local stores – and we mean all of them.

"We started in 1999, my husband was a band director and had to go to all the different music stores in our town, and he had to go to three different music stores to get a full set of drum heads for a specific drum kit," says "ringleader" and wife Leslie Faltin. "None of the music stores in town has a full set in stock, and it kind of started this conversation of 'goodness, couldn't we do this better than some of the other people in town?'"

The answer quickly became an obvious "yes."

Leslie adds an unlikely dimension to the music store – she holds a degree in chemistry and had previously sold radioactive isotopes and worked in the laser industry.

"I missed the grand opening of the music store, I was selling lasers to people in Japan that day," she says, admitting the irony of the entire situation.

The couple have nearly built their business from the ground up, with Faltin putting in all the lighting himself, and starting with only two employees in 1999.

"There are a lot of music stores out there that got the music store from their grandpa or uncle or whatever, we actually built it from scratch. We did it in a very scrappy way. We didn't even have a certificate of authenticity when we first opened because we did all the work ourselves," Faltin explains. "We took this leap of faith but I had a pretty strong vision of what we needed to do and what was going to work."

Once IMC opened its doors, it didn't take long for word to get out that an ex-band director owned the new music store, which to fellow music people, indicated that it was probably going to be a good one.

Meanwhile, when applying their first trip to NAMM with their fledgling company, doors still unopened and ribbon still intact, NAMM told them that if they didn't officially own a store, they couldn't come.

And so they Photoshopped the store sign onto the building, sent the photo in, and got access. (No, NAMM still doesn't know).

"We kind of commando'd our way in to the first NAMM show," the couple says jokingly.

In 2017, the location, of course, is very real, and much larger than the original with the expansion that they underwent six years ago, complete with a 37-person staff. In the plaza where IMC is, the adjacent stores went out of business, and in the landlord's effort to keep the parking traffic down onsite, they made an agreement to take over the empty spaces, which allowed for more room for shipping, receiving, and repairs.

"I like working on things and fixing things, especially that first year, I spent a lot of time doing repair and figuring out how that stuff worked. So repairs is a big part of what we do," Faltin adds.

Reworking Rentals

Circling back to the initial issue that sparked IMC, rentals account for 40 to 50 percent of IMC's business to this day. Tucked into that portion of business is a ceaseless dedication to quality that really stands out this time of the school year, as bands prep to get back in the game.



“We’re making sure our growth doesn’t cripple us. You have to consciously choose to not grow fast and chase the American dream.”

– Michael Faltin



“We rent Eastman, we rent Yamaha - it’s all, honest-to-god real name stuff. It’s kind of expensive, but we have instruments in our inventory, some of them for 15-20 years now,” Faltin explains.

The couple calls rentals their driving force of the business, which makes sense, considering that low-quality rentals are what proved to be lacking in the community pre-IMC.

“At this point, almost every store that I know that does instrument rentals is renting Chinese-made, no-name products, so you go out there to rent an instrument for your fifth-grader and you end up with this instrument that barely plays,” Faltin says.

Faltin notes that these instruments don’t last very long, but the company makes their money back quickly because they’re so cheap, but that’s not the kind of business that the Faltin family is interested in running.

“We’re the only store right now that I can think of in Arizona that constantly takes name brand instruments to a rental night, and so that kind of caring, that kind of attention to detail is something separates us from everybody else,” he says.

Intentional Growth

Since that expansion to their original location, IMC has grown again, this time planting a store in a different part of Tucson just this past summer.

IMC has leased a storefront three doors down from the Speedway and Kolb location, which adds another 1400 square feet to the operation.

Because of this move, IMC’s string repair department has expanded to three times the original size. In addition, IMC now uses a new ultra-sonic cleaner brass repairs, which no other store in Tucson has.

The six repair benches in the new area were custom-built to the specifications and requirements of each repair person; the brass bench is very large to accommodate tubas and sousaphones, while the woodwind benches have been designed for optimal height and ease of access to parts.

IMC also now has an expanded shipping and receiving area to accommodate for their ever-increasing growth.

“In 1999, when we opened the store... UPS would drop off 1-2 boxes per day. Now, we are getting pallets of musical instruments and accessories almost daily. We have secured several State Contracts, making it easier for schools to place orders with IMC, increasing our business even more,” says Leslie. “In 2016, we were struggling to move that amount of inventory with such a small space. So, we decided to move and upgrade the receiving department to give staff a more efficient and comfortable work space. The timing is perfect, as our business is up about 20 percent this year.”

While the couple realizes that they could open other stores in different lucrative areas of Arizona, they choose not to maintain the balance of their store; business isn’t a numbers game for them.

“We’re making sure our growth doesn’t

cripple us. You have to consciously choose to not grow fast and chase the American dream,” the Faltins agree. “There’s no point in having six stores and having to work constantly if you can’t enjoy it.”

While the store does two million dollars in business every year, money and making their children rich isn’t in the game plan.

“We’re controlling our growth. At this point our priority is still out family,” Faltin notes. “I find it very interesting that we are one of the few couples that can functionally run a music store. That balance of our lives ...is more important to us that the overwhelming success of the music store.”

“They’re rushing their way to an early grave and having a horrible time,” the couple says. “Our focus, again, is doing the right thing and taking care of our customers.” After all, that very intention of community service is exactly where this business started. PHOTO: IMC

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MI RETAIL *reimagined*

Village Music Wellington Redefines What it Means to be an MI Store

By Victoria **Wasylak**

Ah, the joys of visiting your favorite music store. Parsing through any new clearance items, ogling at the guitars hanging on the walls with pride, and... visiting the in-house café?

Building on the current trend of adding performance spaces to MI stores, Village Music Wellington has created one heck of a hub for musicians, featuring a stage and adjacent café, spaces for workshops, and bustling repair area, all in about 4000 square feet. Combined in one facility at 10410 Forest Hill Boulevard in Florida, Village Music is taking what it means to be a music center to the next level (and the level after that).

"More than a store, we see ourselves as a community music center," says Donna Willey, co-owner of the shop. "The concept of offering a full-service retail store as well as a dynamic lesson program, a dedicated repair shop, a performance stage and a live-music venue is what differentiates us. We believe that the presence of our center, in a very prominent location, will intrigue and inspire people who may never before have had a connection to music to come in and explore. We want people, whether involved in music or not, to hang out here, be motivated and experience the power of music."

The origins of the new music center are rooted in 2014, two years after they had opened their first store in Wellington. After quickly outgrowing the initial 1800 square foot space, the Village Music team realized they needed more lesson rooms and more space for an expanded concept.

In 2015, Village Music started to look for a new location for their dream store, finally selecting a spot in the Wellington Mall. The owners of the building had initially wanted to rent to national chain, but after witnessing the positive effect that the store was having on the community, they changed their minds. From there, Village Music moved forward with their blueprint for a new kind of music store experience. The store celebrated its grand opening on December 2 and 3 with live music, tours of the facilities, product demonstrations, tastings at the new café, and opportunities to meet their staff and instructors.

"We began creating the concept when we realized that there was a huge demand for activities like after-school music camps, ensembles, Mommy & Me classes, etc., - which we did not have adequate space to provide," Willey adds. "We started to build the unit out in June of this year and moved in on October 1st. Now we're able to offer all of those services and more - rock camps, chorus and ukulele workshops are already in progress!"

As an extra boost of encouragement, Village Music provides the ukuleles at the uke workshops so that total beginners can come in and feel comfortable experimenting without the burden having to buy an instrument.

"We've already started running weekly ukulele workshops, string ensembles and after-school rock camps. After Christmas, we'll start running Mommy & Me (early musical education) classes, Adult Rock Camp and Drum Master Classes," she adds. "We are also in the process of organizing some vendor-sponsored artist visits which will be added to the roster early next year. Also, we run weekly Student Showcases on Sunday afternoons and Jazz Breakfast on Saturdays, with students providing the music."

Workshops and lessons are only a fraction of whole package, however; a major chunk of the store also brings musicians and visitors together in the performance and café area.

Ukuleles and Native American flutes strewn on the café tables provide an interactive aspect to the space, inviting people who may have never touched an instrument in their lives to experiment with music in an unintimidating atmosphere.

Between offering open mic nights and a family-friendly space for guests to kick back and enjoy some chow and a performance from a local musician, this part of Village Music has been booming.

"We're already seeing that the use of the stage is going beyond its original intention, which was as a space for the students to perform on a regular basis, which we believe makes their lessons more meaningful," Willey adds. "In the meantime, we've had all sorts of talented individuals from the community coming and

asking to perform here, to which we say 'Yes!' We're so happy that the café is becoming a gathering place for musicians, and people interested in listening to live music. We've started doing open mic nights on Thursdays and have professional live music performances every Friday evening. For one hour before the Friday evening shows, all students and kids from the community are invited to share the stage for an hour as the 'opening act' in an open-mic type setting."

Willey said that the idea for a stage in the center spouted from recognizing the demand for performance spaces in the western Palm Beach communities, one that they were happy to provide.

"We wanted to have the space for a stage to give the students the opportunity to perform on a regular basis, together with other students. And, we heard out of the community that there was a need for a more family-oriented, intimate live music venue. So, we decided to try to fulfill all those needs and design a casual coffee-house type venue with a stage, which would facilitate both the students and the community."

The coffee house portion of the store, however, was born from the desire to give multitudes of parents a place to relax and grab a snack while their children are in music lessons. Needless to say, the concept has bloomed far beyond what the Village Music team had had in mind.

"The addition of the café was initially motivated by the multitude of parents that hang out in our store!" Willey explains. "We have 350 students, and most of them come in with one or both parents. Our original thought was to provide a place for them to

relax and enjoy the time while they're waiting. We serve gourmet coffees, flat breads paninis, pastries and salads in the afternoons. Once it became obvious that this was also becoming a local hang-out and an evening venue, we added the wine, beer and charcuterie boards, which have become very popular. The parents who bring their kids in for evening lessons also tend to relax with a glass of wine or beer while they're waiting."

The store's recent grand opening showcase went so well that Village Music aims to host more of them after the holiday season, starting a new Saturday block party tradition.

"The grand opening was epic! We had a line-up of live music from 2:00 through 11:00 p.m. and a full house the whole time," Willey notes. "Along with local bands, we had students and teachers performing. It was a beautiful showcase of professional and budding talent. In fact, the turnout was so massive and the reception from the community so positive, that we decided to replicate it on a regular basis! We're planning Saturday afternoon Village Music Block Parties to start after the holidays. They will provide a venue where the community can come together to enjoy some great music and enjoy each other."

Put together, the complex is the whole package, save for maybe save for an arena or an orchestra pit. All the layers of Village Music are a piece of the puzzle to what it takes to making a comprehensive and all-encompassing music center.

"We'll do whatever it takes to encourage, enthuse and spread the joy of music, because we understand the power of music to change lives," Willey says. PHOTO: JEFF

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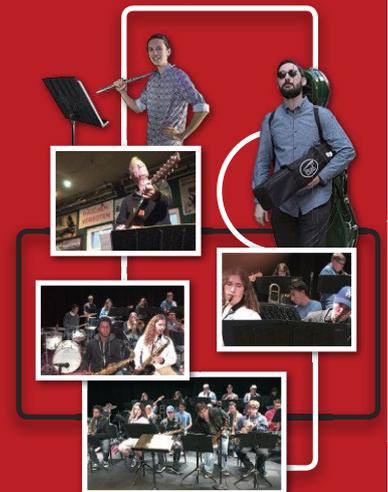
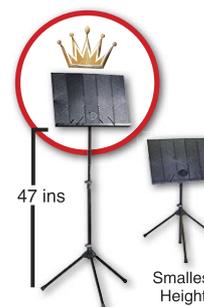
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The Ideal in Service: 4 Keys to Success

By Menzie **Pittman**

In business we often think of “service” as the interaction between the customer and a retailer during a sales transaction, and today most businesses approach it just that way. But, in truth, service is everything else but. In a time of changing customer habits, there is no better time than now to get our heads around the true understanding of service and to bring it back into vogue.

1) Service – You can’t give what you don’t understand

Most readers of this column know by now I am absolutely impassioned about a few things: music, people, conversation, and quality. I live to kindle passion and awaken curiosity with every interaction I have. I am unapologetically “old school,” and I take full advantage of that with our customers.

Enter Mr. Jones, an adult guitar student, aged 74 and retired after working in a high profile government job. He has returned to enjoy his passion for music after putting it off for thirty years. The other day he stopped me in the lobby and struck up a conversation. His probing question began our conversation.

MJ: You a honcho around here?

Me: Some may be under the impression that I’m a honcho.

MJ: You the head honcho?

Me: According to the paperwork filed with the state, yes, sir I am, (I then add with a smile) which makes me the last in line to get a bonus and the first called when something breaks.

Mr. Jones continues with his inquisitive questions asking if I knew his teacher. *This is the gateway question* and a chance for me to share that both my daughter and I have studied with “Mr. Mike,” his teacher. As we talk, Mr. Jones begins to gush about the bright, young employees behind the counter. He seems entertained by how efficient this younger generation is with gadgets. We proceed to walk and talk, and I invite him to come downstairs with me to see a playground I built. I know he will understand it and appreciate the efforts that went into designing and building our listening room. I take him into the stage area, and I ask him if he likes to sing with friends. We talk about our bluegrass jam and begin to discuss great classic folk and bluegrass artists.

The takeaway here is Mr. Jones sought me out to say thank you. He knew who I was, and he wanted to let me know that our customers are smart enough to pick up on the subtleties that we strive everyday to get right. He appreciates old, crusty dudes like his fabulous teacher, and the sharp, young talent he sees in our staff, and he is keen to witness that we work extra hard to make sure the details of his experience are as they should be. He appreciates the quality of our commitment to “service.”

2) Let’s take service on the road and have some fun

When you buy a drum set from my stores, it presents me with a unique opportunity. I have a special chance to share a few hours with the family who just purchased the kit because I deliver and assemble it, personally. It’s my opportunity to provide a service few other stores in our region can. Yes, Internet big boxes will ship it for free, but I don’t ship it – I *personally* bring it. And you, the customer, don’t assemble it; we do that together. I discuss every part of the instrument and its functions, and while we have fun with this, we talk the whole time. We talk about music, learning, cre-

ative thinking, and the benefits of music education. The customer learns about my work with the NAMM Fly-ins. They learn my father was a professional musician, and, of course, they ask about music colleges and the like. They get an inside understanding about my role in the music industry, and I get to help the drummer get the kit set up exactly as he wants and needs it to be. *That* is service.

3) Sometimes service is initiating and building bridges

I call him Mr. Case.

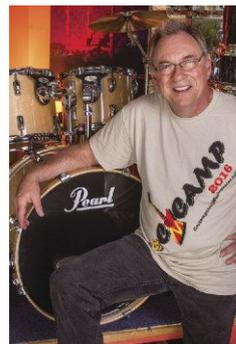
He is a first chair, all-district, and jazz band kind of guy. I liked him the first time we met because he is a dedicated, hard worker, and unquestionably a leader. The day we met he was walking out of the lesson room. His trumpet was slung like a weapon off his right shoulder in a funky, high-end case with a round end for the bell of the horn. I knew I had one shot and as I greeted him, I thought about the hotel doorman Lamar in the movie “That Thing You Do”.

“I live to kindle passion and awaken curiosity with every interaction I have.”

“What’s up Mr. Case? – I see you don’t need a cool guy case ‘cuz you’re slingin’ one off your shoulder; love that case, ‘cuz it’s extra funky.” He looked up and smiled. He realized I had dialed him in quickly, and he liked the tease. It was our gateway moment, and now we speak every week when he comes in because he trusts me. This kid represents the best in the county, and he loves telling people about the fun vibe at our store – because now we talk jazz, icons, music schools, and such.

4) Great service isn’t an action, it’s a philosophy

You don’t give it, you embody it. Great service is sharing a gift meant to be given. No different than courtesy or a smile, service is “a way of being” – one that’s coming back into style... or maybe one that should have never left! 



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



Exiting? A Buyer's Perspective

By Jaimie Blackman

*Hop on the bus, Gus, don't need to discuss much.
Just drop off the key, Lee, and get – yourself free... – Paul Simon*

While Paul Simon wrote and sang the hit song, “50 Ways to Leave Your Lover,” there are only three ways to leave your business.

Option # 1: Inside sale to family and or employee(s) potentially offers the seller the most control and tax benefits over the transaction. This option requires two-to-five years plus lead time, and you may need to help the employee(s) with financing the purchase.

Option #2: Outside sale to a strategic or a third-party buyer may speed up the time table, and get you cash faster than an inside sale. The best part is you don't have to worry about helping an employee with the financing.

Option #3: A liquidation may be planned or unplanned. A planned liquidation of inventory may be perfectly viable if the owner is unable to find a suitable buyer in the required time frame. Bear in mind, the owner is giving up any good will for the business itself. An unplanned liquidation can be like holding a fire sale with highly discounted pricing.

Who and how you would like to sell or transfer your business to depends largely on your goals and time frame. Always review the transaction with your legal and tax advisor.

“What's the value of my business?”

A seller would be well advised to put themselves in the buyer's shoes when considering a valuation. The value of a business is nothing more than the buyer's assessment of risk. The less risk the buyer perceives, the higher the price he or she is prepared to offer. The more risk the buyer perceives, the seller will undoubtedly be disappointed with the offer.

Caveat emptor is a Latin term defined as “let the buyer beware.” Buyers usually feel that sellers are asking too much. Sellers feel that buyers are offering too little. Cognitive sciences call this the “endowment effect” and offer many reasons for the valuation discrepancy, ranging from loss aversion to evolutionary factors. In the end, the fair market value of a business is determined by what an informed buyer is prepared to pay, which is governed by the risk factor.

When it comes to how much a business is worth, who better to ask than Steve Zapf, president of Music & Arts based in Frederick, Maryland. With more than 500 retail and affiliate locations, 120 educational representatives, and over 1.5 million lessons taught per year, Music & Arts is one of the nation's largest school music retailers and lesson providers. The organization is the dominant national buyer of music retailers. Music & Arts look for strong rental programs and companies that emphasize band and orchestral sales and school service.

I asked Zapf a series of pointed questions regarding his valuation process. Many of his answers revolved around the importance of the seller's intangible assets

For example, when I asked Zapf what were the key drivers for valuation multiples, the seller's intellectual capital was on the top of his mind.

“Larger businesses with consistent earnings that are less dependent on a single person provide for a more stable and predictable operation after the acquisition,” he says. “These are factors that give us the necessary confidence to increase the multiple we pay.”

When at NAMM, it's not unusual to hear an owner “brag” how his business couldn't exist without him. The buyer is looking for transfer value. If the exiting owner owns the relationships, and all processes are locked up in his head, what is the buyer really buying?

Process and data called “structural capital” is a key intangible asset, and is usually the straw that breaks the camel's back.

Zapf says it this way:

“Inventory accuracy is often a problem in deals. Often, we are buying assets, or if we are valuing income, we may require a minimum amount of inventory consistent with a business that is a going concern. Unfortunately, all too often we find that the confidence in the inventory number in the computer or on the balance sheet is not very high. This can create a lot of stress in the final hours of the deal when we do a physical count and find out just how much inventory really is – or in some cases is not – there.”

“In the end, the fair market value of a business is determined by what an informed buyer is prepared to pay, which is governed by the risk factor.”

When I asked Zapf for his final thoughts, he said:

“You can tell a lot about a business from the organization of the store, the shop, and the warehouse. Clean, well-organized operations typically have the most accurate financial information as well – all of which increases our confidence in the future value of the business as a part of Music & Arts.”

Lesson learned. If you want to increase the offer from a buyer, grow your intangible assets which a powerful way to reduce the risks when exiting your business. If you plan on attending NAMM, I will be offering a must-see session during my talk on how to better manage your Intangibles. Stop by the Idea Center on Saturday, January 27 at 2 p.m. and say hello. Wishing you all a great 2018.



Jaimie Blackman – a former music educator & retailer – is a certified wealth strategist & creator of Value-Builder™ | MoneyCapsules®, which capsule value-building activities into 90-day sprints. Blackman helps music retailers accelerate business value now and maximize value when it's time to exit. Blackman is a frequent speaker at NAMM's Idea Center. Visit jaimieblackman.com to register for educational webinars and to subscribe to his podcasts.

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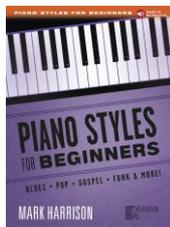


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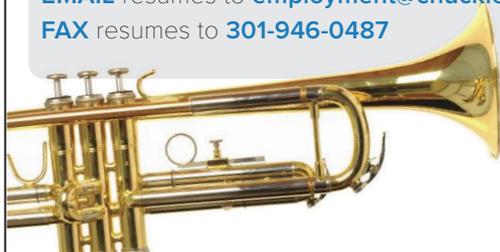
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Fishman Transducers Inc.	55	fishman.com	Two Old Hippies/Breelove	25	twooldhippies.com
Fluid Audio	18	fluidaudio.net	Vic Firth Company	19	vicfirth.com
Gator Cases Inc.	41	gatorcases.com	Virgin Musical Instruments Co.	24	virginmusicalinstruments.com
Gear Up Products LLC	67, 69	gearupproducts.com	Walking Bird Forms & Tags	51	walkingbird.com
Hailun USA	14	hailun-pianos.com	WD Music Products Inc.	4	wdmusic.com
Hal Leonard Corp.	11	halleonard.com	Wells Fargo Commercial Distribution Finance	39	cdf.wf.com/mmr
House of Troy	87	houseoftroy.com	Wexler Music Co.	60	wexlermusic.com
Hunter Music Instrument Inc.	93	huntermusical.com	WFL III Drums & Percussion	31	wfl3drums.com
HW Products	87	hwproducts.com	Whirlwind Music Inc	C2	whirlwindusa.com
IMS Technologies	72	imstechnologies.net	Wittner GmbH & Co. KG	33	wittner-gmbh.de
J.J. Babbitt Co. Inc.	12	jjbabbitt.com	Zinc Platform Inc.	C3	zincplatform.com/mmr
JodyJazz Inc.	60	jodyjazz.com	Zoom North America	C4	zoom-na.com



By Dan Daley

Guitars and Vinyl – Sometimes it's a Marriage that Leads to a Deep and Lengthy (Customer) Engagement

Chocolate and peanut butter, fish and chips... Here's another couple of things that seem to go together well: musical instruments and vinyl records. A few shops here and there have made that connection, and it's been a synergistic one.

The poster child for the combination of guitars and vinyl is Gordie's Music, in Victoria, B.C. Gordie Budd began his MI retail store conventionally in 1998, after a career as a recording and performing musician, himself, selling a variety of instruments until it became clear that guitars, amps, and accessories were his sweet spot in this west Canadian island-city market. And so it was until a decade later, when Budd made room in a corner for a few used vinyl records that some customers brought in. The corner grew even as the demand for guitar sales cooled in the last 10 years, to the point where, as Gordie's Music prepared to close its doors for the last time in December due mainly to soaring rents, the vinyl was bringing in more revenue than the guitars were. "One day I looked up and realized, 'My God, I'm running a record store here,'" he recalls.

There wasn't an overt connection between the two product categories other than the fact that they were both obviously music related. However, he did discover a deep emotional connection between the two – one that had the practical benefit of bringing MI customers, who might otherwise have visited once a month for strings or biannually for a new guitar or amp, into the store on a weekly or nearly daily basis, looking for new (used) vinyl treasures. It's not so much that guitars became secondary to the customer relationship; rather, it's that the vinyl became the connective tissue that linked customers to the store in between their usual visits. The records, says Budd, became something that customers and staff could focus on that didn't require a purchase of more than \$20 or so, and whose liner notes provided grist for deeper conversations than those engendered by the wording on a pack of super-light strings.

When Gordie's Music closes, it'll leave a void (literally as well as figuratively, if landlords all over continue to leave street-level stores vacant as they pursue unreal-

istic retail rents), but it will also have proved the power of pairing music's most iconic format with music's most iconic instrument, helping create a true parlor atmosphere that reinforces the intimacy of the independent shop. It's a combination other MI retailers may want to consider.

It's a good fit. A *Billboard* analysis from 2014 shows that indie record-store owners in the U.S. collectively account for about 50 percent of all vinyl sales. However, Alliance Entertainment, a wholesaler that sells vinyl to accounts like Best Buy, Barnes & Noble, and Trans World Entertainment, also includes the Guitar Center chain among its customers. GC began testing vinyl records in 2013 and now carries a mix of classic and new titles in more than 200 of its stores.

The thing is, while up-scale lifestyle chains, in-



“It's not so much that guitars became secondary to the customer relationship; rather, vinyl became the connective tissue that linked customers to the store in between their usual visits.”

cluding Whole Foods (now owned by Amazon, the single biggest seller of records and, apparently, everything else) and Starbucks, helped drive CD sales back in the 1990s, they also had the unintended collateral effect of undermining those same sales at independent record stores. And how many of those are left now?

Correlation does not mean causation, of course, but independent retailers are an endangered species in more than a few verticals. Just as independent stores are the backbone of MI retail, they've also become the foundation for vinyl sales. Connecting the two in the same store can produce some positive synergies. 



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