

# MMR

## MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW



Thinking Outside of the (Stomp)Box

44

Dealer Survey:  
Instrument  
Cables

50



Wallace Detroit  
Guitars:  
Reclaiming a  
City's History

53



Small Business  
Matters: A United  
Collective is Always  
Stronger



# 34 SMALL WONDERS

With No End in Sight for the 'Ukulele Craze,' Higher End Models Increasing in Popularity



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# MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

## FEATURES

Vol.177 MARCH 2018 No.3

**Small Wonders: With No End in Sight for the 'Ukulele Craze,' Higher End Models Increasing in Popularity 34**  
 Chatting with the major players in the world of ukuleles about the latest (and seemingly strongest) trend in the fretted world



**Thinking Outside of the (Stomp)Box: Smaller, 'Boutique' FX Pedal Brands are Leading the Way in 2018 40**  
 Digging into the current demand for compact FX stompboxes with some of the brands leading the way in the market

**Survey: Plugging Along... A look at the Increasingly Crowded and Diverse World of Instrument Cables 44**  
 Breaking down the current trends across the board in the varied market of MI cables



**Fretted: Wallace Guitars 50**  
 How Mark Wallace is rebuilding and revisiting Detroit's history, one hand-crafted guitar at a time

**Sound of Money: Masters of Intangibles 52**  
 Jaimie Blackman explains how companies can take inventory of their intangibles to determine if they have the right mix to take off

**Small Business Matters: A United Collective is Always Stronger 53**  
 Menzie Pittman discusses a new age of guitar heroes and working together to sell the passion of music itself

## Departments

Editorial .....	6
UpFront .....	8
Letters.....	8
Supplier Scene .....	16
MMR Global.....	26
People on the Move.....	30
Trade Regrets .....	31
New Products.....	54
Classifieds.....	58
Ad Index .....	59
The Last Word .....	60

Cover Photo: Courtesy Kala Brand Music Co.

MMR Musical Merchandise Review® (ISSN 0027-4615), Volume 177, Number 3, March 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 ©2018 by Timeless Communications Corp., all rights reserved. Printed in USA.

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# Living in the Present

This – our March issue – is one of *MMR*'s two annual "fretted focus" issues.

Anyone who reads *MMR* regularly and checks this Editorial page is likely aware that I'm a full-on guitar geek. I love guitars and "guitar-ish" instruments – solid body electrics, hollow bodies, semi-hollows, acoustics, vintage, cutting-edge, wacky, traditional, basses, ukuleles, dulcimers, mandolins, lutes: you name it, I'm interested.

Trying to narrow my attention for this here editorial was something of a daunting task.

See, I'm a shameless "Gibson guy" (I'm also a "Dan Armstrong guy," but seeing as Ampeg has once again pressed Pause on the distribution of those badass guitars, I'll leave that to the side for current purposes) and, as such, it'd be tempting to devote this column to speculating about what's going on at Gibson, the stories of the organization's impending doom, former employees' tales of disorganization and mismanagement, CEO Henry Juszkiewicz' recent assertion – as printed in *Billboard* – that the problem boils down to MI retailers not having qualified sales staff or adequate facilities for customers to sit and check out gear in the stores, or the belief of some that Mr. Juszkiewicz, himself, is the root cause of Gibson's woes (open up Google, type in "Gibson CEO," and the first suggested search is, "Gibson CEO crazy").

But, I prefer to remain agnostic on this topic until the dust settles. Financial ratings groups are having their say, Mr. Juszkiewicz was kind enough to speak with *MMR* to offer his side of the current story (a completely cordial, professional conversation, for what it's worth), and I don't see any need to add further speculative fuel to the fire.

I was interested to read Menzie Pittman's comments on the subject of "guitar heroes" in this issue's "Small Business Matters" as that general topic was where I'd been headed for this Editorial.

Menzie talks about how an appropriate focus for those bemoaning the lack of guitar heroes these days might be female players – in particular female bassists. It's a fair point. From Esperanza Spalding to Kim Gordon to Tal Wilkenfeld to Tina Weymouth and beyond there are any number of women who play bass – from all styles and every age range – who, by shining the spotlight a little brighter, both marketers and retailers could benefit from.

But what resonated even more with me was Pittman's attention to folks like Ed Sheeran. Whether you love his music or not, Sheeran is a perfectly competent songwriter and rhythm guitarist. Does that assessment put him in the same category as Eddie Van Halen or Randy Rhoads? No, not at all. But it's been bothering me for years when I talk to an MI retailer and he or she complain that guitars aren't selling because we don't have "this year's Eddie Van Halen." George Harrison was a lovely slide player and John Lennon was a good guitarist in his own way, but were they virtuosos? Nope. And The Beatles were the single biggest driver of rock combo instrument sales in the history of the genre. Add Kurt Cobain and Billie Joe Armstrong to the list of fine-but-not-amazing guitarists responsible for temporary upticks in sales.

If the current guitar heroes are the likes of Taylor Swift and Ed Sheeran, let's just live with that and make the most of it.

I like *Appetite for Destruction*, too, but that was 30 years ago. Just because there isn't currently a "2018 Slash" doesn't mean the world's ending.



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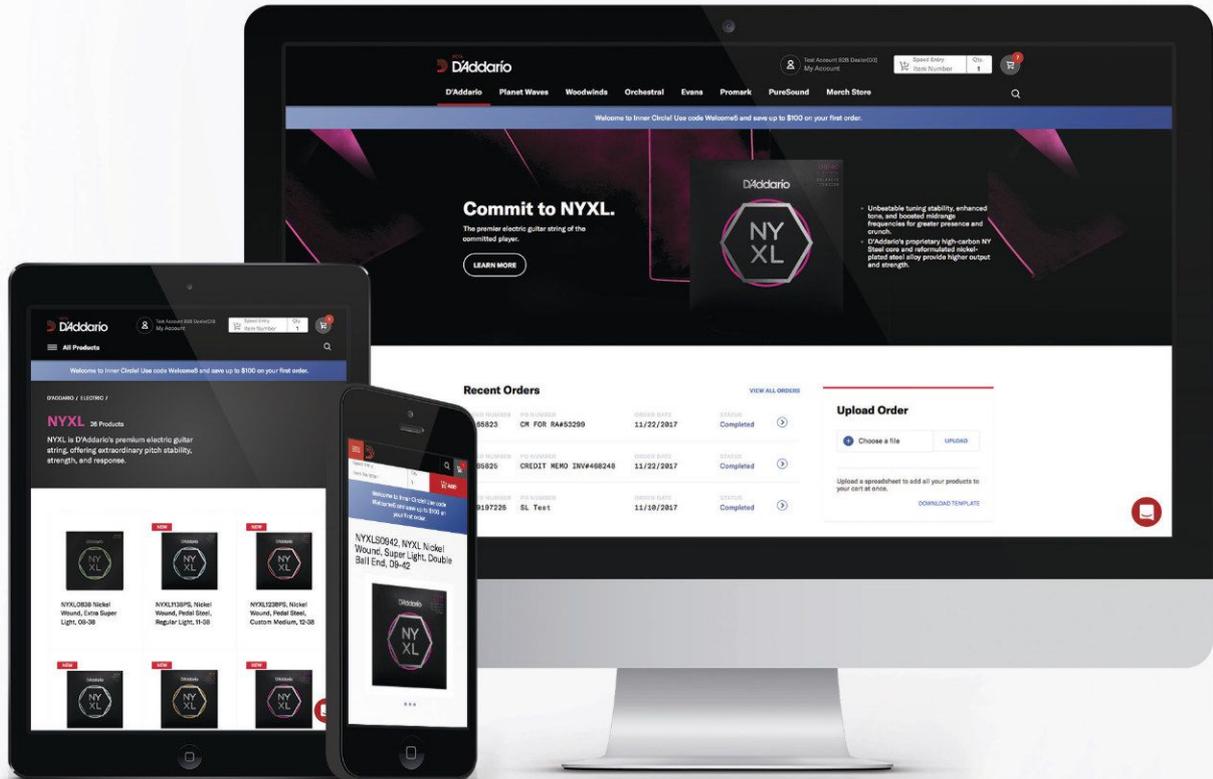
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# Industry News

## BandLab Technologies Acquires Assets of Cakewalk

BandLab Technologies has announced the acquisition of certain assets and the complete intellectual property of Cakewalk Inc. from Gibson Brands.

CEO of BandLab Technologies, Meng Ru Kuok said, "We are very excited to be bringing Cakewalk Inc.'s products into the BandLab Technologies stable. Cakewalk has been an industry leader in professional music software, delivering cutting edge technology that has empowered producers and artists alike around the world for more than 30 years. We have immense respect for Cakewalk's legacy and the incredible community of people who love the brand and rely on its products in both their personal and professional lives.



"The teams at both Gibson and BandLab felt that Cakewalk's products deserved a new home where development could continue. We are pleased to be supporting Cakewalk's passionate community of creators to ensure they have access to the best possible features and music products under the BandLab Technologies banner," he said.

The deal includes only the transfer of Cakewalk Inc.'s assets and intellectual property. No other details of the deal have been released. More information will be shared about product roadmap and future features in due course.

Gibson Brands acquired Cakewalk in 2013. It announced in November 2017 that it was ceasing active development and production of Cakewalk branded companies.

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

## Debt Troubles Reported for Gibson, Juskiewicz Responds

It has recently been reported by many that Gibson Brands, Inc. – parent company of Gibson Guitars – is facing an uncertain future due to serious debt-related and operational concerns. The company has issued a statement regarding their financial situation and, further, *MMR* spoke with Gibson Chairman and CEO Henry Juskiewicz on the afternoon of February 20.

The company must soon address upcoming repayments of senior secured notes totaling \$375 million, with an additional \$145 million due if the first amount is not resolved by July 23. In early February, *Debtwire* reporter Reshimi Basu told *The Nashville Post*, "At the end of the day, someone will take control of this company – be it the debtors or the bondholders." Further Kevin Cassidy, a senior credit officer at Moody's Investment Service, noted to the *Post* that Henry Juskiewicz, "essen-

tially has just three options: He and his team could negotiate an exchange of their debt coming due with new notes, which may not be feasible at a reasonable price; He could also be persuaded – or forced – to give up some of his equity in exchange for the debt payments; or he may end up taking one of the most globally recognized brands... to bankruptcy court."

"Pretty much, what we said in our press release holds true," Juskiewicz told *MMR*. "The music side of the business is doing very well, we are growing. We just released a relatively good quarter for both sides of the business. The MI side of the business, which includes Pro Audio, is doing well, is very profitable, and we have very high expectations for that segment of the business going into next year. In general, the MI industry is ticking upwards as much as a mature industry does, so we have a tail-

*continued on page 14*



## LETTERS

Just saw your bit in the December 2017 Editorial regarding the ups and downs of 2017. Here's my story: rentals were up somewhat, sales of supplies also up somewhat, students up somewhat. Repairs up and '18 started off with some indications that this will continue. Piano services – tuning and repair – [are] up significantly. Instrument sales: flat as a pancake. Notice that it is all the "subsidiary" stuff – rentals, supplies and repair, piano, and teaching services – which are up, and those are up significantly enough that the overall bottom line went up significantly as well.

Biggest concern? A store with deep pockets from a nearby metro area decided to open a branch here. This is not a large market to begin with and the additional competition is not a good thing. But in this respect the services I provide give me an edge – particularly the piano work.

It has often been pointed out that what keeps a music store afloat is the diversification into services and just plain old good service – usually that has been in the context of how to compete with Amazon, but over the many years I've noticed that music stores who survive the lean times are the ones that have a balanced approach in both instruments and in "extraneous" services such as instrument repair and instrument lessons. Adding piano work has really done wonders for my bottom line – often the folks with the piano have a kid(s) also in orchestra or band or want to learn guitar (which I teach and I have written some instructional books for). Turns out that what have also been considered "secondary sales" are, in fact, primary sales – instruments being rather secondary. And so far, Amazon ain't sending out piano techs :)

Later,  
Richard Hannemann  
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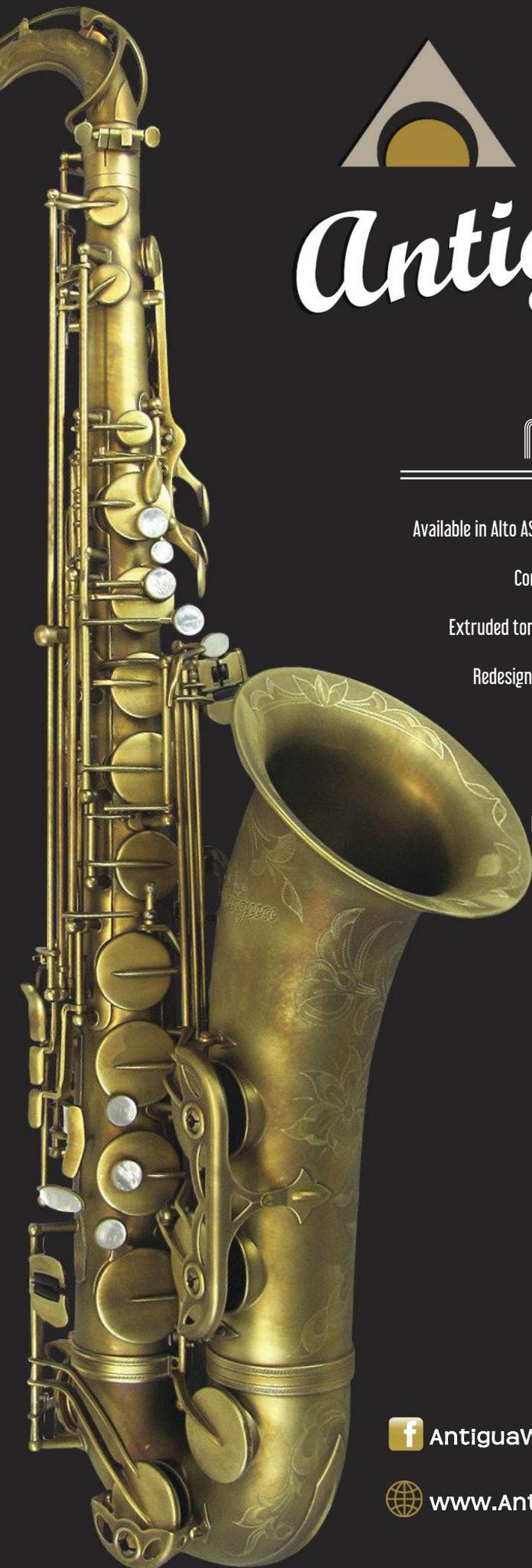
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# Fender Unveils First Line of Effects Pedals

By Victoria Wasylak

Cozied up in the lofty space of Manhattan's Home Studios last month, Fender created a garage. Well, re-created one.

Poised to release their first-ever line of effects pedals, the renown guitar company decided to revisit the new line's roots – and place of birth – by setting up a makeshift workspace based on Fender vice president of innovation Stan Cotey's garage on February 13.

The six pedals, all the work of Cotey, include the Marine Layer Reverb, Mirror Image Delay, Pugilist Distortion, Santa Ana Overdrive, Level Set Buffer, and The Bends Compressor. With the launch of the line, Fender shows they aren't fooling around - after releasing a handful of pedals, often decades apart, over their storied 60-plus-year history, this line represents a voyage into one of music's ever-growing (and currently booming) markets – plus, in a price range of \$99.99 to \$199.99, there's something for everyone's pedalboard available.

"Everything you will see today is a completely new, original idea," said director of product development Richard Bussey at the event. "These came out of Stan's brain."

Setting up six individual stations for each new pedal, guests at the event were invited to customize their own pedalboards and test out custom blends of their own guitar playing.

When Fender decided to work on a full line of pedals, Cotey said he came forward with a couple of his own designs that were already making the rounds at his personal gigs.



All six of Fender's new pedals

"A couple of them I've had just on my own pedalboard in my own life for five or six years - and those were the buffer and the compressor," Cotey explains. "The rest of them all came together just this past year. I have a pretty elaborate shop in my garage. These things just came from me playing and having a good source of parts, and materials just sitting there. I just kind of naturally work on things anyway, I naturally build things."

Working nights and weekends from home - in addition to his other job - Cotey invented and designed all six new Fender pedals

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with his unique perspective as both an engineer and a guitarist. Not initially trained in engineering, Cotey describes himself as a "lifelong learner" who also has been writing, recording, and performing on guitar for years, as well as working with Fender on amps and guitars. Blending the technical with a process of trial and error, plus the genuine taste and feel of a longtime guitarist, Cotey completed all six pedals in the matter of a year for Fender.

"It takes a lot of years and studying, it's kind of a feedback process. There's a mix of science and it's definitely driven by the art," he says. "Music, above all, needs to be inspiring. It needs to feed your imagination and take you someplace. I think being a player gives you a better link between the musical vocabulary and what's going on technically."

He explained that his ties to music helped to add a far more human touch to the pedals - still, quality remained a priority, with Cotey stating that he wanted the pedals' circuits to work "NASA-well."



Richard Bussey and Stan Cotey pose with the new pedals

"To me, there's not really math that describes what is euphonic and what isn't euphonic, because a lot of it is cultural. There isn't really good math that describes that stuff - at least not that I know of," Cotey notes. "I care a lot about the music the engineering, and the quality of the engineering, and things like long term reliability and manufacturability, kind of dry, boring things like that, but I also want it to feel really good and sound really good and to have surprises and twists and turns. I've built my own gear across my whole life, and every time you build something, you go 'well that didn't work' or 'that DID work' and you learn along the way. There are beautiful accidents that happen when people experiment and sometimes unique things come out of that, but it's really hard to predict."

Citing the likes of English pop crooner Ed Sheeran and multi-instrumentalist Mura Masa as indicative artists hopping on the trend (not to mention *MMR's* own feature on the rise of boutique pedals this

month), Fender sees pedals as a logical addition to their ever-growing brand.

"Fender is a growth company and pedals [are] a growing segment within MI," says Fender CEO Andy Mooney. "It's a logical expansion of the Fender brand. We will allocate significant marketing resources to encourage consumers to experience our pedals. Our goal is to fuel continued category growth."

"Pedals are like spices for cooking - pedals allow you to take flavors and add subtleties and shadings to things," Cotey explains. "When you start adding pedals, it can become a whole different instrument. It's like dressing up in a costume or something. It allows you to have another identity for a night."

Keeping their prior, very-spaced-out pedal releases in mind, Fender has plans to keep pushing their pedals forwards for at least the next three years.

"We're going to continue the line," Cotey adds. "We have at least a three-year product rollout. We're planning regular launches because we don't want these 20 year gaps in between when we do things."

"In analog comes a lot of chaos and a lot of possibilities, rule-bending and things like that. There are things that digital does really well and analog will never be able to do, and there are things that analog does well that are harder to do in digital, so this line is going to stay deeply steeped in analog culture, and designs and parts, but we are going to push into digital," he continues. "Pedals are going to get more comprehensive and more complex. This won't be the only delay we do, we'll do another delay that'll have more features and be a little bigger and be stereo. You'll probably see us eventually get vacuum tubes in our pedals because they've been in our guitar amplifiers since the beginning, so we'll go there as well. We're planning on going up-scale, outward, expanding into both the analog and the digital."

But as longtime Fender fans themselves might ask "what gives Fender the right to venture into these new waters?," Cotey has the answer.

"People love the traditional products that we make so innovation can be a dirty word for consumers," he says. "We have the ability to manufacture things at our price point that are high quality and really attractive, and those two things are not a reason to be in a space, in my opinion, but also, we've really thought about these from a player's standpoint... these are my children."



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## Piano Adventures Receives Frances Clark Keyboard Pedagogy Award

*Piano Adventures* by Nancy and Randall Faber, has been selected as the recipient of the MTNA Frances Clark Keyboard Pedagogy Award for 2018.

The method was selected by members of the Frances Clark Center board of directors and ratified by the MTNA board of directors at its winter meeting.

This annual award was established by a bequest to the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) by the renowned pedagogue, Frances Clark. It is given annually to a person or company who has made significant contributions to the field of

keyboard pedagogy, through the creation and development of products and publications that further the profession. The first award was presented in 2001 to Jane Magrath for her classic reference work *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature*. Most recently, the award was presented to pianist and Julliard professor Paul Sheftel for his book entitled *Modules*. Other recipients have included Barbara Lister-Sink, James Lyke, Marianne Uszler, Maurice Hinson, the Yamaha Disklavier, Willard Palmer, Fred Karpoff, Robert Duke, and Seymour Bernstein.

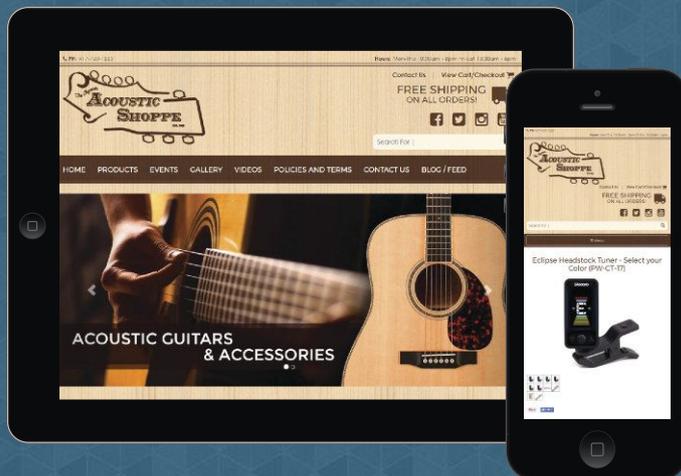


"Nancy and Randy have changed the face of modern piano pedagogy," said Larry Morton, president of Hal Leonard. "Some might even say they revolutionized piano teaching. As teachers, they saw the gaps and pitfalls in other methods, and set out to write the method they always wanted for their own students. As composers, they invoke pianism and artistic music in every original composition and arrangement – even in scale exercises – so technique and artistry is emphasized from the beginning. As educators, they understand how intrinsic motivation can work to the student's advantage, so they created

a library with nearly every genre and musical taste represented. They continue to evolve, creating new works and support materials that recognize the changing nature of teaching and learning in the digital age," said Morton. "Their story is quite remarkable. So much of what we take for granted in modern pedagogy can be attributed to the works of Nancy and Randy Faber."

The Fabers will be recognized at the MTNA National Conference in Lake Buena Vista, Florida at the Awards Brunch on March 21, 2018.

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## D'Addario Foundation Awards \$247,000 in Donations

The D'Addario Foundation has announced the results of its first grant application cycle of 2018.

\$247,000 in monetary grants and D'Addario & Co. product donations were given to 110 grassroots, community-based organizations that are greatly improving outcomes of marginalized and impoverished children through an immersive education in music. These grantees spread out

over 34 of the 50 states.

Of those 110 organizations, 46 are being awarded D'Addario Foundation grants for the first time, including Ingenuity, an Illinois initiative that is improving the access and quality of in-school music programs in underserved communities in hopes to fully institutionalize the arts in Chicago public schools; INTAKE Organization, which along with a rigorous music instruction cur-

riculum also has a family advocacy team in place that delivers academic and reading tutoring, English language help, and homework assistance; Kids In Concert, an El Sistema-inspired string program in Washington state with a heavy emphasis on student mentoring and volunteering; and The Gift of Music Foundation, an organization serving nearly 200 students that places experienced music educators and volunteer teachers in classrooms where music programs were cut by the city of Atlanta.

"2018 is going to be a big year for the D'Addario Foundation," Suzanne D'Addario Brouder says, executive director of the Foundation. "In addition to identifying and awarding support to the finest not-for-profit music programs, the D'Addario Foundation will launch a few exciting new initiatives that we believe will greatly enhance our ability to affect positive change in a number of ways."

**GIBSON** *continued from page 8*  
wind and our business is doing well in that area. The word 'bankruptcy' gets tossed around, and it's very exciting to hear that word, and it's all [presented as being] dismal. The fact is, if we *don't* replace the bonds, that's the outcome. But that's sort of like saying, 'If you get hit by a train, you will die.' That is absolutely possible, but it's unlikely, right? We are, in fact, working with an investment bank, they feel highly confident that we can replace that financing, and we're on the case. It's just a question of getting the best terms and conditions in refinancing the business."

The past few months have been notable for Gibson Brands – which has annual revenues of more than \$1 billion – in a number of ways: Last summer, the company's debt rating was downgraded; after less than a year on the job CFO Bill Lawrence left recently; Gibson sold a former Baldwin Piano warehouse in Nashville; in late October of 2017 the company announced that its Memphis-based guitar manufacturing division would move to a new facility; and in January Gibson was a notable no-show at the NAMM Show in Anaheim, California.

"This year is critical and they are running out of time," Cassidy told the *Post*. Some type of restructuring will be necessary. The core business is a very stable business, and a sustainable one. But you have a balance sheet problem and an operational problem."

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## Supplier Scene

### Music & Arts Opens 160th Location

Music & Arts has announced the opening of their 160th location in the U.S. with the acquisition of Ponier Music in West Cobb, Georgia.

Ponier Music has served the community as a respected music retailer and a Music & Arts rental affiliate that offered a lessons program for more than 200 students. They are now being formally welcomed into the family as an official Music & Arts location.

Previous owner, Doug Ponier, will remain as the store's manager, and will continue to serve the residents of West Cobb, and surrounding towns in Cobb County, including Fair Oaks, Country Lake, Wynford Chase, Arbor Forest and West Hampton with services including private and group lessons, instrument rentals, repairs, and a wide assortment of instruments and accessories. Located at 2325 Dallas Highway in Marietta, the store will also serve school music programs throughout nearby counties.

"For almost 23 years, I was proud to serve the West Cobb community for all things music related," says Ponier. "But, with the internet taking a bigger and bigger bite of the Mom and Pop store it was time to move on... Music and Arts has been wonderful to work with to start that next chapter, and I'm proud to stay on as the new manager. Everyone has been very helpful and supportive in getting myself and my staff acclimated, and I look forward to continuing to bring music to our community."

"For many years, Ponier Music has been the go-to music store in the West Cobb area for performing musicians of all styles and levels. We're excited to continue to provide the best in instruments, lessons, rentals and repair services to West Cobb and surrounding communities," shares Music & Arts president Steve Zapf.

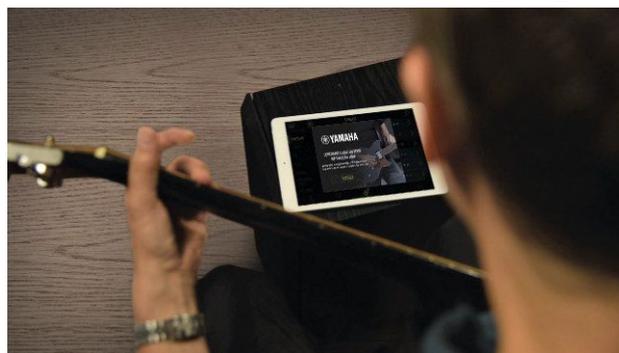
## Yamaha Guitars Partners With Musopia

Yamaha Guitars has partnered with Musopia, a music software development studio, to bring forth a package featuring Musopia's FourChords app.

Musopia's FourChords app will be included in the Yamaha GigMaker – available in both Electric and Standard (acoustic) packages. The GigMaker provides the beginning guitarist with all the gear they need to make music. The kit includes all the essentials: a Yamaha acoustic or electric guitar (a 20-watt amp comes included in the GigMaker Electric), gig bag, strap, strings, picks, digital tuner, DVD guitar lessons, and now, a 30-day free trial of Musopia's FourChords app. Designed to allow beginners and intermediate players to learn quickly how to play, FourChords can help GigMaker musicians start using the gear and play songs immediately on day one, whether it be Adele, Bruno Mars, the Beatles, or any of hundreds of other artists.

FourChords is the only mobile app with over 1,700 fully licensed hit and classic songs arranged specifically for the beginning guitarist. It contains multiple chordal and fingering options, optimized for all skill levels from first-time to advanced players. The combination of GigMaker and FourChords allows players to start playing the music that matters to them from the very first strum of the guitar.

FourChords features exclusive "smart listening" technology which provides personalized feedback to a user's devel-



opment, telling them which chords they are playing perfectly and which they need to work on. Other key features include karaoke-style display and lyrics allowing multiple users to play and sing along, an in-app tuner, key transposing, and adjustable tempo and backing tracks.

"Partnering with Musopia and adding FourChords to the GigMaker package moves aspiring musicians from traditional learning to a new experience geared towards fun," said Dennis Webster, product marketing manager, Yamaha Guitars. "Not only do players have the opportunity to play from the moment they touch the guitar, but they also have access to an abundance of song selections. Budding musicians have the ability to learn the music of their life, catered to their personal skill set."

"Musopia FourChords is a great example of how the digital revolution changes the way we learn music," explains Musopia's CEO Topi Löppönen. "Our partnership with Yamaha – the largest instrument manufacturer in the world – is a strategic one and it allows us to reach a significant number of new customers and help them enjoy their great Yamaha instruments."

## MJP Sales Announces U.S. Distribution Agreement with Ruach Music

MJP Sales, Inc. has announced an exclusive U.S. distribution agreement with Ruach Music, the maker of hand-built cajons, stompboxes, and hardwood pedalboards.

"When it comes to designing music gear, innovations are a vital component to ensuring longevity," says MJP Sales owner Michael Prager. "Ruach CEO Stephen Henderson has demonstrated this admirably with his inventive cajon designs and fashionable, yet functional hardwood pedalboards that command attention when shown off. We were immediately drawn to the products when they were first brought to our attention, but it was Stephen's enthusiastic entrepreneurial spirit that sold us on the brand. We look forward to the next steps in our brand-new partnership."



# KHS America Announces Annual Scholarship Winner

Each year, KHS America awards a college scholarship to a member of the United States Army All American Marching Band (USAAAMB).

Made up of 101 high school seniors from around the country, members of the band who are pursuing a career in music education can apply for a \$1,000 College Scholarship from KHS America. There were 17 applicants this year and the winner was announced during the band's banquet in San Antonio, Texas on Saturday, January 6. The 2018 winner is Elissa Travis from Hamilton High School in Chandler, Arizona.

"It was a surreal moment for me! The entire Bowl week was truly a once in a lifetime experience and accepting this scholarship in front of so many talented USAAAMB members, my family, and my school band director was an incredible and emotional moment for me I will never forget," Travis said.



KHS America president Emeritus Tabor Stamper presents a \$1,000 college scholarship to USAAAMB member Elissa Travis.

Travis plans to attend Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona in the fall.

"Playing in high-level ensembles and working closely with my band directors influenced my love for performance, but after joining marching band my junior year, I found the missing piece and my love for the marching arts grew quickly," she said. "Band has taught me that it takes drive, responsibility, and passion to achieve a goal in its entirety; it is not about the end result, but everything you learn along the journey to reach the result."

As part of the application process, students must submit an essay on why they are interested in becoming a music educator along with a letter of recommendation for their band director.

Travis's music director, Julie Trent, notes, "Elissa will be a tremendous addition to our music education community. As a future band director, I am sure she will reach her students with a kind and loving demeanor while holding high standards for musical achievement."

"Knowing the quality of students who

get selected to be a part of US Army All American Marching Band is why we at KHS America are proud to offer a scholarship to a future music educator," states education manager Rick DeJonge. "We need people like Elissa Travis in our schools as a music teacher and this scholarship is one of the ways we can help."



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## Shure Powers Performing Artists at 60th GRAMMY Awards

At the 60th Annual GRAMMY Awards, many of the nominated and performing artists used Shure microphones for their sets during the awards ceremony.

A seasoned crew of professionals led by audio coordinator Michael Abbott teamed up to meet the show's substantial sound requirements, with Firehouse Productions supplying the audio, RF and communications gear, while Music Mix Mobile brought two full recording trucks for 5.1 surround music mixing. As always, the GRAMMY team encouraged all performers to use their preferred vocal microphones.

To meet the challenge of delivering enough channels for the ambitious, dual-stage production, RF coordinator Vinny Siniscal used Shure Axient Digital as the default wireless microphones for artists on stage, as its spectral efficiency permits more channels in less available spectrum than any analog system. As has become common practice on all major award shows, 24 channels of Shure PSM 1000 delivered flawless sound to the performers on both stages.

Bruno Mars used an Axient Digital handheld for his vocals, as did Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee in their performance of "Despacito." The system was also central to several of the show's signature events, including a Beta 58A version for the Chuck Berry tribute by Gary Clark Jr. and SM58 capsules for "Tears in Heaven," featuring Maren Morris, Brothers Osborne and Eric Church.

"This was the first live to air show we've done with all digital mics,

and this is a high-channel count show. I like the way Axient Digital performs; the RF performance is solid," reports Siniscal. "I especially love the rechargeable battery technology. The long battery life and ability to monitor the battery status gives us confidence throughout the show."

Kesha used her usual Shure UHF-R handheld wireless, while backing vocalists Andra Day, Cyndi Lauper, Julia Michaels, and Camila Cabello used Axient Digital systems with classic SM58 mics. Other performers on Axient Digital included Bono, Little Big Town, Childish Gambino, Logic, Shaggy, DJ Khaled, Broadway stars Patti Lupone and Ben Platt, Khalid, Dave Chappelle, Alessia Cara, and SZA.

"We knew going into the GRAMMYS this year was going to be challenging, especially trying to coordinate wireless frequencies in one of the biggest cities in the world," says Shure artist relations manager Cory Lorentz. "Shure wireless, especially Axient Digital, played a much larger role in this year's show, and we were ecstatic to see the huge channel count on hand to make such a large production run smoothly."



Childish Gambino and JD McCrary perform on-stage with Shure Axient Digital Wireless during the 60th Annual GRAMMY Awards



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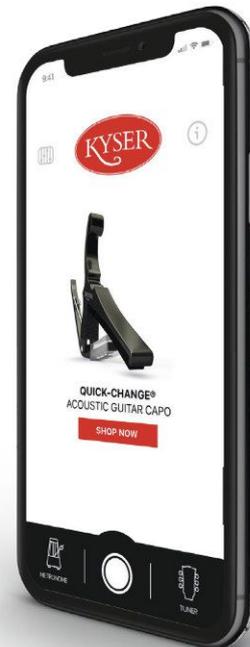
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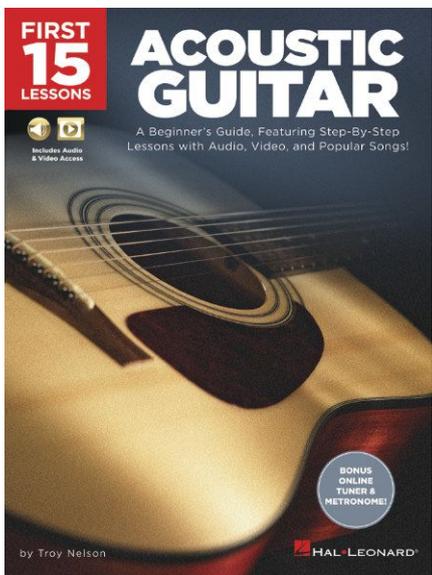
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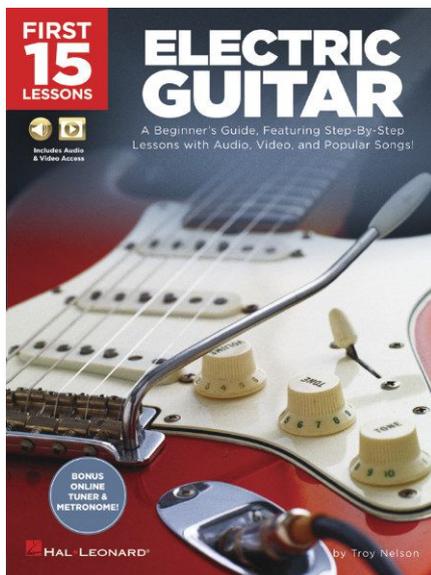
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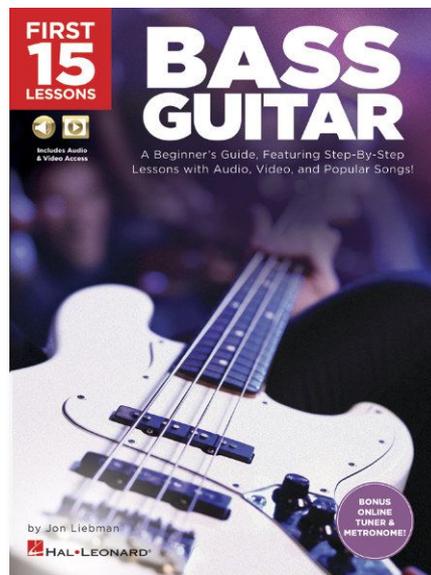
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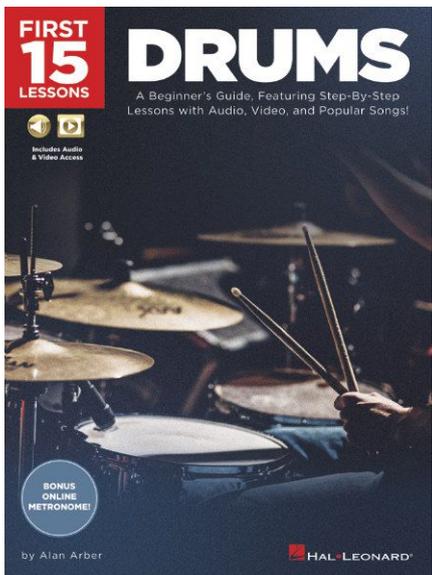
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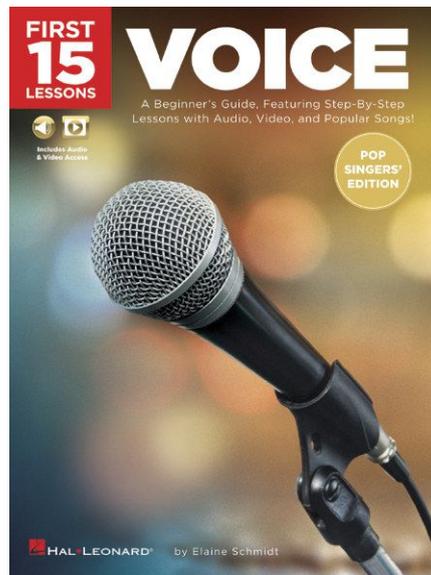
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# Quest Marketing Presented With Arturo Vicari Award of Excellence

Quest Marketing, RCF USA manufacturer representative for the Southeast region of the United States, was recently presented with the Arturo Vicari Award of Excellence as Rep of the Year.

The award, named on behalf of the Italian-based RCF Group CEO Arturo Vicari, is presented to the rep firm that not only achieves their sales goals, but for their professional presentation of the company's products.

"Every year Quest Marketing steps up to the plate and hits a home run," says RCF vice president of sales and marketing Tarik Solangi. "They continue to solidify RCF brand recognition and expand RCF presence in their territory."

Quest covers the Southeast U.S. market including Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi.

"Nobody has shown a better example of a professional sales force than Quest



RCF Group CEO Arturo Vicari, RCF USA vice president of sales Tarik Solangi, Quest Marketing Matt Pogorelc, and RCF USA CEO Roni Nevo

Marketing," continues Solangi, "capturing all vertical market segments and far exceeding goals set."

"To be recognized like this is such an honor. Quest Marketing is proud to be associated with RCF," says Quest Marketing principal John Saviano. "There is not another company in our industry that makes you feel so much like part of the family - maybe that's why we've been successful. The reason RCF sells, and why we have success with them, is simply that they are building products that the market wants and needs."

## Orange Amplification Celebrates Golden Anniversary in 2018

Orange Amplification will celebrate its golden anniversary in 2018 by launching new innovative products and commemorative merchandise, along with videos covering rare amplifiers, interviews with key staff (past and present), and further content centered around its fifty-year history.

"I am proud of Orange. We took a small idea and grew it into a global leading brand," said CEO and founder, Cliff Cooper. "We



have stayed current and relevant, retained that personal touch and remained true to our identity. Today, Orange is renowned for its state of the art products and has been honored by winning the Queens Award for Industry and Enterprise three times."

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# QSC Founders Honored with NAMM Milestone Award



NAMM president and CEO Joe Lamond with QSC Founders Pat Quilter and John Andrews

QSC founders Pat Quilter, John Andrews and Barry Andrews were honored at the 2018 Winter NAMM Show with the

National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Milestone Award for 50 years of service in the music products industry.

Presented by NAMM President and CEO Joe Lamond, the Milestone Award recognizes music businesses that have flourished through changing business environments to reach a noteworthy anniversary.

"Everyone at QSC is extremely grateful to Pat, Barry and John for their vision, leadership and management through many years of transformation at QSC," says Joe Pham, QSC president and CEO. "We congratulate the company Founders on receiving the NAMM Milestone Award in 2018 as

QSC celebrates 50 Years and Forward."

In 2018, QSC celebrates its "50 Years and Forward" milestone, committed to continuing to offer innovations in its company and technologies, new opportunities for people, and solutions for customers across the globe.

"NAMM is honored to recognize Pat Quilter, Barry Andrews and John Andrews for their 50 years in business and service to both the music products industry and their community," says Joe Lamond. "The founders of QSC have demonstrated the perseverance and passion to stand the test of time, inspire countless others and create a more musical world for the benefit of all."

The Milestone Awards are presented annually to industry leaders celebrating notable anniversaries during the annual winter NAMM Show, which brings together over 100,000 industry professionals to preview the latest gear, attend educational sessions and network with peers from around the world.

# Yamaha Drums Adds Chamberlin to Artist Roster

Yamaha Drums has announced the signing of Jimmy Chamberlin (of alternative rock band Smashing Pumpkins) to the roster of Yamaha Artists.

Chamberlin is also known for drumming with the alternative supergroup Zwan, his jazz fusion outfit titled Jimmy Chamberlin Complex, and collaboration with Chicago jazz saxophonist Frank Catalano.

Chamberlin's kit of choice is the Yamaha Absolute Hybrid Maple with Polar White finish, which perfectly blends his signature feel, sound and dynamics. This popular line of drums allows him to perform at all levels. His snares of choice include the Yamaha 14" x 6.5" Recording Custom Aluminum snare as well as the 14" x 6" Absolute Hybrid Maple snare drum.

"Yamaha Drums are the sound on my best-selling records and the accompaniment to my biggest and proudest musical moments," notes Chamberlin. "The versatility of these drums continues to be unmatched by any other brand. These days, the scope of the music that I play is such that I need an instrument that can take me from a small jazz club to an arena to a festival, and Yamaha provides me with that flexibility. I couldn't be happier to be back!"

He will be joining Smashing Pumpkins on their upcoming Shiny And Oh So Bright tour in July 2018.



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# Roland Uses CHAUVET Professional Fixtures at Winter NAMM 2018



Roland's exhibit at Winter NAMM 2018 featured a lighting design by Justin Preston that used a collection of over 90 CHAUVET Professional fixtures, including 32 Maverick MK2 Wash units.

"Our concept in lighting the Roland space was to merge a club and a trade show look," he said. "While we wanted to be able to create a full club vibe in the Roland Room during shows, we also needed to create an atmosphere that promoted customer-product interaction between the musical performances.

"The Mavericks were instrumental in helping us do this," continued Preston, who rented his lights from Kinetic Lighting. "We used the Mavericks to provide a saturated wash of the exhibit between

shows, and also to serve up some eye candy effects and beam effects when we had performances. Their large zoom range allowed them to be used as beams during performances and as a general wash between shows; plus, their virtual gobos gave us an extra diversity of looks. I even ended up using them for key, fill, and back light at Roland's international press conference – even though I didn't intend to do this originally -- and they performed quite well."

Preston flew his Maverick MK2 Wash units on four 60' straight trusses in the Roland Room, a spacious area that housed exhibit and performance space. Each of the truss structures had eight of the powerful LED washes. Powered by 12 40W OSRAM RGBW LEDs, the Maverick fixtures had the output needed to stand up to the bright video content in the room.

"Our VJ Grant Davis was an amazing collaborator," said Preston. "Videos were an important part of the overall booth presentation, so it was essential that any light we used was able to hold its own in this setting."

In addition to the Maverick MK2 Wash, Preston used four COLORado 1 Solo fixtures to add extra color to DJ performances in the Roland Room. He positioned two of these units on 10' truss towers, relying on them for key lighting, and mounted two behind the DJ on the stage deck for backlight. Color helped set different moods in the room for performances, which included themes from the '80s, '90s and today.

Preston also relied on the COLORados for color washes through the extensive exhibit area, which included an outdoor patio as well as indoor rooms. In the Boss Room, he flew 14 of his 20 COLORado 1 Solo fixtures on two 60' straight truss structures. His design also included 40 COLORado Batten 72 Tour fixtures.

"The Roland exhibit is always a top attraction at NAMM, because it showcases the latest technology, so it called for a top-level lighting design," said Preston. "Our team, including my ALD Will Chandler and Equipment Manager Garret Kelly, did an excellent job. When our lighting wasn't supporting performances, it was accenting products and allowing their quality to speak for itself."

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## Meinl and D'Addario Part Company

After four years, D'Addario UK and Meinl have mutually agreed that D'Addario will no longer represent Meinl cymbals and percussion in the UK from April 1st, 2018.

In a statement, Simon Turnbull, managing director of D'Addario Europe said: "Until April, we will continue to represent the brand and collaborate with our colleagues at Meinl to ensure a smooth transition; resulting in no supply disruption or customer service issues. As custodians of the Meinl brand in the UK for over four years we are proud of our achievement of having doubled sales in that period. Meinl, like D'Addario, makes products of exceptional quality so we are honored to have been associated with the brand."



Udo Heubeck, general manager of Meinl Cymbals and Percussion added: "We would like to express our sincere thanks to the entire D'Addario UK team for all of their support and effort in promoting the Meinl brand and products over the last four years. We wish them all the very best for their future business."

UK Meinl dealers have been advised to contact their sales representative with any specific questions. All UK Meinl dealers will be contacted before April 1st with details on the future arrangements and contacts for Meinl distribution in the UK.

## Are You Arsenal in Disguise?

In case you're not familiar with Arsenal FC (it's soccer), they are a much-maligned Premier League team currently living off past glories, with a coach that, whilst once hugely successful and transformative for them, is now clearly past his sell-by date and probably needs to move on for the club to once again become competitive at the very top of the game.

Or so the thinking of certain disgruntled/disillusioned fans goes. The coach (or manager as he's called in the UK) is Arsene Wenger and the phrase, "Wenger Out," has been cropping up not just at Arsenal games, but on placards at unrelated protests all over the world, such a running joke have Arsenal become.

Gibson is Arsenal FC. I've yet to see a "Juszkiewicz Out" placard, but that might be because no one is *that* good at spelling. But it seems that the knives are out for Henry J. He rescued the firm, no question, but shareholders, like the Wenger Out contingent at Arsenal, have run out of patience and the firm's current flirtation with bankruptcy has made up the minds of many of them. Or so we hear.

Henry J., meanwhile, blames the company's woes, at least in part, on the retail sector, arguing that many dealers are stuck in a time warp and unable or unwilling to compete in a modern, multi-platform retail environment. In fact, he argues that the industry as whole has struggled to attract new consumers.

"[The industry is] stuck in a time warp," he says. "If you are a kid today, you have an iPad by the age of two, and if you're not

offering new technology, you're old. Kids today may think some music from the '50s is kind of cool here and there, but what other industry do you know that hasn't changed since the '50s? Those guitars from the '50s are what the purists want, but we have to have something new and exciting. Imagine if the camera had never changed. Innovation is a part of every business to some degree, but [the guitar industry] hates it. The kids demand it, and if you don't have it, they walk."

Does he have a point? Well, retail was certainly guilty of being in a time warp, but here in the UK at least, there are plenty of good new retailers that have thrown out the sticky carpets, let in some light, and created a much better environments for customers. My guess is that it's the same in the U.S. So he might be in a bit of a time warp, himself, there.

Does the guitar industry lack innovation? Maybe the cognoscenti are a little dismissive of attempts to modernize the guitar, favoring instead those designs from the fifties and sixties and therefore discouraging some musicians from being a bit more open minded, but by and large they are design classics that customers want to keep just as they are. Violins haven't really changed that much over the last few centuries either. Perhaps it's customer-led. Begging the question, can we lead customers in a different direction?

The far bigger issue is not lack of demand for new product innovations right now, it's lack of demand for guitars, period. You can't even blame Henry J. for that.

## GHS Strikes Jewelry Partnership

GHS Strings has struck a partnership with Wear Your Music, maker of sustainable jewelry from the recycled guitar strings of famous musicians. Wear Your Music focuses on making jewelry from strings used and donated by acclaimed musicians with the profits going to charities of their choosing. Today more than one hundred and fifty famous guitarists, including many GHS endorsees (such as Alexx Calise, Nels Cline, Bonnie Raitt, and Warren Haynes) donate their strings to be made into one of a kind memorabilia.

"We are excited to be partnering with a company like Wear Your Music," said Jonathan Moody, head of digital brand



development at GHS Strings, "that allows people to connect with their favorite musician in a very personal way while also giving something back at the same time! We look forward to building this relationship in the coming years."

View a complete list of available bracelets and participating charities at [www.wearyourmusic.com](http://www.wearyourmusic.com).

## HK Launches New Elements

HK Audio has raised the curtain on Elements Gala, the newest iteration of the German pro audio company's Elements series.

An all-in-one stereo columnar system with all the components of a full-blown PA, Elements Gala features an extended sub-bass range, a top end with greater definition, and more powerful, punchier low mids.



Elements Gala comes with all the components needed to get the show started straightaway – four E 835 columnar tops (each loaded with eight 3.5" high-performance speakers), a 15" system subwoofer to power the whole operation, two EF 45 bases, two EP 2 extension poles for applications requiring raised speakers, and two LS 10 Speakon cables.

When venues get very big or the music requires even more muscular bass, Elements Gala can also be extended using an HK Audio L SUB 1500 A subwoofer.

Julian Fischer, HK Audio Product Manager, said: "Over the last couple of years, we asked many avid Elements users what they want. More bass, loftier highs and stronger low mids were at the top of their wish list. So we came up with a spot-on way of satisfying precisely these wishes – Ele-

ments Gala. We deployed a next-generation digital controller that lets us incisively shape the response. On top of that, our newly developed Class D power amps deliver plenty of power to provide the headroom that this far more dynamic response requires."

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- Five-year HK Audio warranty

HK Audio is exclusive distributed in the UK and ROI by JHS.

## Re-brand for Audio-Technica's Dutch Partner

Audio-Technica's Netherlands-based distributor, Lemke Roos Audio, has re-branded as Audio-Technica Benelux.

While the name changes, the team will remain unchanged, headed up by long-serving managing director, Gineke van Urk.

Lemke Roos has worked with broadcasters, musicians and audio-visual and hi-fi specialist retailers since 1969. The company has been an affiliate of Audio-Technica Group since July 2014 and it is hoped that the naming transition to Audio-Technica Benelux will further increase the firm's presence in Europe, adding to its offices in France, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Dubai and UK.

Robert Morgan-Males, marketing director, Audio-Technica Europe, said, "The launch of Audio-Technica Bene-

lux is the result of many years of close collaboration with Lemke Roos and I'm delighted to further strengthen our relationship with the Netherlands and Belgium-based team."

Gineke van Urk, managing director, Lemke Roos Audio said: "Working in close collaboration with Audio-Technica Europe has given us opportunities to grow our business and presence in the market, making use of the knowledge, experience and marketing resources of the Audio-Technica Europe team."

"The move will also prove positive for our distributed brands that we have represented for many years in the Benelux region and I'm looking forward to an exciting future in what has always been an important territory for Audio-Technica."

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# Musikmesse Adds Amp World, the World of Vintage Guitars

Musikmesse has added a new Amp World area to this year's show, in conjunction with Musik Produktiv.

Amplifiers and cabinets from 16 companies are interconnected via a switching system. By simply pressing a button, it is possible to combine all stacks quickly and easily. Amp World is located in an acoustically separated area of Hall 9.0.

In an area of 150 square meters, visitors can see and hear products from Blackstar, Diezel, Engl, EVH, Friedman, Hughes & Kettner, Karl's, Morgan, Orange, Peavey, Pedaltrain, Randall, Schmidt Array, Suhr, Synergy, and Victory. To create Amp World, hundreds of meters of cable have to be laid, to combine the individual components with high-grade switches. This ensures it is possible to switch between all different head/cab combinations without any sound loss or delays. Guitarists can also try out stacks via remote control and test them with a large selection of guitars. It is also possible to make an A/B test to compare different settings.

In addition, another new exhibit – The

World of Vintage Guitars – presents historical Fender instruments from 1950 to 1964 and Fender custom shop highlights at this year's show.

Further, the exhibition entitled "Fender by Leo Fender: The Evolution of Fender's Electric Guitars 1950-1964" will use original instruments to show the development of Leo Fender's models during the golden years from the early fifties to mid-sixties. The Fender custom shop will present a large selection of individual instruments handmade in the USA during this period, as well as vintage guitars played by legends such as Joe Bonamassa, Joe Satriani, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and other stars.

Visitors will also be able to have their guitars valued and assessed by experts, who will also tell them about any wood used in the manufacture of the instrument that is listed in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Information about owning, carrying and



trading musical instruments with components made of protected woods will also be available.

Another highlight will be the Fender Custom Shop Lounge, a meeting place for the scene and the venue for meet and greets with Darryl Jones (live bassist of the Rolling Stones), Ken Taylor, Peter Keller (Peter Maffay band), Thomas Blug, Andreas Kloppmann, and other Musikmesse stars. The World of Vintage Guitars special area is to be found in Galleria.0 and is organized by the No. 1 Guitar Centre Hamburg in cooperation with the Fender Custom Shop and the Thünen Institute.

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## Dublin Store on the Move

Iconic Dublin music store, Walton's World of Music, has been forced to relocate from the city center after having a presence there for nearly 100 years.

In 1922, Martin Walton opened the eponymous music shop on North Great Frederick Street. He also founded the Dublin School of Music. The shop closed down in 2013, but reopened on South Great George's Street in 1992.

Increasing rents and other costs mean MD Niall Walton has been forced to make redundancies and relocate the store to reduce overheads.

"We're a marginal business, we're not clothes or electronics," he said, "so we only sell to about 10 percent of the population. The internet is also taking away a lot of business from the music industry. People will buy anything online, so the turnover goes down in general because of online shopping; and on top of that the rents go up."

The business will now operate from Blanchardstown Shopping Center in the suburbs of West Dublin.

## Pioneer DJ Adds New Serato Controllers

Pioneer DJ has upgraded one of its popular Serato DJ controllers to create the 2-channel DDJ-SB3, designed for dedicated use with Serato DJ Lite (previously known as Serato DJ Intro).

The new controller offers an intuitive interface for beginner DJs to craft professional performances and improve their skills.

It improves on the DDJ-SB2, used by a wide range of DJs. The interface of the DDJ-SB3 is designed to be more intuitive to use than its predecessor's, inheriting traits from the layouts of the top mod-

els in the DDJ-S series, including the introduction of the dedicated play and cue buttons and the independent Auto Loop button.

In collaboration with DJ Jazzy Jeff, Pioneer created Pad Scratch. The brand-new feature on the DDJ-SB3 enables DJs to reproduce scratches based on the legendary hip-hop DJ's own recordings by simply pressing the Performance Pads. Plus, smooth mixing is made easier with another new feature, FX Fade.

Price: £229 including VAT.

## Spector Launches New Euro Koa Basses at Olympia



Spector Bass UK announced the launch of limited edition Euro Koa basses at this year's London Bass Guitar Show at Olympia.

Launched exclusively in the UK by distributor Barnes & Mullins, the four and five-string basses have been designed specifically for UK customers and are available in one-off, limited quantities. They offer a new twist on Spector's professional Euro series basses, featuring a handcrafted and carved body made European alder with a koa top – available in natural stain gloss and matte finishes.

They feature a three-piece maple neck with internal graphite rod supports and a 24-fret rosewood fingerboard inlaid with mother of pearl crown fret markers. Other high-end appointments include a light-weight zinc brass alloy Spector bridge, brass nut and gold hardware. Each bass includes a Spector-branded hard case.

Electronics come in the form of a Spector 9v Tone Pump circuit with Aguilar OBP3 pre amp (master volume, pickup blend, stacked bass/treble and mid pots). Four-string models feature PJX EMG-X pickups with 5 string models loaded with 40TWX EMG-X's.

Spector Limited Edition Euro Koa models are available to order now for £2735 (four-string) and £2800 (five-string).

Four-string gloss and five-string matte models will be on show for the first time at Spector Bass UK's A22 booth at the London Bass Guitar Show.

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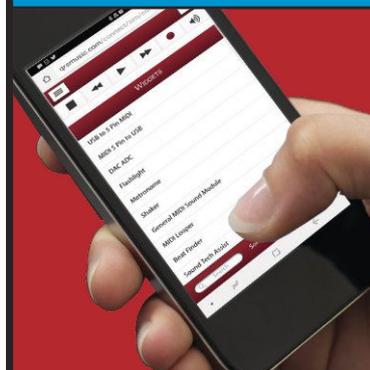


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# ON THE MOVE

Longtime employee Bill McGloine, who has dedicated over twenty years at **Korg USA** has recently been promoted to the new position of VP of operations.



McGloine, who initially started as the assistant manager of distribution in 1996, has worked his way to database administrator and then again to director of IT, where he was responsible for all software development, information systems, network systems, communications systems, and computer hardware and disaster recovery planning within the organization for the past eight years.

McGloine's new position as the VP of operations includes continuing his vital role within the IT department, as well as working within the Warehouse, Repair Services and Customer Support departments, where he will oversee and aid in Korg USA's efforts to elevate warehousing operations as well as enhance the company's supply chain management with valued vendors.

"For the past twenty years Bill has been a vital part of our team in helping to make Korg USA a world class organization," says Korg USA president, Joe Castronovo. "His forward thinking and his vision for computer system technologies and operating efficiencies while working with all our major customers has been exceptional and we're ecstatic to offer him this new position," Castronovo explains.

Additionally, Korg USA's growing sales team has hired John Page, the new district sales manager for the South Central Territory. Page, who has had worked in the Texas and Oklahoma regions for over a decade, will be responsible for developing and maintaining relationships with MI retailers throughout Texas.



Page brings considerable knowledge to Korg USA, having worked with Bormann Marketing Group, where he represented brands such as TC Electronics, Behringer, Midas Mixing Consoles, and other high-end pro-audio/video lines. Prior to his time there, Page worked as a district sales manager for U.S. Music Corp work-

ing with brands like Marshall, Digitech, and Warwick Basses, to name a few.

**Auralex Acoustics, Inc.** has announced the appointment of James Horton to the position of Western regional manager.



Horton received a B.A. from Ball State University in music engineer technology with an emphasis in physics. During college he was active in recording and playing double bass in several regional symphony orchestras. After graduating, he took a decade-long hiatus from music and excelled in the commercial HVAC-R scene. His start with Auralex was a much-needed return to his roots. He continues to be an in-demand bassist.

Eric Smith, Auralex founder/president, notes, "We are pleased to have James join our team. After working in-house on customer/project quotes and room analysis, James has an excellent grasp of the full line of Auralex products and will be of great assistance to our dealers throughout the region."

**ESP Guitars** has announced that Tony Rausser has been named as the company's new director of artist relations. Rausser has served with ESP for over five years in the role of artist relations assistant.



"We are very proud to have Tony fill this essential position at ESP," says Matt Masciandaro, president and CEO of the ESP Guitar Company. "The artists who use our guitars and basses, who are among the world's most respected and influential musicians, need to know that their main point of contact at ESP is someone who understands what they require for successful music creation and performance. Tony is that guy, and we're confident that he's going to be excellent in his expanded role."

"ESP is the ultimate artist-driven instrument company, and I'm proud that the team has faith in my abilities for this position," says Rausser. "For five years, I've seen the level of dedication needed to be a trusted resource for ESP artists. Over that time, I've become close to many of our artists, and they already know what it's like to work with me. It's an honor to be in a role to even better serve their needs."

**PRS Guitars** has named David Settimi as accessories product manager.



In this new position, David will be responsible for all elements of PRS Guitars' accessories business, including product development and sales. David will report directly to Judy Schaefer, director of marketing for PRS Guitars.

"We are very excited to have David join the PRS Guitars team and work with us, our customers, and our vendors to grow our accessories business. We see a lot of potential to better serve our customers in this segment while maintaining our brand promise of quality and value," said Judy Schaefer, director of marketing. "David's vast experience with accessories, sales, and merchandising within the music industry will be a great asset to PRS, as will his positive attitude and determination."

Settimi's twenty-plus years of experience in the music industry have included ever-increasing responsibilities with Guitar Center, including his most recent MI position as Guitar Center's vice president of sales. He is also an active guitar player.

**Audix** named Chris Pagella director of operations, Gene Houck director of sales and Todd Brushwyler national sales manager. Pagella, who joined Audix in 2014, will oversee the engineering department and manage the company's manufacturing and supply chain.



Houck joined Audix in 2000 as national sales manager. As director of sales, he will now oversee sales and marketing in North America and beyond. Todd Brushwyler, who joined Audix in 2013, will oversee both retail and install markets and report to Houck.



**PreSonus** promoted Jim Boitnott to COO, Rick Naqvi to senior VP of global sales, and Bret Costin to senior VP of research and development. Prior to their

promotions, Boitnott had served as executive VP of marketing and product services; Naqvi was VP of sales and Costin had been VP of research and development.

QSC named Duncan Savage director, UK and Ireland, QSC Systems. Savage joins QSC from Shure Distribution UK. QSC also named Torsten Haack as the director, Germany and Austria. Haack also comes to QSC from Shure. Both report to Markus Winkler and



will work out of the new sales and business development offices in the U.K. and Germany set to open in June 2018.

Yamaha named David Nowak district manager covering the U.S. southeast market for Yamaha Corporation of America's Professional Audio Division. The appointment is part of the company's continuing expansion of its Commercial Installation Solutions (CIS) product line.



## Trade Regrets

On January 31, we received the following news from NAMM's Dan Del Fiorentino: *It's with a heavy heart that I report the passing of Stan Kitchen.*



Stan and his dear wife, were the co-owners and founders of Sound Music Company. This music publishing company was established in 1957 in London and has grown over the years to include a special method of engraving that Stan developed in the days before the musical typewriter. His own career began on radio as a ventriloquist, which led to years in Vaudeville and the friendship of many interesting characters, including a handful of noted songwriters.

James M. Heidrich passed away on February 11<sup>th</sup>. Boston Guitar's Heath Berkowitz reached out to MMR, inviting us to share his tribute, which was published on February 20<sup>th</sup>. Excerpts of the write-up are below:



On February 11, the music industry lost one of its own when James M. Heidrich, founder of Bad Cat Amplifiers and owner of the Blackwing Amplifier Company, passed away unexpectedly due to heart failure from a pulmonary embolism. He was 64 years old.

James Heidrich founded Bad Cat Amplifiers in 1999 after seeing that there was a hole in the then-rapidly growing "boutique amp" market from the temporary absence

of Matchless Amplifiers. He knew that to get the best tone a guitar amplifier can achieve it needed to be done with point-to-point wiring and the best components available.

Everything from resistors, caps, chassis, transformers, speakers, and cabinets were always the highest quality he could source, and it remained that way until James sold Bad Cat in 2011...

In 2011, James sold Bad Cat and waited out a 5-year non-compete as part of the sale agreement. But he was getting the itch. So in 2016 James started the Blackwing Amplifier Company and debuted his line of amps at the 2017 NAMM show.

Blackwing Amplifiers are built to the same standards as Bad Cat amps were when he was the owner, using American components and wired by the same few people who wired all Bad Cat amps before the company was sold. At the time of his death James was working on new models and, as always, was trying to implement great ideas into his amplifiers...

It was not uncommon for him to spend hours on the phone with a customer, regardless of their industry status. James was an amazing person and friend to so many. He had a huge heart and an abnormal tolerance for people and their hardships. Trust me—I know this for a fact.

He will be remembered not only for his contributions to the amplifier business but for his friendly demeanor and great sense of humor. You really only needed to meet him once to be able to recall his distinguished laugh and wide smile."

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# Small Wonders

With No End in Sight for the 'Ukulele Craze,' Higher End Models Increasing in Popularity

By Christian **Wissmuller**



**For your brand, how are sales of higher end, step-up and/or "alternative" ukuleles so far in 2018, compared to this same time last year?**

**Michael Schear:** It turns out sales of intermediate and step-up ukuleles are up around 30 percent over the same time last year. In the previous year, our sales of intermediate and step-ups were flat.

**Billy Martinez:** We have definitely seen an increase in sales of our higher-end ukuleles. Our California Coast Series Ukuleles offer a great step-up option, especially for those who need to amplify their sound.

**Gil Soucy:** Depending on model, we have been averaging 20% - 30% year over year increase across all Ukuleles over \$500 MSRP. This rate is about double the growth we've seen in the past year on the lower priced models, but to be fair when reviewing the overall business, I think on the growth numbers of the lower-end models we need to consider the impact CITES had to availability in the past year.

**Rock Clouser:** Our sales have dramatically increased in these categories. In fact, last year we revamped, refreshed, and enhanced our full line-up purposely for a greater focus for this expanding market segment.

**Adam Gomes:** You would think that a trend that has been going on for over a decade would eventually die off, but that clearly isn't the case with ukuleles. It's here to stay. Year after year, Luna has been seeing a steady increase in sales from both our top-shelf models as well as our mid-range priced ukes. Specifically, from 2017 to 2018, we focused on developing more mid-level priced ukuleles that are affordable to enthusiasts and visu-

**A** few years ago, many dealers and other industry insiders predicted that the booming "Uke craze" would cool off soon. Well, here we are in 2018 and there's no sign of the public losing interest in these diminutive fretted wonders. In fact, to cater to the many players who picked up their first ukuleles a decade ago and have stuck with it, suppliers are now capitalizing on the trend, offering more step-up/high-end or "alternative" (electric ukes, banjo-ukuleles, bass-ukes) models. *MMR* recently reached out to a handful of key brands in this growing market segment.

ally appealing.

**Kristen Souza:** Our sales for 2018 have been phenomenal. We have found that sales on instruments like our 2018 Platinum Tenor, Uncle Willie K 5-string Super Tenor, Aldrine Guerrero Tenor, and custom orders have increased by at least 30 percent.

**Joy Cafiero:** We've noticed a trend going from entry-level to midrange to higher end over the past year. Because we are a brand that is diverse in offerings – with the U-Bass®, baritones, USA-made Elites, and specialty ukulele – we tend to do well across all markets but there has definitely been a shift in people moving to more variety.

**What do you think is driving consumer interest in these types of models?**

**BM:** As more musicians record with ukes now, there is a real need for upgraded tonal qualities, as well as electronics.

**JC:** A ukulele player never has just one ukulele!

**AG: 2.** The key is keeping it fresh. From ukulele models with exotic woods to detail-oriented design work, Luna keeps consumer interest by sticking to our creative roots. We offer a wide variety of ukulele body shapes, with an assortment of different designs, ranging from laser-etched engravings & tribal tattoo designs to historic paintings and more. It has received very well in the ukulele community.

**KS:** Our ukulele community has matured as players have embraced the instrument. The ukulele has been accepted in "mainstream music" and is covering nearly every music genre.

**RC:** Basically, it is truly unique that a single instrument has such popularity across such a wide demographic range. The ukulele market continues to expand in multiple directions through middle school programs, among teens and young adults as dedicated players, and all through up to senior hobbyists. This phenomenon is precisely what is driving popularity of higher end and alternative ukes.



**Gil Soucy, Vice President & General Manager of U.S. Music Corp.**



Michael Schear, President/Owner Amahi Ukuleles

**GS:** There seems to be a continuing phenomenon around the ukulele in social media and especially on YouTube. We are seeing more and more players posting videos of their ukulele arrangements of hit songs and many are re-done with great musical proficiency and are very entertaining to watch. For higher end models of ukulele, we are also seeing sales increases to many seasoned guitar players looking to pick up the ukulele and recognizing that the quality difference between the lower end and higher end is very meaningful to the playability and tone. Many of our dealers are holding “group classes” for the ukulele and we feel this is also fueling the desire to own these nicer instruments.

**MS:** This is what’s different about this past year. In 2016 we had Grace VanderWaal winning “America’s Got Talent” with the ukulele, and that made the ukulele the “Tickle Me Elmo” gift for Christmas that year. Basically everybody had to have a ukulele as a gift. It was so hot that in January of 2017 we had a record month because everybody’s shelves were empty at the end of December. What dealers found for 2017 was that we didn’t have that same “Tickle Me Elmo experience” with entry-level ukuleles at Christmastime. Sales of ukuleles for Christmas for the year were consistent or up, but we didn’t have an explosion in December. I imagine some of those beginner players, a year or so later, are looking for a better instrument than their first ukulele.

**Of ukuleles that fit into this larger category for your brand, what model is your hottest seller?**

**AG:** 3. The Tattoo Concert Mahogany Ukulele (or Uke TC MAH) is hands-down our most popular ukulele Luna has to offer. There’s a lot to love about the Tattoo Concert Mahogany. The sharp laser-etched tattoo design on the mahogany ukulele has become a staple among uke enthusiasts.

**RC:** Best sellers for us are designs featuring natural premium woods such as Natural Acacia, Quilted Maple, Mahogany and Flamed Maple models, trimmed with complementary wood marquetry such as inlays and wood bindings.

**GS:** For the higher priced models, our Oscar Schmidt Koa and Spruce baritone model OU55CE that has an MSRP of \$683.90 continues to be a star performer, as well as the Spalted Mango baritone OU57, which retails for \$510.90. All of our Oscar Schmidt All Solid wood models, such as the all-solid Koa wood OU280SWK and OU270TSK, and the all solid Mahogany OU240SWK and OU220SWK continue to grow in popularity. These range in price from \$438.90 MSRP to \$918.90 MSRP and all continue to show positive sales growth over last year.

**KS:** Our 2018 Platinum Tenor and our slotted headstock models are our hottest sellers.

**JC:** It depends on what people are looking for. Guitar players may want a baritone ukulele and bass players may be looking for a U-Bass and some people just want a travel ukulele to take with them everywhere!

**MS:** The most popular step-up or intermediate model for Amahi has been the UK220C. That’s our lowest priced intermediate mahogany ukulele with a MAP of \$115.00. It has red tortoise binding, a bound fingerboard, sealed guitar-style tuners, and a padded bag. By sheer volume, that model outsold every other model by two to one.

**BM:** The California Coast Series Rincon Ukulele is our hottest seller.

**Have you noticed any trends with respect to what end-users are looking for in higher end or “alternative” ukes?**

**BM:** More and more, end users seem to be looking for ukuleles that are an esthetically appealing without sacrificing the tone. If the uke sounds really great and



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Billy Martinez, VP Category Manager – Acoustics and Squier Divisions, FMI



has a unique look, consumers tend to lean towards that.

**MS:** People have been buying intermediate ukuleles, but they weren't necessarily splurging for the most expensive models. They wanted the sound of an intermediate but they weren't, going to splurge for all the "extras." The UK220C MAPs at \$115 and that really seems to be the sweet spot, price-wise.

**RC:** The market is increasingly savvy to what step-up features can bring to sound, projection, and playability. Tonal features like solid tops and all solid models have increased in demand along with electric cutaway models. For alternative ukuleles, we are seeing more players exploring multi-string options. While there are purists, the overwhelming ukulele trend is away from tradition and stereotypes. In turn, there is progressively more exploration and creativity to how and where the ukulele is being applied in

other music genres, which only serve to strengthen the instrument's popularity.

**JC:** Most decisions on a ukulele purchase – especially the ones after the initial entry-level ukulele – are based on price point, looks, sound, overall quality, and name brand recognition. It may be a choice to round out a ukulele collection or be a new size or spec they don't currently have. Or it may be as simple as an upgrade.

**AG:** As the ukulele market becomes more saturated, it's important to recognize the expanding needs of uke players in an already crowded field. I am certainly seeing a trend between these two categories of ukuleles. There is a standard of expectation that consumers have when they look to purchase an alternative ukulele or high-end model. With higher end models folks are expecting

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intricate details from the design or the wood selection to the fret markers and more minute details. For alternative ukuleles consumers are looking for a strong instrument with at least a pop of design so they can feel like they're part of something bigger when they perform – *all at an affordable price.*

**KS:** We have found that beautiful Koa wood is still king from a Hawaiian built instrument. Although, we have seen an increase in “alternative” tone woods as more and more players are understanding the tonal nuances that come with replacement tone wood combinations like a Torrified Spruce or a Cedar sound board.

**GS:** Our Oscar Schmidt ukuleles feature wider string spacing, and one trend we are seeing is this being a sought-after feature by guitar players looking to play the uke. We also pay close attention to the intonation all the way through the 15<sup>th</sup> fret, which is one feature that lacks on many low-cost instruments out of Asia. We hear from our dealers and end users that this is truly meaningful for players that record or perform with bands or in non-solo situations. Other trends we see include sought-after features like Comfort Armrest, nicer tuning machines, and figured woods such as Spalted Maple, Spalted Mango, and Flamed Koa. As these figured woods continue to become harder to source, consumers seem to be very willing to step up in price to purchase them.



Adam Gomes, Director of Marketing & Artist Relations at Luna Guitars



Rock Clouser, KHS Music – String Instrument Product Manager | Guitars, Ukuleles, and Latin Instrument

**Are there any particular strategies in terms of marketing and display that you've observed being employed by dealers who are particularly successful in selling these types of ukuleles?**

**AG:** In any store you want to focus on the brand image. Ask yourself: How will your ukulele products stand out in the store? The uke is a unique showpiece in itself – Find something that will instantly attract brand recognition from consumers shopping their stores.

**RC:** As the years of the “ukulele surge” continues, dealers are recognizing the ukulele as a legitimate instrument and as a necessary and valuable contributor to their daily revenue and profitability. Stores that once thought it a “passing fad,” have gradually dedicated more prime space to the ukulele. General ukulele representation is a staple and ukulele displays are more prominently placed, rather than a few pieces haphazardly displayed in the corner with novelty instruments.

**GS:** Dealers that merchandise their uke displays in a way that creates a story to show the value of stepping up in price seem to sell a lot more of the higher end models than those dealers that just lump the nicer ukes in with the lowest cost ones. Where there are so many brands and models in the market, and where ukes take up less room than a guitar or other instrument, it can be easy to overlook the opportunity for a better sale that



loog



## Loog Pro

Ages: 8+

MAP: \$199

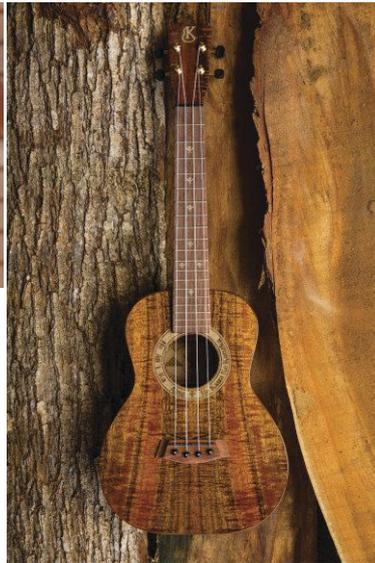
Designed to make it fun and easy for children to play music. Good enough for pros.



Point your phone camera to see the Loog Pro in action.



Karen and Joe Souza, Co-Owners, Kanile'a 'Ukulele



a \$500-plus uke provides. Like with any finer quality or higher priced instrument, enthusiast will be happy to pay a premium if they understand the value of the better woods and features, and if it's presented to them in a way that helps them stand apart from the sea of lower end models. In marketing, posts to social media and YouTube at the dealer level continues to help their local sales.

**KS:** We have found that dealers who are showcasing Kanile'a 'Ukulele as the premiere Hawaiian made instrument via high quality pictures, video and sound files have helped boost sales. Also, by focusing on our integration of technology, innovative designs

and being environmentally responsible while doing what we love has helped boost customer confidence.

**MS:** Our dealers have told us that the more they display the ukuleles within reach of the customer, the greater success they have. So if you have them behind the counter, where the customer has to ask an employee for access to the instruments, it's a barrier. If it's displayed right in front at eye-level, and the customer has the freedom of picking it up and playing it, that makes for the best sales. We offer this Ukulele Tree, manufactured by String Swing, and we offer it with some of our packages. If you buy a package that costs \$599 or more, you can add the tree for an additional \$100. That tree would cost the dealer over \$200 if they bought it anywhere else. The tree holds 24 ukuleles. It has three tiers, with each tier holding eight ukuleles.

**JC:** Branding Kala with our dealers helps to sell our ukes in their stores. We have a large social media following of end users and we partner with our dealers to extend our reach. Our dealers are extremely important to us and we work with them as a team and have a collaborative relationship.

**BM:** Honestly, it's more about the salesman on the floor with the customer. They have become much more aware of the specs of the instruments as well as how that fits the consumer's needs!

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Joy Cafiero, Marketing Director, Kala Brand Music Co.

**What are your expectations for this market segment in the coming year?**

**BM:** We expect continued growth in the ukulele market in the foreseeable future.

**GS:** With the millions of low priced ukes sold around the world in recent years, I think we have a massive opportunity to grow the higher end category this year. There is more music being created on the ukulele than ever before and like with any instrument, as players become more proficient in their playing abilities, they will want to step up to higher quality instruments and will be willing to pay for them.

**MS:** We've actually expanded our lineup of intermediate ukuleles for the coming year. We've added three banjo ukuleles, a soprano, concert and tenor, and we're getting really great reviews from customers. We've also had customers want intermediate-level quality, but need them more affordable, so we developed a line called the Penguin Classics. In 2017, we came out with the Penguin Mahogany series, which was a ukulele that had less restrictive bracing, it produced more volume of sound. And dealers were saying to us, "This student ukulele sounds so good. Can you dress it up?" So we came out with the Penguin Classics for 2018, in which we have a model with a spruce top and a mahogany back and sides, all Zebra Wood, all Flame Maple, all Koa, all Bacote, all Ebony, all Spalted Maple, all Quilted Ash. These ukuleles MAP at a lower price than our traditional models. For example, the Spruce top, Mahogany back and sides is going to MAP at \$109, the Zebra Wood model MAPs at \$119, the Bacote model MAPs at \$145, the Flame Maple maps at \$159, the Koa maps at \$179, the Spalted Maple \$169, the Quilted Ash \$139, and the Ebony at \$159. These models sell for @ \$20 less at map than our traditional lines, and they cost the



dealer about \$20 less each. We're trying to produce more models that are less expensive but don't give up the quality of sound, but maybe give up some of the esthetics of some of the more expensive models.

**JC:** We expect sales to continue to grow. As the entry-level market grows more people will become interested in upgrading their instrument. Kala is the ukulele brand from beginner to expert. We make a ukulele for every kind of player.

**AG:** Ukuleles will remain a popular instrument throughout 2018 and a staple of music store shelves beyond that. Many people of all ages are teaching themselves how to play the ukulele simply because of influencers such as Grace VanderWaal, Mandy Harvey and Jake Shimabukuro – all of whom enjoy the instrument and have been playing for quite some time.

**RC:** It is evident the ukulele has successfully carved out an authentic, ongoing, and significant portion of the music market. Due to sustained sales and enhanced dealer representation, this will be another solid year for ukuleles. However, retailers have so many ukulele brand options now, it is imperative that they carefully select their inventory wisely and train their sales staff accordingly. Sure, the entry level market will remain strong due to the ease of playability and low entry price points, but the days of stocking just any ukulele of any quality are over. As the market matures with playing skill and product knowledge, dealers will need to up their game, as well.

**KS:** We predict that the 'ukulele will continue to climb as the "People's instrument." While our global ukulele community continues to grow, the 'ukulele will inspire, challenge, comfort, and perpetuate the Aloha Spirit for generations to come.

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# Thinking Outside of the (Stomp)Box

Smaller, 'Boutique' FX Pedal Brands are Leading the Way in 2018

By Victoria Wasylak and Christian Wissmuller

In recent years, demand for compact FX stompboxes has skyrocketed and the number of players in that market, itself, has grown substantially. While there was a moment in the '90s where it seemed as if the trend amongst guitarists and bassists was towards large, multi-effect floor or rack-mount units, in 2018 boutique stompboxes reign supreme for more and more players.

These days, the term and description, "boutique," is applied fairly loosely, but it does, in fact, have a fairly clear definition, origin, and evolution. Initially reserved for one-off, custom-built gear, "boutique" – particularly when applied to stompbox effect pedals – now implies handmade (or mostly handmade), high quality units, typically with smaller production runs.

Just because those qualities are implied, of course, doesn't always make it so. When certain mass-produced stompboxes are re-packaged and re-branded as "boutique" it's unquestionable that to some it's just a marketing buzzword.

But for the purposes of this article, we're going to focus on a few of the companies who take the assumed qualities of boutique pedals to heart...

## EarthQuaker Devices

"I started building pedals around 2004 just for fun," says EarthQuaker president Jamie Stillman on the company's genesis. "I built some for myself and a few friends then decided to put some up on eBay in late 2005. Those early pedals didn't really sell, but generated some interest. I sat on the idea for a year and came up with some simple branding and a more solidified line."

That first line included the Hoof Fuzz, Tusk Fuzz, and "a short-lived overdrive called Spectre." The Hoof was the pedal that really got the ball rolling. "[It] drew the most attention on some forums and I started getting some orders," Stillman recalls. "I quickly followed that up with the Disaster transport delay and a few others and I've been at it ever since."

EarthQuaker Devices (EQD) has become especially noted for their reverb and modulation pedals: "The Rainbow Machine is the pedal that solidified our 'weirdo' reputation, but the Dispatch Master, Avalanche Run and Afterneath are our best sellers."

What does Stillman think that boutique effect pedals have been experience such a surge in interest? "Pedals are a quick way to change your sound and inspire creativity without



spending tons of money," he says. "A lot of the bigger, established brands tend to cater to the broader, more traditional audience. The smaller brands can take risks with their designs with little consequence and usually come up with more unique sounds. I do think that gap is getting smaller every year, I'm seeing a lot more experimental effects coming from the bigger companies.

"We like to keep quiet about what we are working on but I have plenty of new pedals in the pipeline. I can tell you that I'm really excited for the next two years worth of releases and you can expect a lot more oddballs from EQD."

## Pigtronix

Supro/Pigtronix's David Koltai recalls his brand's early days clearly. "When Pigtronix first debuted at Summer NAMM with the EP-1 Envelope Phaser in 2003, the two prevalent trends in guitar effects

were digital modeling of vintage analog stompboxes as well as handmade, boutique replicas of these same classic units," he says. "There were not many companies focused on advanced analog designs at that time, so we set out to fill this unoccupied niche making Futuristic Analog pedals. Since the late 1990s we've been living in a world that has become infused with digital devices, so to insist that the future could be analog seemed as absurd as the idea that pigs would fly... hence the Pig logo with space helmet and WWI era flight goggles."

Pigtronix "went big" from the get-go, making large format pedals with a number of features, multiple footswitches – and a steep price-point.

"While these units established our fanbase and attracted a wide array of top-tier touring musicians, it was the single-footswitch Philosopher's Tone Sustainer that gained traction at the retail level," says Koltai of the brand's breakthrough. "This unit, now available in a micro format, continues to be one of our strongest sellers, with well over 20,000 units sold since its release.

"In the late 2000s, when it became clear that we needed to branch out into the realm of digital design in order to continue to evolve the brand, Pigtronix took a huge financial risk in committing to the development of the Infinity Looper pedal. Upon its release, this MIDI controlled stereo looper quickly become our number-one product in terms of gross revenue and remains a cornerstone of our sales to this day.

"Most recently we have put a focus on miniaturizing and updating several legacy pedals, engineering our award-winning circuit designs into a smaller footprint with new features and a lower price point while retaining the genuine Pigtronix sounds that made us famous in the first place."



David Koltai

Like the others we spoke with for this feature, he has some strongly held theories as to why there's been such an interest in smaller, unique pedals of late.

"When larger companies lose their way, smaller ones come up to fill the gaps in the market," says Koltai. "Many companies that position themselves as 'boutique' make variations on industry standard circuits, focusing largely on brand image and social media engagement, with the goal of getting musicians to relate to the company on a personal or artistic level. In contrast, the agenda at Pigtronix is driven by sound design. We are a technology company, creating entirely original products that can be manufactured on a massive scale to satisfy a worldwide audience."

For the near future, the brand plans to continue to expand the line of Pigtronix Micro pedals, as well as introducing a number of other new products.

"Pigtronix will also release Bob Weir's REAL DEAL, an acoustic guitar preamp designed in collaboration with the legendary guitarist from the Grateful Dead," Koltai reveals. "2018 will also see the release of several guitar synthesizer products that utilize our proprietary analog pitch tracking technology in different ways. These new units will be able to combine with the Pigtronix Mothership 2 synthesizer to create an advanced modular guitar synth that is 100 percent analog. Play Pigtronix, Get FAT!"

### J. Rockett Audio Designs

"We started in about 2004, but did not become official until 2008," says Chris Van Tassel of the early days of J. Rockett Audio Designs (J.RAD). Both Van Tassel and partner Jay Rockett were experienced session players and live performers, but "were always obsessed with the gear," he says. "I think the first products we made, such as the Rockett Boost and Afterburner, were attempts to make something we had always wanted. We never really thought about others wanting the products. After getting more and more requests to 'build one for me!' from friends et cetera, we started thinking about trying to make more and more products. I guess it took off from there with a whole lot of lumps along the way."

The brand's best-known and hottest sellers over the years have been the Blue Note, Archer(s), and Dude. "It depends on the year as to which one in particular was the hottest seller," says Van Tassel, who also thinks the current interest boutique effect pedals comes down to three main factors: "One, pure aesthetic design; two, [the] sound; and three, price, to be honest. There are only so many degrees of separation in pedals, but each builder has a tone print, if you will, consistent throughout their respective line. I think certain artistic designs appeal to certain people. I know some love quirky/artsy looking pedals and tend to commit to a certain builder for that reason only, which is fine. When you have a combination of cool looking, great sounding



,and affordable you probably have a winning combination." For 2018, Van Tassel says that J. RAD will be jumping into the DSP world. "A few designs are underway," he shares. "But they will be done with the Rockett stank all over them which is usually steeped in old school at least internally."

### Cusack Music

"Cusack Music was started in 2002 by Jon Cusack, who was fixing gear and building pedals as a sideline to his work as an electrical engineer," explains Mark Huizenga of sales and artist relations at Cusack Music.

Once Jon decided to go into pedal-building full-time, Cusack Music was officially established and would "later come to be known as a problem solver and innovator in the business," Huizenga says.

"His primary successes have been seeing many of the innovations he helped to introduce such as tap tempo, relay-based switching, and SMT production come to be industry standards," Huizenga adds of Jon's contributions to the pedal world. "He also counts as success the many pedals he designed or help design for others that went on to become very well known."

Cusack Music's best sellers thus far have been their original tap tempo tremolo the Tap-A-Whirl, the Cusack Screamer Overdrive, as well as the Tap-A-Delay Deluxe and the Pedalcracker microphone to pedal interface. New to the Cusack lineup this year is a programmable DSP Reverb that's due out by Summer NAMM.

"I think there is such an interest in boutique pedals because they have become not just performing tools, but a hobby and pastime as well for musicians," Huizenga adds. "There is nothing like the anticipation of getting a new pedal and finding out what it can do for your sound and setup!"

### Osiamo

Osiamo, importer for Mooer, Nobels, Dr J, JOYO, Taurus, and Big-foot effect pedals, was founded in 2007 when the hot accessory for the guitar and accessory markets was effects pedals. In ten years, clearly very little has changed with regards to their popularity.

"We started in 2007 with the



Jon Cusack with Robert Keely



Osiamo founder Ed Matthiack



goal of supplying unique, high quality guitar accessory items to music stores," says founder Ed Matthiack. "We discovered Mooer in Hall E at the 2012 NAMM show and have been their main U.S. distributor since then. Mooer was the first company to produce a full line of mini effect pedals. The tone and build quality of the Mooer micro pedals is very good and the pedals are an excellent value for beginners through to pros."

"As we've grown, we've added more pedal brands to our catalog," he adds, citing Nobels, well-known for the ODR-1 overdrive pedal, as the latest addition. "Dr J combines boutique quality tone in a small, affordable package. The best sellers in the line, Shadow Echo, Sparrow Driver, Lancelot, and Emerald, offer a nice balance of original tone and quality at a great price. Both Taurus and Bigfoot, are boutique pedal makers with loyal followers. Taurus offer a range of pedals designed for bass players and Bigfoot offer a range of analog pedals for players looking for true vintage tone. Mooer micro pedals have been one of the biggest successes."

Mooer's new pedals outside their Micro Series have also seen notable success, including the Radar IR (Impulse Response) Speaker Simulator, GE200 Multi-effects processor, Ocean Machine Dual Delay Reverb and Looper, and the Red Truck

effects strip. Likewise, Matthiack says that Nobels was well-received at NAMM and has been growing the market with good retailers and YouTube stars.

However, Matthiack says that smaller pedals are bigger than ever due to touring artists needing a smaller and lighter pedal to take with them on tour.

"The small footprint allows artists to fit the same selection of pedals in a pedal board half the size of standard pedals," he notes. "Many local guitarists have also been downsizing the gear they carry to gigs. The Mooer range of micro pedals give guitarists many options to go small and not sacrifice tone at their shows. It depends on the artist, but we have some that choose the Red Truck, some replicate their full-size pedal board with Mooer equivalents, and some are choosing to take a Mooer Micro Preamp and a Radar as their main 'road rig.' The technology and sound in the smaller size packages is amazing and is revolutionizing the way professional musicians can tour and still give their fans 'their sound.'"

New and in-the-works from the Osiamo family include the Servo from Taurus, a pedal that enriches the sound of an electric guitar, and the Preamp Live from Mooer, which can store 12 Mooer micro preamps, has a built in IR speaker simulator, and four footswitches.

Still, with Osiamo's ever-growing catalogue, the company remains on the lookout for new pedals to add to their roster.

"It's a big market and there are many creative people around the world inventing new pedals," Matthiack concludes. "We saw a few young companies at NAMM with some really interesting ideas. We think the pedal market will continue to grow in 2018 and beyond, especially for unique pedals that allow guitarist to expand their sonic palette."

**ZVEX**

Zachary Vex's introduction to pedals came early in life; at age 15, the ZVEX founder built and sold his first pedal for \$10. His story of how he became a pedal manufacturer is just an unlikely.

"It was pretty terrible, unstable if you shook it, and it was in a small plastic tackle box so it wasn't properly shielded," he recalls. "I got into high voltage for a while after that, and finally returned to audio electronics after college and modified tube guitar amp. After that I got into recording and did that for 10 years, and had to quit because I had tinnitus in my right ear that was triggered by loud sounds. I took a break for a year, built a pedal for myself on my kitchen table, and took it to a guitar store to show it off. I wasn't intending to go into business, but the store owner looked at it and said 'I'll take three.' Suddenly, I was a pedal manufacturer."

Flash forward to 2018, and Vex says that two of his top-sellers are the Fuzz Factory and the Box of Rock pedals. Going forward, he notes that ZVEX hopes to introduce more vertical pedals from their previous line, and maybe introduce compressor and delay pedals to the family.

"People want to be individuals, to stand out with a signature sound," Vex says of the current pedal craze. "This has helped sell the Fuzz Factory because it's so adjustable that the user can find a sound that might be absolutely perfect for the song, or inspire writing a new song." **BYRON**



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# electro-harmonix

By Christian **Wissmuller**

As one of the bigger players in stompbox effect pedals, it'd be a stretch to categorize Electro-Harmonix as a "small, boutique" brand, but when it comes to the larger concept, EHX is the company that sort of started at all. As Sam Adams' Jim Koch is widely considered the father of the modern American micro-brew movement, Electro-Harmonix founder Mike Matthews is the guy who really grew the whole concept of wacky, funky, high-quality, boutique effect pedals

"When I started there were only about two or three companies making pedals and now there are literally thousands," Matthews observes. "Our first product was the LPB-1 Linear Power Booster in late 1968. What happened was, I was working with a designer to do a distortion-free sustainer so people could play and sound like Hendrix, who I was really a close friend with, before he went off to England and even after that. But when I went out to try a prototype, plugged into the prototype was a small box. Bob Myer, the designer, said that he did that because he didn't realize the output of the guitar was so low, and so he did that to boost the signal. And when I tried that box, it made the amps so loud. And in those days, you could turn an amplifier up to 10; they had a lot of headroom. With the LPB-1, not only would

it be a lot louder, but also if you continued to increase the gain on the LPB-1, it finally put the amps into overdrive. And that was the, really, beginning of overdrive. And we still sell large quantities of LPB-1s even to this day, almost 50 years later." A host of now-classic designs followed: The Screaming Bird Treble Booster, Ego Microphone Booster, Memory Man, the Muff Fuzz, Electric Mistress, and the legendary Big Muff. "We were the first ones to come up with crazy names," Matthews notes. "When we came out with the Big Muff, to take advantage of the name recognition of Muff Buzz, I called it Big Muff PI, which, of course, had double, triple meanings. But in those days – this is in the '60s – I approached the names very liberally. The Big Muffs, we still sell thousands of them every month." The company grew very fast, but hit a rough patch in the '80s, eventually going bankrupt in 1984. However, in the '90s, while Matthews was selling vacuum tubes, he noticed an interesting trend. "I noticed all the pedals that I had made in the '70s were selling for much higher than what they were selling for in the '70s, and this new vintage market

## This Whole Movement Had to Start Somewhere



EHX founder  
Mike Matthews

had developed," he says. "I hooked up with a small military factory in St. Petersburg and I just gave them the circuit diagram of the Big Muff and they just designed it using that

circuit, but with Russian parts, Russian transistors. They redesigned the chassis. They even made a huge foot switch. And at first, that was the Red Army Overdrive, and then the Sovtek Big Muff. Eventually, we started making all those things in the U.S.A. again.

"What we do here at Electro-Harmonix is we have a balance, in my philosophy. We bring out some simple analogs, some more complex analogs over time, we bring out some simple digitals, and maybe working always on one exotic unit, but something that we can bring out, you know, in less than a year. And once we start a digital product, or any product for that matter, and decide on the features, we don't, halfway through the project, change the features, or add features. Because a lot of times the engineer will say, 'Oh, geez, let's add this because then we could do that.' I'd say, 'No, save that for a future product.' Because, I mean, still, it's a business, and you've got to get your product out." PHOTO: EHX

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# Plugging Along...

A look at the Increasingly Crowded and Diverse World of Instrument Cables

By Christian Wissmuller

**B**raided, colored, coiled, switchable, with volume control, Bluetooth-capable, low profile, with gold connectors, DIY cable kits – the options available to end-users when it comes to selecting instrument cables have never been more varied, and the brands offering these products are just as numerous. “Suppliers are offering great discounts which tells me the competition is heating up,” notes Paul Tobias of Downers Grove, Illinois’ Tobias Music.

Another significant trend observed by many participants in this month’s retailer survey (sent out to over 250 dealers) include a move away from the traditional, standard 1/4” cable. As Amy England of Arthur’s Music Store in Indianapolis puts it, “The biggest trend we’ve seen from customer requests is the adaptability

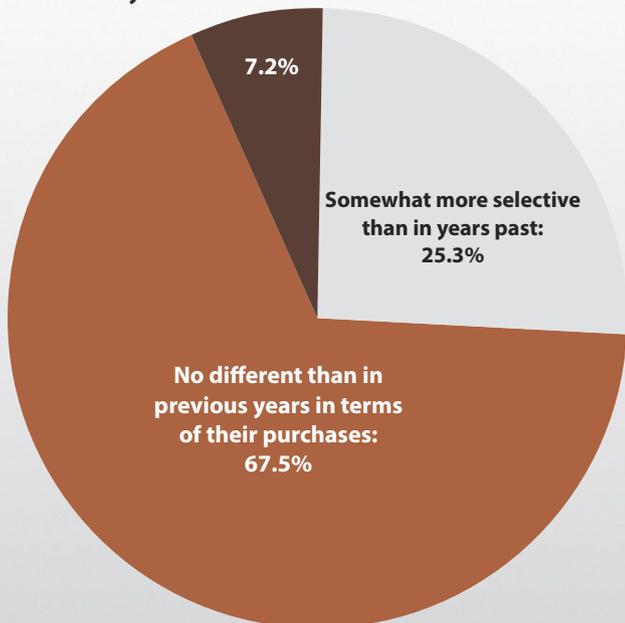
of cables for other purposes than just guitar to amplifier. Instrument cables which go from instrument to USB, mini 1/8” jack, Y-splits, et cetera are the trend as more and more players are going direct into computers and mobile devices, bypassing traditional amps, and even soundboards for live performance and recording.”

Interestingly, a great number of the retailers we heard from pointed to increased business in this market segment *not* necessarily from traditional MI consumers.

“With less retailers like Radio Shack et cetera, there is great opportunity to profit from all sorts of cables and connectors,” says Philip Leitz of Florida’s Leitz Music Co. “If you have it, you sell it. If not, consider it another loss to the Internet black hole.”

**With more brands in this market segment and different materials and manufacturing techniques being used, customers who purchase instrument cables from your store are...**

Increasingly picky about what they select:



*“We have polarized cable sales. Either customers want the cheapest, or the perceived quality of the ‘most expensive thing you got.’ Very rarely do customers ask specifically for the mid-range cable. We always offer what we know to be the better quality, best value cable if they don’t ask. Normally that’s a standard Peavey cable.”*

Amy England  
Arthur’s Music Store  
Indianapolis, Indiana

*“If you carry almost every length and every possible adaptor, and lots of them, you will be the ‘go-to store’ in your town.”*

Mark Magellan  
Bill’s Music Sales, Inc.  
Stockton, California

*“Most customers are fine with the old reliable stock numbers, but with a wider variety in cables (i.e. kill switches, heavier shielding, et cetera). Some customers are asking for uncommon cables.”*

Allen McBroom  
Backstage Music  
Starkville, Mississippi

*“With everyone jumping into the cable market, customers are more confused than ever. Fortunately, most of our customers trust us to sell them the appropriate quality for their need.”*

Ken Cefalo  
Main Street Music, Inc.  
Tracy, California

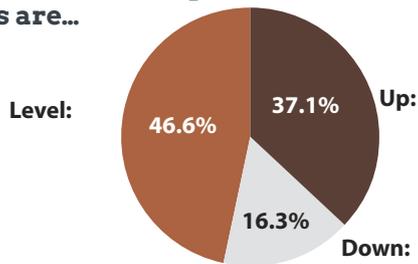
*“It is so important to advise your customer about the difference in price and quality if you want to sell more expensive products. This applies to cables just as much as it does guitars or saxophones. It is imperative to keep up to speed because, with the vast amount of information available online, you can guarantee that most of your customers are very informed. Be the authority on what you choose to sell. As a Brick and Mortar/small dealer it is your best weapon against the Internet monster.”*

Tony Harrison  
The Cape Fear Music Center  
Fayetteville, North Carolina

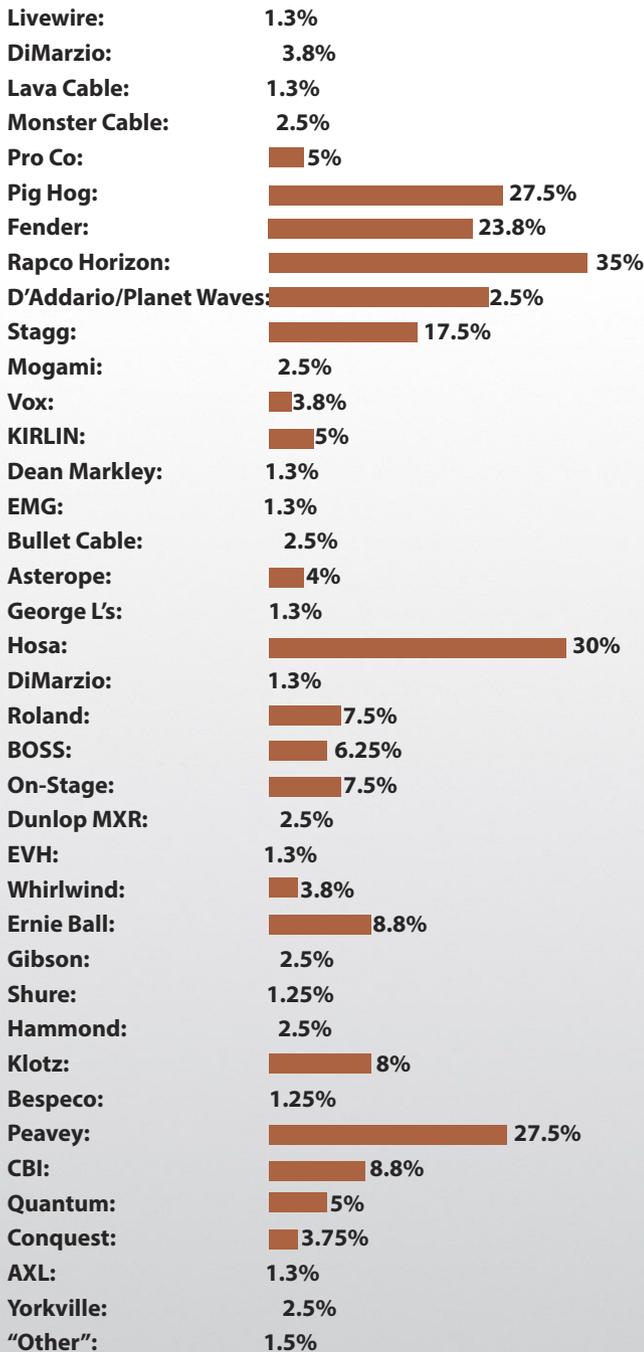
*“People are looking for a better grade of cables at a competitive price. Road Hog is a big seller.”*

Paul Lewis  
Lewis Music Store  
Kissimmee, Florida

Compared to this time last year, sales of instrument cables at your business are...



What brands of instrument cables generate the most profit for your store?



(The most commonly cited brands by those who selected "other" were, in order: Structure, store-branded, and Black Market Modular)

# Game Changing Repairs. **DONE!**



BEFORE



AFTER

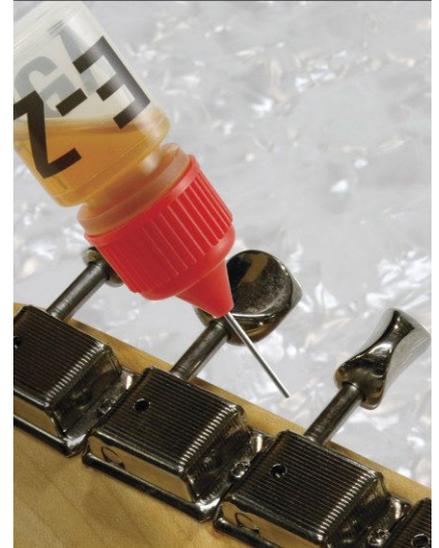
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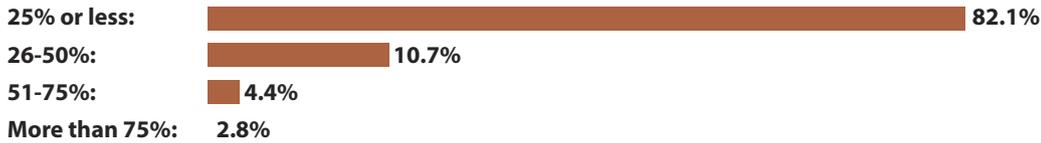
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## E-Z KEY™ Vintage Tuner Lube

Multi-purpose mineral lubricant for tuners, bridges, and tremos. Safe for all metal finishes.

## Instrument cables account for what percentage of overall accessory sales for your business?



**"The current trend has been that of the customer looking for a more heavy duty cable. High-end cable sales have increased more than any other." – John Dees, Dees Music**

## What are the biggest recent or emerging trends when it comes to instrument cables – either on the supplier or consumer side?

*"Our private label product is used as a spiff item on large purchases and we offer a lifetime guarantee as well. Very little returns, and the few we have had to replace, are usually accompanied with other purchases, offsetting the COG while still maintaining the excellent customer service we are well known for."*

Jerry Vesely  
Vesely Music  
Parowan, Utah

*"More unique audio cables. It is true that with the loss of Radio Shacks, customers are looking for help with many audio needs. Even the guys from Best Buy will send folks our way."*

Kevin Hedley  
Uncle Ike's Music  
Dubuque, Iowa

*"The current trend has been that of the customer looking for a more heavy duty cable. High-end cable sales have increased more than any other."*

John Dees  
Dees Music  
Visalia, California

*"Pig Hog's high quality/low price one-two punch."*

Spidey Mulrooney  
The Music Shop  
Southington, Connecticut

*"Domestic made with switchcraft components not Chinese Neutriks."*

Jeff Elias  
Interesting Music Shoppe  
Wilfrid, Ontario  
Canada

*"The educated consumer is getting tired of gimmicks. [They] just want quality. Customers are willing to pay for quality."*

Dan Patterson  
Roger's Music  
Fort Payne, Alabama

*"Technology-driven changes affect SKUs. For instance, almost no 1/4" insert cable sales, diminished RCA connectors, and increasing iPod style cables."*

Keith Giles  
Alaska Music One  
Juneau, Alaska

*"Colored and braided cables seem to be popular on the consumer side. They know that that is 'their cable.' Most suppliers are putting 'lifetime guarantees' on their cables. Also, coil cables seem to be making somewhat of a comeback."*

Adam York  
The Music Store, Inc.  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

*"Vintage cloth covered cables for instruments and microphones are increasing in sales monthly. Manufacturers are beefing up the appearance of their cables, which seems to be appealing to the consumer."*

Wesley Edwards  
Draisen Edwards Music  
Anderson, South Carolina

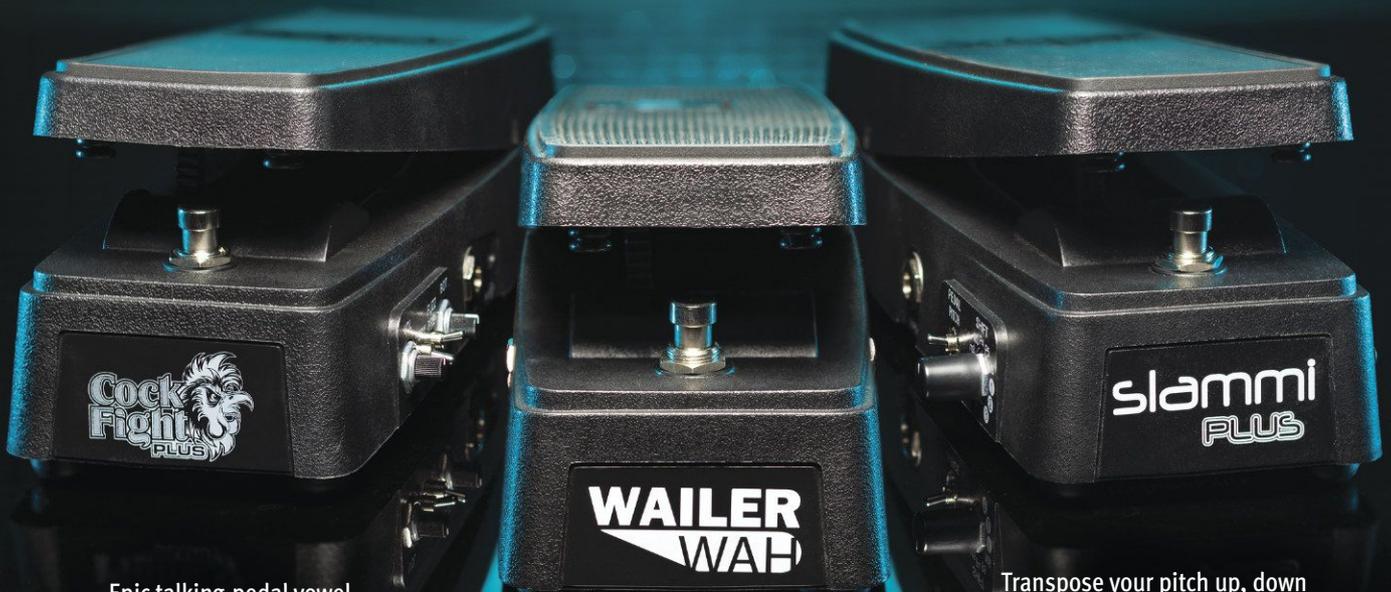
*"We always try and sell them a good cable with a proper warranty. How many music stores can explain exactly what the benefits of a quad-core cable are? Well...we can."*

Tim Bascom  
Morgan Music Services, Inc.  
Lebanon, Missouri

*"Some suppliers are thinking big and showing great wisdom in providing serious profit margins!"*

Anthony Mantova  
Mantova's Two Street Music  
Eureka, California

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Control just about any device with an expression input. Range knob fine tunes your sweep. Reverse button flips the direction. Polarity switch and TRS cable included. Affordable and versatile!



Control two devices from a single source. Each output has independent range and reverse controls plus a polarity switch. Two TRS cables included. More control, less space!



Ultra-smooth action with EH X's unique taper for the best effects and precise dynamics control anywhere in your signal chain. Two impedance options (25K or 250K) for universal compatibility.

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Note From Mary

## Be a Part of The NAMM Foundation

“We envision a world in which the joy of making music is a precious element of daily living for everyone; where every child has a deep desire to learn music and a recognized right to be taught; and in which every adult is a passionate champion and defender of that right.”

The NAMM Foundation supports programs that advance opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to make music.

NAMM members have many opportunities to **PARTICIPATE**, promote, celebrate and support music education in their own communities.

NAMM Foundation projects and programs inspire and grow music making opportunities, and the market, as part of our unique Circle of Benefits business model, which channels trade show, membership revenues and donations into targeted efforts that bring us closer to our vision.

Programs such as the Best Communities for Music Education and Make Music Day strive to ensure music education is essential for all children, and promote its vital role in the health and wellness for people at every age.

NAMM's annual Fly-in and Coalition on Coalitions are other ways that members can **PARTICIPATE** and **ADVOCATE** as well as develop skills as advocacy leaders and champions.

And, to celebrate all these efforts that unite us as music education champions, you can **DONATE** to expand and strengthen the work of The NAMM Foundation. Donations can also honor your legacy or the memory of others that have inspired and helped you achieve your goals and success in the music industry.

Working together, we can amplify our efforts to ensure every person has the opportunity to learn and grow with music. The future of music begins with you, and through our collective effort, we will continue to work toward the vision of the world we believe in – a world of music makers.

Mary Luehrsen  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NAMM FOUNDATION



### Thank you!

Your support of NAMM helps power yearlong efforts to make more music makers.



### Get Involved!

Benefit from information to grow your music education expertise. Access our monthly e-newsletter for resources, updates, events and activities.

# Participate



**2018 BEST Communities for MUSIC EDUCATION**  
 Designated by The NAMM Foundation

Celebrating school districts and schools with an exemplary commitment to music education.



**MAKE MUSIC**  
 JUNE 21

Create your own event during this global celebration uniting people of all backgrounds, ages and skill levels together to make and enjoy music.

# Advocate



**Advocacy Fly-In**   
 Washington, D.C.

May 21-24, 2018  
 NAMM members and other music industry leaders will storm Washington, D.C. to meet with Members of Congress to champion music education for all children.



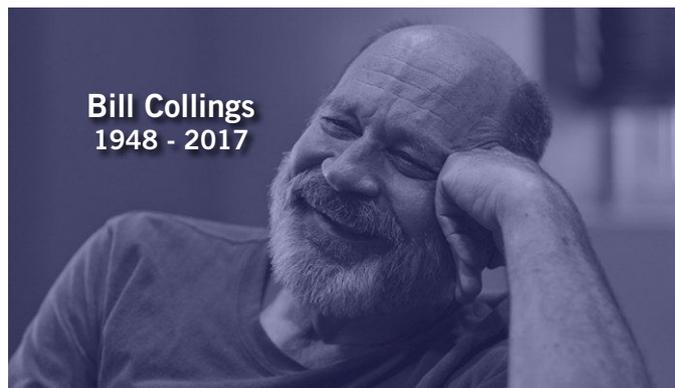
**Support Music**  
 Brought to you by The NAMM Foundation and NAfME

The Coalition on Coalitions provides tactics, resources and best practices to support NAMM members working on state-level music and arts education advocacy efforts.

# Donate



Logos include: NPC, music makes us, San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory, Wind Symphony, Musical Futures, Guitars in the Classroom, SPHINX, National Piano Foundation, Songwriting With Soldiers, Music for ALL, Australian Music Association, Time 107, GAMA, Discover Guitar, Anafima, John Lennon Educational Tour Bus, Why Save the Music, Engage, Percussive Society, and PMB Percussion Marketing Council.



**Bill Collings**  
 1948 - 2017

Your contributions will expand the work of The NAMM Foundation, helping us support more music education grant recipients in 2018.

Donations can be made to honor your legacy or the memory of others, including the new Bill Collings Memorial Fund.

Learn more at [nammfoundation.org](http://nammfoundation.org)

In 1950, Detroit's population hit 1.85 million, making it America's fourth-largest city. It was the hub of car manufacturing. Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors, commonly referred to as the "Big Three", were all based in Detroit and, along with other auto manufacturers, employed most of the city's working population. However, by the 1960s, things began to change. Due to economics, deindustrialization, and many other factors, car manufacturers were moving their operations out of Detroit to surrounding suburbs. As the manufacturers began moving out of the city, many of their employees did, too, and the population began to shrink. Detroit was emptying out and what was left was a gutted city, with the visual markings of a war zone. Detroit, once known as America's pulsating center of industry, became known as a center of urban blight and decay.

In 2010, a U.S. Census Bureau report revealed that Detroit's population was at its lowest level since 1910 and the city's identity had long shifted from a boomtown to a ghostly shell of itself and a landscape of abandoned factories, theatres, and homes.

Lately, though, there have been small signs of a renaissance, thanks to dedicated residents who believe in the city's future and pride of its past. One of those believers is Mark Wallace, owner of Wallace Detroit Guitars. Prior to starting his guitar business, Wallace worked in real estate in Detroit for a decade, spending a lot of time traveling around the city. "When you live in Detroit, it's pretty hard to not get interested in abandoned buildings – unfortunately we have many of them," he explains. At one point in time Detroit was home to 60,000 vacant properties. He continues, "It's kind of heart-breaking. You think about the lives of the people who lived in those place and memories that were made. I think a lot of people look at that and wonder what they can do. You can rehab those properties, which is what I used to do a bit of, or do something else with them."

A guitar player himself, Wallace started playing when he was 11 years old and has played in several bands throughout his career. However, the road to his guitar business didn't necessarily start with music. As he explains, "Through my experience in real estate, I got involved and learned a lot about wood working. I bought an old house that was built in 1860, I spent time trying to fix the mistakes made by the previous owner. I'd screw things up and fix them again. That's where I came up with the idea to make these guitars."

In 2013 Wallace ran into an old friend who was working with a non-profit group that reclaims wood from the city's abandoned buildings. He says, "I asked him who he was selling the wood to and he said he didn't have a lot of customers yet. I introduced him to some contractors and architects in town." Wallace went to take a look at his friend's workshop and saw some wood sitting on a cutting board, "It was cut on the end grain, so you could see all the age and history in the wood. And it was just about the same width as a guitar. I had recently learned about CNC routing a couple of weeks before, and as we were walking around the workshop, I Googled 'CNC guitar' and up popped some plans. That was it." At first he thought he'd just make a guitar for himself, and he did. He posted a photo on Facebook of the guitar body he crafted and a neck that he bought online. As Wallace explains, "The image went viral almost instantly. People started sending me messages asking if I could make them a guitar." This initial spark was also supported by an arts grant from John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, which helped him to put a business plan together.

### The Guitars

Since then, Mark has sold over 140 guitars. He hasn't necessari-



Mark Wallace

ly done it all alone, as he says, "I have a great group of people. I've assembled a team who are incredibly good at what they do, and they love these instruments." He has one direct employee who manages the business and the rest are sub-contractors, who work out of garages and workshops throughout Detroit. Wallace has his own workshop, but as he explains, "The guitars travel around."

The journey begins at the Architectural Salvage Warehouse in Detroit, a non-profit organization that deconstructs the city's abandoned buildings and salvages the wood. There are rules for salvaging the wood. He says, "We want to be a part of the positive story of Detroit." They do not scrap wood from a house they do not own or support someone taking apart a house that could be renovated and brought back to life. "The non-profit we work with is very responsible," he explains. "All of the revenue that the non-profit brings in goes to supporting job creation and historic preservation." Wallace and his team have also bought wood from private individuals

and developers. No matter what source is, there is a very intentional pathway to ensure it's being done responsibly.

### The Wood

The salvaging facility is where the wood that will transform into a Wallace guitar is dried and the nails are pulled. Some of the guitar lamination work is done there as well. From there, the wood goes from place to place. The entire process, from order to delivery, takes about three months. Most of the guitar parts, including pickups and hand-cut bone nuts, are custom made. As Wallace puts it, "Whatever changes the tone and the quality of the instrument is done in-house. The equipment we do buy is all high end, what you would use to modify a guitar and make it special." In terms of the Telecaster-style shape and body of the guitars, it's simply Mark's personal preference, a style that he's always favored. "It's good hanging on a strap or when you're sitting," he says. He's been asked to make other shapes, but he's just not interested.

Many of the Wallace guitar bodies are carved from pine, but they also use maple and mahogany. In terms of the sound, maple produces a brighter sound, and with pine it gets a lot darker. As Wallace says of the wood, "The pine is interesting – you could never go to a lumber yard now and get some pine to build a guitar. That new pine is grown so quickly in commercial farms and the density of the wood is minimal, not a very tight grain pattern. The pine that we work with will generally come from a structure that was built in sometime around 1880 to 1920. Those trees were about 100 years old coming from old growth forests around Detroit and produced a grain with different properties and density than modern pine. So the pine we use to build the guitars has the qualities similar to ash. But, the older trees contain a lot of sap and require a long drying time." The wood has many variations and when each piece is joined together, it creates butcherblock-style pattern, with each piece placed carefully on the front of the guitars, providing a unique look to each instrument. The back is a solid piece of wood and the two sides are joined together with a veneer, creating a strong and sturdy neck pocket.

Currently, most of Wallace's guitars are custom orders. Customers can go to the Wallace Detroit Guitars website and dial in exactly what features they'd like. The process evolves on the site as they make decisions about finishes. The company does have a small inventory of guitars that are on-hand, but they sell quickly once they're built, and prices range from \$1,800 to \$3,100. "Typically, our

customers are collectors of guitars and are intrigued by the idea, or people who really love Detroit and have an emotional connection to the music or the city itself," Wallace explains. "The guitars are made to be played, but they're also works of art and collectable pieces and a lot of customers are at that level. We've shipped internationally and have sold guitars in about 10-15 states – fifty percent of the sales are in Detroit and the rest are out of state."

Wallace Detroit Guitars does not have a brick and mortar retail footprint. They're currently considering partners and dealers who would be interested in stocking their guitars, but for now, Wallace says, "It's mostly online sales, custom orders, but we'd like to find some retail outlets. Right now, we love working with Reverb.com. They do a great job. The Chicago Music Exchange has been great too."

### The Future

How does a business of such an artisanal nature and custom output grow? Mark Wallace has a plan: "Our goal is to continue adding options and pushing design. Expanding to basses will be a big deal for us. We'll also be playing around with different models and price points. Right now, the guitars are high end and a great investment. But there are a lot of people who want to buy a guitar for \$500 or \$600. At some point we'd like to offer an entry-level product with less high-end components. The important thing for us is to always be sourcing interesting pieces of wood. We want to continue to work with these old buildings." Currently, all of Wallace's guitars feature hand-shaped necks, hand-cut bone nuts, and hand-wound pickups. Wallace continues, "If we want to continue making the bodies out of reclaimed wood from Detroit and add components that are more of the shelf, we could change the price point. Also, the lamination on the end grain has been a time-consuming process. If we did a two-piece body, put a simple finish on it, bought necks instead of making them, bought components instead of making them, it would allow for a lower price point."

"We'd like to be seen as a brand that's played on stages all over the world. I'd also like to expand in terms of the wood. I love New Orleans, and they also have many abandoned buildings, most of which were built from swamp ash. It would be great to do something similar there." Much like Detroit, New Orleans has a special history of music, struggle, and a renaissance of its own. Meanwhile, the empty buildings in Detroit still sit, waiting for a second life, and Wallace Detroit Guitars may give them one. 



**“I have a great group of people. I’ve assembled a team who are incredibly good at what they do, and they love these instruments.”**



# Masters of Intangibles

By Jaimie Blackman

## 'Up in the sky, look: It's a bird. It's a plane. It's Superman!' - DC Comics

**A**t the winter NAMM show, I sat in awe at the Idea Center while one music superhero after another took the stage. One common theme across all the best MI retailers was how they all used their intangible assets – 80% people and 20% enabling technology – to help implement their vision and strategy. According to Ocean Tomo, in 1975, intangible assets only contributed 17% of the value to some of the largest companies in America. By 2015, with the explosion of the knowledge economy, the number jumped to 87%.

I spotlighted 10 of the some of the best MI retailers at my talk at the Idea Center. I call this group the *Masters of Intangibles* because they recognize their intangible assets are worth considerably more than the value of their inventory.

It takes significant employee talent to nurture loyal and profitable customer relationships. This talent is a valuable asset to the company, but unfortunately you will not find this asset on your balance sheet. As a non-financial asset, intangibles are hidden from view.

“As a non-financial asset, intangibles are hidden from view.”

In my January 2018 *MMR* column, I interviewed Steve Zapf, president of Music & Arts. When I asked Zapf what were the key drivers for valuation multiples, the seller's intangibles were 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. These are factors that give us the necessary confidence to increase the multiple we pay.”

In other words, regardless of how profitable a company is, if all the knowledge is locked up in the owner's head, the business is not as valuable.

Since your intangible assets are hidden from your financial statements, you're not seeing it. And like the hidden roots, which are responsible for nurturing the life of a tree, hidden intangible assets nurture the life of the company. If you can't see it you can't measure it. If you can't measure it, you can't grow it. Your most valuable assets are hidden, and as a result, growth is not being managed.

It's not that intangible assets are difficult to measure; they just use a different metric. Because it is a non-financial asset, the organization will use surveys, peer-to-peer interviews, and guided conversations. For example, ever think of asking your wholesaler, “How am I doing?” for some honest feedback?

These are essentially four intangibles that contribute more value to your company than any other asset you own. They are:

- **Wellness Capital:** Personal goals and aspirations. If you are not taking care of your physical, spiritual, and financial health, everything else will eventually fall apart.

- **Human Capital:** Employee Talent. In today's knowledge economy, identifying, training, motivating, and retaining talent has never been more important.

- **Customer Capital:** Relationships. Customer capital is the single most important influence on revenue per employee and profit per employee according to Bontis of McMaster University. Vendor and other influencers also play a key role in relationship assets.

- **Structural Capital:** Process and data. The sum total of all your intellectual capital such as databases, process, intellectual property, all belong to the domain of structural capital.

It's also important to remember that intangibles by themselves have no value. Intangibles have value when they are executing your vision and strategy. Here are three retailers who successfully harness the power of their intangibles to implement their vision and strategy.

**1. Sweetwater – Vision:** *Always do the right thing.* An important intangible for Sweetwater is their CRM: Customer Relationship Management system. Most retailers use an inventory management system. Most retailers are not using a CRM. “A CRM is critical in every business I own. We track everything we can about the customer. I would not have a business without a CRM,” says Chuck Surack, founder and president.

**2. West Music – Vision:** *Play now. Play for Life.* Pearl West, the retailer's founder, battled Alzheimer's the last few years of his life. Music Therapy was instrumental to Pearl's wellness as the disease took its hold. West Music created West Music Therapy to deliver music's blessing to all their customers, and delivers services through its growing team of licensed music therapists. Rob-in Walenta is president and Ryan West, a third generation of the management team, directs the company.

**3. Spicer's Music – Vision:** *Not your average music store.* Driven to create memorable customer events which sets Spicer's Music apart from the crowd, founder Tim Spicer is looking to set a new world's record. Spicer's Music's goal is to hold the record for the world's largest rock band, and Spicer's Music's last event had 850 members in the band. China, who currently holds the Guinness book of records for the largest rock band has 953 members. I'm betting on Tim Spicer and team to be #1.

Music retail superheroes come in many sizes and shapes. Every company has all of the four intangibles, but some emphasize one more than the other to get the required lift-off. Take an inventory of your intangibles to determine if you have the right mix to fly.



Jaimie Blackman – a former music educator & retailer – is a certified wealth strategist & creator of MoneyCapsules Value-Builder, 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](http://jaimieblackman.com) to register for educational webinars and to subscribe to his podcasts.

# A United Collective is Always Stronger

By Menzie Pittman

## **A**lways say yes to an invitation to make the world a better place

At the NAMM show I received a fun email from Hal Leonard's Brad Smith with a request to participate in a breakfast panel for Guitar Accessory Manufacturers Association (GAMA). The agenda was to address ways to increase and stimulate interest in guitars and guitar education around the country.

I immediately responded with an enthusiastic, "Yes!" because I am a huge fan of collective thinking.

### **We started with a diverse panel**

The panel consisted of Mike Molenda of *Guitar Player Magazine*, Laura B. Whitmore of Mad Sun Marketing, Squiggy DiGiacomo of *The Music Experience*, and myself. The moderator fired off questions for an hour, and we all weighed in with what each of us believed to be our best answers.

### **Everyone absolutely agreed on one thing**

The industry has changed drastically and we are well served to admit honestly that it is an extremely more different terrain than just a decade ago. The spirit of the debate came alive when we were asked to consider solutions to rekindle an interest and passion in guitars.

We all agreed on the importance and impact of guitar heroes in the music industry, but we differed on what the definition of who today's heroes would be. By Steve Vai standards we need a new, flashy shredder, but a counterpoint to consider is the impact of an artist like Ed Sheeran. No, Ed is not a riffing guitarist by any stretch, but looping pedals are a staple in his approach, and the last time I checked, that is a guitar accessory. There is also no doubt that an artist like Sheeran has had a very positive effect on the sale of acoustic guitars. Tommy Emmanuel would be another example of a very positive influence, attracting new, young musicians into the world of guitar; and he is certainly a guitar hero, but again, he is an acoustic player.

For me, the real issue in the conversation emerged when the topic centered on the idea of needing a new guitar hero. I do think we are missing heroes on all the instruments, but not because they don't exist. And I don't think that's the only problem because if you think about it, guitar virtuosity is at an all-time high. As a matter of fact, we are saturated with virtuosity.

### **Could the problem be we can't see the forest for the trees?**

Yes, we need new blood in "guitar hero land," we do need more players with high visibility like the John Mayer's of the world. But Jeff Beck hasn't gone away, and he and Prince and David Bowie and others like Steven Tyler all have something in common: *the female bassist*.

### **Tomorrow's trend is here today**

Since its inception three years ago, I have attended the Pilgrimage Festival in Franklin, Tennessee, and every year more and more female bassists are front and center. When Beck filled the role of his bass player with Tal Wilkenfeld, she stood on stage with Beck and Vinnie Colaiuta and held the chair of

bassist masterfully. If you read her bio it is nothing but a list of marquee names of some of the best musicians in the world. I think that makes her a bass guitar hero. Rhonda Smith also works with Beck, and played bass for Prince. Her musicianship is Herculean. Truly, anyone who can claim to have worked for Prince and Beck automatically qualifies as a music hero.

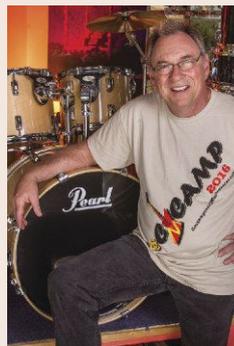
David Bowie was an early adapter. He gave the bass chair as well as the vocals on the song "Heroes" to Gail Ann Dorsey. Are you noticing a pattern yet? Esperanza Spalding is commanding attention for her work. She sings just as well as she plays and, of course, she sings and plays all at the same time. You only need to Google her White House performance of Stevie Wonder's "Overjoyed" to be shocked into the reality that our heroes are already here. And going back in time, certainly, we should always tip our hat to the career bass work of Carole Kaye.

### **If multiple heroes are here, then what's the true problem, and how do we fix it?**

I think it's clear that what our industry needs to reconsider is that while we have many heroes in all categories, as an industry, we can't seem to embrace a way to re-brand and stimulate interest for someone who wants to become a successful musician. We seem to compete instead of working together as an industry.

### **We are so busy myopically focusing on sales that we have forgotten how to market and sell the passion of music itself**

Think about General Motors in the 1970s. We should be working together better in order to foster the success of younger players. The big record labels perished for a reason – they forgot to take care of their most important asset: *the musicians*. You can't blame school education programs if you, yourself, are not in the conversation working to provide viable solutions. We have become takers, not givers, and that is an epic fail. We should look at the example of smart musicians like Michael League of Snarky Puppy. He is nothing short of a hero to our industry. He happens to be a bassist, guitarist, composer, producer, and entrepreneur. When looking for solutions, Michael thinks inclusively, and that is one reason he is incredibly successful. The time has come to look at ourselves differently. If and when we do, our industry will, once again, thrive creatively. 



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.

## FRETTED

### Loog Guitars' Paul Frank Line

Loog Guitars' new line of guitars designed by Paul Frank comes in a color palette that reflects the artist's instantly recognizable style, featuring Julius the monkey and more of Paul's beloved cast of characters. The new Loog + Paul Frank Collection as well as the Mini and Pro lines are available now through Hal Leonard, the exclusive distributor for Loog guitars in North America.



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

### NXTa Radius Bass Guitar from NS Design

The new NXTa Radius Bass Guitar brings together the brilliant ergonomics of the headless neck and body configuration, the Ned Steinberger self-clamping tuning system, custom NS/EMG pickups, volume-volume-tone controls, and the battery-free Dual Mode Output electronics made for Ned Steinberger by Mi-Si. Fretted or fretless, 4 string (NXT4a) or 5 string (NXT5a), the NXTa Radius Bass Guitar is beautifully crafted in the Czech Republic and is made from solid, straight grain maple, with maple face (satin black model) or flame maple face (sunburst model).



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

### Bedell Rio Guitar from Bedell Guitars

The Bedell Rio Guitar features Bearclaw Spruce and Brazilian Rosewood from the Esperanza Tree, as well as brass inlays, and prewar-style compound tapered dovetail neck joints. Each Bedell Rio come with a hard shell case. Price: \$6,990.



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

### Doyle Dykes Multiac Steel Guitar

The Doyle Dykes Signature Edition guitar comes with tons of tonal possibilities thanks to a custom-voiced LR Baggs Electronics system. This system offers the possibility of blending an LB6 saddle transducer with a Lyric acoustic guitar microphone. It comes with a solid spruce top on a dual-chambered mahogany body, mahogany neck, Richlite fingerboard, white binding, as well as white rose inlays at the 12<sup>th</sup> fret.



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

## PIANO & KEYBOARDS



### NV10 Digital Piano from Kawai

The NV10, the very first model in the new NOVUS series of hybrid digital pianos from Kawai. The piano combines Kawai's finest Millennium III acoustic grand piano keyboard action, including a real damper mechanism, with the latest SK-EX Rendering piano sound engine and premium amplification technologies developed in collaboration with audio specialists Onkyo. The ultra-modern NV10 also features built-in Bluetooth MIDI and audio connectivity, and a 5" LCD touchscreen display embedded within the instrument's left cheekblock. An ebony polish cabinet gives pianists the impression of playing a premium grand piano, while occupying less floor space than a standard upright.

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



### Dragonfly Grand Piano from Bösendorfer

The new Dragonfly grand piano is the fourth in a series of special edition marquetry pianos from Bösendorfer. Limited to 18 Model 200 grand pianos, each has an individually numbered brass plaque. In keeping with the Viennese tradition of incorporating art into the craft of piano-making, the unique dragonfly design on the inside of the lid recreates a beautiful scene from nature. Veneers used within the marquetry inlay include tulip wood, English and American burr walnut, birds eye maple, ripple sycamore, myrtle burr, silky oak, and eucalyptus. Features include an independent Capo d'Astro that allows for perfect adjustment in the descant registry, hand-spun Bösendorfer bass strings, single stringing and three pedals. The instrument's body is crafted from Austrian spruce resonance wood.

[www.boesendorfer.com/en-us](http://www.boesendorfer.com/en-us)

ACCESSORIES



**New Strings from Elixir**

Elixir Strings has expanded its line-up of electric guitar strings to include nine new sets for extended range guitars. In addition, two new Polyweb Coated Electric String sets plus 20 new electric singles are also available. Elixir Strings offers three coatings for electric guitar strings to complement every guitarist's desired tone and feel. Optiweb Coating offers a crisp tone and natural feel while Polyweb Coating features a warm tone and slick and fast feel, and Nanoweb Coating offers a bright tone and smooth feel. All three coatings offer the renowned tone life of Elixir Strings.

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



**Ernie Ball's New Everlast Picks**

Everlast Picks from Ernie Ball Music Man are manufactured from highly durable, wear-resistant Delrin material for a more secure non-slip surface. The new picks are available in eight different thicknesses that are fluorescent color-coded as follows: 0.48mm (blue); 0.60mm (pink); 0.73mm (orange); 0.88mm (green); 1.0MM (purple); 1.14mm (red); 1.5mm (yellow); and 2.0mm (teal). The Everlast Picks are also available in 12-pack bags.

[www.music-man.com](http://www.music-man.com)

**New Cables from Cordial**



Cordial has extended its adapter cable range with a mono version, the CPI PZ, equipped with hand soldered REAN 3.5mm and 6.3mm full metal connectors. In contrast to the current customary cables featuring welded on plastic connectors, these connectors prevent interferences to the full extent. The unusually massive bulk cable CIK 122 also features an additional inner shield made of conductive plastic to minimize noise caused by electrostatic phenomena. The cable comes in three lengths: 1, 2, or 3 meters.

Cordial's new data cable drum features the universally usable CAT 6A RJ45 connector made by the renowned industrial brand Telegärtner. These high-class "Industrial Ethernet" connectors feature the same electrical properties as etherCON, but can be utilized in the tightest of spaces, and can be connected to network switches suitable for business applications. Available lengths for the cable are 75, 100, 125, and 150 meters.



[www.cordial.eu](http://www.cordial.eu)

**Marca Reeds's New Unfiltered Reeds**

The new unfiled reeds from Marca Reeds offer more choice and flexibility for people who love their jazz cut but prefer unfiled reeds over filed. These reeds feature a new cut and offers playability and great tone of the reeds right out of the box.



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

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ACCESSORIES

**Whirlwind's PLR-SKB Series Portable Power Distribution**

The PLR-SKB series takes a Whirlwind Power Link distro and packs it into an SKB i-series case, with casters, measuring 23"x18"x12". The PLR-SKB01 and PLR-SKB02 provide an extremely portable and simple solution when you need to breakout power. With all connections and access from the top, the PLR-SKB series avoids the need for unnecessary clearance around the distro while offering easy access. The PLR-SKB01, weighing 72 lbs., has one set of (5) 16-series Cam-type inlets (dual-gender G/N) for Input and four sets of (7) 16-series Cam-type outlets (dual-gender G/N) for Output. The PLR-SKB02, weighing 47 lbs., has one set of (5) 16-series Cam-type inlets, (12) 20A duplex and (3) L2130 outlets, all with hydraulic / magnetic circuit breakers, test points, and neon lamps. Custom configurations are available as well.



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

**EHX 95000 Performance Loop Laboratory from Electro-Harmonix**

The new EHX 95000 Performance Loop Laboratory expands upon the multitrack looping of the 2880 and 45000. The 95000 is a 6-track looping station which functions almost as a mini on-the-fly studio. Each track features an individual volume slider and panning knob for live mixing and manipulation. The 95000 features six footswitches for Loop Up and Down, Stop/Start, Record/Overdub, Undo, and Track toggle. Until now, multi-track loopers required an external footswitch to be used by the guitarist whose hands would be too busy to operate the looper. It is fully MIDI-capable for those looking for external or expanded control.



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

**Coated Metal Snap Hook from BG Franck Bichon**

The new Coated Metal Snap Hook for straps from BG Franck Bichon has a unique soft and durable coating to protect saxophones from scratches. This feature also helps to avoid unwanted noises during recording and performing. Users will find a brand-new shape and a new great look.



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

PRINT & DIGITAL

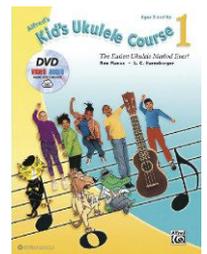
**Hal Leonard's Star Wars: The Last Jedi - Music from the Motion Picture**



*Star Wars: The Last Jedi - Music from the Motion Picture Soundtrack* features 12 tracks from the soundtrack, including "Ahch-To Island," "The Battle of Crait," "Canto Bight," "Fun with Finn and Rose," "The Last Jedi," "Main Title and Escape," "Old Friends," "Peace and Purpose," "The Rebellion Is Reborn," "The Sacred Jedi Texts," "The Spark," and "The Supremacy." Available in both piano solo and easy piano arrangements, Hal Leonard editors worked closely with John Williams on the arrangements, ensuring *Star Wars* fans have a songbook accurately reflecting the score as it's heard in the film. The piano solo arrangements are available for \$17.99, while the easy piano arrangements are available for \$16.99.

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

**Kid's Ukulele Course from Alfred Music**



Alfred's *Kid's Ukulele Course* is for kids ages 5 and up and available in two levels. This fun method teaches how to play songs on the ukulele right away, and the accompanying online audio always lets you hear how the music should sound on any computer or handheld device. Parents can be effective guides through this course, even if they've never had any musical training. This course is also perfect for the classroom. Book 1 songs include "Aloha Oe," "Over the Rainbow," "When the Saints Go Marching In," and more. Book 2's songs include "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," "Aura Lee," "A-Tisket, A-Tasket," and many more.

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

CASES & STANDS

**#1090 Trente LED Lamp from Manhasset Stands**



The #1090 Trente LED Lamp is Manhasset Stands' newest model LED lamp for use on music stands. The lamp includes 30 LED bulbs, which are built into the lamp's housing, offering glare-free lighting and excellent coverage of the full-width of the music stand surface. This new model has three settings - high, low, and off. The two settings of illumination allow more flexibility for the individual needs of musicians. The new lamps fit easily and securely on Manhasset stands and many other models, with ample clearance for taller music scores.

[www.manhasset-specialty.com](http://www.manhasset-specialty.com)

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By Dan Daley

## Another Way of Looking at China

China has occupied a protean place in the business of MI. At times it's been reviled for well-documented and pernicious intellectual property piracy and price cutting, and at other times it's been lauded for mass-producing cost-effective entry-level musical instruments that make decent-or-better-quality instruments accessible to more students and musicians than might otherwise have been able to afford them.

Conversely, musical instruments have had their own perceptual ups and downs in China. The Chinese Communist Party, which rules the country culturally, as well as politically and economically, took a dim view of the electric guitar for decades after the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, and after the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, the central authorities *banned rock music* performances altogether for a time. While that stance has loosened some, the Party has continued to target certain individual Western music artists, such as Jay-Z in 2006 (citing profanity), Oasis in 2009 (alleging due to the band's links to the Free Tibet movement), and Bob Dylan in 2010, viewing him as a one-man counter-revolutionary movement.

But in light of recent political and economic current events, China's profile and influence is only going to increase. So it's worth noting that NAMM has done a lot to tamp down the negatives and accentuate the positives of Chinese MI. It's been working closely with Music China, the country's indigenous MI trade show, for a dozen years now. Anything that fosters musical expression in a place like China is a positive. If anyone doubts that, think about how music was widely credited with bringing down the Soviet Union, which took a similarly dim institutional view of rock & roll. In the early 1960s, then-premier Nikita Khrushchev declared the electric guitar, "an enemy of the Soviet people." In 1989, Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega was holed up in the Vatican's embassy in Panama City, indicted by the U.S. government on charges of drug trafficking and election rigging. He was driven out by a barrage fired through loudspeakers (with the accent on "loud") and featuring songs chosen as much for irony as volume, including "I Fought The Law" by The Clash, "Panama" by Van Halen, U2's "All I Want Is You," and Bruce Cockburn's "If I Had A Rocket Launcher."

Could music have a similarly revolutionary effect on China? *The New York Times* recently wrote about how saxophone manufacturing has transformed a town in northern China. In the course of producing 10,000 saxes a month in over 70 factories in the area,

the instrument – once decried by orthodox Communists as a representation of "decadent" jazz and free expression – has become the city's flagship, played by thousands of citizens. It's made Kenny G an unlikely icon in parts of rural China.

The story underscores how China is changing when it comes to musical instruments. It's now a \$7-billion industry there, growing at a rate of 10 percent in the past five years, according to research from Daxue Consulting, a Chinese market-data firm. More critically, the country's MI manufacturing base now exports only 22.4 percent of its output, down from 70 percent in 2005. That's because China's burgeoning middle class is buying more domestically-made instruments, and those are overwhelmingly Western ones, with the piano and guitar the most popular.

**“In light of recent political and economic current events, China's profile and influence is only going to increase.”**

The MI retail models, however, are radically different. The vast majority of instruments sold in China are through online portals, which have embraced the Amazon model of no-hassle returns. In fact, Daxue Consulting cautions, "Foreign brands wishing to do business in the music instrument market in China would do well to pay attention to the online side of their business to really take advantage of the size of the local market."

There is no shortage of hurdles and barriers – political, economic, and cultural – to doing business in China today, but it's less so than even a dozen years ago. Short of a trade war (which can still happen, given Donald Trump's antipathy towards the Chinese, with tariffs on washing machines and solar panels so far this year) it could become less difficult to do business in and with China. And ironically, it may be music itself that will ultimately help that process along, as it did other challenging authoritarian markets in recent history. The old 1920s song title, "Fifty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong" can be easily adapted to China, where 1.2 billion consumers who want to play what we play can't – or at least, shouldn't – be ignored. PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS

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