

# M M M R

## MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

Est. 1879



**'We Help the World Experience  
the Joy of Making Music'**

**Ron Manus Looks Back on a Century of Alfred Music**



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## C O N T E N T S

# MMMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

Vol. 181 NOVEMBER 2022 No. 10

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Nearly 100 percent of participants in this month's MI retailer poll reported either upwards-trending or level sales of drum heads, when compared to 2021. Live music is, indeed, back!

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## Don't Shoot the Messenger

By  
Christian  
Wissmuller

In both this issue's Roundtable feature exploring the market for studio/recording drum kits and this month's MI retailer survey on the topic of drum head sales, many chimed in on the lingering supply chain challenges impacting our industry. According to some, the grip of these trials is lessening.

"We're experiencing supply chain issues less often compared to a year ago, thank heavens," shares Gretsch Drums brand manager, Andrew Shrev. "However, it still occurs sporadically which is still very frustrating." Mike Petrak of ddrum also feels optimistic about the overall situation improving: "Right now, there seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel. I think and feel, by mid-2023, all supply chain issues will be somewhat back to normal. Maybe not for all industries, but a least MI."

Great news, right?

Unfortunately, inflation (see Menzie Pittman's excellent "Small Business Matters" column in this issue on the topic and how it pertains to retail and music education) looks to be adding to our supply chain woes. On October 28, *Forbes's* David Vallejo wrote, "Inflation is not only driving up the cost of everything, it is also wreaking havoc with long-established ways business leaders understand, plan and forecast product demand, supply chain resources, inventory and cash flow."

And things could get even bleaker, courtesy of increased political tensions. On October 27, industry provider of global supply chain market intelligence, *FreightWaves*, posted the following: "The trans-Pacific trade lane connecting the world's most important countries is a pillar of the global economy. But now it's becoming an epicenter of supply chain, financial, and geopolitical risk."

**“As usual, those vendors and dealers who are prepared, nimble, and creative during times of duress will best weather challenges.”**

During the pandemic, ocean container spot rates rocketed upward from approximately \$1,000 per 40-foot container to nearly \$20,000 last fall before plunging again to \$2,720 last week. Meanwhile, U.S. officials staged visits to Taiwan and took action to further separate the Chinese and American semiconductor sectors. This potent combination of economic, political and military issues will make trans-Pacific business complicated for years to come.

Let that last bit sink in and receive the resonance it merits – "for years to come."

So, what's to be done? Most MI dealers have already adjusted their expectations for delivery times and have been placing orders earlier and in greater quantity, while suppliers are turning, as much as possible, towards in-house and/or domestic production of materials and components, making them less reliant on third-party, overseas sourcing.

In our UpFront Q&A with Pearl River director of Global Sales and Marketing, Leng Tshau, he noted, "We make everything in-house, so we don't have to rely on suppliers, worldwide, which adds to your cost."

DW is also leaning in to practices self-reliance, as explained by executive VP of Sales & Marketing, Jim DeStefano, who says, "We manufacture Collector's & Performance Series drums in our Oxnard shop. For the most part, that production was not adversely affected by supply chain issues."

So, as usual, those vendors and dealers who are prepared, nimble, and creative during times of duress will best weather challenges – however long it takes to return to "normal" (if that ever happens...).

In sunnier news: A reminder to cast your vote for the 2022 *MMR* Dealers' Choice Awards by heading over to [mmrmagazine.com/votedca](http://mmrmagazine.com/votedca). All current subscribers are allowed one ballot and voting will continue until 5pm ET, November 18. Best of luck to all of the deserving nominated brands and instruments!

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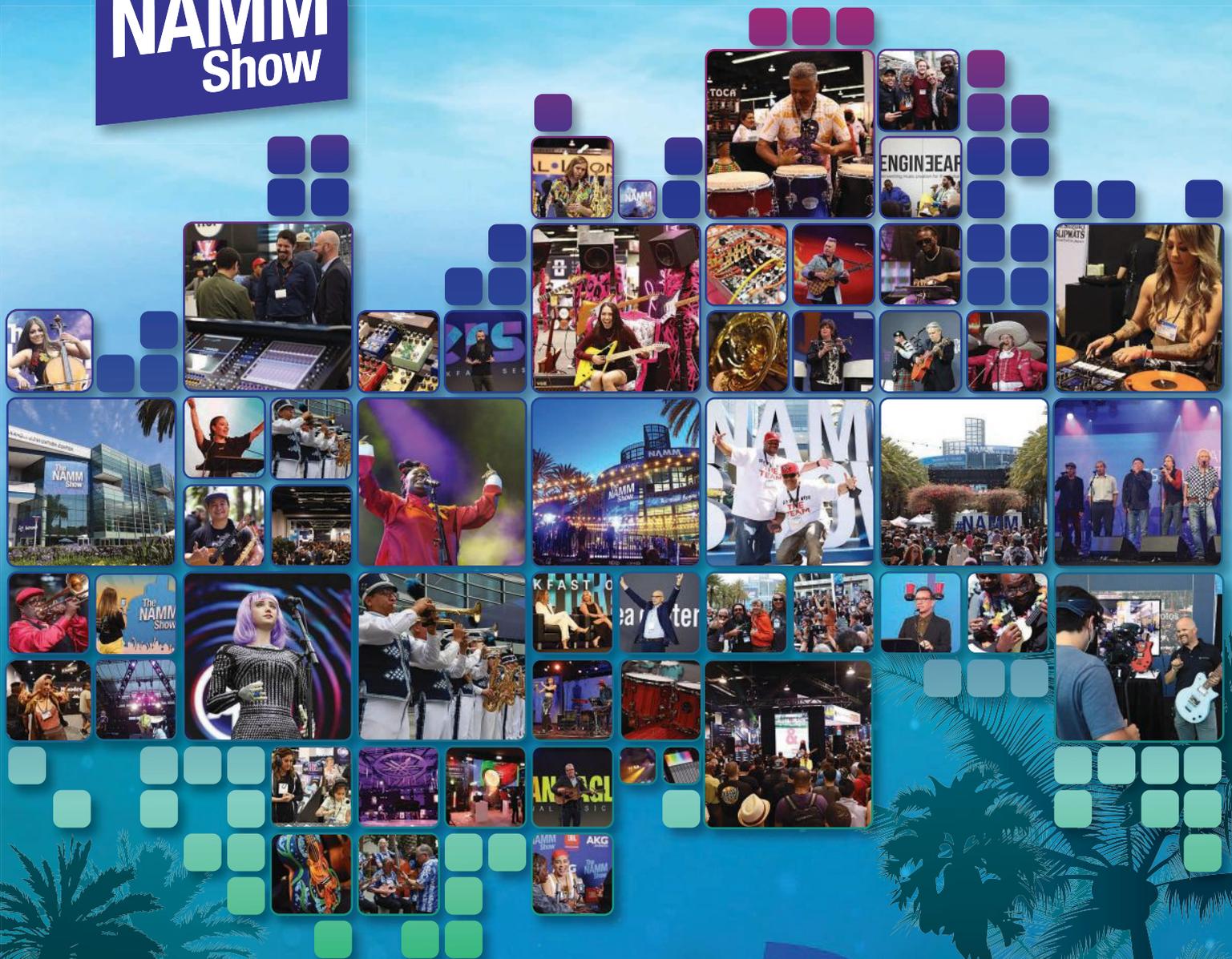
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## Rupp's Drums Set to Expand with Denver Real Estate Purchase

Alex Simpson, owner of independent drum retailer Rupp's Drums, successfully closed on the purchase of 2045 S Holly St. on October 20. The company had been leasing the Denver property for roughly 30 years.

"The modest 2,300 sq. ft building that our customers know and love sits on a lot four times that size (9,200 sq. ft), providing ample opportunity to meaningfully expand our operations and services," said Simpson. "This investment also secures the company's convenient and familiar location in the heart of Denver, allowing us to continue serving Denver-area drummers for decades to come."

Rupp's Drums has been serving drummers in Colorado and across the United States since 1984. Offering new, used and vintage drums, live events, rentals and repairs, the company was purchased by Alex Simpson in April 2018. Rupp's Drums was named a Top 100 Dealer by NAMM (the National Association of Music Merchants) in 2019 and 2021. The company was also recognized by the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce as a Small Business Awards Finalist in 2022.

## NAMM Foundation Gala Featuring Jason Mraz Raises Over \$150,000 to Advance Music-Making

On Sunday, October 16, generous arts, civic, and music patrons gathered to enjoy an evening of musical performance by GRAMMY® award-winning singer-songwriter Jason Mraz. The benefit concert for The NAMM Foundation welcomed patrons at the Belly Up Tavern in Solana Beach, California, and raised over \$150,000, which will help the not-for-profit advance its mission in benefitting music-making opportunities and serving the community at large through its signature program, the Museum of Making Music (MoMM). The NAMM Foundation advances active participation in music-making across the lifespan through scientific research, philanthropic giving, and public service programs such as the NAMM Museum of Making Music.

Patrons of the evening enjoyed a ninety-minute performance of inspiring musicianship spanning Mraz's discography of hits. The set started with a chart mover from his early career with "Make it Mine," followed by 2020's "Look for the Good," the title track from an album in which Mraz donated all royalties to a variety of charities. Mraz closed the set with "Have it All," a song to inspire life's limitless possibilities of hope, togetherness, affection, friendship, and more.

Donations raised at the gala will help support the NAMM Foundation's efforts to advance music-making as well as the Museum Making Music's year-round mu-

sic-making opportunities. The MoMM presents exhibitions that celebrate music-making in its many aspects and encourages visitors to find their own place in the world of music. The MoMM hosts thousands of school-aged children each year, many from Title I schools, for tours that provide educational enrichment. Its North Coast Strings and New Horizons Band programs, musical ensembles designed to be an entry point for adults, are also hosted and organized by the museum along with Community Music Making Days, Special Exhibitions, and live performances that celebrate connectivity through music. Other MoMM galas have presented notable names, including Emmylou Harris, Graham Nash, and Mavis Staples.

Late last year, the MoMM celebrated its reopening after an extensive renovation, the first major redesign after the MoMM's founding in 2000.

The gala event was made possible by generous contributions from the Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Fund; Aaron Chang Ocean Art Galleries; Alesmith Brewing Company; Burger Construction; Deering Banjos; Henry Diltz; Exclusive Networks; Hilton San Diego Bayfront; Gary and Jerri-Ann Jacobs; Rosemarie Kubes; The Lamond Family Fund; Evelyn Lipson; Philip and Melane Lurie; Morrison Hotel Gallery; San Diego Firefighters Association; Sanford Radom, M.D.; Taylor Guitars; ZUZA Print; and others.

## Schmitt Music Hosts Grand Opening of Flagship Store and HQ in Bloomington, MN

Schmitt Music Company hosted a Nov. 1 public grand opening of its new flagship retail showroom and office at 7800 Picture Drive in Bloomington, MN, the former home of Lifetouch. A private VIP celebration was held on Oct. 29 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., with a more formal public grand opening scheduled for Dec. 10.

Visitors to the expansive 92,000 square-foot showroom find specialty shops that have been designed to reflect the 'personality' of each instrument. The rooms include the Saxophone Shop, Flute Gallery, Trombone Shop, Trumpet Shop, Clarinet Gallery, The Paul A. Schmitt Violin Shop, named in honor of the company's founder, and the Steinway & Sons Spirio Lounge. They will also be able to attend recitals, rehearsals and masterclasses in an acoustically designed concert hall with seating for 100 people and take advantage of expert or instrument-specific repair services.

Peter Schmitt, the fifth-generation CEO of the 126-year-old, family-owned business, selected Minneapolis-based Shea to reimagine the space. "Our new building provided the opportunity to rethink our music retail environment to not only house Schmitt's business for the next 126 years, but also foster the connections – with each other, our customers and community – that are the founding heritage and enduring legacy of our company," said Schmitt. "Customers will continue to find that our instrument departments are headed by extraordinary people with the dedication and expertise needed to respond to inquiries and performance needs."

Shea, a multi-disciplinary design firm behind many of the most captivating and contemporary retail and hospitality environments in the Twin Cities, approached the project by creating a store-within-a-store experience. "Our expertise is in creating great guest experiences," said

Kim Aune, senior vice president, principal. "We are delighted to have partnered with Schmitt in designing a destination that is welcoming, inspiring, accessible and memorable for every musical interest, from first-time musicians and students to music educators and professional musicians." In addition to the building's redesign, Shea took a holistic approach to refreshing the company's logo and brand identity to reflect not only its heritage but also to launch its next generation in a more contemporary manner.

"Schmitt Music has always been about more than selling instruments and lessons," said Schmitt. "With our new flagship store, we are expanding upon our commitment to provide customers and community with a space to explore and pursue their musical dreams. We remain dedicated, just as my great-grandfather was when he opened our first store in 1896, to helping people make music."

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Sam Manus



Iris and Morty Manus



Iris and Ron Manus

## Ron Manus Looks Back on a Century of Alfred Music

By ChristianWissmuller

Few organizations of any type can boast of 100 years of innovation, industry-leading products, and uninterrupted dedication to a clear mission statement. Alfred Music can lay claim to all of those accomplishments – and more – and 2022 has seen the company celebrating its first century of supporting music education through celebrated methods and reference materials geared towards music scholars and instructors of all types and skill levels.

MMR recently chatted with Alfred Music chief business development officer Ron Manus about the significant milestones, commitment to the music industry, and current initiatives that have defined the business and which position Alfred for another 100 years (or more) of continued success.

### Let's talk a bit about the origins of Alfred Music: how did "Manus Music" go about acquiring Alfred & Co. and what was behind the decision to rebrand as "Alfred Music"?

The question I get asked the most is, "Who's Alfred?" It turns out it is a pretty interesting story.

A little background: my grandfather Sam Manus immigrated to the USA in 1903. He was 20 years old and from Odessa in what was then Russia. He was a violist and played with various symphonies in Boston and New York. In 1922 he started Manus Music based in Tin Pan Alley, focusing primarily on popular sheet music. In 1930 as the depression grabbed hold, most people were struggling, but Sam saw this as an opportunity.

A retailer in NYC called "Orchestral Music Supply" was having financial problems and owed Manus Music more than they could pay. Sam suggested a deal, he forgives the debt, and Sam would pay some additional cash to purchase their other business, which happened to be a small publishing brand, Alfred & Company



(named after its owner Alfred Hasse), which had some attractive copyrights. Sam now owned two brands. Instead of keeping both names, he combined them and rebranded them as Alfred Music, in part because he liked that Alfred would always be first alphabetically in the displays. Also, Manus was his truncated name, originally Manneschewitz, which didn't really roll off the tongue.

**Can you describe the original headquarters?**

Alfred Music was originally located at 145 W 45th Street, on the 6th floor. We remained there until 1963, when we moved to a much larger space in Port Washington, NY. My dad said in the early 1950s, there were five employees, including warehousing and shipping. In 1950 the office space was about 2,000 square feet. In 1940, the total income was \$15,740, growing to \$29,316 by 1949.

Year	Dom. S.	For S.	Royal	Yearly Totals					
				Tot inc.	Adv	Cir	Pure	Print	ARR
1940	8519		7221	15 740	1441	296	593	3408	251
1941	10022		6360	16382	1262	520	737	2065	441
1942	8396		7550	15 946	766	487	782	2471	405
1943	8672		3967	12 639	577	411	885	1243	94
1944	10876		5361	16 237	759	301	1760	1728	88
1945	14159	2962	3696	20 817	1609	252	1555	3919	234
1946	16992	7259	5502	29 753	2644	426	3754	4232	500
1947	20210	5054	9950	35 214	2690	384	3520	3201	527
1948	16399	3605	8936	28 940	1967	393	2220	4519	479
1949	22280	1938	7428	29 316	1967	1076	2758	5127	604

**Bringing us to the present day, how many are currently employed at Alfred? Can you describe the 2022 headquarters and other facilities?**

Alfred moved into the new Peaksware offices in Louisville, Colorado, in 2021. The new Peaksware office has many great features, including music, photography, and video studios; an athletic performance and recovery center; a full hot and cold kitchen; tech-enabled conference rooms; and workspaces suited to a variety of productivity styles. My favorite part is the break room. It's the largest space in the building, with indoor and outdoor seating. And the best part, it's got 24/7 access to beer, kombucha, and cold brew. We think it brings a little of the comfort of home into a great work environment. The new offices are over 47,000 square feet, and we have more than 260 employees, stretching across the Peaksware family of companies.

**100 years is a significant – and rarely achieved – corporate milestone, but to remain within the same family is even more impressive. Could you walk us through the Manus family involvement in the company, from Sam to Morty and Iris and yourself?**

It is fantastic to be a part of this. It's been a fairly simple timeline. As I mentioned earlier, Sam Manus started the company in 1922 and built it into a nice pop sheet music company. Sam had a stroke in 1949, which threw his son Morty into running the business, having just graduated from college (after serving in the air force during WWII). Morty reinvented the company in the 1950s. Inspired by the need for quality music education products, Morty, a clarinetist and pianist, oversaw the development of an instructional series for accordion, followed by books for guitar, piano, and recorder. Alfred Music was now more than just a pop sheet music publisher; the company was taking its first steps to become the leader in music education. Also, during this time, Morty met Alfred's bookkeeper, Rose's daughter Iris and a romance bloomed (see what I did there?). In 1963 the company

moved to a much larger facility out on Long Island in Port Washington at 75 Channel Drive.

With Morty and Iris running the business, Alfred grew significantly over the next two decades and eventually exceeded the capacity of its New York headquarters. In 1976, the main office moved to Los Angeles, and the distribution center moved to upstate New York. I shared Iris & Morty's vision for the company and joined Alfred full-time in 1988, and my older brother Steve joined the company in 1992. During the next decade, Alfred grew internationally, establishing offices in Australia, Germany, Singapore, and the UK. In 2005 Steve and I became the owners. In 2007 Steve began to step away from the business, and in 2009 I became the sole owner.

**Alfred Music has long distinguished itself from other print music publications with a strong emphasis on the importance of supporting and encouraging music education. What was behind the company's focus on academic music studies?**

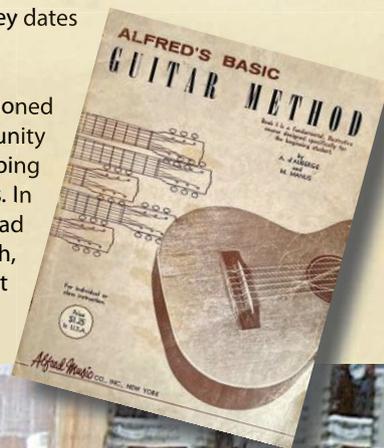
It is about having a healthy ecosystem for our music industry. The better quality of music education we can provide to a beginner, the more musicians we have – not just for this semester but for a lifetime. If we can make those first few months a little better/easier/fun and help get students past the most challenging steps, we have created lifelong musicians. Alfred's been extremely fortunate to work with incredible authors, composers, arrangers, and editors who created amazing content. And as we know, music makes us smarter, and better students make smarter people who can make better decisions. The world is a better place when we have more musicians. A focus on music education inspired our mission statement; We help the world experience the joy of making music.

**When looking back at the past 100 years, what would you consider to be some of the most significant developments and achievements at Alfred – groundbreaking releases, corporate partnerships, acquisitions, etcetera?**

There are so many, but a few key dates come to mind:

**1955 - Alfred's Basic Guitar**

Timing is everything. As mentioned earlier, Morty saw a real opportunity to grow the business by developing quality music education products. In the early 1950s, the company had focused on accordion music, which, believe it or not, was super-hot then. Morty didn't love the accordion or its music. He saw guitar



Morty and Alfred d'Auberge in 1958

# anniversary

music catching on with recent hits by people like Hank Williams, Les Paul, Elmore James, John Lee Hooker, Bill Haley & His Comets. Morty felt a lot of energy and excitement with this new music, so he began working on a guitar method with Alfred d'Auberger, with whom he had written a recorder book. (If you're getting dizzy with the name 'Alfred' you're not alone.) The timing of the release of the book was perfect, and its release coincided with the birth of rock music. The book went through several cover changes over the first five years, but the book took off and has been one of our most successful series to this day. The book is now in its third edition, but the basic structure and bones remain intact.

Willard Palmer with Iris and Morty Manus



## 08/01/1981 – Alfred's Basic Piano Library

In 1981 Alfred had strong instructional methods in most areas, but the one thing we didn't have was a strong piano method, and Morty focused on solving that problem. He did a lot of research and decided that Alfred needed a piano method focused on an interval approach. Morty needed a team to write this, and he first reached out to Willard A. Palmer to be the main composer and collaborator. Willard then suggested adding Amanda Vick Lethco to the team as she was an influential educator. With that, the team was in place, and over the next ten years, they grew *Alfred's Basic Piano Library* to have seven levels, a prep course, and an adult method. The series now has over 250 titles and has been updated several times, but 40 years later, it is still one of the best-selling piano methods in the world.

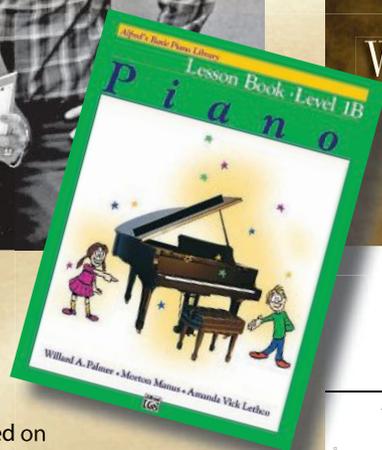
## 01/15/1994 – Earthquake

A funny thing happened on the way to the NAMM show in 1994. Let me set the stage. Most of us know what the week of NAMM is like. For those exhibiting at NAMM, it is a massive undertaking with months of planning. On the Monday of NAMM week, you begin the annual migration to Anaheim by making the final preparations. Because we are within driving distance of the show, we start loading our vehicles on Monday.

It was Monday, January 17th, 1994, just three days until NAMM. I planned to head to the Alfred headquarters in Northridge first to load up the car with new products and begin driving down to set up our booth. At 4:30 am, I awaken to violent shaking. Having grown up in LA, this was nothing new, but it kept going and was more violent than usual. I knew this was a big one when I began climbing over my knocked-over dresser to get to the doorway for safety. After the shaking stops and things seem ok, the next thing is to see if you get the news to find out where the epicenter is and how bad

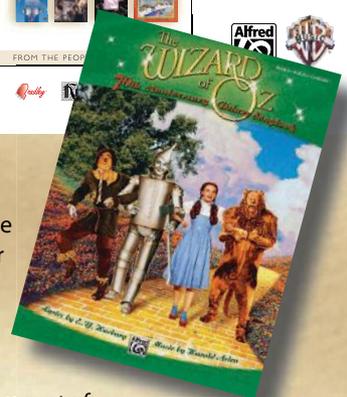
this is. I found out that the earthquake was a 6.7 magnitude and in Northridge, where our offices are. With all the power out, including street lights, it wasn't easy getting any info, but we soon learned that our building was devastated and was 'red flagged', meaning it was unsafe to enter. What happened next is what makes this story one of our greatest moments.

Our team came together, and it was legendary how we all worked closely to come up with solutions. There was never a thought of giving up. We set up our temporary offices in the parking lot next to our building. We moved into four or five trailers with something like 65 people crammed into tight quarters with fancy port-a-potties with running water, and everyone celebrated each other like never before. We built Café Ron next to the trailers and made the best of it. We showed up at the NAMM show with what we had access to and made mock-ups from printouts. If you had come to our booth, you wouldn't have known there was a problem. In hindsight, we only survived that because of our staff's fantastic spirit and hard work, who believed in what Alfred does and the importance of music education.



## 06/01/2005 – Warner Bros Publications Acquisition

In 2004 we heard a rumor that one of our biggest competitors Warner Bros Publications, was on the market. The larger company, Warner Music Group, was re-positioning itself for an IPO, and for whatever reason, they felt like the print division wasn't an attractive part of that. We filled out the paperwork and NDAs to be in the negotiating pool of companies considering the purchase. At first, we thought, "what are we doing? This is too big for us", and maybe it was, but it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Warner's rich history included a collection of many impressive catalogs. Some highlights include the rights to the EMI Catalogue Partnership and the print publishing rights of legendary publishers such as M. Witmark & Sons, Remick Music Corp., and T.B. Harms, Inc. Among the vast EMI holdings are the Robbins and Leo Feist catalogs, film music from United Artists, MGM, and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, including *The Wizard of Oz*, *Singin' in the Rain*, and many others. It also began a long-term relationship with Warner/Chappell. All of this gave us access to pop copyrights for the first time since our early days. In addition to all of these pop copyrights were also iconic educational works like the Suzuki and Belwin catalogs. If all of that wasn't enough, as we got really serious about finding a way to make this deal work, we began meeting with the staff, which was the tipping point. We met so many passionate and impressive folks that we wanted on our team.



We made the deal, and I am happy to say we still have some of those employees working alongside us 17 years later!

**The collaboration with Peaksware Holdings is still relatively recent. What was behind that move and how has Alfred Music evolved in the subsequent years?**

The partnership with Peaksware really began way back in 1995 when we started licensing content for use in SmartMusic, back then, it was called Vivace. We love partnering with people who bring real innovation and quality. Over the years, we have continued to grow our partnership, and in 2012 Alfred became the distributor for Finale. In 2015, Alfred needed a boost in our technology and infrastructure, we were looking for a partner to join forces with, and our first call was to what is now Peaksware. It has been an excellent partnership for both companies. Alfred's strength has always been creating the best educational content, which continues to be our focus. Peaksware places a high value on quality content across all of its platforms. When we think about print and digital, we think of the products reinforcing and enhancing each other. Sometimes a printed book is the easiest way to access music, and sometimes you want the digital or the SmartMusic platform's ability to assess performance and sight reading. All of it makes for a better music education experience and opens the doors to help music makers start a lifetime of making music.

**How has Alfred been observing this major milestone?**

We've been celebrating the 100th anniversary all year! It is crazy, but even though we had 100 years to plan this, the pandemic kind of forced us to celebrate in lots of little ways. Examples include the "Celebrating a Century" ad campaign with the "100" made up of our best-loved print products. Our performance music catalog covers were intentionally designed with the 1920s in mind to honor Alfred Music's roots. We created a special 100th Anniversary video and a 100th logo that we are showing off in all our marketing in 2022 – website, social media, emails, and a dedicated hero tile/slider on alfred.com. We've created pins, notepads, and special signage at events, and one of the most notable events was the AWESOME cake and beer celebration at NAMM.

**With a century of celebrated work behind it, what are Alfred Music's expectations and goals for the coming years?**

Iris and Ron Manus celebrate Alfred Music's 100th Anniversary at the 2022 NAMM Show



Alfred will continue to do what it has always done, focusing on making the best educational products. We work in all mediums to deliver our educational message and customize the educational content to take advantage of what each medium offers. We get excited about all the ways of providing cutting-edge content! Looking back, we have used every format and technology available to provide the best experience for the end user. We have used, Flexi-disks, cassettes, CDs, VHS tapes, Blu-ray, and now streaming, and we will continue to evolve. In addition, teaming up with SmartMusic, the first and leading digital education platform that uses assessment, sight reading and features the best play-along tracks you have ever heard. Alfred has thrived for a century by evolving and changing. We think the future will be an exciting place to learn, teach, and play! 🎵

# MMR

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## Pearl River's Leng Tshua 'Everybody Can Afford to Buy a Good Piano'

By Christian Wissmuller

China's largest piano manufacturer since 2000 and the world's best-selling piano, period – you might think such achievements would be enough for Pearl River Piano Group (Pearl River, Ritmüller, and Kayserburg) to be a household name. Indeed, it has long been precisely that, globally, with the notable exception of the U.S.

That's been changing in the past couple years, however, as Pearl River has reached out to the American MI market in a number of significant ways. In fact, since the restructuring of the company's U.S. distribution in 2020, the Kayserburg brand is now the fastest-growing in the nation.

We recently sat down with Leng Tshua, director of Global Sales and Marketing, and David Davis of MCD Advertising & Design to discuss Pearl River's stateside expansion, upgrades in communication with the Pearl River dealer network, new model introductions, and much more.

**Let's start by talking about the 2020 restructuring of Pearl River's U.S. Division: What was the catalyst behind the move? What are some subsequent benefits as it pertains to American MI retailers?**

Most people base their impression of our company on experiences from 20 years ago. We want to correct that full force. One of the best ways is to say we would like to invite like-minded dealers to connect with us directly through the factory. That means the dealer now has full access to the updated information, product lines, and everything else that we can communicate with them. Since 2020, I've focused in the U.S. market because I felt I needed to restructure this. So, in not even two years' time, we have seen really good movement, and it's working very well for everybody, especially the dealers. The dealers now have access to 100 percent of our products.

**And they didn't previously?**

Previously, they had access to about 30 percent. We decided to make the entire Kayserburg line and the new Ritmüller (RS and RSH models) plus the Pearl River Prestige Series, directly available to our retailers. Meanwhile, Pearl River had been developing so much more in Asia, in Europe, but nobody in America knew about it. Case in point: the Kayserburg. Our Kayserburg International Youth Piano Competition is now the world's largest. In 2021, the world participation of that competition was over 100,000 students.

**Wow. That's massive!**

And nobody here knows about it. The funny thing is that when I first approach people here, they say, "Kayserburg? That's an unknown name." So, we want to correct that, to make people understand that Kayserburg is very well-known and respected internationally and represents a premium brand in the Pearl River family.

**Within the larger Pearl River Piano Group umbrella, am I correct in understanding that Kayserburg is the brand that is taking hold in the most impactful way in the U.S. market thus far?**

Yes. It's now the fastest growing piano brand in the United States. This is the type of instrument that really is a home run in every aspect. This is a hand-built piano, and has a history of success worldwide. The rest of the world is selling Kayserburg as a top brand. Now that the dealers have a chance to work with us directly, they're amazed by the advantage of direct factory cost to them, which means the dealer can make a really good profit. That's because our factory is one of the very few that's completely sustainable and vertically integrated, which is the most cost-effective way of manufacturing. We make everything in-house, so we don't have to rely on suppliers, worldwide, which adds to your cost. We even have our own lumber yard – a million square feet, separate facilities. From start to finish, we process the wood right there. Doing everything in-house, as you know, is part of being the most cost-effective. And then on top of that, we have the world's largest volume: 150,000 units of pianos produced every year. So, the economy of scale all kicks in, and, in the end, we are able to produce a world-class product, but we can make it attractive and affordable, especially to the end user, to the family, to the pianist, to the artists, to the student. Everybody can afford to buy a good piano.

**Is this specific to the Kayserburg brand specifically or also to Pearl River and Ritmüller?**

It's overall. Because, in China alone, every year there are 50 million new customers coming to our market. Well, if you have 50 million customers, would you adopt the policy of saying, "I want to be only focusing on the top one percent" or would you say, "I want to reach as many as possible – and let's think of a way to manage the price point, the operation integrated with the economy of scale, and then we can service the community," Of course, we chose the latter.

**I would imagine keeping so much in-house has mitigated supply-chain challenges somewhat for Pearl River. To what degree are you having problems with international shipping and sourcing materials?**

The only thing that is out of our hands is, of course, the international shipping. We even make our own piano hammers now, the PR 2.0s, which have been a great success. We process all the parts, including the soundboard and all that. Then we have a local chain supply of plates manufacturers within our reach and, in any case, we are their largest customer, so we always get top priority.

**So when dealers are working with Pearl River, they're going to get what they ordered within a reasonable span of time.**

And we're shipping directly, if the dealer is willing to give us some advance notice and help us plan their stock requirements. Even nowadays, we mostly look at a delivery time of between six to eight weeks. We're also working differently with our dealers when it comes to marketing. David Davis and MCD Advertising have been working with Pearl River for many years. They were somewhat unknown until recently, but MCD is now working directly with our retailers, which they find very exciting. We have five websites: three here in the U.S. that were recently relaunched, one in Germany, and one for Pearl River Piano Group is specifically designed for the whole world. When we post news, the dealers here can see it immediately. We are advertising in 112 countries and there's total transparency with dealers. Then, we have Facebook, we have two YouTube channels – one in Europe, one here. Dealers like it because we're doing everything we can to help raise awareness, and promote them through social media. This is the new way of doing business today.

**What introductions or events do you have coming up in the U.S.? What are your plans for NAMM 2023, for example?**

Due to COVID restrictions, our executives could not travel here from China. However, this past year we did the NAMM Show successfully, thanks to David Davis and his team. Regarding next year's NAMM Show, I can only say, "Just wait and see." We also want to make dealers and players aware of the Kayserburg Competitions. Last year, we got Americans involved in a very small way as a test market, but in 2023 we plan a proper major launch for the entire North America.

David and I are working together now to start the KA275 debut here in the U.S. – that's the 9' concert grand, which is the designated piano for the Kayserburg International Finals in Guangzhou. We just launched at Oklahoma Pianos (Metroplex Piano) in Oklahoma, Broken Arrow. And now, the piano's on its way to Nashville.

We're going to do another dealer event there at Miller Piano Specialists. Things are progressing, very, very nicely.

**Is there anything else that you'd like to share with our readers?**

I just want to lightly touch on Pearl River digital products. Right now, we are talking with Piano Marvel. They're huge and very successful in distance learning. And I just want to sort of drop a hint on that because it's still a work in progress. Our products should actually be helpful to students, teachers, and dealers to reach out to a lot of people who are curious, but afraid, to buy

acoustic pianos. So, try it on a digital piano first and see if you enjoy it, you know?

**How would an interested dealer go about partnering with Pearl River? What's the easiest conduit?**

On all of our websites, including Kayserburg, Ritmüller, and [pearlriverusa.com](http://pearlriverusa.com), there is a button for retailers to actually connect with us. Dealers fill in their information, and then we will contact them. We have successfully connected with many dealers through that portal. It is working very well. ☺☺☺

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# ■ roundtable Going

## *on the record* with Drum Kits

### Studio Drum Kit Sales in 2022 By Christian Wissmuller

What precisely defines a “studio drum set,” you ask? For one, engineers tend to prefer a “drier” kit sound, without overtones and room tone. Fair enough, but really what that often equates to is: the best available instrument.

Studio drum sets remain in high demand (big shock), as more and more musicians are finding access to the world of recording – at whatever level. We recently spoke with representatives from some of the major players in this market segment to learn about emerging trends and effective sales tools.

#### For your brand, what are currently the hottest selling acoustic studio drum kits?

**Jeff Mulvihill:** There are two definite answers here: First is our completely custom SQ2 series that has been exceeding expectations all through our global pandemic business, in addition to all of 2022 thus far. Our online configurator gives the user a vast range of choices to design the kit that only dreams are made of, whether that be for a drummer’s playing experience, or for a recording engineer or studio owner. The second answer which I will focus on here is the Sonor Vintage series produced with German Beech shells appointed with rounded bearing edges for a very classic and vintage sound and feel. All these drums are manufactured using the Sonor Optimum Shell Technology producing drum shells with slightly un-

dersized diameters contributing to the magic in the Sonor sound. Vintage series have quickly become a staple in the Nashville Recording scene primarily through the work of A-list recording artist Nir Z. We produced a fantastic series of videos on this series giving the listener a full look at what these drums are capable of with testimony from both Nir and record producer/engineer Joe West.

**Mike Petrak:** For ddrum, many of our artists and customers who are looking for a studio kit turn to our Dios series drums. The Dios series includes thin, all maple shells that really resonant and have that tried-and-true maple tone many studio players look for.

**Andrew Shrev:** USA Custom. It’s still recognized as one of most sought-after drum kits for studio use.

**Jim DeStefano:** Within the DW Brand, we have three series of drums (Collector’s Series, Performance Series, and Design Series). Each of the series are “studio” quality, so the differentiator is your ability to customize your choice and their respective price points. Performance and Design Series are all maple shell drums. They do have different shell layouts, that contribute to their tonal character.



“Barring a significant change to the economy, the drum business should keep on rolling.”  
– Jim DeStefano, Executive Vice President of Sales & Marketing, DW





“When looking for high-end studio kits, the consumer needs to be able to hear and experience a variety of drums and receive enlightened information about them.”

– John Palmer, Strategic Sales Manager for Drums/Band & Orchestra Percussion, TAMA



Collector's Series offers the most options. Within the Collector's Series, all maple shells are our largest segment, but Maple Mahogany; Purple Heart, and Birch are also popular choices, due to their unique tonal characteristics and how they perform under the mics.

**John Palmer:** Historically, these tend to be our upper-end series; including original Imperialstar's from the 1970s and original Superstar's from the 1980s. We continue with this philosophy for today's studios with our upper-end drums: STAR, Starclassic Maple and Starclassic Walnut/Birch being most utilized in recording studios today. An important design spec in the STAR and Starclassic drums is die-cast hoops, which are equipped on each of these series'. Die-cast hoops tend to reduce overtones, which tends to benefit studio microphone applications.

**JM:** The Black Panther Design Lab Versatus kit continues to impress engineers and producers in the studio. Mapex is known for blended hybrid shell technology and these drum shells are a blend of Maple and Mahogany enhancing and blending the best qualities that both of those tone woods are known for into one beautiful sound. This shell recipe coupled with the SAS (Soniclear Attenuation System) Ring System are really the secrets to the sauce here. Rather than using "reinforcement" rings solely for the purpose of keeping thin-shelled drums round, Mapex focuses on how the use of rings and their unique placement can affect the sonic character of the instrument. Recording artist Russ Miller has built up an impressive list of credits that these drums have appeared including album and movie sessions at a remarkably high level.

**Terry Bisette:** This is a tough one to answer. Our best-selling series by far and above is our Classic Maple series. This has been our strongest category for the last 20 plus years... That being said, specifically in the context of Studio and Recording applications, many are drawn to our Legacy series. It's a very different shell design and delivers a very solid traditional sound. A sound you can depend on, a sound you've heard on tens of thousands of records. While Classic Maple is our primary "workhorse" series, the Legacy series delivers a "little something extra" under the microphone.

**Have you been noticing any trends of late when it comes to these types of drums? What are end-users looking for, specifically, when it comes to kits for studio/recording use?**

**JP:** It depends on the music... certainly there has been a return to a "low-fi" sound in some genres, including Indie Pop and Neo Soul. What I'm hearing in those genres (and others) is a lot of muted tones, achieved by liberal use of external dampening on drum heads. I believe it is important to start with an excellent fundamental drum tone, then modify as needed from there. You can always moderate tone and sustain, but you can't add them in as easily.

**TB:** In recent years, more shallow bass drums (14" depth) and "standard" size toms. Power-toms and extra-long bass drums went the way of the dinosaur many years ago. I also notice engineers are wanting to hear warmer tones. Not only in drums, but in cymbals as well. Our Legacy Mahogany series fits the bill perfectly. It's a little warmer and darker than our Legacy Maple series. Not to be confused with "dull," by any means. If anything, Legacy Mahogany delivers a pronounced rich tone with a lot of body. More "oomph" if such a word exists.

**JM:** End users are looking for a balanced and natural drum sound regardless of the tuning range. At one time in the industry the race was on for the ultimate in mounting systems that would allow as much resonance in drum tone as possible and after achieving that through many different developments, the pursuit became controlling that resonance to achieve the desired balance. Sonor Vintage series has this balanced pre-EQ'd type of character in any tuning range.

**AS:** We been noticing an increasing trend/request for more direct-to-shell mounting on our rack toms. Sonically, (as it pertains to Gretsch USA factory drums), we have not noticed much difference between using GTS mounts vs. Direct-To-Shell. It's ironic how drummers want their toms to have a ton of sustain and in most studio circumstances, engineers and producers apply tape or moon gel to dampen most of the drums anyway.

**JD:** This isn't a new trend, but I think most drummers are biased to smaller sized drums in the studio. I believe you can always tune a smaller drum down to a lower pitch. It typically retains a great resonate quality and the tuning range is flexible. On the other hand,



“The trend in this space has been players and engineers looking for a drum sound that gets in and gets out cleanly without fighting the tuning or struggling with dampening.”

– Jeff Mulvihill, Combo Drum Brand Manager, Sonor Drums; Mapex Drums





“Supply chain for these types of kit was severely affected.”

– Mike Petrak, Brand Director, ddrum



larger drums might be more challenged when tuned higher, as they can choke when tuned up to a higher pitch.

Another consideration when choosing a kit for the studio is shell material. As noted above, some drummers opt for different wood shell species because they are looking for a different tone characteristic. As an example, maple is a very warm resonant wood with a long decay. Birch shells have much quicker resonance, are not as warm and have bright attack. The shell material type is a personal consideration and choice.

**MP:** There are couple of trends that I'm seeing. A lot of players are looking for or using birch shells. The shallower depth bass drums seem to be the way to go now too. As for what users are looking for in a studio kit, they will be looking for a kit that obviously sounds and looks good, but a kit that works in a variety of musical situations. These same users will be looking for a nice snare selection for studio use as well.

**JM:** The trend in this space has been players and engineers looking for a drum

sound that gets in and gets out cleanly without fighting the tuning or struggling with dampening. Mapex responds with drums that are engineered for this purpose from the instrument in a ground up, or musical- sound-first principle. This means identifying a sound characteristic or goal to reach through drum design, rather than simply making “the most resonant” or the “perfect maple sound” both ideas which have been pursued endlessly.

**Supply-chain issues remain a challenge for many. To what degree is the production acoustic studio drum kits being impacted?**

**JD:** We manufacture Collector's and Performance Series drums in our Oxnard shop. For the most part, that production was not adversely affected by supply chain issues. Our Design kits are imported and in the height of the pandemic experienced a fair amount of delay, mainly due to transportation / shipping bottlenecks. For the most part that has returned to normal.

**AS:** We're experiencing supply chain

issues less often compared to a year ago, thank heavens. However, it still occurs sporadically which is still very frustrating. We've had situations where delivery for certain customer orders is delayed a couple of weeks because a shipment of a particular drum component has not arrived at the factory... that's so annoying. All in all, we're working through it and Gretsch is grateful that our customers understand this challenge.

**MP:** Supply chain for these types of kit was severely affected. Supply chain issues were not only affecting production of acoustic kits, but for all of our products and all industries for that matter. COVID-19 caused a chain reaction in every sector of the supply chain. At first with all the factories shut down, production was the biggest issue. After that, raw material pricing increased drastically. Then there were shipping issues with the cost of shipping or even obtaining a container. That compounded with the great demand of products during the pandemic put a tremendous strain on the logistics of the supply chain. Right now, there seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel. I think and feel by mid-2023, all supply chain issues will be somewhat back to normal. Maybe not for all industries, but a least MI. Only time will tell.

**JP:** Yes, we have experienced unpredictable times, for sure. How you plan for that? The good news is we have been able to stabilize our production and are back to consistently producing drum sets at this time. Most of the supply chain challenges we needed to work through were for the sub-parts needed to complete a drum set, things like tension rods, hoops and other metal parts. But our product development team reacted to the challenges from the start and worked really closely with our suppliers to minimize delay issues. We still run into some problems here and there, but for the most part, have returned to a more consistent and normalized manufacturing flow.

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“If it takes too long to dial in a great drum sound, you’ve lost the inertia, the momentum, and, sometimes, the battle.”

– Terry Bisette, Director Global Sales & Product Development, Ludwig



**TB:** There have been a few rough moments and bumps in the road over the last two years, but we’ve managed to be relatively unaffected. (DHL loves us. Haha!)

**JM:** On the production side of the business the challenge is volatile raw material prices which make pricing the end user challenging to keep consistent. There have been more industry-wide price increases at odd times over the last couple of years than ever which have been felt differently across the distribution, retail, and consumer sectors. However, that is not the leading challenge right now. The main impact has been the rising and unpredictable cost of sea container freight over the ocean, coupled with extreme delays in truck and rail movement across the U.S. Inflation, labor shortages, war, and increasing fuel costs all play a part here.

**JM:** Rising raw materials cost and continued COVID-19 outbreaks in the manufacturing regions of China have continued to affect production beyond what most consider as the most familiar pandemic period, but the most up-front challenge has been sea freight container prices and trunk/rail challenges once the product hits the U.S.

### What strategies have you observed successful MI retailers adopting when it comes to promoting and displaying these types of kits?

**JM:** In my view the most successful retailers doing well in this space are the ones with a complete and well-rounded approach to business participating in both traditional physical showroom retail, web-based shopping cart style retail, and heavy presence on social networks.

**JP:** When looking for high-end studio kits, the consumer needs to be able to hear and experience a variety of drums and receive enlightened information about them. The best case scenario is to be able to audition the drums, critically listen to them, carefully check how they are put together, how they tune, etc. The best retailers will allow drummers the time and space needed for them to do this. By giving drummers a variety of choice, they provide drummers different brands and different series’ to allow them to really explore options. To have detailed informa-

tion about drum specifications and sounds that can be achieved with each drum set is also super valuable. The better a sales person is informed, the more they can gain trust with the drummer/consumer to help them find the most appropriate kit to their needs. Bottom line, the more drum set options and information the retailer can have, the more informed choice the consumer can make.

**TB:** Retailers that are full line stores and offer recording gear use their intimate knowledge in engineering to champion our Legacy kits. That seems to move the needle with studios and churches. They strive for the “best of the best” sound and an instrument that is easy to mic up and roll with. If it takes too long to dial in a great drum sound, you’ve lost the inertia, the momentum, and, sometimes, the battle.

**MP:** Retailers usually do promotions to help sell drum sets. Promotions can be a partnered effort or retailers doing their own thing. Some examples are: Free shipping, free add on tom with purchase of a shell pack or even doing an exclusive configuration or color. Also, with today’s new, information and content consumed on social media, it’s important to have a solid footprint on all platforms to ensure your products are being seen. This is important for both the manufacturer and retailer.

**AS:** I feel there’s two important methods for promoting kits for studio/recording use. The first is an audio/video presentation that various dealers already conduct for their websites and social media platforms. The second is to display the kit on their showroom floor and not stack them or display it 10 high where you can’t physically sample the kit. Nothing beats physically playing and hearing a USA Custom kit. Once you do, you immediately understand why they are the preferred choice for studio/recording use.

**JD:** The use of social media and YouTube videos have contributed greatly to the promotion of all drum kits. When it comes to presentations, several of our dealers create unbelievably great content that showcases the sonic differences between different shell types. Some of the best videos include room vs direct mics that highlight and accentuate the audible differences. Consumers appreciate these presentations, and it really sets the dealers apart.

**JM:** The most successful strategy that I have seen with these kits has been through retailers that have the willingness and capability to understand some of the revolutionary technologies associated with Mapex Black Panther Design Lab drums. Talking with customers about the afore-mentioned SAS sonic ring system, the atten-



“Gretsch turns 140 and we’ll be introducing a very special drum kit to celebrate our ‘double platinum’ anniversary... stay tuned.”

– Andrew Shrev, Brand Manager, Gretsch



uating floor tom legs, the SAS finish scale as it pertains to sound, the MAATS mount technology and further BPDFL innovations for even just a few minutes can make the difference in showing just how incredible they really are.

**Does your brand have any recent or upcoming studio drum kit models you'd like to draw MMR readers' attention to?**

**MP:** Yes, we just release our new Dominion Birch kits. They look and sound amazing, not to mention a great price point especially with everything on the rise. Please check out our website and socials for all information on these kits as we will be promoting them in the coming months. These kits also are coming in at a good time since, like I mentioned earlier, many players are looking to birch wood.

**JM:** The most recent addition to the Sonor Vintage series is a Rosewood Semi-Gloss finish that really captures the historic Sonor look that many long-time enthusiasts consider the classic Sonor look.

**AS:** We do not, but next year Gretsch turns 140 and we'll be introducing a very special drum kit to celebrate our "double platinum" anniversary... stay tuned.

**JM:** Later in 2023 we will unveil a new chapter in the BPDFL lineup adding to the Versatus series and the acclaimed Cherry Bomb Series in step with our efforts to produce instruments that cover the entire sonic pallet.

**TB:** Just our current Legacy Maple and Legacy Mahogany series. They're the "tried and true" movers and shakers that have been around for decades in one form or another.

**JD:** I would be remiss if I didn't mention that we are celebrating our 50th Anniversary at DW this year. John Good, our co-founder and, as Neil Peart dubbed, "Wood Whisperer," has just completed a special limited-edition kit offering that will be unveiled at our 50th celebration in November. It will incorporate yet another wood species that we have never used before. Please stay tuned for that.

**JP:** We think our STAR series is really amazing in critical studio environments. We offer shell builds with either Bubinga, Maple or Walnut, all with die-cast hoops. Each of these shells has their own unique sonic attributes. By exploring different drum head options, each of these is capable of a huge array of sounds. We know Starclassic Maple and Starclassic Walnut Birch drums are consistently appreciated in the studio environment, as well. We are constantly exploring and developing new ways to create excitement in these series,

so new products are definitely on the horizon.

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

**JD:** With the significant rise of home recording and social media/YouTube artists, the demand for studio kits for all companies looks optimistic. Barring a significant change to the economy, the drum business should keep on rolling.

**JP:** With the increase of high-end home studio activity during COVID, we believe the studio recording segment will continue to be an active aspiration for many drummers and recording enthusiasts. We love the sonic explorations and creativity we consistently hear from this passionate community. We look forward to continuing to offer the highest quality acoustic drums to inspire these drummers and engineers to explore their most creative options.

**JM:** I am looking at the coming months with let us say "cautious confidence." There is enough demand and respect for the legacy and iconic status of Sonor to continue to claim our share of sales in the market, but I am mindful of the boom we saw last year during, and coming out of,

global pandemic business. Assuming that the market will stay as strong would be a mistake.

**TB:** We expect an uptick in this area. We're seeing more customers strive to upgrade their gear in recent years. Drummers always want to sound better, either in the studio or live. And studios like to promote premium gear on their websites to draw more sophisticated customers.

**MP:** With all the hurdles over the past two years with the pandemic and huge demand for instruments during this time, I see the market slowing down slightly as people begin to get back to their normal routines. I know other segments of the MI industry have really slowed down, almost to a halt, but drums are still going steady. We will keep our fingers crossed!

**JM:** The expectation for this market segment is optimistic but I do not think we will see the same demand as this time last year. Many customers out there are prone to very quick and easily digestible standards in this segment, but those who are truly seeking new, innovative, forward-thinking technology built for a true sound and musical purpose should find that Black Panther Design Lab drums totally deliver. 



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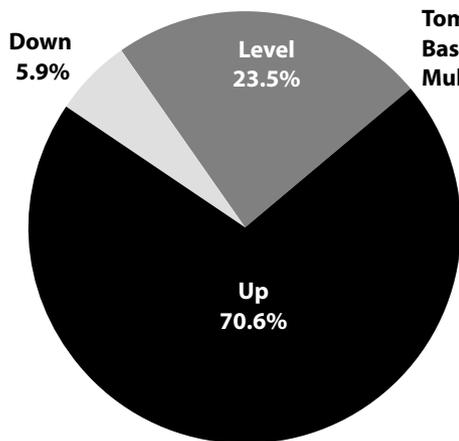
# Bang Your Head!

## Drum Head Sales Soar in 2022 By Christian Wissmuller

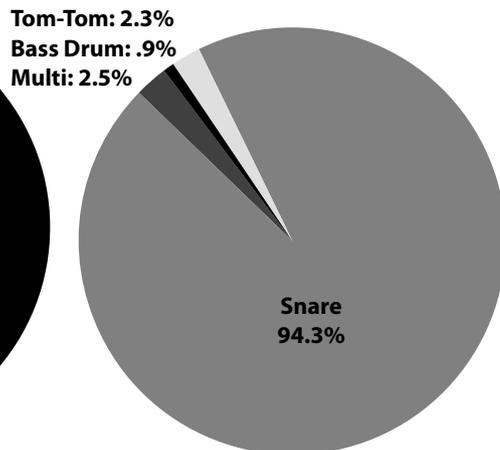
With nearly 100 percent (94.1%) of participants in this month's dealer survey reporting either upwards or level sales trends when it comes to drum heads, it seems inarguable that percussionists are nearly back in full force, post-pandemic. Other trends noted by retailers include continu-

ing supply-chain issues, a predictably high number of snare heads requiring frequent replacement (compared to other drum heads), and the need for knowledgeable sales staff to help guide those musicians who may not be up to snuff on what their precise needs may be.

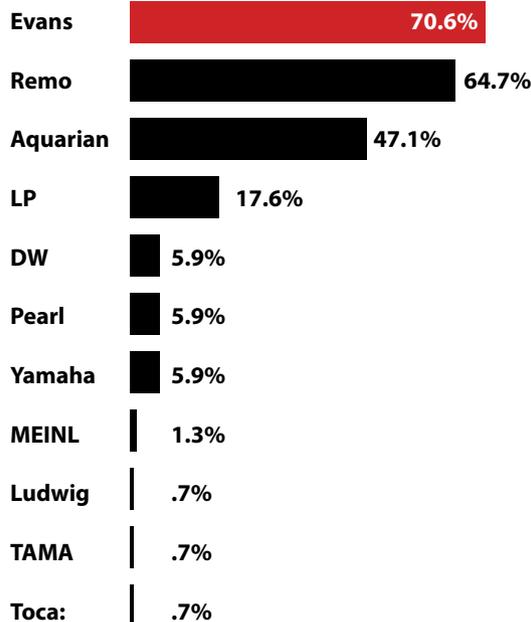
Sales of drum heads, when compared to this time last year, are...



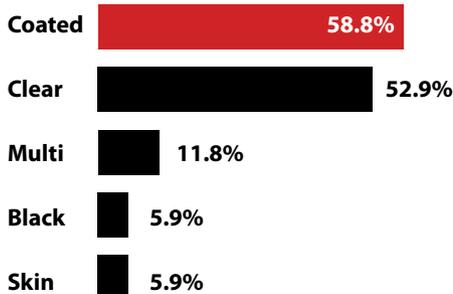
What are the most popular drum heads at your store?



Which brands are generating the most profit for your operation?



What specific head types are the hottest sellers for your business?



"With COVID restrictions lifting this summer, there was an influx in drummers getting out gigging again. I suspect that it will return to pre-2020 numbers next year."  
 - Nori Wentworth, Wentworth Music

### Have you been observing any trends when it comes to these products?

"With COVID restrictions lifting this summer, there was an influx in drummers getting out gigging again. I suspect that it will return to pre-2020 numbers next year."

**Nori Wentworth**  
 Wentworth Music  
 Kelowna, BC, Canada

"Tom pre-packs have become incredibly popular as a cost savings for the end user. Customers are also opening up to new brands, as the fill rate from some suppliers has been strident since the pandemic started."

**Shane Kinney**  
 Drum Center of Portsmouth  
 North Hampton, New Hampshire

"One thing about drummers: they love to

tinker with their set and sound. Sales for drumheads remained constant during the pandemic as drummers experimented with different heads. They remain steady as drummers are playing live again. Most have gone back to the heads they were using pre-pandemic."

**David St. John**  
 Music & Arts  
 Glendora, California

"There are so many different drum heads that customers ask us for our recommendations. We make sure that the customer gets the perfect head pertaining to the type of music they play."

**Mark Bolos**  
 Big Apple Music  
 New Hartford, New York

"People are amazed, yet still unaware of 'silent'/low-volume mesh heads. The majority of drummers don't know much about heads, plys, coatings, sound, tuning."

**Richard "Gus" Guastamachio**  
 Dynamic Percussion  
 East Hartford, Connecticut

"Full sets are on the rise, not just single drums."

**Derek Sharp**  
 Supersonic Music  
 Topeka, Kansas

"We sell marching heads/timpani, drum sets. Haven't sold as many drum set heads."

**Peter Knudson**  
 Drums West/Boomer Music  
 Ft. Collins, Colorado

# For Your Consideration



# The 2022 Dealers' Choice Award Nominees

Submit your vote for the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual MMR Dealers' Choice Awards.  
Only subscribers to *Musical Merchandise Review (MMR)* magazine qualify to participate.

## Product of the Year

- Allen & Heath Avantis V1.2
- Austrian Audio Hi-X65
- Riversong P2P River Pacific
- Yamaha FGC-TA Trans Acoustic Guitar

## Accessory Line of the Year

- D'Addario
- Fender
- On-Stage
- Yamaha

## Acoustic Guitar of the Year

- Martin D-28
- Riversong P2P River Pacific
- Taylor 724ce Grand Auditorium
- Yamaha FG800

## Acoustic Piano Line of the Year

- Kawai
- Pearl River
- Steinway & Sons
- Yamaha

## Amplifier Line of the Year

- Fender
- Marshall
- Positive Grid
- VOX

## B&O Line of the Year

- Buffet Crampon
- Conn-Selmer
- Jupiter
- Yamaha

## Ukulele of the Year

- Kala Archtop
- Luna Great Wave Soprano
- Martin T1K
- Riversong Pacific

## Electric Bass of the Year

- Fender Player Series
- Ernie Ball Music Man StingRay Short Scale
- Warwick Corvette
- Yamaha TRBX174

## Electric Guitar of the Year

- Fender Vintera Telecaster
- Gibson Les Paul Special Tribute
- Riversong T2
- Yamaha Revstar

## Home Digital Keyboard of the Year

- Casio PX-S Series
- Kawai Novus NV5
- Roland LX Series
- Yamaha DGX-670
- 

## Pro Digital Keyboard Line of the Year

- Kurzweil
- Nord
- Roland
- Yamaha

## Lighting Line of the Year

- Blizzard
- Chauvet DJ
- Elektralite
- Gamma

## Sound Reinforcement Line of the Year

- Allen & Heath
- EAW
- Yamaha
- QSC

## Recording Equipment Line of the Year

- Avid
- Focusrite
- PreSonus
- Steinberg

## Print Music Publisher of the Year

- Alfred
- Excelcia Music Publishing
- Hal Leonard
- JW Pepper

## Microphone Line of the Year

- Audio-Technica
- Austrian Audio
- Earthworks
- Shure

## Percussion Line of the Year

- DW
- Pearl
- Slingerland
- Yamaha

Vote online at: [mmrmagazine.com/votedca](http://mmrmagazine.com/votedca)

## ACCESSORIES

### On-Stage's Reusable DG600 Drum Gels Help Drummers Achieve Desired

The Music People, a division of Jam Industries USA, LLC, a leading supplier of musical accessories and pro-audio equipment, and parent company of On-Stage and TMP-Pro, has launched On-Stage's new DG600 Drum Gels, which allows players to dampen resonance, ringing and sustain to achieve the desired drum tone. By placing a gel or multiple gels in various locations on a drumhead, different resonances can be controlled to refine and alter a drum's tone and dampen excessive ringing.

Made using a nontoxic formula for safe handling, the self-adhering gels are easy to apply, reposition and remove without leaving behind a residue. Reusable many times, the DG600's stickiness can be maintained simply by washing them with soap and water when needed. This pack includes six gels and a canister that keeps them clean and protected during transportation.

Full specs:

- Quantity Per Pack: 6
- Color: Black
- Thickness: 3-mm

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



## PRINT & DIGITAL

### Hal Leonard Releases First-Ever Lin-Manuel Miranda Collection

A Pulitzer Prize, Grammy, Emmy, and Tony Award-winning composer, lyricist, and actor, Lin-Manuel is the creator and original star of Broadway's *Hamilton* and *In the Heights*, and is the recipient of the 2015 MacArthur Foundation Award and the 2018 Kennedy Center Honors. Now, one of the most successful and influential composers of our time also has his own song collection in print.



*The Lin-Manuel Miranda Collection* gathers 26 defining selections from his entire career, including never-before-in-print songs from *21 Chump Street* plus selections from *Bring It On*, *Encanto*, *In the Heights*, *Hamilton*, *Moana*, and *Vivo*. The songs are arranged for voice and piano with guitar chord frames.

Songs include: Alexander Hamilton • Breathe • Cousin • Do Your Own Thing • Helpless • How Far I'll Go • In the Heights • Inside Your Heart • Keep the Beat • My Own Drum • My Shot • Surface Pressure • We Don't Talk About Bruno • You'll Be Back • You're Welcome • and more.

The Lin-Manuel Miranda Collection retails for \$29.99.

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

## PIANO & KEYBOARD

### Donner's New DMK-25 Pro Portable MIDI Keyboard

Donner has launched the DMK-25 PRO, an innovative portable MIDI keyboard. Supporting a large variety of popular DAWs in the market, the DMK-25 PRO provides users with a complete music production experience, while also streamlining their workflow.



Features such as Intelligent Dynamic Scale Mode and Real-Time Multi-Mode Control make it easier than ever for users to arrange their music, and the included 16 modal scales let players transition seamlessly between different musical genres, generating an infinite amount of creative possibilities. Other convenient functions, such as arpeggio, note-repeat, and chord functions, are easily manageable for even a novice creator.

Featuring a portable and lightweight design, the DMK-25 PRO fits easily into a backpack. A variety of DAW and USB bus-powered features add to the unit's versatility — making it plug and play ready.

The DMK-25 PRO MIDI keyboard features four innovative wheels, six transport controllers, two touch strips with light scale for pitch bend and modulation, as well as a high-definition OLED display.

Velocity-sensitive keys and eight velocity-sensitive pads are ultra-responsive, creating four exquisite touch-sensitive curves.

The DMK-25 PRO is now available as a bundle with three Steinberg DAWs, including Cubase LE, which is derived from legendary Cubase software line, WaveLab LE, for mastering, and Cubasis LE, the iOS version of Cubase LE. Customers of the following Donner's devices are eligible for the full bundle of Steinberg software.

Donner DMK 25-Pro Specifications:

Number of Keys: 25

Key Size: Mini

Controls: Pitch bend and modulation touch strips, 8 backlit pads, 4 assignable knobs, 4 assignable sliders, 8 function buttons, 6 transport buttons, OLED display for visual feedback.

Connectivity: USB Type-C, 3.5MM Jack MIDI out

Dimension: 337X183X26 MM

Weight: 0.68kg

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

## FRETTED

### Dean Guitars Unveils Exile X Floyd Satin White

Dean Guitars introduces the Exile X Floyd Satin White, delivering intense shredability at an affordable price. This latest addition to Dean's X-Series features DMT Designed High Output Zebra Pickups for excellent sonic performance, a Floyd Rose FR20 Tremolo system for added stability, and an eye-catching Satin White finish. From top to bottom, the Exile X Floyd Satin White is built to be bold and brutal but arrives in style and class.

Dean's new X-Series offers all the high-quality features and aesthetics of the brand's high-end models, but at a price point any player can afford. The Exile X Floyd Satin White is built with an eastern mahogany body on a standard 25.5-inch scale and features a high-access neck-through-heel joint that allows players to reach every note. Players are also assisted by the top arm cut, which further improves ergonomics.

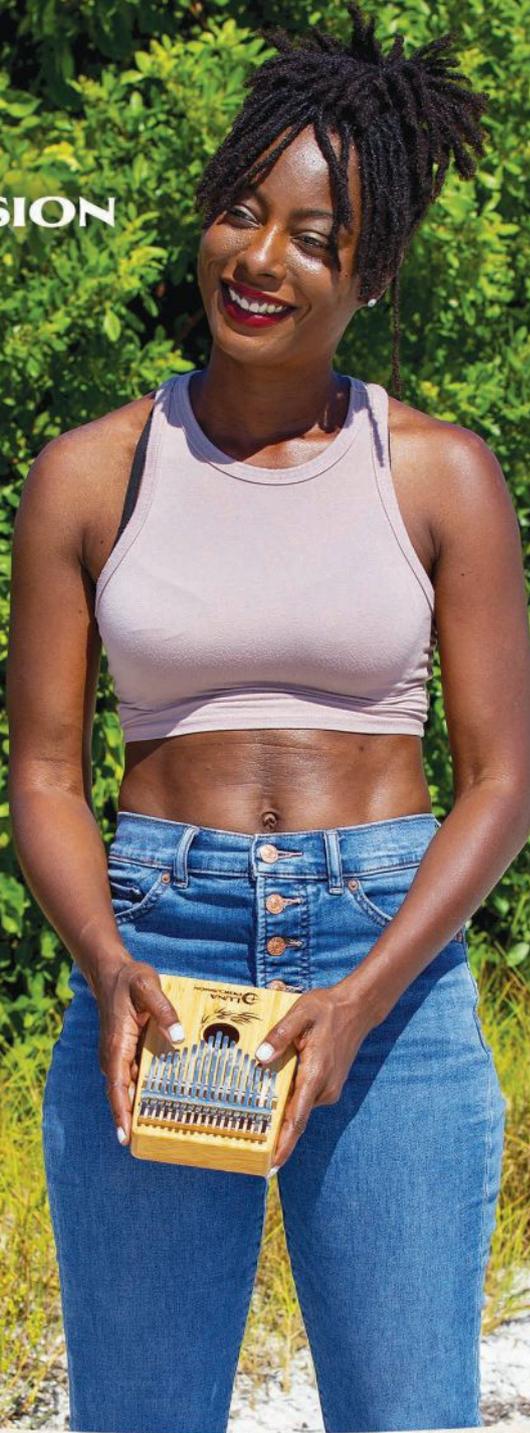
The Exile X Floyd Satin White is built to withstand whatever the player unleashes. The bolt-on neck is made from sturdy maple and has a dual-action truss rod. Twenty-four jumbo frets, combined with a comfortable C-shape and flat 16-inch radius, are ideal for blistering solos. The fretboard is constructed of Indian rosewood with pearloid dot inlays for sleek and smooth playability. At the bridge, the Floyd Rose FR20 Tremolo system provides tuning stability and is equipped to handle dramatic use of the whammy bar. A corresponding Floyd Rose R3 nut (1 11/16-inch width) is rock solid with hardened steel and provides an authentic locking nut for the tremolo system.

The DMT Designed High Output Zebra Pickups serve as the spark plugs for a guitar that's ready to ignite. Players can dial in their exact sound using the Volume, Tone, and 3-way blade controls that are simple and effective.

Dean tops off the contrasting aesthetics with single-ply black binding on the body and white binding on the neck and headstock. Black sealed die-cast tuners and dome black hardware provide the finishing bold touches. MSRP \$659

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





**2022**  
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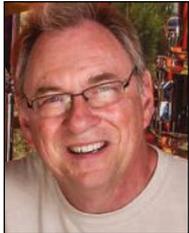
      
[lunaguitars.com](http://lunaguitars.com)

Bamboo Kalimba  
Key of B

Honu Kalimba  
Key of C

Mo'o "Lizard" Kalimba  
Key of C

# Music is the Cure for the Modern Malaise



By  
Menzie  
Pittman

The way that most business owners judge if all is right with the world is by reviewing their sales figures for the last few quarters. But this time, now that we can see all of our beautiful faces again, that approach won't help us predict the trends of customers' behavior. Here's why.

During the lockdown, music stores enjoyed a false spike – and perhaps a false sense of security – because of increased sales of online instruments.

And when music stores compare having no rental season to an active rental season, again we have skewed data. So, sales reports don't always tell us the true story, and they never tell us about emotions, and they certainly couldn't predict the pain and concern that families are currently experiencing from inflation.

I don't think anyone would deny that inflation is creating renewed pressure for business owners. The truth is that inflation causes pain for every customer, as well as store owners, and when you add together the recent stretch of isolation, confusion, and now inflation, you create an entirely new type of disenfranchisement. It goes by the name of "Malaise."

Malaise is insidious. It's slow, and quietly permeates the enthusiasm of young learners, and most certainly adults. It's a steady drip of discontent. You can look to several places to see it. For example, there is an ever-growing malaise amongst our youth, and families in general. There are a couple different reasons for the general sense of apathy: one is social, and one is economic.

As I mentioned, inflation is hurting everybody except the uber wealthy. The big squeeze now is directly on the wallets of everyday families, as well as those entering the job market for the first time. The fallout from inflation's terse behavior affects the whole family, not just the bread-winners, because we all know stress rolls downhill.

Most small business music store owners have established somewhat of a predictable diversified income stream, such as retail sales, instrument rentals, education, and repairs, et cetera. But in the case of runaway inflation, diversification doesn't really help, because inflation causes the consumer to make cost-cutting choices across the board. For example, the lockdown gave adults and families more isolation time, and that was the gift that created the online spike in guitar sales. We were lucky after the shutdown, because adults signed up in droves for music lessons and for a quick minute it almost felt like 1964, with the British invasion.

But if we look at the artificial COVID-spike in retail sales, the natural progression that would follow would be a spike

in music lessons. And while that was beginning to happen, inflation immediately impeded that natural progression. It was the adult lesson market that was enjoying a new robustness. Adults were jumping into music head-first, finding their "old spirits" that they had left on the table for so long. But it's no secret that responsible adults put family first, and when money tightens, personal wants don't take priority.

The real frustration here is that, once an adult student justifies postponement, it is challenging to get them to re-engage. Of course, they always share their regret later, when they talk about music. So, we should use every trick in the book to keep them attending lessons. Whatever it takes, it's worth it.

On the social front, the malaise that has forged its way into our youth stems from a few different issues, and inflation plays a less significant role.

Students were excited to get back to school after the lockdown was over. The good news here is that most string and band programs this fall had record numbers of sign-ups. Excitedly, the most noted sign-ups were mostly in elementary school programs. That's great news! But as good as that news is, the amount of genuine joy and inspiration with school students seems lacking. Achievement is based more on duty, rather than curiosity and intrigue. Parents and teachers are feeling the pressures to make up for lost time, and to get school test scores higher quickly. So the pressure of so much lost time is falling directly on the youth.

But for that very reason, there is a great opportunity here. It may be the best opportunity the music industry has had in a very long time. What could be better for soothing angst and curing malaise in our youth than music lessons?

It's understood music lessons are an added cost for a family, but if we communicate the benefits clearly and properly, it's easy to help families understand that now, more than ever, music lessons matter. Now is the time to rebrand and reeducate families on the personal benefits of learning an instrument. Now, more than ever, we have an opportunity to introduce creativity back into learning programs, and what could be better for removing a sense of malaise than creativity and music? 🎸🎹

*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."*

“Now, more than ever, music lessons matter.”

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Music Instruction



By  
**Jaimie  
Blackman**

**E**ntrepreneurship is at the heart of MI retail thinking. This is a unique mindset that business owners must possess in order to succeed. After all, entrepreneurial thinking is all about innovation and creativity, which is nothing new to the readers of *MMR* magazine.

Entrepreneurial thinking can also be quite valuable in the K-12 private studio music settings that many MI stores have established. The longer the student is engaged in music making, the longer the MI owner enjoys the re-occurring cash flow from lessons, rentals, and sales.

While it is common for the word “entrepreneur” to be associated with opening a business, its definition is a bit more nuanced. Creating a context for communicating in an entrepreneurial mindset is at the heart of entrepreneurial thinking.

Music teachers who encourage students to think like an entrepreneur empower students’ abilities for innovation, creativity, passion, problem-solving, focus, discipline, autonomy, and achievement. Using this construct increases the value exchange between the MI retailer, students, and parents.

This column uses ideas developed by Dr. Michelle Hansen Snow in her PhD dissertation published by Boston University entitled, *Music education and entrepreneurship: post-secondary music teacher education and value creation for individuals and communities*.

Many people over the years have talked about uninspiring music teachers that result in the elimination of countless music makers, and leave the music industry taking the financial hit. The music teacher’s mindset is a key contributor to this dilemma.

Teachers who see their role as primarily one of dispensing knowledge and training students in technical skills geared toward future performance may be missing their mark. It is widely held that when students are offered opportunities to exercise their creativity, their musicianship improves dramatically. Noted educator and composer David Elliott states, “musical creativity pivots on making decisions and predictions about the musical potential or promise of one’s musical choices, goals, and sub goals.”

MI retailers well understand that there is more than one answer to a question and more than one solution to a problem. After all, creativity fuels our ability to create variable outcomes.

Now imagine a narrative for parents and students, which transcends performance and includes the valuable outcomes of entrepreneurial thinking. Developing skills for entrepreneurial thinking will certainly resonate with those students who would like a career as a professional musician. I am suggesting that the greater the value opportunity, the greater the artistic rewards to students, and the financial rewards to the MI business.

Can studio music teachers encourage this type of thinking in students?

Are studio music teachers soliciting ideas and opinions from students?

Why not make creativity the focus of the lesson, instead of just taking directions from the teacher? What are some ways entrepreneurial thinking can, in the context of a music studio, be accomplished?

If you look into the mirror, the answers will become apparent.

If the store has your name on it, you already must be thinking like an entrepreneur. There is no other reason why you are still in business. Consider how you do what you do and why. Speak to your teachers about the qualities you deem important, and inspire your music teachers with your creativity. Develop ideas on infusing this mindset into the lesson plans.

Entrepreneurs are inherently value creators. Value creation is defined as the act of developing, making, or producing something of worth, significance, importance, and relevance and is a defining outcome of successful entrepreneurship. The value may not only be thought of as economic or financial value. It may also include community value, social value, cultural value, personal value, musical value, academic value, and human value.

Do you remember when your instrument training finally clicked and you had the feeling that you can do this music-making thing? I do. Like many beginning guitarists, I struggled with coordinating the left with the right hand. I would strum, stop and change chords, and strum again. I don’t recall my teacher ever saying to me, “Get creative, Jaimie! How would you strum this song, or how would you change the ending of the song?” It was when I just went “wild” and started my own creative strumming that it all came together.

The eminent advocate for arts education Charles Fowler said we deceive ourselves into thinking that interpretation is the equivalent of creativity in music. At the very least, music educators could do less telling and invite students to exercise more judgment in the music class.

As an entrepreneur, you need to learn as you go along, creating your own style, and patterns. That is your competitive edge in the marketplace. Maybe it is time that your music teachers promote individual creativity in the classroom, and set their students free to create. At least for part of the lesson. Maybe it is time music teachers become regular participants in your weekly staff conversations. After all, music education is too important to be left to music educators alone.

*Jaimie Blackman – a former music educator & retailer – is co-founder of BH Wealth Management. The organization offers 401(k), insurance, and succession planning services. Download your complimentary copy of End Your War With Money at [bh-wealth.com/moneycapsules](http://bh-wealth.com/moneycapsules) Registered Representative, First Allied Securities, Inc. Member FINRA/SIPC*

“Music education is too important to be left to music educators, alone.” – Wayne Bowman

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Total (Sum of 15b and 15c)		10,155	10,470
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15b divided by 15d times 100)		46.17%	42.84%

\*If you are claiming electronic copies, see the 15b on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.

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16. Electronic Copy Circulation

a. Requested and Paid Electronic Copies	3,874	3,987
b. Total Requested and Paid Print Copies (Line 15b) + Requested/Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	7,439	7,793
c. Total Requested Copy Distribution (Lines 15b + Requested/Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a))	12,879	13,537
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17. Publication of Statement of Ownership for a Requester Publication is required and will be printed in the November 2022 issue of this publication.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Mia Lawson, Publisher Date: 8/17/22

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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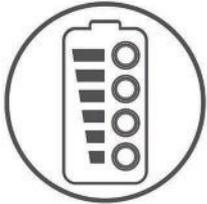
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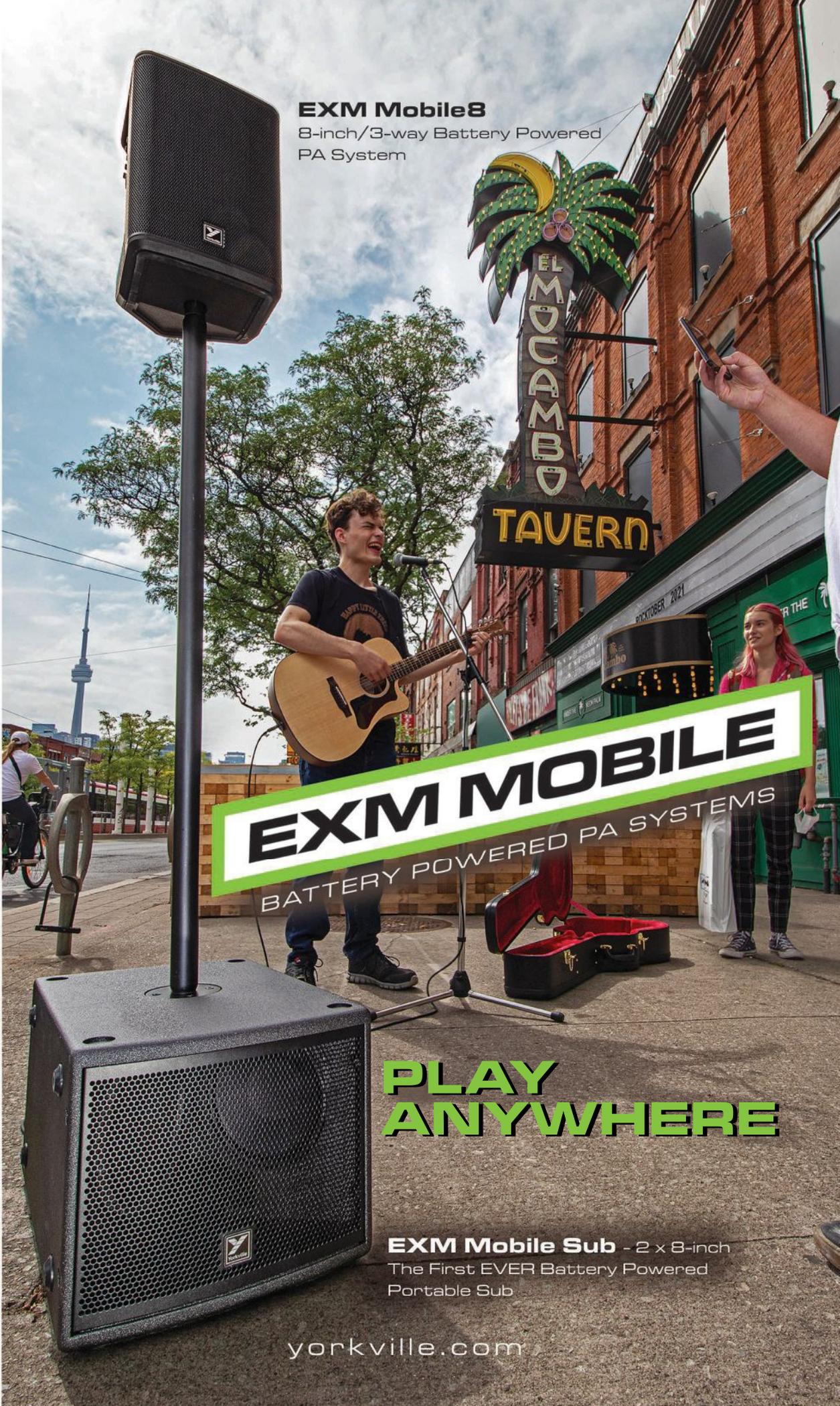
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