

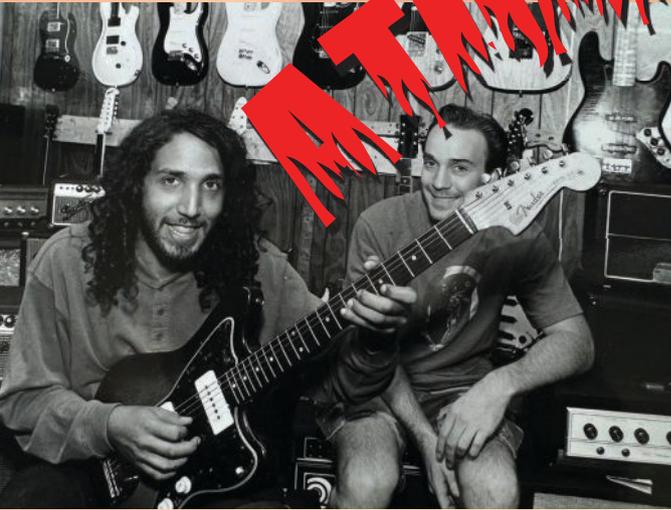
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MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

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INSIDE



Casting a Wide Net
Podcast Mixers and
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32nd Annual MMR Dealers' Choice Awards Finalists



Show Report
Music China 2024



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MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

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Casting a Wide Net – Podcast Mixers and Control Surfaces 10

From Marc Maron to Alex Cooper, Dax Shepard to Anna Faris, The Kelce brothers to your next-door neighbor to your sporting enthusiast co-worker, it seems like virtually everyone is hosting a podcast these days. *MMR* recently spoke with Sean Kelly of Roland/BOSS and Ryan Burke of RØDE to get more familiar with this burgeoning market segment and, more specifically, podcast mixers - an essential component of pro-level content creation.

Show Report

Music China 2024 12

Held from October 10 to 13 at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre, Music China 2024 welcomed over 1,800 exhibitors from 26 countries, including the United States. Covering 150,000 square meters across 14 exhibit halls, the event was truly a monumental experience. Music China offered fresh insights into the global industry and introduced me to a broader network of international connections and perspectives

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For 30 years, Atomic Music in Beltsville, Maryland, has been a haven for musicians and collectors alike. Founded in 1994 by Eric Schwelling and Luis Peraza, this unique music store has grown from a small rented house into a local legend. Known for its welcoming atmosphere and vast collection of used instruments, Atomic Music has become a community fixture.

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Small Business Matters

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It's hard to be original, and very hard to be unique. But, in the most generic time in retail in many a year, the "originality card" is really the only card left to play. Menzie Pittman thought it beneficial to mention a few companies that embrace unique character, original approaches, and personal charm.

32nd Annual MMR Dealers' Choice Awards Finalists 20

The people have spoken! These are the finalists in all 18 Dealers' Choice Awards categories, ranging from "Product of the Year" to "Education Print Music Publisher of the Year," "Electric Guitar of the Year" to "Home Digital Keyboard of the Year," and more.



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FOMO Can Be Good for You!

By
Christian
Wissmuller

In the opening paragraph to his Show Report from Music China 2024 on page 12 of this issue, *MMR* publisher Mike Lawson writes, "Covering 150,000 square meters across 14 exhibit halls, the event was truly a monumental experience for this veteran of over 30 NAMM Shows and more than a dozen Frankfurt MusikMesse shows."

As I was unable to attend the Shanghai gathering this October, I was both pleased that Mike was impressed by the scope of the event and, perhaps predictably, more than a little bummed/envious! My most recent trip to Music China was covering the 2019 convention, which not only seems – but at this point truly *is* – quite a while ago. (Sidebar: when I returned from that trip in early November, I was sick as a dog for two weeks; A couple of months later, when a little PANDEMIC with origins – likely – in China rolled into town, a few of my friends and bandmates did the math and jokingly started referring to me as the rhesus monkey from the movie, "Outbreak." What larks! I digress...) Anyway – yes! It's great to read how someone I work with (for!) both enjoyed and was awed by an MI gathering I've come to value and feel familiar with, but, boy did I feel the sting of missing out!

It's one thing to long for the days of Musikmesse and hobnobbing with industry pals over *apfelwein* and *Frankfurter grüne soße mit eiern und kartoffeln* – *that* show exists only in the past (for now, at least). Music China, however? Serious FOMO at work.

“This year’s NAMM Show will be longer and, quite arguably, better than you remember it. To any fence-straddlers: Feeling some FOMO yet?”

For those of you without frequent internet connectivity, lacking friends or family under the age of 70 or so, or with better things to do than keep up with the ridiculous ephemeral vernacular of the young-ish (my hat's off to those of you in the latter category!) "FOMO" is an acronym for: Fear of Missing Out. I know I missed out on plenty of learning experiences, cultural exploration, and plain old good times in Shanghai this October, so, in this case, it's not so much "fear of," but "awareness of."

The good news for those of you who, like me, weren't at the recent Music China, is that in but a few short weeks (10 or so weeks counts as "short" to me, anyway) those amongst us who choose to do so can make our way to Anaheim for the largest and longest-running stateside gathering of the MI industry: the NAMM Show!

Is it the same event as in years gone by? No, not entirely. For one thing, it's bigger! Per a recent press release: "The NAMM Show unites the entire global music industry for one spectacular week of exhibits, education and networking in January," said John Mlynczak, president and CEO of NAMM. "The expansion to five days of events is necessary to provide more time for education and networking that our global members depend on to grow their businesses, industry and professional community."

So the 2025 NAMM Show will be longer and, quite arguably, better than you remember it. To any fence-straddlers: Feeling some FOMO yet? In cases like these, FOMO can be good for you, but there's no need to fear! While 10 weeks is (again, to me) only a short chunk of time, it's more than enough to arrange your registration (or plan to exhibit, depending), book travel and hotel, and get your ducks in a row!

I couldn't be in Shanghai this year, but I look forward – as always – to returning to Orange County for one of the biggest events in our industry.

Hope to see you there!

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Dates Announced for NAMM NeXT 2025 in Nashville

NAMM has announced the second year of NAMM NeXT, a two-day education and networking summit that strengthens the music industry by providing expert insights and analysis for the future of business.

NAMM NeXT 2025 will take place in Nashville, Tenn., from June 29–July 1 at the JW Marriott Nashville, with the subsidized individual early-bird pricing at \$995. Once again, the event will feature a full slate of high-profile presenters from inside and outside the music industry. Registration will open in January, and NAMM NeXT will be limited to only 400 attendees, so be sure to register early to secure your spot.

“We are excited to announce NAMM NeXT 2025, which will once again unite the leaders of our NAMM member companies around the common goal of strengthening the music products industry,” said John Mlynczak, president and CEO of NAMM. “After witnessing the overwhelming positive energy and abundance of ideas gained at our inaugural event, it was abundantly clear that we need to keep this event going in Music City USA for NAMM NeXT 2025.”

NAMM NeXT will feature big-picture and hands-on sessions with experts from inside and outside of the music industry to inspire new ideas, develop organiza-

tional talent and drive conversations that will take attendees’ businesses and the global industry to the next level.

Last year, more than 100 global companies gathered at the inaugural conference and shared the following post-event statements from attendees.

“NAMM NeXT was an excellent opportunity for our leadership team to get together and listen to great thought leadership while remaining focused on the growth of our business, our industry and ourselves as leaders,” said Morgan Walker, director of marketing communications at KORG USA. “This two-day summit was a perfect opportunity for us to listen and focus on the sessions without having a booth or show to manage, and the value of NAMM NeXT was a perfect example of NAMM providing service to its members.”

“Most other industries have annual leadership events and dedicated leadership conferences; unfortunately, our music products industry did not... until now,” said Elizabeth Heidt, chief market-



NAMM President and CEO John Mlynczak at NAMM NeXT 2024

ing officer of Gibson. “To be part of the inaugural event, in Nashville, that combines outside-the-industry knowledge with inside-the-industry perspectives to help accelerate our industry’s growth was incredibly impactful for Gibson and our team. We are a proud partner of NAMM and can’t wait to participate and support the 2025 event.”

NAMM NeXT will continue as an annual investment in the music industry at large with the common focus and theme of helping grow the music business by elevating the companies and people in the industry. Further details will be announced during John Mlynczak’s “Industry Insights” session on January 23 of the 2025 NAMM Show in Anaheim.

IPS Sets Mood at Movie Premiere with Chauvet REM 3IP Panels

Critics who have seen previews of the upcoming remake of Alfred Zinnemann’s classic 1973 political thriller *Day of the Jackal* have universally praised it for its suspenseful tautness. According to them, viewers who tune in to this globally broadcast television series, which begins in November, will be on the edge of their seats throughout the entire show.

The team at Milton Keynes-based Impact Productions Services (IPS) had no such nail-biting experience when they set up the production for the London Premiere of the reimagined classic at Queen Elizabeth Hall (formerly Royal Festival Hall) at the Southbank Centre in the British capital. Everything went according to plan for them on October 22, as they put up the lighting rig and video wall for this Limited Edition Event Design project, which was designed by Richard Godin.

Helping to ensure smooth sailing for the event were REM 3IP LED Screen panels from CHAUVET Professional installed on the premier’s two screen structures. IPS’ onsite screen tech Dan Ainsley and the en-



tire team were not surprised that the REM 3IP created “no surprises; they’ve been using the bright 4500 NITs indoor/outdoor video panel for almost one year now.

“Our install team has been using the REM 3IP quite often since we first acquired it, so they are familiar with the quick rigging and power/data connections, as well as the software configuration,” said Ainsley. “However, this was one of the first projects that featured the newly expanded hire inventory, as IPS have now doubled their REM 3IP screen stockholding to 700 units.”

The screen structure install for the pre-

miere was a 5m wide by 3m high screen on an edifice above an interview stage platform. The second was a 11m wide by 2m high screen that was incorporated into a media wall. Custom masking panels fitted in front of the structure, allowed content to be revealed in two circular cutouts as well as a text cutout.

Although the premiere site on the south bank outside the festival hall provided an enchanting backdrop for the event, it did come with some challenges. “All equipment needs to be either carried up a series of stairs or moved into position using telehandlers at this location,” said Ainsley. “We also had to remove all equipment and structures starting as soon as this show ended, but it all worked out very well.”

As for the panels themselves, Ainsley gave them a rave review. “The IP rating was reassuring in the outdoor location,” he said. “As a premiere located next to the river Thames in late autumn in the UK always brings with it the likelihood of rain – although it stayed clear for this one.

JHS to Distribute Donner Musical Instruments in the UK and Republic of Ireland

Renowned for affordable, reliable instruments, Chinese musical instrument manufacturer Donner, has earned a reputation in the music industry for producing quality built portable keyboards, digital pianos, electronic drum kits and fretted instruments often with advanced and innovative designs.

New additions to the JHS catalogue include the popular Hush series of ultra-compact electric travel guitars. Designed as full-sized instruments with highly efficient tonewood bodies, all models which include the Hush 1, Hush X and Hush 1 Pro Acoustic have detachable, precision engineered bar frames optimized for strength, weight, support and comfort.

Exciting features include the company's own headless tuning system, asymmetric neck profiles, Bluetooth technology,

built-in adjustable presets and up to 8 hours operation on a single charge.

With the skeleton frame removed in seconds and the whole guitar package fitting snug within the supplied gig bag, the Donner Hush Series are the ultimate portable, 'all in one, play anywhere' electric travel guitars for musicians of every level.

Donner offers a superb range of weighted and semi weighted 88 key digital pianos for beginners and professionals seeking affordable and fully functional instruments, all with rich full bodied sounds with an exciting range of multi-functional features, which include dozens of preset voices, rhythms, dual modes and USB-B support for Windows/Mac/ Android/iOS and real-time recording.

Lightweight and compact with stylish looks the Donner Dek 620 and SD10 61 key Arranger keyboards, are designed

for total portability. Powered by mains or batteries, these 'take anywhere' keyboards have literally hundreds of tonal options, rhythms and demo tracks, the ideal choice to meet the needs of beginners or professional musicians.

Compact and portable is again the theme for the Donner Ded 70 Electric Drum set. With a fully adjustable sturdy frame, robust trigger pedals for hi-hat and bass drum, 4 drums with 6in (15.24 mm) diameter offering a wider strike for small hands, 68 sounds and 12 preset kits, mains or mobile power options, the Ded 70, complete with padded seat, sticks and headphones, is the perfect choice for a youngster's introduction to the magical world of sound and rhythm.

Donner products are distributed exclusively in the UK and Republic of Ireland by JHS.

Cloud Microphones Expands Distribution Across Central and South America

Cloud Microphones is excited to announce the expansion of its distribution network in Central and South America. New partnerships have been established in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, broadening access to their innovative audio solutions.

Proudly manufactured in the USA, Cloud Microphones is committed to responsible production and has received numerous industry accolades, including the prestigious Presidential "E" and "E-Star" awards from the U.S. International Trade Administration, honoring significant contributions to the growth of U.S.-made exports.

"These partnerships mark another step in our commitment to expanding our global presence and supporting the international music community," said Rodger Cloud, founder and CEO of Cloud Microphones. "We look forward to collaborating with our new distributors to empower musicians, podcasters, broadcasters, and others to enhance their audio quality and share Cloud's message of creative inspiration."

Pro Audio Sistemas, based in Chile, is among the new distributors eager to showcase Cloud's products. "The opportunity to represent Rodger's innovative solutions was one I couldn't pass up," said Javier Salvo, CEO and Founder of Pro Audio Sistemas. "We invite everyone



in Chile to visit our store and discover firsthand why Cloud Microphones is recognized worldwide as an industry leader."

Planeta Analógico, a key player in the Argentine market with a presence in Uruguay, is equally enthusiastic. "As the official distributor for Cloud Microphones in Argentina and Uruguay, we're thrilled to partner with Rodger and his team to expand our market presence," said Daniel Weiss, founder of Planeta Analógico.

In Central America, Supersonidos, which serves El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, is optimistic about introducing Cloud's innovative brand. "We are excited to launch this new line and are confident it will thrive in our markets," said Guillermo Falla, CEO of Supersonidos.

With this expansion, Cloud Microphones is poised to enhance the audio landscape across Central and South America, reinforcing its mission to inspire creativity through superior sound.



AudioPros Expands EAW Territory to Include Metro NY

Eastern Acoustic Works (EAW) selects AudioPros, LLC, as its manufacturer's representative to serve the Northeast territory. AudioPros currently represents EAW throughout New England and Western NY and has now expanded to Metro New York.

Principals Andrew Shillo and Alex Shillo are proud to represent Eastern Acoustic Works. "EAW is constantly innovating and bringing to market, high quality solutions, which meet the needs of clients throughout the professional audio community," says Alex Shillo.

"For over 40 years, EAW has been a leading manufacturer of speakers in our own backyard," says Andrew Shillo. "EAW's innovative and unique approach to professional sound reinforcement has made them an industry leader worldwide. EAW's passion and drive aligns with our own philosophies, we are excited for the opportunity to provide our services to new dealers."

Samantha Fish, Christina Perri and More to be Honored at 2025 She Rocks Awards

The Women's International Music Network (WiMN) is proud to announce additional honorees for the 13th Annual She Rocks Awards. Taking place on January 25, 2025, at the Hilton Anaheim Pacific Ballroom during the NAMM Show, with NAMM as the presenting sponsor, this star-studded event will celebrate the achievements of women in music and audio, co-hosted by Jennifer Batten and Lindsey Stirling.

Introducing the Latest Honorees:

Samantha Fish – Grammy-nominated guitarist and songwriter known for her unique blend of blues, rock, and soul. Fish's recent successes include performing at Eric Clapton's Crossroads LA Festival, gracing the cover of *Guitar World* with Slash, and touring with both Slash and The Rolling Stones. Her latest album, *Death Wish Blues*, topped the *Billboard* Blues Chart.

Christina Perri – Multi-platinum singer-songwriter is celebrated for her hits like "Jar of Hearts" and the timeless "A Thousand Years," which has surpassed 2 billion views on YouTube. Perri's acclaimed work includes multiple albums, children's music projects, and her recent children's book adaptation of "A Thousand Years," set for release in April 2025.

Nurit Siegel Smith – Executive director of Music Forward Foundation, a charitable partner of Live Nation Entertainment, dedicated to fostering a more inclusive music industry.

LaTrice Burnette – A trailblazing music executive and current EVP of music/head of label at UnitedMasters. With key roles at Roc-A-Fella, Atlantic, Epic, Island, and Def Jam, she has shaped the success of artists like Jay-Z, Kanye West, and Future, while championing diversity and mentoring future music leaders.

Theresa Hoffman – Director of custom shop sales at C.F. Martin Guitar & Co., she brings her extensive experience in sales, engineering, and leadership to drive growth and innovation. Known for her professionalism and dedication, Theresa holds two patents and has led significant projects in custom machinery development and international sales.

These remarkable women join an inspiring group of previously announced honorees who have made a significant impact on the music industry:

Paula Cole – Grammy-winning singer-songwriter known for "Where Have All the Cowboys Gone?" and "I Don't Want to Wait." Her latest album *Lo* is her first collection of original songs in nearly a decade.

NAMM Foundation's Grantmaking Focuses on Creating More Music Makers

The NAMM Foundation has announced \$750,000 in grants to 32 programs, demonstrating one of the largest distributions in its history with over a 50% increase from last year. The projects selected serve music makers across our industry segments in 29 states and six countries and provide access to music-making opportunities to a variety of different communities and demographics, including those who are under-resourced.

"This expanded grantmaking program demonstrates our unwavering commitment to supporting community-level access to music making and workforce development for the music industry," said John Mlynczak, NAMM president and CEO. "Each program shares in and reflects our organization's mission and values in focusing on creating more music makers across the lifespan of learning throughout the entire music industry."

NAMM and The NAMM Foundation share a vision to significantly grow and diversify the Global Grantmaking program,



Samantha Fish (photo Doug Hardesty), Christina Perri, Nurit Siegel-Smith, LaTrice Burnette, Theresa Hoffman

Amanda Palmer – A pioneering performance artist and musician, Palmer gained fame with The Dresden Dolls. Palmer's solo career includes the fan-funded *Theatre Is Evil*, which debuted in the top 10 of the *Billboard* 200 and remains the top-funded music project on Kickstarter.

AIJIA – Artist, songwriter, and vocal producer who has worked with Selena Gomez and Anderson .Paak and is an advocate for women's equality.

Katie Daryl – Rock journalist and former vice president of programming at AXS TV, known for developing shows like *The Top Ten Revealed* and *Sounds Delicious*.

Christine Schyvinck – Chairman, president, and CEO of Shure Inc., leading the company to global growth and celebrating its 100th anniversary.

Opening the night will be Shantaia, a Nashville-based singer-songwriter named the 2023 SCMA Female Artist of the Year. Shantaia has toured with The Washboard Union and opened for artists like Kane Brown and Chris Lane, with millions of streams for her singles such as "Had a Good Weekend" and "Broke to Brand New." Her performance is sponsored by PRS Guitars.

The She Rocks Awards is proudly supported by presenting sponsor NAMM, along with PRS Guitars, Monster Energy, Positive Grid, Shure, M.A.C Cosmetics, Fishman, Berklee Online, Sennheiser, Ernie Ball, Exploration.io, D'Angelico, Taylor Guitars, Reverb, 108 Rock Star Guitars, Venus Guitars, Ableton, Sweetwater, Rafter Marsh, Hudson Audio Works, *The Hollywood Times*, *Guitar Girl Magazine*, *Music Connection*, *Guitar World*, *Guitar Player*, *MusicRadar*, and AXS TV.

with responsive investments that deepen impact, expand internationally, and balance representation across industry segments and funding priorities. This year's grantmaking program sets the stage for a strong future in realizing this vision.

"With generous financial support from NAMM and independent donors, the Foundation has charted a course to become the largest and most philanthropically impactful music foundations of its kind," said Julia Rubio, executive director of The NAMM Foundation. "We are proud to support organizations that demonstrate a significant commitment to the creation of more music makers and music industry careers, especially in communities that traditionally have historically lacked these opportunities."

The 2025 programs and organizations selected for NAMM's expanded grantee program are: <https://www.nammfoundation.org/articles/2025Grantees>

people on the move

Calzone and Anvil Case Co. has appointed **TJ Milian** as chief marketing and sales officer. In his new role, Milian will spearhead Calzone's global marketing and sales efforts as the half-century-old company initiates its next phase of expansion. He will report directly to President and CEO Joe Calzone, a drummer turned entrepreneur who founded the company in the 1970s.



Milian brings abundant experience, including more than 25 years with Sam Ash Music, where he led a team of over 200 employees across eight West Coast stores generating year-over-year sales and profit increases despite a recent downturn in the retail chain's overall business. Combining technical expertise, creative campaigns and proven business practices, Milian has used a coaching approach to align individual and company goals to improve revenue performance and satisfy client needs.

"TJ brings with him an extremely high level of knowledge and experience in Calzone Anvil's core competencies and beyond. His extensive background and diverse responsibilities earned while managing one of the country's largest music retail chains will complement and contribute to our goal of aggressive expansion into markets and industries in which we only scratch the surface," Joe Calzone said. "TJ's depth of knowledge in proven messaging techniques will offer our sales team a significantly higher and in-depth level of support. He will be instrumental in leading our efforts to grow market share while also developing new opportunities."

The timing of Milian joining the company comes at the crossroads when Calzone & Anvil, after decades of manufacturing rackmount, ramp cases, workboxes, monitor cases, trunks, go-live workstations and other durable protective cases for U.S. companies has received new demand for its custom-made products from other parts of the world where the company has begun to export.

Calzone & Anvil recently designed and introduced the StrongBox MK2 cable trunk and has received orders from all over the world. It is constructed from rugged birch plywood with a durable textured exterior and sleek black interior, which is built like a fortress for cables and equipment designed to take on the rigors of transporting sensitive equipment containing electronics. All equipment is currently manufactured by the company in its three U.S. plants located in Bridgeport, Conn.; Carrollton, Texas and Covina, California.

"I am thrilled and honored to join Calzone & Anvil at such a pivotal moment in its history," said Milian. "The company has a rich history of groundbreaking innovation in safeguarding high-value equipment and assets while consistently surpassing customer expectations in the most demanding, mission-critical scenarios. I look forward to working with the talented teams at Calzone & Anvil to build on this legacy and drive further growth in North America and overseas."

GEWA Music USA is thrilled to announce **Nick D'Virgilio** as its new digital marketing & content creation manager. Effective immediately, D'Virgilio will lead digital marketing efforts for renowned brands including Gretsch Drums, Schlagwerk Percussion, GEWA Digital Drums, and Ovation Guitars. He will collaborate closely with global marketing teams to develop innovative strategies that strengthen brand presence on both B2B and B2C levels. With his creativity and extensive experience, Nick will enhance engagement with the community, fans, and "Friends of the Brands," fostering stronger connections and brand loyalty.

D'Virgilio is a well-known musician, producer, and marketing expert with years of experience in the music industry. In his new role, he will utilize Gretsch Drums, allowing him to bring an authentic musician's perspective to community-building and brand communication. Fans can look forward to exciting new content and inspiring projects developed in close collaboration with Gretsch.

With this strategic addition, GEWA Music USA eagerly anticipates the innovative projects and dynamic content that D'Virgilio will bring, paving the way for an exciting future.

traderegrets

ESP Guitars is mourning the passing of the company's esteemed founder and owner, Japanese businessman **Hisatake Shibuya**. After a long and extraordinarily successful life, Shibuya died in late September 2024. He was 87 years old.



Matt Masciandro, president and CEO of The ESP Guitar Company USA said, "As we mourn Mr. Shibuya's loss, we can take comfort in the strong foundation that he created for ESP. This will continue to guide us as we move the company forward into a promising future. Together, we will carry forward his vision, and I am confident that ESP's best days are still ahead."

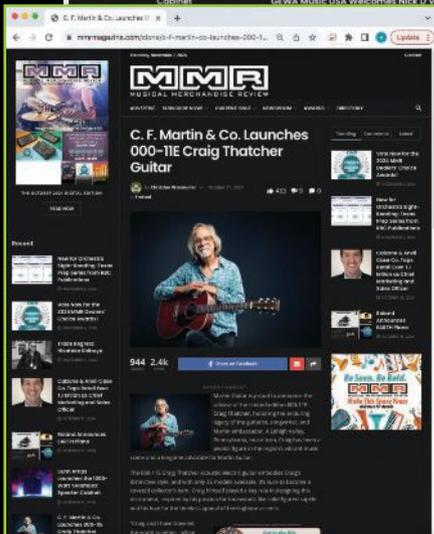
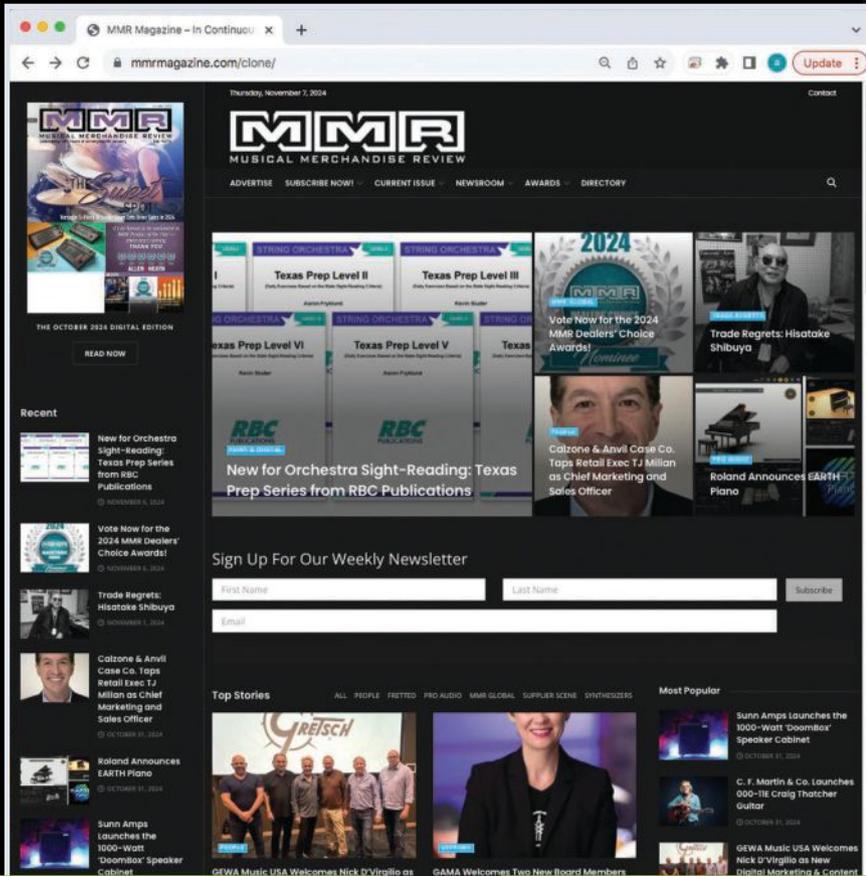
Born on Sado Island and having spent his early years in Kyoto, Japan, Shibuya struck out on his own at a young age, moving to Tokyo. He realized that music was an important part of his existence, saying, "I thought if there was music around me, life would be better." Shibuya first began employment with Kawai as an electric guitar salesman, and after a number of years there, spent time working for Yamaha in a similar role.

In 1975, Shibuya went into business for himself, opening a small workshop and retail store in Tokyo that he called Electric Sound Products, or ESP for short. ESP began developing an excellent reputation, first for creating upgraded replacement parts for existing guitars, and then for building exquisite new instruments from the ground up. Shibuya's strong and clear vision enabled the small company to be successful from the start, and he became well respected within the music industry worldwide, eventually becoming a legendary figure for all people who love music.

Shibuya's business acumen led to other ventures. After opening music and guitar-building schools in Japan, in 1994 he purchased Musicians Institute in Los Angeles, one of the world's preeminent educational facilities for contemporary music. Throughout his life, Shibuya took great pride in developing music education opportunities for students around the world who wished to bring music into their lives.

As ESP reaches its milestone 50th anniversary in 2025, the legacy of Shibuya leaves a lasting impact on the entire musical instrument industry. He is survived by his wife and daughters, and his memory lives on indefinitely through the many musicians whose lives he touched, and the music they make using his well-crafted instruments.

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changes

Casting a Wide Net

Podcast Mixers and Control Surfaces

By Christian **Wissmuller**



From Marc Maron to Alex Cooper, Dax Shepard to Anna Faris, The Kelce brothers to your next-door neighbor to your sporting enthusiast co-worker, it seems like virtually everyone is hosting a podcast these days. As with most forms of “home creation,” podcasting and streaming truly exploded during the pandemic. Hosts discuss true crime, interview celebrity guests, discuss politics, examine popular music trends – the scope of podcasting is virtually limitless. And the ease of entry into the podcasting space is especially inviting. With minimal investment, you can be sharing your idea for compelling content with the world in no time! Whether “the world” will subscribe to your project and lead you to the next multi-million deal with Wondery or Spotify, well... won’t find out unless you give it a shot!

That “minimal investment” includes acquiring certain essential pieces of gear – USB microphone, recording software, editing software, and a hosting service are essential. But for a really pro-level, sophisticated podcast, you’ll also need a podcast mixer. We recently spoke with Sean Kelly of Roland/BOSS and Ryan Burke of RØDE to get more familiar with this burgeoning market segment.

The topic of this article is “podcast mixers and control surfaces,” but that, in itself, brings with it a whole host of questions – first of which being: What is a podcast mixer? How is such a thing different than a mixer for recording audio of any type? The same could be said of audio interfaces, microphones, headphones – any item used in streaming/podcasting. With that in mind, what types of features and qualities are podcasters and aspiring podcasters looking for in mixers and control surfaces?

Sean Kelly: Podcast mixers differ from standard audio mixers because they’re tailored for the specific workflow of livestreaming or multi-channel recording podcast-type content. They also need

to be more user-friendly with regards to connectivity, input mixing, and providing production-quality audio in real time. So USB connectivity, easy to understand layouts, and the ability to apply effects, sound samples, and sound shaping tools are priority features.

Ryan Burke: Creators are looking for three main things: streamlining production processes, consistently excellent audio, and the flexibility to create when and how they want. They are looking for devices that give them creative flexibility to spend more time focusing on the content of their podcast, rather than the technical aspects of running it. Simpler, all-in-one devices with programmable features and the ability to output professional sounding audio.

For your brand, what’s the most popular model of podcasting/streaming mixer?

RB: The RØDEcaster Duo is our most popular audio production solution, though we’ve seen a rise in popularity of the RØDEcaster Pro II as the talk-show format of podcasts has become more prevalent with more than two guests.

SK: Our BOSS GCS-5 and BOSS GCS-8 Gigcaster streaming mixers are all-in-one USB interface solutions designed for the specific purpose of podcasting and streaming content that incorporates or focuses on musical content. With a dedicated Guitar/Bass input, you get instant access to our flagship-level GT amps and effects. Additional inputs for microphones and line level instruments, plus Bluetooth audio input provide plenty of channels and flexibility. A color touchscreen interface makes the Gigcasters intuitive and easy to use, and the GCS-8 features touchpads for instant sound effect and music playback, as well as an internal hard drive for onboard recording.

“Musicians of all levels, music educators, podcasters, and music-focused content creators are enjoying larger audiences by sharing their creativity and talent via livestreaming and recorded podcasts.”

– Sean Kelly, BOSS Senior Product Manager, Roland Americas





“We expect this segment of audio technology to rapidly evolve to meet the demands of creators and new media platforms.”

— Ryan Burke, Product Director, RØDE



At-home creation, including podcasting, has really taken off in the past decade or so – and particularly during COVID-related lockdowns. Do you feel that trend is holding steady, still on the rise, or declining?

SK: Demand has definitely normalized post-COVID. However, musicians of all levels, music educators, podcasters, and music-focused content creators are enjoying larger audiences by sharing their creativity and talent via livestreaming and recorded podcasts.

RB: Podcasting is still an evolving format. Video podcasts were a rarity 10 years ago, and now almost every podcast has some video content element to reach a wider audience across a multiple of platforms available for distribution. Podcasting is very much still growing and very quickly adapts to new media platforms.

Do you have any recent or upcoming podcast/streaming mixer models you’d like to draw our readers’ attention to?

RB: As I mentioned, video podcasting is in many ways the new standard for many of these platforms. We recently introduced the RØDEcaster Video, which is a revolutionary all-in-one video and audio production console that provides intuitive

control over every element of your content. Combining powerful video switching, recording and production capabilities with a fully integrated professional audio mixer, it offers a seamless way to streamline and supercharge your workflow for studio productions, video podcasts and interviews, and stream live events with broadcast quality.

SK: From our Roland brand, the VR Series of Video switchers and mixers include video switching functions for multiple cameras and full featured audio mixers that let podcasters take advantage of live broadcasting or posting on video platforms as well, expand their podcasts reach to a wider audience.

Expectations for this segment of MI within the coming months?

SK: I expect this segment to continue be a steady performer, as music enthusiasts and pros, alike, continue to see the benefits and gratification of connecting with their social network and fans via podcasting and livestreaming their content.

RB: We expect this segment of audio technology to rapidly evolve to meet the demands of creators and new media platforms. We’re very excited about the potential for continued innovation in this space. © 2024 RØDE

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Get More Information

Music China 2024



by Mike Lawson

Held from October 10 to 13 at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre, Music China 2024 welcomed over 1,800 exhibitors from 26 countries, including the United States. Covering 150,000 square meters across 14 exhibit halls, the event was truly a monumental experience for this veteran of over 30 NAMM Shows and more than a dozen Frankfurt MusikMesse shows. As an American deeply involved in the music products industry, Music China offered fresh insights into the global industry and introduced me to a broader network of international connections and perspectives.

A Showcase of Every Musical Product Imaginable

Music China 2024 was, without question, one of the most comprehensive exhibitions in the world for musical products. It included halls dedicated to an enormous range of musical instruments and equipment, from rock guitars and keyboards to woodwinds, acoustic pianos, and brass instruments. If MI needs it, sells it, manufactures it, or repairs it, Music China had it. Separate halls were assigned to each product category, ensuring that rock instruments were in a different space from acoustic pianos and stringed instruments. This thoughtful layout allowed each product type to be displayed in its optimal environment, creating an engaging experience for attendees.

One of the liveliest zones of the show was the guitar section, where bands jammed to enthusiastic crowds and visitors explored the latest in electric and acoustic guitars, amplifiers, and related gear. MIDI wind controllers—a very prevalent item at the show—were also demonstrated at multiple booths, drawing much attention from musicians and industry professionals alike.

Global Connections and Familiar Faces

It wasn't just the larger "combo store products"

American companies on display; U.S.-based manufacturers like JodyJazz were also present. JodyJazz, makers of fine mouthpieces for wind instruments including Chedeville and Rousseau, is based in Savannah, Georgia, and had a constant flow of visitors at their booth. Having never been to Music China before, I was especially excited to see them exhibiting, as it highlighted the show's global reach and the demand for quality U.S. products on the world stage. Seeing friendly, familiar faces so far from home underscored the importance of global export opportunities for U.S. manufacturers of all sizes. If JodyJazz had made their way to Shanghai, it was clear there was a strong market far outside the U.S. for American products.

JodyJazz's presence underscored the significant demand for American-made products abroad—even niche, high-end gear designed for discerning musicians. If a U.S. company like JodyJazz can attract interest at such a large show, it's evident that American music products, including those from niche manufacturers, have a place on the global stage. This presence reflects not only demand but also the importance of investing in international trade shows to build connections and expand market reach.

Prestige and Popularity of U.S. Brands in Asia

U.S. brands carried a sense of prestige at the event, attracting large crowds of dealers, musicians, and distributors who were interested in both American quality and innovation. Although Asia is a dominant player in manufacturing, the popularity of U.S. and European brands at Music China was a powerful reminder that quality and craftsmanship are valued in the music industry. Like a NAMM Show in the United States, Music China's halls buzzed with artist signings, demonstrations, and interactive events that drew attendees and kept foot traffic flowing.

American brands as diverse as Fender, IK Multimedia, Conn-Selmer, and Martin Guitars enjoyed impressive visibility, drawing musicians eager to experience iconic products firsthand. It was a clear indicator that U.S. brands hold significant influence, even in markets dominated by local and regional manufacturing. There were, in fact, far too many brands from the USA on exhibit to list here.

Inspiring Performances and a Sense of Connection

Music China isn't just about products; it's also a celebration of music and performance. Throughout the show, multiple stages featured live performances by talented young musicians, some still in school, who captivated the crowds with their passion and skill. One unforgettable moment was watching a middle school-aged band deliver an incredible performance of Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit." Seeing this iconic song played so well by musicians from another culture was a powerful reminder of music's universal language.

Connecting with these young performers and other musicians at the show reinforced the common ground shared by music lovers worldwide. People are drawn to music for the same reasons everywhere—joy, expression, and creativity—and being in Shanghai underscored how much musicians share, regardless of borders. Beyond the music, Shanghai itself is a vibrant city with welcoming people and incredible food, making the entire trip an experience I'd gladly repeat.

Highlights from Music China 2024

This year's Music China attracted 119,083 visitors from 105 countries, including a notable 10% increase in overseas buyers compared to last year. With attendees from nearby regions such as Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, and Taiwan, as well as from the U.S., the event facilitated a wealth of international connections. Dedicated pavilions housed exhibitors from the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, and the U.K., making it one of the most internationally diverse shows I've attended.

Brands like Yamaha, Kawai, Taylor, and Peavey joined with international names such as Seiler, Savarez, Pearl River, Donner, and even Stylophone, offering attendees access to an extensive range of instruments that spanned traditional handcrafted classical pieces, digital innovations, and electronic equipment. The variety and quality on display illustrated Music China's importance as a global crossroads for the music industry, where suppliers and manufacturers meet retailers and distributors from around the world.

Innovation in Digital and Audio Technology

Digital technology was a central theme at Music China this year. Hall N1, dedicated entirely to audio recording and electro-acoustic instruments, was packed with cutting-edge sound technology that drew music professionals and enthusiasts alike. From advanced recording equipment to high-end microphones and MIDI controllers, the innovations on display demonstrated the show's commitment to leading the digital music revolution.



Savannah, Georgia-based Jody Jazz made a big investment to bring their USA-made mouthpieces to Music China, and it paid off



Adam Audio studio monitors were just one of many brands in the pro audio hall



Novation controllers were a hit



A crowd-favorite at Music China was Kawai

Digital pianos and synthesizers also attracted significant attention, with brands introducing new models designed to replicate the feel and sound of traditional instruments while adding digital versatility. These advancements make digital instruments appealing to both professional musicians and music educators, who recognize the importance of innovation in their fields.

Educational Events and Professional Development

The educational events at Music China 2024 added depth to the show, offering valuable learning and networking opportunities through workshops, masterclasses, and forums. The Industry Forum, a particular highlight, featured experts like NAMM president John Mlynzczak, who shared insights on the U.S. and global music markets. This forum was packed with attendees eager to learn more about market trends and best practices from industry leaders.

Other events, like Music X and DJ Pro, showcased the latest trends in DJ technology and interactive performance, bringing a fresh energy to the fair and underscoring Music China's role as a hub for musical innovation. These activities allowed attendees to explore trends and innovations across multiple genres, making the show an educational experience as well as a commercial one.

Looking Ahead

Music China 2024 was far more than an exhibition; it was a dynamic platform for global business, professional growth, and cultural exchange. As the music industry looks ahead to the next edition in October 2025, Music China stands as a testament to music's universal appeal and the expanding opportunities within the global MI industry. The show's international reach and inclusivity, combined with its focus on innovation and tradition, highlight the evolving nature of the music products industry and its ability to inspire creativity worldwide.

MMR Magazine's Commitment to Covering Music China

MMR Magazine is proud to be the only U.S. MI trade publication to cover Music China year after year. Our commitment to bringing this incredible international experience to our readers reflects our belief in the value of connecting American and global audiences. As we look forward to covering the 2025 show, we remain dedicated to sharing the stories, insights, and emerging trends from one of the world's most important music trade events.



Fishman founder and CEO Larry Fishman with MMR publisher, Mike Lawson



There were literally hundreds of guitar brands at Music China we have never seen in the US



Pearl River released two new handmade Mike Lawson Signature Model acoustic guitars at Music China



Allen & Heath enjoyed representation by their distributor in China



The pro audio hall was home to many US brands such as Universal Audio



The pro audio hall at Music China was packed with USA brands and more



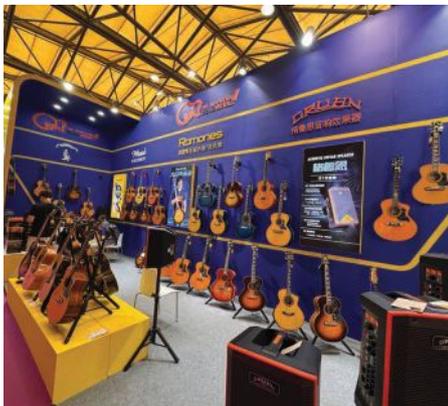
Music China's halls were packed each day



IK Multimedia's exhibits stayed busy at Music China



KORG presented a full line of keyboards in a busy booth



There were literally hundreds of guitar brands at Music China we have never seen in the US



International brands well-known in US markets abounded at Music China



Blackstar, Fishman, Washburn, Peavey, and more at Music China



Ernie Ball Strings and Accessories were very popular at Music China



Dunlop was another US brand whose booth enjoyed a lot of traffic at Music China



Rode Microphones were a crowd pleaser



Hampback had one of the more interesting booths with a lifelike realistic moon walker on display for their digital drum line



A typical day at Music China, with each booth jammed full of buyers



PreSonus, now owned by Fender, is a very popular brand in Asia, too



Pearl is another US drum maker on display at Music China drawing a lot of attention



If the brand is popular in the USA, it was popular at Music China, too



ESP USA guitars were a hot item at Music China

ATOMIC MUSIC

A 30-Year Legacy in the Heart of Beltsville

by Mike Lawson

For 30 years, Atomic Music in Beltsville, Maryland, has been a haven for musicians and collectors alike. Founded in 1994 by Eric Schwelling and Luis Peraza, this unique music store has grown from a small rented house into a local legend. Known for its welcoming atmosphere and vast collection of used instruments, Atomic Music has become a community fixture. In an industry dominated by big-box stores, Atomic Music has found success by putting musicians first. *MMR* sat down with Eric and Luis to learn more about their journey, the trials they've overcome, and the passion that fuels Atomic Music's enduring legacy.

MMR: Thank you both for taking the time to chat with us. Could you start by introducing yourselves and telling us where Atomic Music is based?

Eric: Sure thing. I'm Eric Schwelling.

Luis: And I'm Luis Peraza. We're in Beltsville, Maryland, which has been our home since we started.

MMR: 30 years is quite a milestone! Let's take it back to the beginning. How did Atomic Music get its start?

Eric: It all began in 1994 when Luis and I, along with our significant others, were headed to Lollapalooza. We'd both been buying and selling guitars on the side, and we figured, "Why not

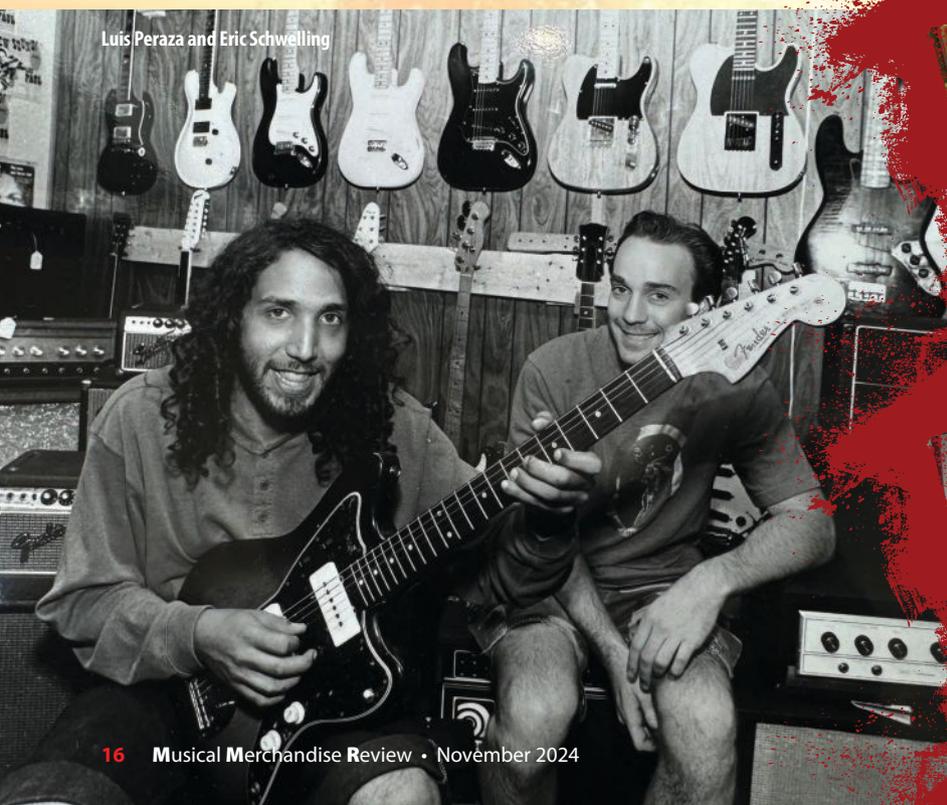
try opening a little store?" So, when we got back, I looked around and found a spot just ten minutes away—a small house for rent with a \$500 monthly price tag. Luis thought it was crazy to rent the whole place, but I convinced him to go for it.

Luis: I didn't even want to sign a lease because we'd never run a business before. But our landlord, Rhonda Brown, was incredibly supportive. She said, "Just give me 60 days' notice if you need to leave." That kind of flexibility was a game-changer. We dove in, got a business license, and used whatever gear we had on hand to fill the place.

MMR: So you started out selling your personal collections?

Luis: Exactly. It was mainly used gear at first. Eric would buy from pawn shops in Baltimore, and I did the same in D.C. Each day, one of us would stay in the shop while the other went on a "pawn shop loop," building up our stock with whatever we could find. We developed relationships with local pawn shop managers who knew to expect us. It was exhausting, but we loved it.

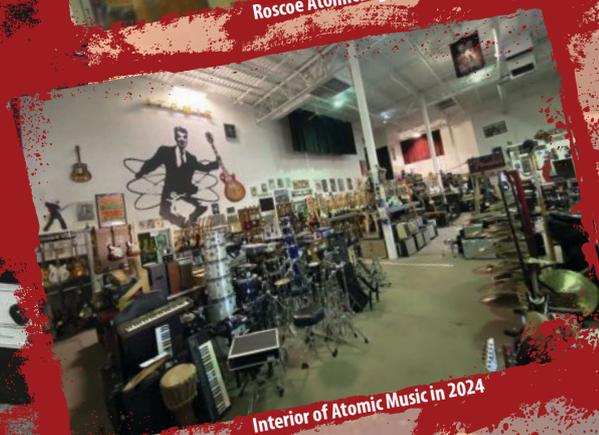
Eric: The shop quickly became a place for musicians to hang out and buy gear without feeling taken advantage of. That was our goal from the start. Musicians would come in and feel at home; it wasn't just about the sale.



Luis Peraza and Eric Schwelling



Roscoe Atomicdog - at the counter



Interior of Atomic Music in 2024

MMR: What was the response from the local community like?

Eric: They were thrilled. People would come in and say, "I didn't know there was a music store here." It was like we'd opened a new clubhouse for local musicians. We treated everyone fairly, and they respected that.

Luis: We weren't looking to make a fortune. We just wanted to make the business sustainable and provide a place where musicians could buy, sell, and trade gear without worrying about being taken advantage of. In fact, we have a policy: if someone sells us a piece of gear and decides they want it back, we'll only mark it up 20%. It's all about treating people right.

MMR: When did you start carrying new gear?

Luis: We stayed mostly with used gear for the first few years. About three years in, we moved to a larger space in an old Safeway building. That expansion allowed us to add some new lines, like Takamine guitars and other popular brands. But the core of our business remained in used gear, which gave us a unique identity.

Eric: Even with new inventory, we were careful. We'd only bring in new gear if we couldn't meet demand with used stock. For example, if we were low on acoustic guitars, we'd order a few new ones, but we always preferred to keep it primarily used.

MMR: It sounds like you've built a really loyal customer base.

Eric: Absolutely. Many of our customers come in once a week to see what's new. Some just come to hang out. It's a bit like a barbershop—everyone knows each other, and there's always someone around to talk music. We've even watched some of our customers grow from kids buying their first guitar to successful musicians with thriving careers.

Luis: There's nothing like seeing someone come back to the store year after year. A lot of local players feel like Atomic is their "home base."

MMR: You've had a few moves over the years. How has that impacted the business?

Luis: We've moved several times, mostly due to rent increases. For instance, when we were in the Safeway building, the owner raised our rent drastically, and we had to leave. We found a warehouse space nearby and made it work, even though it was less ideal. We were paying less, which helped us survive the 2008 recession.

Eric: Our current location in Beltsville is perfect. Our landlord is supportive, which is a nice change. He understands that

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retail

having a long-term tenant is more valuable than raising the rent every few years. During COVID, he was extremely accommodating, and that meant a lot to us.

MMR: How did you adapt to the challenges of COVID?

Eric: COVID was tough. Demand went through the roof, but inventory was hard to come by. Luckily, an old pawn shop contact came through for us. He had about 400 guitars in stock, so each week, I'd go over and buy 30 or so guitars from him. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement that kept us stocked during a critical time.

Luis: We also offered curbside pickup and even made a few deliveries. We did what we had to do to keep things running and serve our customers safely.

MMR: That's dedication. Have you thought about expanding into lessons?

Luis: We tried it briefly with a separate building dedicated to lessons, but it wasn't for us. Managing lessons requires a lot of time and space, and we wanted every square foot for gear. It's just not our model. We focus on being the best used-gear store, and that's what we're known for.

Eric: There are plenty of other stores in the area that handle lessons. We'd rather specialize in what we're good at, and that's providing high-quality used gear at fair prices.

MMR: It sounds like you've become more than just a store for many people in your community.

Eric: Definitely. It's rewarding to be part of people's musical journeys. We've seen kids buy their first guitars here, and years later, they're successful musicians. The relationships we've are one of the most fulfilling parts of the business.

MMR: Speaking of the future, what's next for Atomic Music?

Luis: We're not planning on going anywhere for the next 10 to 15 years. After that, we'll see. Maybe the employees will take over, and we'll just pop in occasionally. Neither of us can sit still for long, though, so I doubt we'll ever fully "retire."

Eric: We'll keep doing what we love for as long as we can. When the time comes, we'll figure out an exit plan that keeps the spirit of Atomic Music alive. But for now, we're here to stay.

MMR: That's great to hear. Do you both still play music?

Eric: I do. I play in a couple of bands and am gearing up to record again after some back surgery. Playing music is in my DNA—I can't imagine not doing it.

Luis: Eric's the one still making music. I'm more focused on running the shop and making sure we're providing the best experience for our customers.

MMR: Thank you both for sharing your story. Atomic Music is a special place, and it's clear you've built something unique.

Eric: Thanks for having us. It's been great to reflect on the journey.

Luis: And thank you. We're grateful to everyone who has supported us along the way.



Co-founder Eric Schwelling

"We weren't looking to make a fortune. We just wanted to make the business sustainable and provide a place where musicians could buy, sell, and trade gear without worrying about being taken advantage of."

— Luis Peraza



The first location on Route 1 in College Park a small house split up into small business space



The current location at 11011 Baltimore Ave. in Beltsville, MD



Atomic Music specializes in used instruments

"We'll keep doing what we love for as long as we can. When the time comes, we'll figure out an exit plan that keeps the spirit of Atomic Music alive. But for now, we're here to stay."

— Eric Schwelling

What Makes a Music Store Special



By
Menzie
Pittman

It's hard to be original, and very hard to be unique. But, in the most generic time in retail that I can recall in many a year, the originality card is really the only card left to play. So I thought it beneficial to mention a few companies that embrace unique character, original approaches, and personal charm.

The two companies that I will spotlight as examples of the success mind set, are The Candyman Strings and Things and Spicer's Music. I asked each store's owner the same two questions: one regarding differentiation, and one regarding today's biggest market challenges.

Let's find out how these two very successful stores look at these important questions that pertain to all of us.

Candyman Strings & Things (Rand Cook)

What is one thing that you believe differentiates Candyman Strings and Things from other music stores?

Rand: There are several things that I believe set us apart from our competitor's at large:

A relaxed and open showroom with lots of space, dynamic natural light and wood architectural features. The space is very inviting and provides a low stress environment.

That, along with a customer service philosophy of no pressure, and our staff working in tandem for the benefit of our customers and students.

We also have an unusually broad selection of instruments and accessories for the market size.

But the most important are the people who work here; most are long term veterans. All are professional musicians (performance, engineering and teaching) and have a focus on fulfilling the needs of our musical community. All carefully driven by women leadership and management.

What is Candyman's biggest challenge in today's market?

Our biggest challenge is staying front of mind in the age of the internet. Too few people understand the value of supporting the local resources – yet lament when they are gone....

Spicer's Music (Tim Spicer)

What is one thing you believe differentiates Spicer's from other music stores?

Tim Spicer: Although we do specialize in a number of niche inventory categories which encourages customers to shop with us virtually from around the country and world, many of

the products we stock, and merchandise can be found at music stores everywhere. Carrying much of the same product as our competitors makes it challenging to stand out in the crowd. I believe one thing Spicer's does very well to differentiate ourselves in a crowded industry is that we lean forward into challenges in a proactive, and often creative way, with the intention of being customer-focused and building stronger customer relationships. We do this by continuously bringing our focus back to the customer's point of view, and empowering our staff to be creative and work autonomously when applicable. For over a year now, this process of customer-focused team management has been led by our General Manager Jonathan Hendrix. Jonathan's dedication to the customer's point of view has played a key role in the continued differentiation of Spicer's Music.

What is Spicer's biggest challenge in today's market?

For our business, sales today just aren't what they were this time last year. Customers are still purchasing high-ticket instruments with profitable margins, but we are experiencing an overall dip in customer traffic. This decline in overall traffic, both in-person and virtually, has resulted in a dip in sales volume. From what we are hearing, this may be a similar trend at many stores across the country after the years of sustained highs from the post-COVID spending. Our challenge is now to adapt and overcome this decline by staying focused on our customer. Our Sales Manager, Jessie Osborne, has worked closely with our management team to develop creative ideas to combat this decline. With a combination of new customer events as well as basic tasks like handwritten notes mailed to customers, we hope to be proactive and make the best of today's current market...

In Closing

It's easy to see from the way these two leaders answer those two questions that many of the problems we face today are universal. I greatly appreciate the honest answers given by both Rand and Tim. In business, it's the way in which we approach vision, as well as our creative solutions to problems, that affords us the tools to differentiate our business from others, and that paves the road to success. 

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."

“It's the way in which we approach vision, as well as our creative solutions to problems, that affords us the tools to differentiate our business from others, and that paves the road to success..”

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CQ Series

BUFFET CRAMPON PARIS
ClariMate

YAMAHA
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2024
Nominee
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MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW
DEALERS' CHOICE AWARD

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Alfred

CARL FISCHER MUSIC

BOOSEY & HAWKES

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DEALERS' CHOICE AWARD

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P2PGA River Pacific

YAMAHA
FS9

Fender **Martin & Co.**
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DEALERS' CHOICE AWARD

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YAMAHA



BUFFET CRAMPON

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GUITARS
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KALA
- BRAND MUSIC CO. -
KA-15

LANIKAI
UKULELES

Quilted Maple Baritone

PEARL RIVER
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steinberg



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BPJ60-N

Fender

Jaguar

YAMAHA

TRBX174

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Paranormal Rascal Bass HH

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YAMAHA
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Player II Stratocaster

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SE Custom 24



Roland
FP-30X

nord
Electro 6D

CASIO
PX-S7000

YAMAHA
PSR-EW320



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Professional Microphones

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PRO AUDIO

Roland Announces EARTH Piano

Roland announces EARTH Piano, a powerful software-based musical instrument available exclusively on Roland Cloud. EARTH Piano brings Roland's acclaimed



piano sound technologies to computer production workflows, offering multiple acoustic piano types and deep customization options via an intuitive user interface. EARTH Piano is available with a Lifetime Key purchase or Roland Cloud Ultimate membership, which users can try for free with a 30-day all-access trial. Through November 30, 2024, a Lifetime Key can be purchased for a special introductory price of \$49.99, an 80 percent savings compared with the regular price of \$249.99.

Since introducing the groundbreaking EP-10 in 1973, Roland has remained dedicated to moving piano design forward and extending the instrument's range for all musicians. EARTH Piano features Roland's best and most modern piano sound technology, combining detailed multi-sampling with proprietary modeling techniques for the perfect blend of realism and playability. With its incredibly natural tone, wide dynamic range, and engaging response, EARTH Piano provides an inspiring platform for everything from intimate solo performances to dense full-scale productions.

EARTH Piano includes seven distinctive instruments that can be modified to taste. There are resonant concert grands for jazz and classical styles, polished and punchy pianos for studio tracks, and upright, felt, and toy pianos filled with atmosphere and vibe for pop, electronic, and cinematic productions.

With its clean and efficient user interface, EARTH Piano provides intuitive tools to fine-tune detailed tonal parameters for every instrument. Players can control the temperament, stereo width, and dynamic range and tweak physical sounds like cabinet resonance, string resonance, pedal noise, and more. They can also adjust each key's tuning, volume, and character to create the perfect tone and response for a performance or track.

EARTH Piano's Venue effect leverages advanced convolution techniques to place a piano in nine different spaces derived from real locations, such as a spacious cathedral, a world-class concert hall, or an intimate studio or lounge setting. With a click on the visual display, the listening perspective can be changed to access a variety of aural experiences within every space. High-quality algorithmic reverbs are also available for standard mixing applications.

EARTH Piano includes a wide selection of integrated studio-grade effects for enhancing sounds. Users can shape the overall tone with a three-band EQ and use the multi-mode compressor to create the ideal dynamic response. There are also 90 multi-effects combinations available to add subtle color or take conventional piano sounds into unexplored sonic territories.

Availability & Pricing

The Roland EARTH Piano is now available in the U.S. with a Lifetime Key purchase or Roland Cloud Ultimate membership, which users can try for free with a 30-day all-access trial.

**Price at the time of publishing.*

www.roland.com/us/

New M-Audio Forty Series Studio Monitors

M-Audio, a leader in music production and recording equipment, announces the launch of the Forty Series studio monitors. The Forty Sixty and Forty Eighty represent the latest evolution in M-Audio's monitor lineup, offering cutting-edge sound customization, Bluetooth 5.0 streaming, and enhanced power for modern creators.



"We designed the M-Audio Forty Series with today's musicians, producers, and creators in mind," said John Boudreau director of product management. "Our goal was to deliver precision sound, adaptability, and seamless connectivity that meet the evolving needs of both home and project studios. With Bluetooth 5.0 streaming and DSP-powered customization, users can tailor their audio to any space, ensuring they always experience professional-grade sound, no matter where they create"

Designed for musicians, producers, and creators seeking versatility and accuracy, the M-Audio Forty Series delivers adaptable sound profiles, advanced connectivity, and intuitive controls, making it an ideal addition to home, project studios, and personal workstations. With the M-Audio Forty Series Control App, users can fine-tune their sound via customizable presets and a 5-band EQ, optimizing audio for any space or preference. These features ensure an exceptional listening experience, solidifying the Forty Series as a top choice for both professional and hobbyist setups.

Key features of the Forty Series:

- DSP-powered sound customization: Precision crossover, EQ, and voicing options allow users to fine-tune audio for any space.
- Professional-grade A/D converters: Superior sound quality with low noise and exceptional signal accuracy.
- Front-panel instant listening modes: Switch between Flat for reference monitoring, Hype for consumer-style enhanced listening, and Custom EQ for personalized audio profiles.
- Bluetooth 5.0 TWS audio streaming and control: Seamlessly stream from any device and control via the Forty Series Control app.

Forty Sixty

- Woofer: 6.5-inch extended bass response
- Tweeter: 1-inch high-frequency driver
- Amplification: 100 watts (60W LF / 40W HF)
- Ideal for smaller studios, delivering precise, rich sound in a compact form.

Forty Eighty

- Woofer: 8-inch extended low-end response
- Tweeter: 1.25-inch high-frequency driver
- Amplification: 150 watts (90W LF / 60W HF)
- Perfect for larger spaces and more demanding audio projects, offering deeper bass and more power.

Availability and pricing

The M-Audio Forty Series monitors will be available starting today from partnered inMusic dealers. For more information, visit M-Audio's website. Pricing is as follows: Forty Sixty – \$199 (USD) • Forty Eighty – \$299 (USD)

<https://m-audio.com>

AMPLIFICATION

Sunn Amps Launches the 1000-Watt 'DoomBox' Speaker Cabinet

Sunn Amps has announced the release of the Sunn Amps DoomBox, a revolutionary 1000-watt speaker cabinet crafted for musicians who demand unmatched power and precision.

This innovative cabinet reinvents the standard 4x12 configuration, setting a new benchmark for professional sound performance in live setups.

The Sunn Amps DoomBox is built to accommodate both guitar and bass, offering an impressive 1000-watt handling capacity—making it the first commercially available 4x12 cabinet with such high power handling. With four specially designed 12" drivers rated at 250 watts each, this cabinet provides clean, unrestrained sound levels that can maintain power integrity across all frequencies, ideal for high-volume performances.

Inspired and developed using feedback from artists and bands who rely on the depth of lower tunings and high volume genres, the DoomBox was engineered to meet the unique demands of professional musicians looking for a robust, high-efficiency cab that can translate the raw power of their sound without compromise.

Premium Craftsmanship and Materials

The Doom Box cabinet is crafted from solid finger-jointed Baltic Birch plywood, ensuring both durability and tonal clarity. Each cabinet is constructed by hand in the U.S.A. using original 1930s machinery, the DoomBox reflects Sunn's historic commitment to quality, contrasting with some of the mass-produced, MDF-based cabinets on the market today. The cabinet's aluminum basket, ferrite magnet, and custom Sunn weave Tolex with a custom grill design complete its professional-grade build.

Technical Specifications:

- Power Handling: 1000W
- Inputs: 1 x 1/4"
- Impedance: 8 Ohm
- Drivers: 4 x Sunn 12S250
- Construction: Marine Grade Baltic Birch
- Dimensions: 29.25" X 30" X 14"
- Weight: 107 lbs.

Price: \$2,399.00

With clear low-end punch, even sound response, and ample air movement, the Doom Box ensures that every note reaches the audience with clarity and power. This cabinet is a game-changer for musicians who need high-performance, road-ready equipment that enhances their unique sound.

<https://sunnamps.com>



FRETTED

C.F. Martin & Co. Launches the 000-11E Craig Thatcher Guitar

Martin Guitar is proud to announce the release of the limited-edition 000-11E Craig Thatcher, honoring the enduring legacy of the guitarist, songwriter, and Martin ambassador. A Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania, music icon, Craig has been a pivotal figure in the region's vibrant music scene and a longtime advocate for Martin Guitar.

The 000-11E Craig Thatcher acoustic-electric guitar embodies



Craig's distinctive style, and with only 35 models available, it's sure to become a coveted collector's item. Craig himself played a key role in designing this instrument, inspired by his passion for tonewoods like solid figured sapele and his love for the timeless appeal of herringbone accents.

"Craig and I have traveled the world together, telling the Martin story. I talk, and he plays," says executive chairman Chris Martin IV. "Craig worked closely with our teams in Nazareth and Navojia, Sonora, Mexico, to make this guitar happen. I think it's pretty cool."

To celebrate the launch of the 000-11E Craig Thatcher, Martin Guitar unveiled this exciting new model at an exclusive event at the Martin Guitar Museum in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, on Wednesday, October 23, 2024. The event featured a private unveiling and a special live performance by Craig.

www.martinguitars.com

Fender Unveils American Ultra II

Fender continues its industry-defining innovation, launching the next iteration of the coveted American Ultra series—Fender's most advanced series of electric guitars - by taking that hyper-modern recipe and turning it up to 11 for American Ultra II.



At a time when projections indicate the electric guitar market is set to grow by USD 1.45 billion from 2024-2028, driven by increasing demand for music-related leisure activities¹, the introduction of the American Ultra II series exemplifies a steadfast commitment to innovation, with every detail reflecting a relentless pursuit of perfection. At Fender, innovation is an ongoing, dynamic process fueled by a deep passion for enhancing the playing experience. Long before the American Ultra series hit the market, discussions were already underway about future possibilities, sparked by spontaneous experiments and real-world feedback from the innovators who play these guitars.

The American Ultra II series is built in Fender's iconic California factory where guitars are meticulously crafted using a blend of time-honored techniques and state-of-the-art CNC technology, ensuring every instrument embodies the perfect balance of tradition and modernity. Massive green punch presses and decades-old tools, some dating back to the 1950s, sit alongside advanced machinery that allows for precise shaping and flawless consistency.

"With the work and heart that went into creating the American Ultra II series, there's a lot of soul in these guitars," said Justin Norvell, EVP of Product at FMIC. "We refer to it as the "sports car" of the Fender lineup, it's designed to push boundaries and redefine what a Fender guitar can be, catering to both traditionalists and those exploring new, faster, and more intricate playing styles. This is a guitar that doesn't fight you; instead, it gets out of the way, allowing you to focus purely on your performance, whether you're playing soulful solos, fast riffs, or complex chord progressions."

Featuring stunning finishes, modern body contours, a Modern "D" neck shape, and the most advanced Ultra Noiseless™ and new Haymaker™ Humbucker pickups, American Ultra II bridges the gap between Fender's classic designs and high-performance instruments typically associated with Fender's specialty brands such as Charvel, EVH or Jackson. The guitars' unique neck profiles provide an effortless glide along the fretboard, making for

an incredibly smooth and responsive feel that increases precision. The American Ultra II series is an ideal fit for players who love the iconic look and sound of a Fender guitar, but crave the speed and playability of a performance guitar adept for playing across genres, from neo-soul and jazz to metal and funk.

A welcome balance to the ultra-modern specs, the American Ultra II also embodies the hallmark qualities that make Fender guitars timeless including unparalleled versatility, modularity, and signature tone. Whether a player is chasing the crystalline clarity of classic Stratocaster® sounds, the bite of a Telecaster®, or the deep growl of a Jazz Bass®, the American Ultra II series is built to handle it all. In addition to the standard models, the series includes Ultra II Jazz Bass® V, a left-hand Stratocaster® model as well Ultra II Meteora® guitar and bass. Top highlights for the series include:

Fender's Fastest-Playing Necks: The quartersawn maple neck has a comfortable modern "D" shape and is topped with an ebony or maple fingerboard with Luminlay side dots and Ultra rolled edges

Upgraded Noiseless Pickups: The Ultra II Noiseless pickups deliver classic Fender single-coil sound – without the hum

Ultra Comfort And Playability: A sculpted neck heel and sleek rear body contours offer next-level comfort and playability

Artists taking part in the launch include some of the most proficient guitar and bass players across genres that synonymously reflect the innovation American Ultra II brings, including American guitarist, singer-songwriter, and producer Isaiah Sharkey, dynamic bassist and vocalist Annie Clements and Telecaster virtuoso Luke McQueary. JIRO from GLAY, one of Japan's most renowned groups, and guitarist Hiloto Wakai from the chart-topping, wildly popular Mrs. GREEN APPLE will also make an appearance. Additionally, renowned players including John 5, a masterfully skilled guitarist that defies regular norms nailing styles ranging from bluegrass to shred metal, alongside Joe Lally, Lawrence Ku, and Felix Pastorius will be featured in the series' demos and Pure Play videos.

www.fender.com



On Its 50th Birthday, Taylor Guitars Unveils Retrospective Legacy Collection Guitars

Fifty years to the day after it first opened its doors for business on October 15, 1974, Taylor Guitars announced the release of its new Legacy Collection, leading with five guitar models that commemorate some of the company's classic designs from years past. The collection features three models inspired by Taylor's original rosewood/spruce 800 Series: the Dreadnought Legacy 810e, 6-string Jumbo Legacy 815e and 12-string Jumbo Legacy 855e; and two models that honor Bob Taylor's iconic Grand Auditorium body style: the mahogany/cedar Legacy 514ce and rosewood/cedar Legacy 714ce. In a fitting tribute, the Legacy Collection makes its debut on October 15, Taylor's actual 50th anniversary.

The Legacy Collection closes out what has been a robust year-long rollout of limited-edition 50th Anniversary guitars spanning nearly the entirety of the Taylor line, ranging from the

GS Mini to its Presentation Series. What sets the Legacy Collection apart is that, as the name suggests, these guitars reimagine classic/historical Taylor designs that helped establish and define the company in its earlier years.

Taylor himself oversaw the development of the collection, which stands out for its reflective focus. In the past, Bob would typically use milestone anniversaries as an opportunity to introduce a new and innovative design that signaled Taylor's path forward, such as his Grand Auditorium body (20th anniversary) or his patented neck joint design (25th anniversary). But for the 50th, Taylor embraced a more reflective design approach with the Legacy guitars.

"In earlier decades, I felt like our guitar designs weren't fully realized, that we needed to keep pushing them forward—which, by the way, Andy Powers continues to do for us here," Taylor says. "But at 50, I feel like we're also entitled to look back. And there are a lot of folks out there who remember and love these earlier guitars, so we thought it would be great to re-introduce some of them."

Taylor's approach in designing the Legacy guitars was not to build pure reissues of the originals from one specific year, but to adopt a more nuanced, curated mindset, resulting in a slightly more composite re-interpretation. The Legacy models do preserve the fundamental qualities of the original builds, incorporating classic design elements such as Taylor's X-bracing architecture and many of the same aesthetic appointments from their era, but with updated features where appropriate, including a version of Bob's patented neck design (originally introduced as the NT neck in 1999).

The Legacy 800 Series (Models: Legacy 810e, Legacy 815e, 12-string Legacy 855e)

Taylor's Indian rosewood/Sitka spruce 800 Series was the first series that company co-founder Bob Taylor developed in the mid-'70s. All three Indian rosewood/Sitka spruce guitars feature subtly updated versions of the Dreadnought (810) and Jumbo (815, 855) body shapes Bob originally inherited from Sam Rading, owner of the American Dream shop that he and co-founding partner Kurt Listug purchased together in 1974. Beyond X-bracing and a modern Taylor neck, notable details for all three guitars include:

Body and peghead shape: The body is slightly newer than Bob's earliest versions but still older. The peghead is an earlier "straight-ear" shape with a rosewood veneer.

Bridge style: The Dreadnought 810e has Taylor's recognizable modern shape; the two Jumbos feature Taylor's vintage mustache-style bridge.

Appointments: The cosmetic details recall those of the early 800 Series models, with a clean, classic aesthetic Bob loves: white plastic binding, three-ring green abalone rosette, non-engraved mother-of-pearl Large Diamond fretboard inlays, ebony bridge pins with green abalone dots, gloss-finish body and neck, faux tortoiseshell pickguard and Taylor nickel tuning machines.

Onboard electronics: The LR Baggs Element VTC (volume, tone, compression) features an undersaddle pickup and all-discrete, Class A preamp that includes a soundhole-mounted volume and tone control.

The Legacy Grand Auditorium Guitars (Models: 514ce and 714ce)

Bob's Grand Auditorium body style established Taylor's distinctive design sensibility both in its refined curves and musical voice. It became the company's most popular body style, offering players extraordinary utility and versatility, producing a clear, balanced acoustic sound that was useful for recording and performance, and featuring a cutaway and onboard electronics,

newproducts

which would become Taylor hallmarks. The Legacy 514ce and 714ce reintroduce two Grand Auditorium models that showcase classic tonewoods—mahogany and Indian rosewood—each paired with tops of Western Red cedar, a popular soundboard wood for fingerstylists and light to medium strummers in the '90s and 2000s due to its warmth and pleasing touch sensitivity. Notable appointments for each model include:

Legacy 514ce*: Faux tortoiseshell binding (body and fretboard) with black and white top purfling, mother-of-pearl small diamond fretboard inlays

Legacy 714ce*: Black plastic binding with black and white pinstripes on the top, side and back, and green abalone dot fretboard inlays

Both models: Green abalone three-ring rosette, ebony bridge pins with green abalone dots, gloss-finish body and satin-finish neck, faux tortoiseshell pickguard, Taylor gold tuning machines, and LR Baggs Element VTC electronics with soundhole-mounted volume and tone controls.

All Legacy Collection models feature a specially designed "Legacy" label inside the guitar. The labels for the first 100 of each model are hand-signed by Taylor co-founders Bob Taylor and Kurt Listug.

*Available later in the fourth quarter of 2024

www.taylorguitars.com

DRUMS & PERCUSSION

Mapex Drums Celebrates 35th Anniversary with Special Edition Saturn Evolution Drumkit in Maple Burl Blaze

In celebration of 35 years of innovation and craftsmanship, Mapex Drums is proud to announce the release of a special edition Saturn Evolution Series drumkit featuring the stunning Maple Burl Blaze finish.



This special edition pays homage to the Mapex legacy of delivering exceptional sound and design with a striking new aesthetic.

The Maple Burl Blaze finish showcases an exotic wood grain maple burl veneer complemented by sleek black brushed hardware and a special edition gold badge. This drumkit is a visual and sonic masterpiece that truly stands out in any performance setting.

At the heart of the Saturn Evolution series is the leading drum design and craftsmanship for which Mapex has become. This special edition kit includes Hybrid Maple/Walnut shells, SONI-Clear™ bearing edges, to ensure effortless tuning and increased resonance, and the innovative halo mount design for complete freedom of resonance.

This limited run of the Saturn Evolution Series in Maple Burl Blaze is a tribute to the Mapex 35-year journey of pushing the boundaries of drum manufacturing. As only a select number of kits will be made available, this is an opportunity for drummers to own a piece of Mapex history while experiencing the modern performance capabilities that set the Saturn Evolution series apart.

www.mapexdrums.com

PRINT & DIGITAL

The Daily Ukulele: Another Year from Hal Leonard

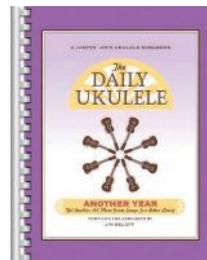
The Daily Ukulele series, created by musician and ukulele expert Jim Beloff (a.k.a. Jumpin' Jim), has become a staple for ukulele enthusiasts and clubs worldwide. Since its release nearly 15 years ago, the original collection quickly inspired hundreds of thousands to pick up their ukuleles daily.

Following the success of the original, baritone ukulele and Leap Year editions, Beloff and Hal Leonard now present *The Daily Ukulele: Another Year*. This new songbook adds another 365 songs—one for each day of the year—without duplicating any from previous editions. Like its predecessors, this edition features popular songs arranged for ukulele with melody lines, lyrics, and chord grids in accessible, uke-friendly keys. The book also features plastic comb-binding that keeps the book flat for easy playing.

The Daily Ukulele: Another Year includes timeless songs from icons like James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, The Beatles, Paul Simon, and John Prine, along with contemporary hits, Motown classics, country favorites, early folk ballads, and more.

Available for \$59.99, *The Daily Ukulele: Another Year* is ready to inspire another generation of daily ukulele players.

www.halleonard.com



New for Orchestra Sight-Reading: Texas Prep Series from RBC Publications

RBC Publications is thrilled to release the much anticipated *Texas Prep Series: Daily Exercises Based on the State Sight-Reading Criteria for String Orchestra*, featuring six levels of collections written by esteemed educators and composers from Texas, Kari Zamora, Aaron Fryklund and Kevin Sluder. Ideal for use by orchestra directors – in Texas, throughout the country and beyond – *Texas Prep* is a daily exercise collection specifically designed to increase sight-reading skills and prepare students for contest adjudication. It covers every key, rhythm, and time signature ensembles may encounter while sight-reading under the Texas state sight-reading criteria. Each of the six levels in the *Texas Prep* series follows the widely respected University Interscholastic League (UIL) sight-reading criteria for string orchestra and follows a progressive, pedagogic sequence.

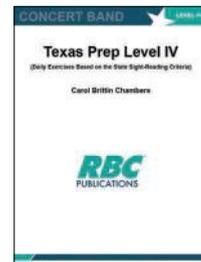
"The state of Texas has earned a wonderful reputation for outstanding music programs," explains Tyler Arcari, director of music production and editing. "Through collaboration with fantastic Texas composers and educators, the *Texas Prep* series has been crafted to be an invaluable resource for teachers in Texas and around the country."

As a longtime collaborator with UIL in providing musical pieces for the sight-reading portion of UIL's assessment, RBC Publications understands the ins and outs of Texas state music education, criteria, and adjudication. *Texas Prep Series* is any String Educator's tool to assist in these endeavors.

Releases that are part of the new series include the following: *Texas Prep Level I* by Kari Zamora, *Texas Prep Level II* by Aaron Fryklund, *Texas Prep Level III* by Kevin Sluder, *Texas Prep Level IV* by Kari Zamora, *Texas Prep Level V* by Aaron Fryklund, and *Texas Prep Level VI* by Kevin Sluder.

Complete String Orchestra sets are available for \$55 each (scores are \$10 each).

<https://rbcmusic.com>



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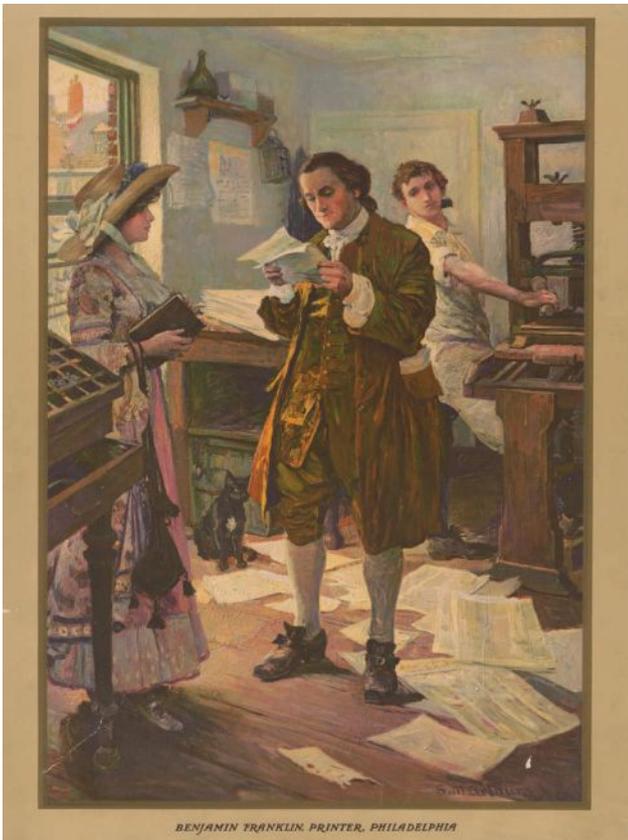
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