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MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

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The Changing Face of the Bay Area Northern California MI Businesses Reflect on Benefits and Challenges to Operating in the Region



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2018 MMR DEALERS CHOICE AWARD Product of the Year

INSIDE

Anniversary
Lee Oskar Harmonicas at 40

UpFront Q&A
Ray Williams of Music Marketing, Inc.

The 2023 NAMM Show Buyer's Guide



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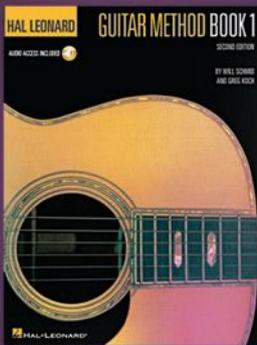
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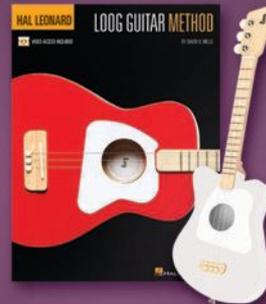
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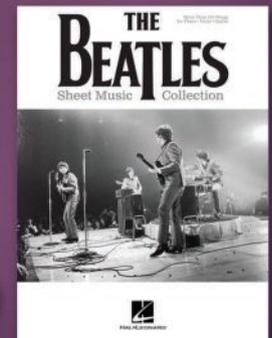
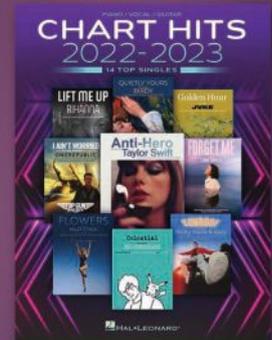
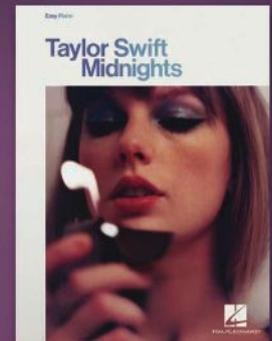
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C O N T E N T S

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FEATURES

Vol. 182 APRIL 2023 No. 4

Upfront Q&A

Ray Williams of Music Marketing, Inc. 12

MMR sat down with Music Marketing, Inc. president Ray Williams to talk specifically about the company's XCHANGE Market Platform and the more recent XCHANGE HD offering in order to learn about the many powerful advantages available to MI Vendors and Resellers.

Market Profile

The Changing Face of the Bay Area – Northern California MI Businesses Reflect on Benefits and Challenges to Operating in the Region 16

While not alone in facing the challenges of gentrification and massive wealth inequity, the Bay Area is certainly representative of the larger phenomenon. MMR recently spoke with a handful of prominent MI vendors and a few of the remaining dealers to learn about the enduring upside to operating in the area, the challenges faced and changes experienced in recent years, and thoughts on what the future may bring.

Anniversary

Lee Oskar Harmonicas at 40 28

Universally lauded for exceptional craftsmanship and design, Lee Oskar Harmonicas have been the go-to brand for serious players since 1983. We sit down with harmonica virtuoso and company founder, Lee Oskar, to discuss that past four decades, the recently released Mick Jagger Ltd. Edition Harmonica, and expectations for the future.



28

Dealer Survey

'Is This Thing On?' – Once-Hot USB Microphone Sales Cool Post-Pandemic 32

During pandemic-related lockdowns, sales of USB mics were white-hot, embraced by at-home creators. Now, in a (mostly) opened up, (mostly) post-COVID world, however, these mics are no longer quite as in-demand.

The 2023 NAMM Show Buyer's Guide 35

A roundup of some of the must-see instruments and gear on the Show floor this April in Anaheim.

Departments

Editorial	4
UpFront	6
Sound of Money	33
Small Business Matters	34
Classifieds.....	42
Ad Index	42

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Finding Space for the Arts

By
**Christian
Wissmuller**

In New York City: Trash Bar, Public Assembly/Black Bear Bar, The Continental, Hank's Saloon; In Boston: TT The Bear's Place, The Abbey Lounge, Thunder Road, Radio, Great Scott, Beachcomber, Sally O's, Bill's Bar, Church, Penalty Box, Bulfinch Yacht Club.

The above is just a partial listing of music venues I've played in that have closed in recent years.

This isn't a phenomenon exclusive to the Northeast (Austin: Threadgill's, Shady Grove, Barracuda, Beerland, Holy Mountain, Plush, The Sidewinder, Red 7, Red Eyed Fly, the North Door; San Francisco: Slim's, Amnesia, Hemlock Tavern, Uptown Nightclub, Club Deluxe, PianoFight) and it's also not limited only to places to perform – and view – live music.

After 16 years as a tenant of Charlestown Rehearsal Studios (CRS) in Boston, a large former commercial warehouse on one of the less-“Instagram-worthy” stretches of the city's waterfront, I was recently told – along with the other over-900 musician and creative lease-holders – that the practice rooms were soon to be converted to storage spaces, an option that provides for greater profit per square footage. Prior to CRS, I had been a practicing musician at Sound Museum, Denby Street, EMF, and Starlab, all of which are now shuttered. As of this writing, CRS is the *last* remaining commercial rehearsal space within Boston city limits.

There is often plenty of hand-wringing within MI regarding online and big-box competition, shrinking margins, supply-chain issues, and more – and all for very good reason. But if there are no places in urban centers for musicians of all ages to hone their craft and no venues for fans to enjoy music of all genres, other than larger arenas which exclusively host established, nationally and internationally touring acts, then that is an issue that *should* concern our community.

It does concern a few.

“Today there are few, if any, advantages to operating in the Bay Area,” says Gallien-Krueger's Robert Gallien in this issue's Market Profile on page 16. “Most of the studios, music retailers, and venues have vanished.”

This is the conundrum facing all “economically successful” U.S. metro areas in 2023. It's great when tech, gaming, bio-tech, and whatever other industries embrace a city and inject revenue and population into the region, but if property owners make the (entirely understandable) decisions to choose the greater profit of selling or converting usage from rehearsal rooms to lab space, affordable retail space to high-end condos, or music stages to upscale dining, it then robs those metros of many of the reasons folks want to locate there in the first place. “Oh, I'm so glad I moved to Austin (sub in Nashville, Cambridge, Brooklyn, San Francisco, Seattle...) – there's so much ‘culture’ here!” Cue to five years later: “Wait... where are all the clubs? What happened to all the bands? Why are there no small theaters or art galleries?”

What sort of “global city” has virtually no native music & arts scene?

In recent weeks, I and other lease-holders have been meeting with CRS ownership, Boston city councilors, and arts advocacy groups. The ultimate fate of my creative home is up in the air – which, to be very clear, is *far* preferable to a simple, “Pack your bags, loser! You're out on your ass next Friday!” – and my hope is for a reasonable and rational meeting of commerce and profit with creativity and culture, for both myself and my city, but also everywhere else in the nation, and the world. Independent music retailers, educators, musicians, venues, practice spaces, restaurants, bars, retail, et cetera: it's an interdependent structure. If it becomes impossible for any one of those components to operate in a city, you weaken the entire structure.

I'll share a similar list to how I began this column, but this time with respect to MI retail stores I used to be a patron of that are no longer in metro Boston – because of *precisely* what I'm talking about: Cambridge Music Center, Daddy's Junky Music, Jack's Drum Shop, Rayburn Music, LaSalle Music, E.U. Wurlitzer. Those were businesses owned and run – for years – by your colleagues.

The big picture isn't limited to what a person's annual income is, the profit-margin of an employer, or the tax breaks a region may offer businesses. Without protecting and ensuring space for arts, entire regions lose first their identity and, ultimately, a key component of the very economic engines that initially spurred growth.

I don't have all (or possibly any!) of the answers, but I can say it's a concern that more folks should have front-and-center and be actively seeking solutions to.

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Lanikai Celebrates Two Decades of Ukulele Innovation

2023 marks the 20th anniversary of the introduction of Lanikai Ukuleles. One of the premier ukulele brands throughout the world, Lanikai is well known for providing quality instruments for all musicians, from beginner to professional. From their inception, Lanikai has been dedicated to delivering instruments that inspire and elevate any performance. With ongoing commitment to innovation, Lanikai has offered unparalleled features, setting new standards across the industry. These unique features have long attracted the interest of professional performers accustomed to higher end instruments.



The Lanikai artist roster has continued to grow with performers who have similar stories about their love for the ukulele and their admiration for Lanikai.

"I've been playing Lanikai ukuleles for 18 years," says Alec "Cheef" Poletsky, co-founder of the band Kings of Ukulele. "On stage or in the studio, they have everything I need. From tone, feel, and wood choice, to cut-away access, pre-amp and strap buttons."

Lanikai brand manager Rock Clouser adds, "We are proud of the inspiration our instruments have provided over the past 20 years, and look forward to continuing that relationship while supporting future players in their love of ukulele."

The Lanikai line includes 4-, 5-, 6-, and 8-string ukuleles, offered in a variety of woods with both acoustic and acoustic electric options. Ukulele sizes include soprano, concert, tenor, and baritone. More recently, Lanikai launched an innovative and highly acclaimed series of bass ukuleles.

Hal Leonard and Fred Bock Celebrate 25 Years of Partnership

For 25 years now, Hal Leonard has been distributing the Fred Bock Publishing Group companies. The two companies celebrated the anniversary at the recent Christian Music Publishers Association Convention.

"We are proud to have such a long-standing relationship with one of the leaders in choral music publishing," stated Doug Lady, Hal Leonard SVP, Global and former co-president of the CMPA. "Initially working with Fred and now for many years with his son Steve, it's an honor to help support them in keeping their legacy developing and expanding."

Stephen Bock also commented that, "The last 25 years have seen such monumental changes to our company and our industry, but what has never wavered was our relationship with Hal Leonard. I cannot fathom having a better partner, and I can't wait to see what the next 25 years bring!"

The Fred Bock Publishing Group was founded by Fred Bock who was one of the most recognized and respected leaders in the church music world. He was a noted composer, arranger, clinician, studio musician, organist, choral director, and



Nancy Ubick - HL VP Business Affairs; Stephen Bock, President Fred Bock Publishing Group; Doug Lady, HL Senior VP Global; Joseph Martin, HL Director of Church Choral Publications

music publisher. Fred started his publishing career by developing Gentry Publications which published school and concert choral works and then the Fred Bock Music Company which published church music

for choir, organ, piano, and instruments. Through the years, Fred also acquired the Raymond A. Hoffman Company, Jubal House and the H.T. FitzSimons Company. During all this, Fred was an active minister of music at several high-profile Southern California churches and became an in-demand choral conductor and studio musician as well. After Fred passed away in 1998, his son Stephen Bock has continued to expand and develop the business which grew into the Fred Bock Publishing Group. This entity now represents those original cornerstone companies as well as Hinshaw Music, Epiphany House, and National Music Publishers.

Hal Leonard has the privilege of being the exclusive distributor of Fred Bock Publishing Group since 1998. There are currently over 9,000 titles in the combined catalogs.

Count Basie Orchestra Sax Section Now Playing JodyJazz Exclusively

The entire sax section of the Legendary Count Basie Orchestra recently had the opportunity to visit the JodyJazz factory. Hosted personally by JodyJazz founder and president Jody Espina, the section was treated to a factory tour, a lavish lunch, and each member had the opportunity to test a comprehensive selection of JodyJazz mouthpieces. The visit resulted in each of the musicians choosing a JodyJazz mouthpiece which they are now playing exclusively.

With more than 30 years since the passing of its legendary leader, the Count Basie Orchestra is still recording and performing sold-out concerts all over the world. William James "Count" Basie elevated the sound and the art of the Big Band to new levels of excellence and sophistication and today he is remembered as one of the greatest ever exponents of the artform and is truly an American institution. The Count Basie Orchestra



today performs under the direction of Scotty Barnhart and has won every respected jazz poll in the world, received 18 Grammy Awards, has appeared in several movies and television shows, and has performed at every major jazz festival and in every major concert hall in the world.

The Legendary Count Basie Orchestra Saxophone Section consists of Dave Glasser (lead alto), Chris Lewis (2nd alto), Doug Lawrence (1st tenor), Doug Miller (2nd tenor) and Josh Lee (baritone).

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DAS Audio Keeps the Energy Level High at Legacy Fitness

Exercise helps keep us healthy. While people can certainly choose the types of exercise that work best for them, the popularity of fitness centers has exploded in recent years. Such is the case with the Legacy chain of fitness centers. With a wide range of programs, numerous types of exercise equipment, and professional instructors to help craft the ideal workout for each individual, Legacy fitness has expanded to include facilities in Fort Lauderdale, Pembroke Pines, Coral Gables and

Wynwood in Florida. To help motivate members as they endeavor to become their very best, each facility uses music to keep the energy level high – all of which comes from loudspeakers and related equipment drawn from the DAS Audio catalog.



Manning Sumner is the founder and CEO of Legacy Fitness. After years of training professional athletes and A-list celebrities, Sumner developed a fitness system called Partner Interval Training (P.I.T.®) that made professional-level fitness results accessible to everyone. This system has taken South Florida by storm. No Days Off is the driving philosophy behind the system, and it has grown into a movement that just keeps accelerating. Music is an integral part of the Legacy programs, and this is precisely why sound reinforcement systems from DAS Audio were selected, which include models from the company's ACTION-500 Series, ARTEC Series, and E11EVEN Sound by DAS Audio product line.

Sumner shared his thoughts on the factors that motivated him to deploy DAS Audio, "As the person ultimately responsible for managing the operation, overseeing facility design, as well as managing customer service and all programs, it was important to me that each Legacy location have world-class sound systems to help motivate everyone during their workouts. This is precisely what led me to DAS Audio. Throughout 2022, we had systems deployed into each of our locations. While there is some variation between each facility due to room size and other factors, one thing is consistent: great sound that motivates people to give their very best effort."

The Wynwood facility also serves as Legacy's headquarters. In addition to housing Sumner's office, there are staff administration offices, a conference room, a podcast room, a cold plunge facility, sauna, IV Suite & Smoothie Bar, as well as the open gym. In this location, the DAS Audio system includes eight ARTEC-310.96 compact 2-way wide array enclosures, eight ARTEC-308 wide-range 2-way passive systems, plus four ESB18 passive direct radiation subwoofers from the E11EVEN Sound by DAS Audio catalog. E11EVEN Sound by DAS Audio EP-6K4 amplifiers power the system, with signal processing from BSS Audio completing the setup.

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Grammy Awards Stage Sports Dozens of Austrian Audio Microphones

Beyoncé was not the only one who broke records at the 65th annual Grammy Awards that took place last week in Los Angeles. Austrian Audio mics have been a staple at previous Grammy Awards, but this year they broke their own record: Twelve OC818s and twelve CC8s mics were used on stage, primarily to record the drum kits for the performing acts that night.

Michael Abbott, the chief engineer

and sound designer of the Grammy Awards, has been relying on Austrian Audio quality for years. He and his team of engineers have always been impressed on how the mics cover the drums. In such a widely broadcasted event like the Grammy Awards, quality and reliability are key, and Austrian Audio delivers just that and more.

Handmade in Vienna, the OC818 is a multi-pattern dual-output condens-

er microphone equipped with a world's first: optional wireless control, while its sibling – the OC18, is a cardioid pattern precision microphone. Its unique design and outstanding sonics, combined with new wireless control technologies offering highly optimized workflows, have garnered the OC818 five-star reviews from all over the world.



Austrian Audio's OC818 microphone

The CC8 small diaphragm microphone excels thanks to Austrian Audio's OCC7 condenser capsule. Its capsule and transformerless output give the CC8 an outstanding linear frequency response. It can handle extremely high sound pressure levels of up to 156 dB without distorting. Combined with a very low self-noise of only 16 dB SPL (A), this results in an exceptional dynamic range. The CC8 sounds natural and open, never harsh or spiky, even at extreme volumes. The mids and highs are silky smooth and never exaggerated.

DAS Audio *continued from page 8*

At Legacy's Fort Lauderdale location, the DAS Audio equipment deployed includes six E11EVEN Sound by DAS Audio ES-10 2-way point source loudspeaker enclosures mated with two ACTION-S18 passive direct radiation subwoofers. Like the Wynwood location, E11EVEN Sound by DAS Audio EP-6K4 amplifiers power the system, with signal processing from BSS Audio.

Similar to the equipment setup deployed in Fort Lauderdale, the Legacy Pembroke Pines facility includes eight E11EVEN Sound by DAS Audio ES-10 2-way point source loudspeaker enclosures mated with two ACTION-S18A high-power active subwoofers. E11EVEN Sound by DAS Audio EP-6K4 amplifiers power the ES-10 enclosures while signal processing from BSS Audio completes the setup.

At the Coral Gables Legacy facility, the DAS Audio setup includes six AR-TEC-310.96 compact 2-way wide array enclosures along with two ACTION-S18 passive direct radiation subwoofers. E11EVEN Sound by DAS Audio EP-6K4 amplifiers power the system, with signal processing from BSS Audio completing the setup.

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Ray Williams of



Music Marketing, Inc.

The Selling Power of the XCHANGE Market Platform

By Christian Wissmuller

Canada-based Music Marketing has been expanding its reach into the American, European, and Asian markets since the group's founding in 2002 and now serves as a software and hardware distribution center with a truly global reach.

MMR sat down with president Ray Williams to talk specifically about the company's XCHANGE Market Platform and the more recent XCHANGE HD offering in order to learn more about the many powerful advantages available to MI Vendors and Resellers.

In most basic terms, XCHANGE Market Platform is an Internet Delivery Service. For those unfamiliar with how this differs from a traditional distributor or Retailer, can you expand on what XCHANGE offers its clients?

XCHANGE is an internet platform that allows Retailers to offer and sell products without first having them in inventory. The platform mainly offers software products as it is very easy for software products to be sold without being stocked and delivered digitally. XCHANGE put this idea into practice in the marketplace back in 2009. Today, the system is responsible for almost 2 million transactions between hundreds of Vendors and Resellers in 70-plus countries around the world.

As we look back today, it's easy to forget how difficult it was to launch the concept of selling something that no one could not see, touch, pick up, or put on a shelf. It took more than five years of evangelizing for the concept to make significant inroads into the market. Today, all the major and medium-sized Retailers use XCHANGE to sell a significant amount of software. To our delight, a lot of small Resellers all over the world also use XCHANGE to sell software and make a significant amount of money.

The major difference between XCHANGE and "traditional distribution" is that it sells products digitally. XCHANGE allows a customer to purchase a license from a Reseller's website and obtain delivery of a license code from a Vendor halfway around the world in seconds, even in the middle of the night. We believe XCHANGE is the best business model in the music instruments retail business.

XCHANGE is tailor-made for music software retail. Can you explain why it's become such a powerful software marketplace?

XCHANGE has become a successful marketplace because it allows Resellers to sell and deliver products instantly over the Internet. It has attracted hundreds of software manufacturers from all over the world who offer their products in one place. The convenience of having over 7,000 music software products in the same marketplace is a very attractive proposition for Resellers all over the world. The fact that XCHANGE was Internet-based allowed software Resellers in challenging markets like China, Brazil, and

India to operate on a level playing field with Resellers in the USA, UK, and Germany. We are very proud of this democratization of the software marketplace and if we did nothing more, we would have made a significant contribution to the MI business.

Similarly, many small software Vendors have become very successful because of XCHANGE. These tiny Vendors are able to access the same hundreds and hundreds of Resellers all over the world just like the larger Vendors. All Vendors enjoy the same access to the XCHANGE Reseller pool. This is very significant because small software Vendors often have some of the most innovative products. It is important that they have a chance to get these products to market without roadblocks.

Who are some of the music software Vendors already selling with XCHANGE?

There are many software Vendors who have been selling on XCHANGE from the beginning, and we appreciate that they bet on XCHANGE when it hardly had made a sale. Some of our Vendors include Antares, IK Multimedia, Avid, PreSonus, Celemony, FabFilter, Soundtoys, McDSP, Arturia, XLN Audio, Output, Image Line, Yamaha, Hal Leonard, Eventide, Roland, Make Music, Music Marketing, and many others.

For MI Retailers who've yet to leverage the selling and productivity power of APIs, can you explain the advantages and how those are achieved?

XCHANGE generates thousands of small sales when fully scaled. The reconciliation of these can be a very laborious task if you have to do it manually. As a result, we built several plugins for the popular shopping carts, like Magento, Shopify, WooCommerce, and BigCommerce, to allow the automatic mirroring of web shop transactions on XCHANGE and local point-of-sale systems.

Our generic API allows direct digital connection of any web cart and any point-of-sale system to XCHANGE. By making an API connection to XCHANGE Resellers remove the manual work and potential human errors that can result by copying and pasting sales data between the XCHANGE browser and a local system. The digital connection from the API allows automatic purchase orders creation, license code retrieval and instant delivery of software products to customers.

The most successful Resellers on XCHANGE have all integrated their systems via our API, which means it is the same amount of work to sync 10 sales per day as it is to sync 10,000. Some Resellers even go further and allow automation of payments reconciliation and invoice status. This removes hours and hours of work from the staff and allows them to do more productive tasks to increase productivity and profits.

The other obvious advantage is that the store can sell products when it is physically closed. For example, XCHANGE has recorded hundreds of thousands of transactions between the hours of 9:00 PM and 9:00 AM. Without such a system, these sales would not be made in the retail channel. This is not a surprise as lot of musicians are up and about after hours and sometimes need to get products right away. We are happy to allow resellers to make money while they sleep.

XCHANGE HD is a whole new platform being offered that allows XCHANGE's automated software delivery to be applied to hardware products. Can you talk about how this works?

XCHANGE in daily use in many countries by hundreds of the best Resellers in the world. It therefore made sense to extend the system to hardware. Some of our vendors really pushed us to explore this option. At first, we didn't think it would be possible, but with a little creative thinking, we found a way.

The hardware expansion is built on a carefully constructed network of Logistics Centers contracted by XCHANGE to supply logistics services to our Vendors. Vendors can connect with a Logistic Center in a region, move products there, sell products to Resellers in that region, and direct the shipment from the Logistics Center. Vendors would move products to a region on demand based on market dynamics. The Logistic Centers are distributed around the world in key regional hubs that allow Vendors to serve all or just one region in the world. It all depends on the needs of each Vendor. The key thing here is every XCHANGE Vendor has access to all Logistic Centers when they need it. We have already selected and negotiated the terms of service, our Vendors only need to connect and expand their business globally.

To be clear, Vendors can use XCHANGE HD to serve the world or just a part of the world. They use the system partially and at the same time continue to use existing distribution structures working just fine in certain Regions. XCHANGE HD is not a necessarily a total replacement for everything, it provides access seamless, transparent, secure access to regions needing better service with professional partners. We have visited all the logistic partners and affirm the quality, security, and reliability of their operations. XCHANGE is investing more than money here; we are investing our reputation in this network. However, we believe this is an absolute necessity to build trust and eventual success.

XCHANGE HD provides a huge opportunity for small manufacturers who have a lot of difficulty establishing effective, efficient, and successful global distribution networks. Some small manufacturers work years and sometimes decades, before attaining an effective global distribution network. Since XCHANGE HD is essentially a ready-made



Ray Williams at the facility in Amsterdam

global network serving all major markets, that accepts your products with no questions asked, manufacturers can freely deploy products to any part of the world and build their business and demand with XCHANGE tools and services. This is a natural evolution, and we believe it is transformational for our industry.

In addition to Logistics services, XCHANGE HD offers Marketing Centers that are regional Sales and Marketing companies with Regional expertise and influence to assist Vendors in engaging the best Resellers in the Region. Marketing Centers are experienced, respected, and influential in their Regions. To round out these services, we offer Service Centers for returns and repairs as well as Experience Centers where your products can be contracted for display in high-traffic, important spaces and busy stores. XCHANGE Vendors now have access to any amount of the global market they need.

A number of factors have rapidly changed the retail, distribution, and delivery landscape in recent years: the expanding reach of Amazon, global market geography, the looming irrelevance of legacy distribution, COVID-19, buying habits of consumers, et cetera. Could you expand on how XCHANGE and XCHANGE HD help stay in step with (or even ahead of) this changing reality?

Amazon and COVID have had a massive impact on music instrument retail over the last few years.

Amazon entered our market and is now, in several major Regions, one of the top, if not the top musical instruments Retailer. In addition, Amazon convinced MI Resellers to sell products on Amazon. In addition, Amazon convinced manufacturers to sell products on Amazon alongside Resellers. And Amazon convinced many Vendors to allow it to sell their products on Amazon. So no matter what, Amazon comes out the winner. It's like playing a tennis match against an opponent who wins every point regardless of where the ball lands.

The rise of Amazon was not fatal, Retailers and Vendors adjusted to a parallel distribution system that offered great convenience of home delivery. Customers loved not having to drive down to the store and find that the product was not there. Customers loved having the ability to compare products against many similar

products instead of have to choose from a limited assortment in a store. Customers loved not having to wonder when the product was going to arrive. Customers loved having the ability to return goods in a simple way. Let's face it, Amazon is a great way to buy stuff. Unfortunately, for Resellers who cannot cope with or adjust to this reality, for whatever reason,

"XCHANGE HD provides a huge opportunity for small manufacturers who have a lot of difficulty establishing effective, efficient, and successful global distribution networks."

their business will be hurt.

COVID-19 introduced a whole new set of issues for the industry primarily supply chain mayhem, massive freight increases, and debilitating currency volatility. Added to that is a permanent change in consumer behavior from driving to the store to wanting to have everything delivered. Retail would never be the same. It will not go back to the way it was in 2019. Today, as the COVID pandemic fades into history, we are left with a landscape permanently changed. In this new landscape not only do you have to contend with an emboldened, empowered Amazon but also with a changed consumer for whom ecommerce is the norm.

In this environment traditional distribution is going to be disrupted and only powerful, unique, and multi-dimensional distributors could survive. The notion of setting up a global distribution network from scratch is a near impossible task.

It's a new world. Vendors embracing this new world built on ecommerce and parallel distribution will thrive and compete well for sales and market prominence. XCHANGE HD is built for this world. It is more than just ecommerce and logistics, but integrates business intelligence and Regional know-how. When we project 5 or 10 years we see XCHANGE HD conducting tens of thousands of monthly transactions moving hundreds of brands efficiently, affordably, and quickly to customers. We believe it will be a great opportunity to better serve our customers around the world.

To whom are XCHANGE and XCHANGE HD available options? Is it on a global scale, are these platforms exclusive to North America, Canada-only?

XCHANGE has always been available globally with the same level of service in Beijing as in Los Angeles as is in Istanbul. There is no difference. XCHANGE HD is being rolled out in phases currently it is available for North and South American markets as well as Asia, Middle East and Africa. The Logistic Centers are located in Los Angeles, Toronto, New York, Miami, Luton, Amsterdam, Dubai, and Singapore. The number of locations will grow as the business demands. Resellers in almost 70 countries are already using XCHANGE and very soon, Resellers in any country will be able to use XCHANGE to purchase software and hardware.

Aside from the strictly business advantages presented by XCHANGE, what is the environmental impact of embracing this approach?

By digitizing software sales, XCHANGE prevented tens of thousands of trees from being cut down and turned into paper for boxes, CD sleeves, labels, manuals, envelopes, cardboard boxes and so much more. We are proud of this contribution and this particular evolution in the software business. It saves money, it saves time, it preserves opportunities, and it's good for the environment.

XCHANGE HD will also



Roberto Lopez President, Express Freight Intl.
with Ray Williams at Miami Logistics Center

have a similar impact on the environment as Vendors will ship products to Regions rather than to Countries. Typically, Vendors set up global distribution networks with distributors in 40, 50 and even 100 countries. Each distributor gets 3 or 4 annual shipments resulting in hundreds of shipments on the ocean and monumental freight costs. Each Distributor has to justify the freight costs and therefore need to place larger orders so the percentage of the freight cost is kept as low as possible. This results in extra products being ordered. As this behavior multiplies over many Distributors, the result is significant overproduction. The system creates excess inventory almost on purpose. However, this excess degrades profits when it has to be discounted and blown out. There are significant shipping costs attached to moving these excess products around the world dozens and dozens of countries, some side by side.

XCHANGE HD moves products to regional hubs in quantities matching the demand in these Region. The products are owned by the Vendor and this fact alone moderates the number of products and therefore amount of excess. A Vendor can ramp up or ramp down inventory levels in a Region as demand dictates. As we transition to such a system there would be a reduction in the number of products created followed by a dramatic growth phase as demand in previously underserved Regions ignite. This is exactly what we saw when the software business evolved away from physical boxes. Whenever it becomes easier to do business, your business will increase.

Does the XCHANGE team at Music Marketing have any recent or upcoming developments or initiatives that you'd like to draw MMR readers' attention to? Will XCHANGE have a presence at the upcoming NAMM Show?

XCHANGE is exhibiting at NAMM. We support the NAMM show and consider it a key place to meet and connect, we won't miss it. We will have Reseller and Vendor general meetings at NAMM show and a booth where we can demonstrate the system to all who are interested.

Expectations for the MI market in the coming months?

There is a lot of blue sky to get more software sales from the Retail channel globally. We see a lot more opportunities there as we are just scratching the surface.

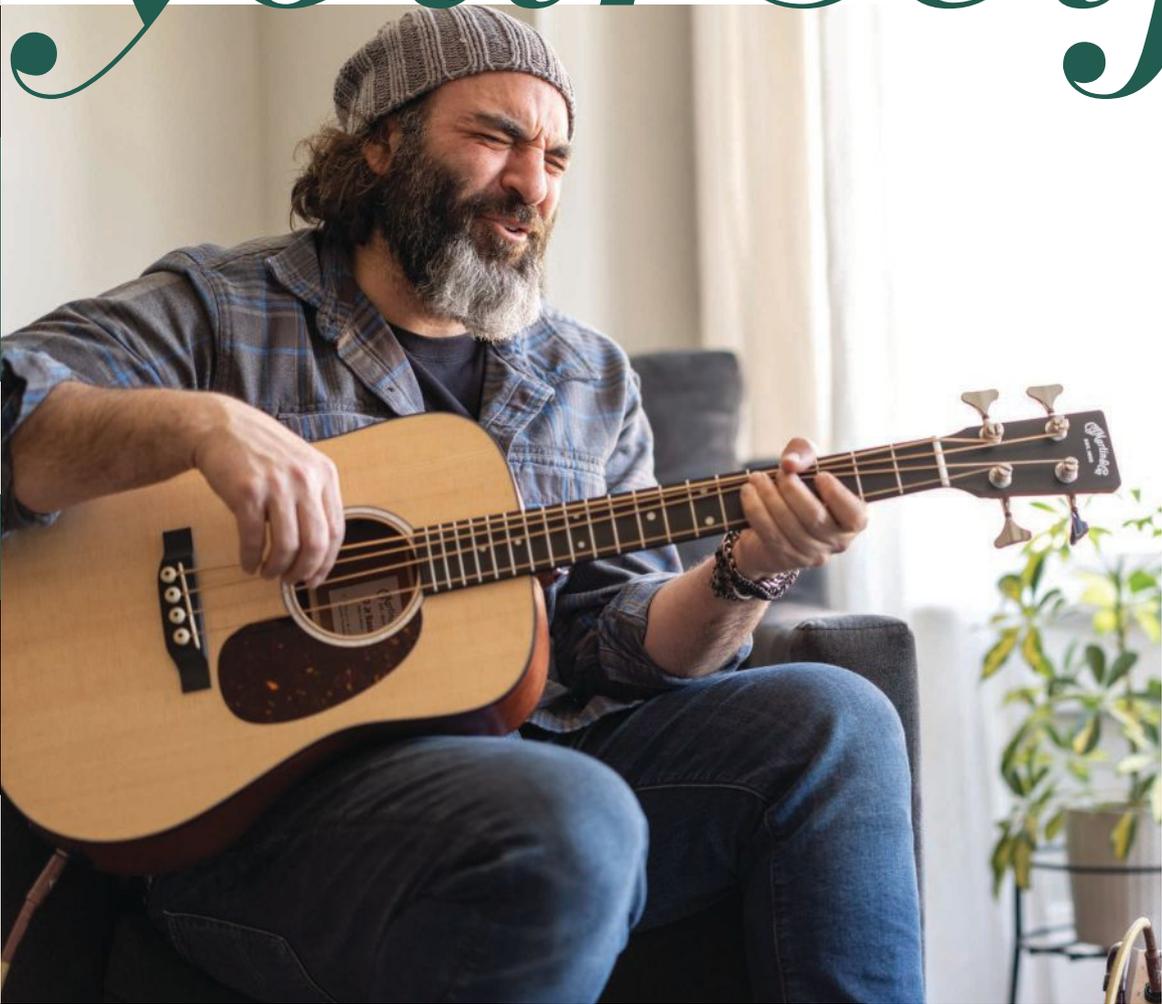
With respect to 2023 and the mature markets, we see some early signs of softening and trending towards a small decline in overall sales. XCHANGE HD will help to stabilize overall sales, however, it will take 2 or 3 years for this idea to really find its footing.

This is an exciting time and we are right in the middle of all of this change. We love change and being able to shape it is the best contribution all of us can make to this industry that we love so much.

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"The most successful Resellers on XCHANGE have all integrated their systems via our API, which means it is the same amount of work to sync 10 sales per day as it is to sync 10,000."

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The Changing Face of the Bay Area

Northern California MI Businesses Reflect on Benefits and Challenges to Operating in the Region

By Christian Wissmuller

The San Francisco Bay Area – which, for the purposes of this feature, we are defining as essentially most of Northern California – is one of many areas struggling with the fallout of its own success. When thriving tech companies set up shop in a metro area and attract top-dollar talent, overall cost of living goes up, small businesses get squeezed out, and anyone not making at least six figures finds remaining in the region unsustainable.

As a result, MI suppliers – and more specifically independent retailers – also feel the crunch. Rising rents lead to the shuttering of venues, practice spaces, and a mass exodus of creative types whose incomes don't place them in one of the upper tax brackets and such gentrified cities then struggle with the mass eradication of once-thriving arts scenes.

While not alone in facing the challenges of such massive wealth inequity, the Bay Area is certainly representative of the larger phenomenon. *MMR* recently spoke with a handful of prominent MI vendors and a few of the remaining dealers to learn about the enduring upside to operating in the area, the challenges faced and changes experienced in recent years, and thoughts on what the future may bring.

Saga Musical Instruments

Richard Keldsen, Founder and Owner

Setting up shop in Northern California had a lot to do with about 20 years of shoveling snow growing up in Northern Michigan. This area gives you choices between skiing or sailing during the winter, so choices like that were really attractive, too.

It's no secret that a lot of businesses start out here. A good percentage of the residents come to California from somewhere else, and they come here with a dream. It's nice to live in that kind of place.

There sure are challenges to operating in the area. The cost of living is about as high as it gets and real estate values are not for the faint of heart, but the benefits are there. In spite of the challenges Northern California offers many benefits, including access to a highly educated and talented workforce and proximate to a dependable shipping port.

Many prospective musicians picked up musical instruments during the COVID days... and as they progress they will find new, higher level instruments. We expect a good number of them will find Saga Musical Instruments as a part of the process.



Richard Keldsen

Real Guitars

Chris Cobb, Co-founder and Co-owner

We've been here for 37 years, selling used and vintage guitars and, you know, bases, and amps, and effects. We hardly sell anything in new products. We started selling strings at one point because our customers

said, "If you start selling strings we'll buy 'em because we don't want to go to Guitar Center." If you walk into this store, you'll go, "Oh yeah... I remember places like this!" You know?

This particular block has gone up and down over the years. It's, gotten nice and then it's gotten bad again. And it's gotten nice and then in the last four or five years, or maybe even a little longer... I don't know if you know much about the Bay Area, but we're maybe 60 miles north of Silicon Valley, San Jose. And at some point, I guess, our mayor, this guy, Ed Lee, got contacted by all these billionaires in Silicon Valley and said, "You know, we love being billionaires and it's just the greatest thing, but there's nothing to do in San Jose." And so, he offered them these like ridiculous sweetheart deals to move their businesses up to San Francisco.



Chris Cobb

"The cost of living is about as high as it gets and real estate values are not for the faint of heart, but the benefits are there." – Richard Keldsen, Saga Musical Instruments

Oddly enough they're about a block and a half away from us here and, which is now called the "10th Street Tech Corridor" or something like that. So we've got Twitter, Uber, Square, and one other big one – I can't remember – a block and a half away from here. So now it's a mixture of bums pissing themselves on the sidewalk, and then 24-year-olds walking by, looking at their phones and making, you know, a quarter million bucks a year. A very interesting juxtaposition. The fact that it happened right here by our stores just blows my mind, you know.

We do the high-end vintage guitar thing when we can, but we've been a little bit priced out of that because the upper end of stuff is just... if somebody had a \$70,000 instrument and they needed 50 grand for it, it would be hard for us to pull together 50 grand to buy it. The big thing is that there's only two music stores left in San Francisco, anymore, and that's us and Guitar Center.

Haight Ashbury moved out of here and a lot of places have closed down. I'm also a professional musician. I've been playing at bars and nightclubs since the mid-'70s in San Francisco, and still to this day do it. I'm more of a light blues and R&B guy. I would say that I know a lot about the music scene because they all come here to buy their stuff. Besides selling the high-end stuff, we sell like, just used guitars, so we can supply players with stuff that gives them a good deal, so they have instruments to play. But the truth of the matter is that the reputation that San Francisco's always enjoyed as a big music city, it's really been dialed down. I wouldn't say we're not a music city anymore, it's just like we're not nearly the one we have always been thought of as being.

I mean, it's almost impossible for people to live here. You know, there are just no bargains in real estate in terms of like rentals or whatever. There's the whole wealth gap, you know, the inequity between how ridiculously rich "rich people" are and how the rest of us are just getting shoved down the drain, you know? And I would call myself middle-class, or lower-middle-class, and we're struggling. But this is a very wealthy area, partly because of Silicon Valley down there and there a lot of people who want to go out and spend \$5,000 a month on a two-bedroom apartment. It's no big deal to them. You know what I mean.

So, your average musician who used to be able to rent a house and have four or five people living there – everybody throws in \$300 or \$400 a month, or whatever – those days are long, long gone. And a lot of that scene moved over to Oakland, but Oakland is now experiencing that, too. In parts. The other parts of Oakland that aren't experiencing that are parts that I would be afraid to live in, I think.

ACE Products Group

Leah Murphy, Director of Marketing

A New York native, our founder Alan Poster traveled extensively as part of his early manufacturing consulting work, and it was love at first sight when he first visited the bay area. The weather was great, the landscape was beautiful, and there was a great sense of opportunity here. Eager to get out of New York, "The dream was to get to California" Alan says, and after purchasing the Ace Guitar Strap company, the chance came to make the move.

After settling in Marin, Ace quickly began to grow under Alan's guidance and vision. Expanding from guitar straps into gig bags and other accessories, the company flourished, and eventually moved to Petaluma, where our headquarters still are today.

One of the key advantages of operating out of the Bay Area is the large and diverse community, and proximity to some of the top talent in the world. Beyond that though, it's a naturally inspiring environment in which to work, with deep musical roots, and a thriving live music scene.



As wonderful as the Bay Area is as a whole, there are of course a number of challenges. We have an exorbitantly high cost of living, and a highly competitive business environment. The distance to other parts of the country also results in logistical challenges, and the need to centralize our distribution and warehousing facilities.

For Ace specifically, we recently moved into a new office space, including new dedicated photo & video studios for our product development and marketing teams. It's been a big project, and we're prioritizing getting all the final details dialed in. We're also celebrating our 40th anniversary this year, so we're looking forward to a few new product launches, along with continued strong growth through 2023 and beyond.

In our larger surrounding community, we're optimistic for continued economic recovery for our retailers, local artists and business partners during the ongoing pandemic. Though the end may not yet be in sight, our hope is for the music industry to unite in collective support and healing through these challenging times.



Mission Synths

Brian B. James and Betsy de la Garza, Co-Founders and Owners

We didn't really consider any other place as an option. We're long-term residents of San Francisco and have been involved in Bay Area music scenes for around two decades. We are rooted here and love the music scenes here; there really wouldn't have been any other better place for us to set up shop. The key advantage in operating out of San Francisco and the Bay

marketprofile

Area is the long history with electronic and experimental music, going back to the SF Tape Music Center in the '60s, morphing into the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College. There is CNMAT at Berkeley and CCRMA at Stanford. Sequential and Dave Smith, Buchla, Cycling 74, Tiptop Audio, Dolby, Serge are all very influential companies with roots in the Bay Area. There is deep culture, lineage, and a thriving electronic music scene here. There are so many amazing parties, artists, and labels coming out of the Bay Area right as well, and there always have been.

Not to mention the tech industry being located here... the area has historically been a hub for technology.

Being located on the West Coast, we tend to have higher overhead costs for shipping than other dealers. Sometimes there can be longer delays in receiving product, especially from Europe.

We expect the interest in electronic music and audio production hardware to increase in general. Music over time tends to constantly evolve as new technologies constantly emerge, shaping the way music is approached and created, this trend

will continue onward. We hosted shop events on a more regular basis last year and expect that to continue in 2023.

Kala Brand Music Co.

Michael Upton, President

I grew up in The San Francisco Bay Area and live in the North Bay (Petaluma), so it was a natural place to set up Kala after I moved back to California from living in Hawaii. It is a beautiful area with a vibrant music community and a great place to have a musical instrument company – a real no-brainer for me in 2005 when I lay down Kala's roots.



Michael Upton

Some of my initial thoughts 20 years ago were that the ports of San Francisco and Oakland are close by to receive foreign shipments. It is a fairly easy place to find a talented workforce. It's a very active area for music and arts and it is just such a cool place to live and work. Plus, so many of my friends and family are here that it was an easy decision.

[As for challenges specific to the area], fires, droughts, and earthquakes come to mind, but obviously it is one of the most expensive places to live and run a business in the country. But I'll trade that off with the absolute natural beauty and abundance of activities available in the area. Yeah, and the weather ain't so bad either!

I am hopeful that the big pendulum sales swings we have seen with the MI market over the last several years will even out eventually, but who knows? I see the current challenge of dealing with, and navigating, the seeming overabundance of inventory that both suppliers and dealers seem to have at the moment. It seems to be feast or famine. I think the high inventory levels have affected everyone, regardless of geographic location. It's also a real challenge to continue to maintain certain pricing structures with ever-increasing inflation and the cost of doing business.

"Obviously it is one of the most expensive places to live and run a business in the country. But I'll trade that off with the absolute natural beauty and abundance of activities available in the area."

— Michael Upton, Kala Brand Music Co.

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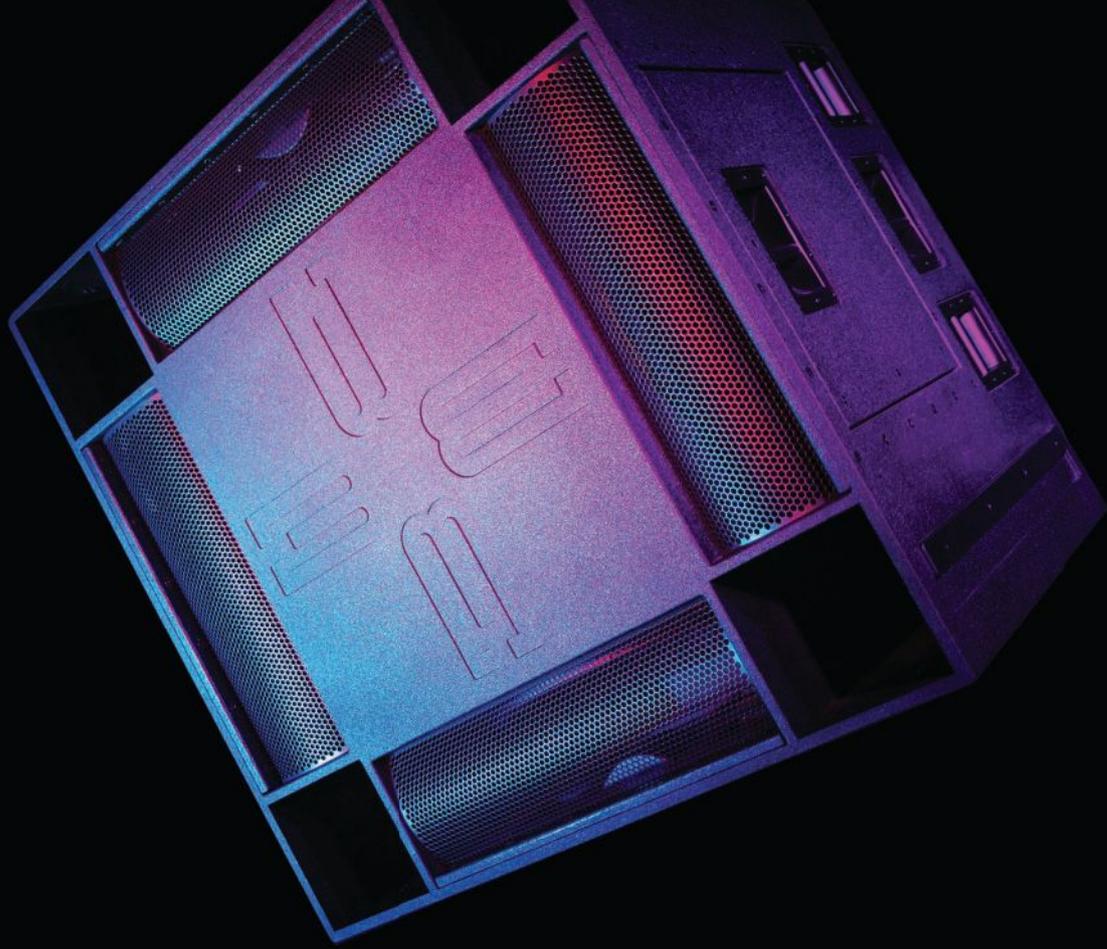
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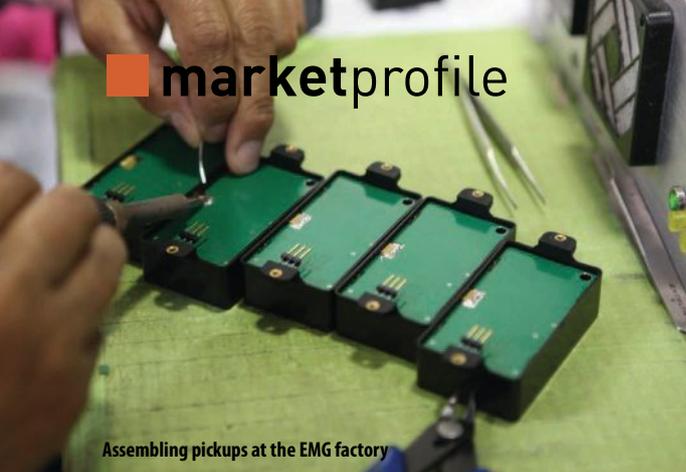
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EMG

Rob Turner, Founder and President

I started the business in LA. I was in Long Beach, and that was in late '75, early '76. I had played in a band with my brother, and we had come through this area. We had come through Sonoma County and he ended up marrying a girl from Sonoma County. I didn't really wanna stay in LA and my brother said, "Well, why don't you just move the business up here and I'll help you out? We'll become partners." And so that's how we ended up here in Sonoma County, starting in 1978.

The Bay Area changed dramatically since then, especially North Bay. I mean, you have to think about the fact that Santa Rosa at that time was a town of about 100,000 – not very big. And it's 160,000 now; the largest population in Northern California other than Sacramento. If you think about it, if you're on the coastal side, so to speak, you don't hit another civilization until Portland, Oregon. So if you're into wilderness and you're into having a good time outdoors and, you know, hiking and biking, and doing all that kind of thing, then this is a great place to be. After growing up in LA it was like, I was just tired of breathing smog and everything else. The air is clean, it actually rains here during the winter, and it's just a beautiful spot, basically.

As for some of the challenges specific to the area, it didn't used to be difficult to find labor, but now with California changing and getting a higher minimum wage, and property values going up all the time, it's difficult to find a place where you can work, where people can actually afford to live.

That's one of the main drawbacks. On the positive side, we've never had a problem finding labor, which is really good. If you're in the city, and I don't mean to say San Francisco, but if you're in LA or any of the major cities, you can find inexpensive labor and it's easier for people to sort of live with one another and do all of that, but up here it's a little more difficult. There's labor, but most of the people that have been with us have been with us for so long now – they've worked for us for 30 years or more, you know?

We're about 50 miles above San Francis-



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co, so it's quite a distance. Here, there are a lot of inexpensive rehearsal areas. The other thing, too, is that there are a lot of venues. I mean, they're everywhere. We have Live Oak, Hot Monk, we have the Mystic Theatre. And then we have professional venues. We have the Green [Music] Center. I caught Lyle Lovett at Luther Burbank a couple of months ago. Los Lobos played the other night, Rodney Crowell's coming to the Mystic in Petaluma, Dave Mason played the Mystic.

The thing that's interesting is, we're about a 45-minute drive away from the city, maybe a little less, maybe 40 minutes. We can be at the Fillmore or any of those sort of places. But there's also the big venues. You know, there's the new Chase Center, which is the home of all the big shows. We are far enough away from the city where we have local promoters as opposed to the corporate promoter – the “big guys.” Let's put it this way: it's a very lively music scene.

We're camped here. We've been here for a long, long time. Let's put it this way. Bottom line, it would be nice to be someplace where it was cheaper to operate, where we could maybe have lower labor costs. But once you're sort of entrenched and you're in real estate, and you're here to stay and your kids grew up here and all that... you're not going anywhere. Once you become part of the woodwork, you're part of the woodwork and I'm happy we are.

Gallien-Krueger

Robert Gallien, Founder and President

In the '60s when I started this company, the Bay Area was a hot-bed of great new music. Many bands lived and made their recordings in the area, which supported many venues, studios, and music retailers. Also the area was very friendly to electronics

manufacturing businesses, and the cost of living was low. Most of the major electronic component distributors had warehouses in the area, which made material procurement convenient. The only drawback to the area was shipping and importing difficulties which were minor compared to the advantages. It also didn't hurt that I was an engineer at Hewlett Packard in Palo Alto and was completing my masters in electrical engineering at Stanford.

Today there are few, if any, advantages to operating in the Bay Area. Most of the studios, music retailers, and venues have vanished. All the electronic distributors have moved out of the area and the cost of living has skyrocketed. The shipping difficulties have only gotten worse and California has definitely become an unfriendly business environment.

The cost of doing business in the Bay Area has skyrocketed since Silicon Valley's tech boom starting in the '90s. Most challenges we face are due to the enormous rises in operation and production costs, making profitability more challenging, especially since the COVID pandemic. If I were starting this business today I would not choose the Bay Area to base my operations.

We have had major production delays the past few years due to the pandemic, so our main focus for the rest of the year is fulfilling back orders and getting our production timeline back on track. My operation is already here with a substantial investment in plant and equipment so I will remain here. I unfortunately do not anticipate any positive changes regarding the Bay area music scene in the coming months or years.



A black and white advertisement for a Kawai grand piano. The piano is shown from a low angle, with its lid open, revealing the internal mechanism. The brand name 'KAWAI' is prominently displayed in large, bold letters across the top of the piano's body. Below it, 'AMERICA' is written in a smaller font. The piano's keyboard is visible at the bottom. The overall aesthetic is classic and elegant.

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Universal Audio

Allan Timms, Senior Vice President of Engineering



Allan Timms

Our roots in Santa Cruz – which is about an hour and 15 minutes from San Francisco – run deep. Our CEO and founder, Bill Putnam Jr. started Universal Audio in his garage on the west side of Santa Cruz in 1999. Our Custom Shop is located near the same location, where we still hand-build analog compressors and channel strips such as the Teletronix LA-2A and UA 1176. Our headquarters is currently seven miles outside of Santa Cruz in neighboring Scotts Valley.

Scotts Valley also has a rich history in the development of audio technology, having been home to an eclectic mix of audio companies including Antares and E-Mu. Santa Cruz and the surrounding area also has a huge amount of musical talent – it’s incredibly diverse and has one of the most vibrant music scenes I’ve ever lived close to.

One key advantage to operating in the area would be the rich combination of technology expertise and the incredible musical talent in the area, as well as our proximity to Stanford and CCRMA (Center for Computer Research in Music & Acoustics) is really all part of our DNA as a company. Some of the world’s foremost experts in DSP engineering, algorithms, analog hardware, and software design live here and work for UA as a result, and many of them are musicians or deep appreciators of music.

On top of that, the weather is awesome, and who wouldn’t want to live so close to the ocean? I can be in the ocean in 15 minutes and skiing in the mountains a few hours later. What’s not to love about that!

We’ve seen many challenges, not least of which is the downside of being so close to Silicon Valley. We constantly have to compete for tech talent against the likes of Apple, Google, Facebook, et cetera. The area also has seen the worst of the recent onslaught of climate change effects. In 2020, wildfires destroyed three employee’s homes, with UA HQ and many more employees having to be evacuated. Flooding and the growing extremes of the latest atmospheric rivers have stranded employees and washed away our roads.

Over the COVID era, our culture has incorporated a larger acceptance of flexible work arrangements, so our ability to react to external pressures and truly work from anywhere has helped mitigate some of these challenges.

Locally, the music scene and the community is bouncing back well from COVID, the fires, and the flooding nearly behind us (just one more atmospheric river to go, possibly...). The ocean and the mountains are just amazing in springtime!

There is also a lot to be excited about at UA. We’re going to keep growing, keep obsessing over the details, keep being creative and keep trying to surprise and delight our customers every step of the way. We have plenty of surprises in store, and we’ll keep putting out amazing products that creators will love, from bedroom producers to pro audio professionals. We have some really amazing things on the roadmap that will blow your mind. I could tell you what they are, but you know... just wait!

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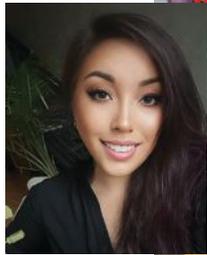
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Ren Stolze, General Manager of
Guitar Center San Francisco



Ren Stolze



Guitars line the walls of GC's San Francisco store

The San Francisco market was one of the first expansion markets for Guitar Center over 50 years ago. San Francisco has a really cool feel to it and it's a true destination for the arts. The music scene here has always been very rich, going way back to the '60s. From The Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and Santana, to Shelia E., Metallica, and Green Day decades later, to any number of indie, punk and metal bands, hip-hop artists, DJs, Latin artists, and much more. The Bay Area is one of those special places where all genres of music consistently happen at a high level.

And we are in a hub for all sorts of people and activities. We are talking tourists and transplants who move here, business and commerce, touring musicians, et cetera. It's one of those places that I think everyone wants to come to, to experience something grand.

It is one of the most diverse communities that you can possibly get, and I see that as a major advantage. It's a massive blend of different ethnicities and people of different backgrounds. You get to know every single type of person, which is really cool. For instance, I'm on a first-name basis with many well-known guitarists, metal legends, and famous DJ's. And because it's a really nice place to live, it attracts all sorts of musicians, celebrities and prominent business figures. Regarding advantages for our Guitar Center stores in particular, we get a lot of foot traffic from tourism. Before COVID, I know that nearly half of our store's foot traffic was international custom-

ers, and that number is getting up there again now that things are getting back to normal.

I would also say that our team of associates and managers at the SF store are some of the best-in-class. I have worked at other Guitar Center locations and have spent a huge amount of time in music stores in general my whole life, and there is a special type of camaraderie here that you don't necessarily find at just any music store, and I would say that results in a tighter operation and some of the happiest customers.

Additionally, we are located in close proximity to several live music venues and recording studios, and they often come directly to us for whatever they need. I'm pretty sure we've sold audio equipment to most of the music venues and studios in the Bay Area.

As to challenges specific to this location, the parking can be tricky. We have no parking facility per se – it's all street parking. So sometimes that can require some special logistics when there's a huge delivery or people want to make a large purchase, but we make it work and have everything ready to load in to the customer's vehicle when they pull up.

Because of the high number of international travelers that visit our store, we try to staff the facility with multilingual employees to cater to that where possible. We are lucky to have some very talented Associates with multi-ethnic backgrounds who can communicate with lots of these international travelers.

Our community also has a very visible homeless population, which isn't an issue in itself, and people who are based here generally treat them with a lot of grace and compassion, but occasionally it can catch customers off-guard, especially if they were visiting from places where the issue is not as prevalent.

We are seeing a lot more people traveling again, and that has led to more tourism and much of our old style of clientele returning to the store. We had the time to get very familiar with our regular customers during the pandemic, but now we have the tourist traffic again, which means creating a balance to service our full community again.

We also saw a lot of beginners who wanted to use their downtime during COVID to learn to play an instrument. Some have since dropped the new hobby, but a surprising number of them are sticking with it, which is wonderful to see! So, we expect to see lots of these new musicians come back to us as regular customers as they start discovering their sound.

Historically, the San Francisco store has also been a premiere destination for things like in-store artist clinic events, performances, meet-and-greets with fans, etc. Much of that went away during the pandemic, but we are starting to see these types of events come back as well.

Additionally, the City just finished a five-year construction project near our store, which included brand-new sidewalks, parking meters and a new Muni Stop that drops off passengers less than a block away from our front door, making shopping at Guitar Center San Francisco very welcoming and more convenient than ever!

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Accomplished pianists have been lining up to play the Kayserburg KA275



The Nashville area is known for attracting some of the best keyboardists in the world. But lately, the Kayserburg KA275 flagship 9' Concert Grand, which has been on an introduction tour of America, has been bringing them to Miller Piano Specialists in Franklin, Tennessee. Each performer was impressed by the musicality and playability of the KA275, as were those who were fortunate to see these performances.

Among the artists gathered to showcase their talents were:

- A. EJ Ford, performer, composer, music teacher, and Katrice Heyward, singer/songwriter.
- B. Ed Bazel, award winning pianist/composer and founder of The River of Calm online radio network.
- C. Caio Pagano, internationally renowned concert pianist, Regents Professor at ASU.
- D. Keith Burns, founding member of platinum-selling group Trick Pony.
- E. Patrick Riddle, self-proclaimed "Piano Nerd", video game music composer.
- F. Eric Bikales, composer, music teacher, and performer with notable artists such as Dolly Parton.
- G. David Symes, international concert pianist, Artist in Residence at UCC, Ireland.



'There's Integrity Along with the Business'

By Christian Wissmuller

When you're a harmonica brand, it certainly doesn't hurt to be able to leverage the well-known name of one of the instrument's most skilled practitioners. Lee Oskar Harmonicas have been connecting with players of all styles and ability levels for four decades now, thanks not only to the fame of the company's namesake, but also due to universal acclaim for the design and high quality construction of these compact free wind instruments.

Crafted by Tombo Manufacturing of Japan, Lee Oskar Harmonicas are recognized the world over for attention to detail and unparalleled craftsmanship. Additionally, Oskar's groundbreaking interchangeable system of reed plates, combs, and cover plates set these instruments apart from the pack. While much of the general public associates "Lee Oskar" with legendarily virtuosic playing and the music of the funk/jazz group WAR, musicians and folks in the MI industry associate the name equally with superior products and a dedication to excellence.

MMR recently spoke with Oskar about the company he founded back in 1983, the recently released Mick Jagger limited edition harmonica, bouncing back from the pandemic, and more.

Having reached such a significant milestone, did you ever expect it to have such staying power and for the brand to be such an enduring part of the landscape?

Well, there are two answers to that. First is, just to qualify, I don't expect things. I just live for it, you know, and the only way you can have things going on rather than expecting it is to be in it and focus on your passion. If you're not in love with you're doing or if your heart and soul is not is not truly in it, then there's no way you can be persistent with the ups and downs. So being involved with manufacturing, with the Tombo factory for my line of harmonicas, it's been an amazing journey so far. 40 years has gone by really fast. What I'm most proud about is that it's the same product. A lot of people can have been a business for so many years, but they still trying to figure out what would be a product to stick. And they've

got maybe bank loans, and they're still trying to innovate a product that may not be welcomed in the market as they hoped. My product has just been a great ride from the get-go because of the quality control, because the expertise of Tombo Manufacturing, and my love for wanting to see a better harmonica.

Lee Oskar Harmonicas continue to be embraced by so many players. Do you chalk that up entirely to the quality of the product, name-recognition based on your own musical legacy, or both?

There are a lot of people who will buy Lee Oskar Harmonicas because they do research, and they look up what people are saying out there. And our credibility is something I'm very proud of. I don't think people ever buy "products," to be honest with you. Most of us have never bought product – we always buy the story, you know? When they use the product and if it lives up to the story, then they're very happy. You can have a great product and you can have salespeople who don't understand marketing and sell it which means they told the story that was exciting and so people bought the story.

So marketing is a very crucial thing in how we connect with the consumers out there. It's not just making them aware of a product, but also [figuring out] what the right story is. If the salespeople don't have the right story to say, just they'll tell a story, so it's a combination.

Are there any plans in the works to celebrate to mark the occasion? Or are you going to, for example, have any anniversary models? Are you going to be doing any special promotions, any events?

Yes. All the above. We are gearing up for a limited edition of the 40th-anniversary harmonica, Lee Oskar Harmonica. And at the same time, we are introducing a different cover plate. It'll be another accessory for the Lee Oskar Harmonica system that will continue

as an accessory after the commemorative, you know, 40th anniversary cover plate Lee Oskar harmonica. That'll be a different design cover plate itself that physically either will be on the next Lee Oskar harmonicas or just be available as accessory.

Now, another thing that's obviously huge news is the partnership with Mick Jagger. Can you talk a little bit about how that came about?

No, not at all. We all have much respect for Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones, I mean, just what they've done for so many years and so consistently at a high level. I can tell you a couple of things. First of all, I know that Mick Jagger has been my using harmonicas for many, many years, but as a manufacturer in this business, you don't want to brag or let people know, because unless you've got literally the rights for using the Mick Jagger name, from my end, I have to be very careful.

I knew an assistant engineer many years ago who worked on a project for the Rolling Stones in L.A. and he called me up and said, "Man, there's a big box here and Mick Jagger's got all these harmonicas that are yours." I said, "I know. He plays them. Would you mind asking Mick if I could come down, I'd like to meet him?" And the answer got back to me, "No, he's just focusing on what he wants." You know, he's not interested in the hoopla. And I respect that because whenever he got Lee Oskar harmonicas, they never hit us up. A lot of people want to get a free ride, right? I mean, they're literally just wherever they've gotten, they bought him. And Mick Jagger chose what he chooses because he wants to, not because of any hype or anything. So I respected that and I loved that.

And then they came to us, almost a year ago when we started the dialogue, and they wanted to have, a limited edition of Mick Jagger-Lee Oskar Harmonica, which was a dream come true. So we made a limited edition for whynow, which is the company Mick Jagger's son Gabe owns and they're the ones that basically negotiated a deal with us. And nowadays we are looking at the next step with them because it's almost sold out in very little time. So we are now in the negotiations, but we are exploring together. We are all excited about the next phase in providing a market with the Mick Jagger Lee Oskar harmonica.

To my knowledge this is the first time an actual musical instrument has had Jagger's name officially attached to it.

Exactly. Someone told me other day, "Lee, do you know that Mick Jagger has never endorsed anything else before?" I believe it because he's a statue of a man that really has self-made and keeps his integrity and doesn't want the hoopla and all that to be part of the fabric of what he's loyal to in his arts. I get all that and I highly respect him. Because as you know, for many years

in our industry, it was like a freaking circus. All the kids will read up and learn that some brand was endorsed by an artist and then they go to the concert and the fan sees their favorite musician not even using the same equipment that there was a hoopla about.

And everybody wanted free stuff from the manufacturers. Sensationalism is great for marketing, but the bottom line is that you only want to hype things as long as it lives up to the reality, but you don't wanna buy the hype yourself. All the hoopla and all that stuff, there's a reason, you know? The truth is, it's got to be for real, too. I highly respect certain people in the music business who've survived. Mick Jagger, Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan – I mean, these people have defied anything that's going to compete against what they want to do in their heart and soul, you know, in the moment artistically. That's what matters. That's important.

When they're expressing from their heart and soul, that's a fiduciary responsibility we have as artists. If I went to the grave and I didn't express everything that comes to my heart and soul through music, I would be ashamed to call myself an artist. Because it's not just about having a hit, it's about the substance. The real depth of what the arts is about and using those media to express what's really going through your heart and soul, and never to being afraid of expressing any of that, it is what a true artist says to me. And Mick Jagger has proven that, and the Rolling Stones and been very smart with business because believe me, as you get big and bigger, there are more things that's going to want to tear you down.

Are there any other major product announcements, or introductions, or anything else on the horizon that you'd like to share with our readers?

Oh, thank you for asking. Well, you know, I can never just do one thing, I wouldn't be able to focus. So literally between the harmonica business and marketing, I'm also very busy in producing and composing, and also painting. I paint every day, too. I have hundreds of paintings and I have a gallery here in my property that I've set up for showcasing. I'm constantly busy being creative and my son, Nathan, has now joined my company. It's like a dream come true.

In what capacity is Nathan with the company?

Overall, he's just learning everything and being proactive in an amazing way with everything with our team. It's all just really perfect, and coming together beautifully. I'm not steering the wheel constantly. I'm learning to delegate and allow others to take responsibility and still be in the loop knowing what's goes on. Nothing gets done without me saying yes or no, you know? In other words, there are protocols, so nobody's running with the ball





Lee Oskar with WAR

without teamwork, but it's an amazing thing to feel comfortable in letting go of being top of everything.

As this issue will coincide with our industry's annual gathering in Anaheim, will you be at the NAMM Show?

Absolutely. As a matter of fact, this year we are going to have a 20 by 10 booth, but the 10 by 10 will be open, and then we'll have next to it, a closed booth, which will be like the meeting room. That'll be the first time we've done that, so we are definitely excited about different things that are happening in our business, and we want to make a nice splash for this next NAMM Show, too.

I love the idea of things really coming back and of the industry becoming healthy in whatever new form that takes. So I'm really glad that you're having a large presence at the Show.

I like to be positive about anything as negative and horrific as a world crisis. What I was blown away about, to be honest with you, is that I've noticed for many years that commerce is more important than human beings. Like, for example, I've seen in places like Florida and small towns where they depend on tourists every year and they make millions of dollars, but every year they, on that beach, there's one or two people who drown – who die every year. But instead of putting a sign up saying, "Do not swim here!" they'd rather pay the liability.

So I was so surprised when business closed down all that. I said, "Man, this has got to be even worse than as bad as they're telling us it is. There's no way humanity comes before commerce." I'm pessimistic that way, but those couple of years it sure changed a lot of things. And it maybe cleaned house in a way where anything that's going to still be in business had to figure out how to survive, and for anybody who wasn't in business, this is like a new day. I saw quite a percentage of new people at the last NAMM Show who'd never been in the business before – young blood, new businesses, stores, retailers.

Since we're touching upon COVID-related issues, supply chain problems were a big challenge for many industries, including MI. To what extent was your business impacted?

Oh, it was terrible. One thing is that we never stopped operating in the factory. And I noticed other companies when there was no business, the factory was closed down. How in the hell are you going to get back and be on the same level that you produced every day in quality control if you don't have business going for two



Oskar with the Tombo team in 1983

years? That's a lot of relearning before the product can be sound. We still kept people at work, we never closed down. But the bad part was we always have our distributors make sure they have at least two or three months' of inventory in the forecasting, so we can prevent as much as possible to not have back orders with all the SKUs that we make in the Lee Oskar Harmonicas, there's a lot to maintain for a distributor to keep track of even a certain key of tuning that rarely sells, but there's still someone who needs it. They need it, and you don't want a back order, so it's a tough game for distributors to be precise and forecast.

But that three months' of supply would've taken three years to sell in the beginning of the COVID thing when it really hit hard. And the reason why is because it's a mouth-breathing instrument. And when people are locked up in their home between everybody in one room and whatever they're dealing with on top of that, wearing masks and worrying about getting each other sick, harmonica was the last thing you wanted to do.

I see your point. Is production back to pre-pandemic numbers or close-to?

We are back to about 80%, getting close back to normal.

Moving in the right direction, so that's good. Any final thoughts for our readers, on the anniversary, the state of the industry – anything?

Yeah. I find any kind of retail is almost like it's a one-way street unless you know how to be creative. It's like everybody knows where your store is, but you don't know where the people are until they come into the store. So to make it a two-way street, again, retailers have a hard job, but anybody who succeeds will have long fans, regardless. And the good thing about a lot of the mom-and-pop stores, if they can maintain and be creative, is they have less vulnerability than a huge chains, the big stores, because big mega stores have very small margin in huge volume, right? So if it goes down a few points, that could be devastating for a huge chain. Whereas mom-and-pop stores, if it goes down 30%, 40%, it could be tough, but you can still survive if you've got enough loyal consumers.

We, as a manufacturer, always want to make sure that the retailer knows that we sell to a distributor. So we don't sell direct to stores. We don't sell through the back door and the front door and everybody's different prices. It's very consistent, very honest, and very real. It's very squeaky clean and very satisfying to note there's integrity along with the business, you know? 

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The new Privia PX-S7000 is simply the best-sounding, best-feeling, and best-looking Privia ever made. Its breathtaking 4-speaker sound system and Smart Hybrid Hammer Action Keyboard deliver a playing experience like no other instrument. With 400 Tones including three legendary grand pianos and 50 vintage electric pianos, inspiration is always at hand. Its luxurious design, in your choice of three finishes and with an included matching stand, breathes life into any room.



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CASIO

'Is This Thing On?'

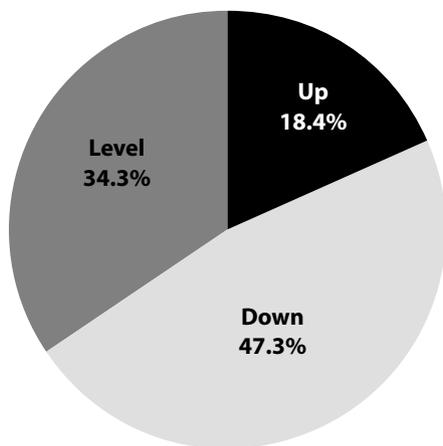
Once-Hot USB Microphone Sales Cool Post-Pandemic By ChristianWissmuller

With over 80 percent (81.6%) of participants in this month's MMR Dealer Survey reporting either downwards-trending or flat sales of USB microphones when compared to last year, this is one market segment that has seen an abrupt reversal in fortune.

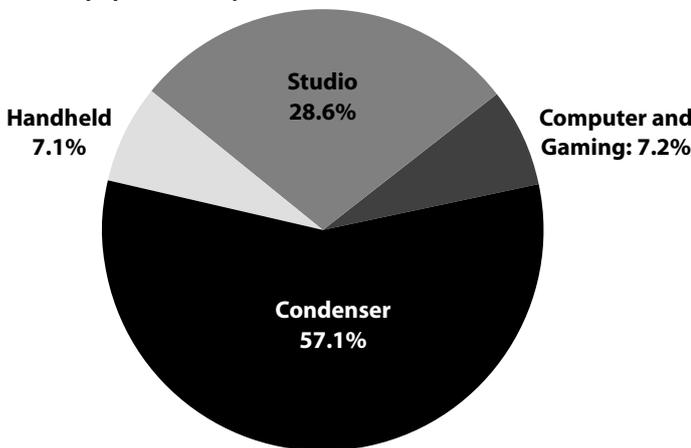
During pandemic-related lockdowns, sales of USB mics – a quick, plug-and-play solution for voice recording – were white-hot. At-home creators were launching podcasts, starting up YouTube channels, and otherwise exploring ways to “stay busy” while stuck inside. In a (mostly) opened up, (mostly) post-COVID

world, however, these mics are no longer quite as in-demand with end-users. Add to the above that more advanced options and bundles/packs now offer content creators greater functionality that incorporates the upsides of stand-alone USB microphones, and it's easy to see why the “USB Mic Boom” may well be in our collective rearview for good. As David St. John of Glendora, California's Music & Arts observes, “Studio packs, especially by IK Multimedia, are selling very well as more people are creating their own studio blogs and podcasts.”

When compared to 2022, sales of USB microphones at your store are...



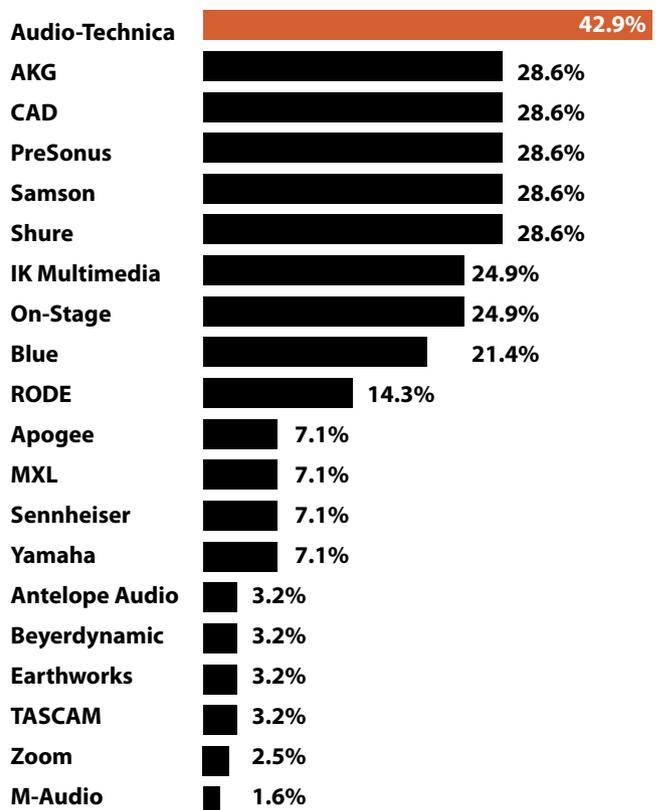
What types of USB mics are most popular with your customers?



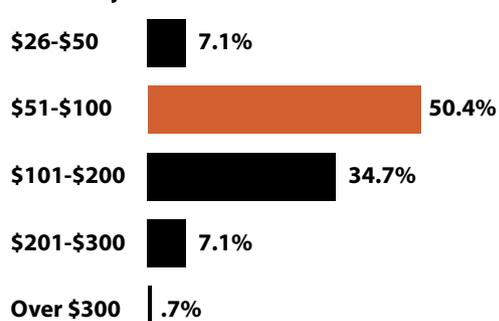
“USB mics blossomed during the COVID lockdown as folks stayed home and recorded with the time they had off. Sales have dropped considerably now that the pandemic is practically over.”
 – Ed Intagliata, Cassell's Music



What brands of USB microphones are selling best for your business?



What price-points for these mics are moving the most units for your business?



Reps and Retailers: A Delicate Dance



By
**Jaimie
Blackman**

In the 1980s my wife and I operated a successful music school. At a NAMM Show, I discovered the Kurzweil K250. I convinced my partner we needed to begin retailing the instrument.

That was the beginning of the end for our music business. It was not because the K250 instrument was the devil. I loved the Steinway grand piano sound, and oh, that choir, patch #50 was divine. It was the instrument's complexity that was highly dependent on continuing education, and it was the inventory demands made on us by many of our manufacturers that eventually drove us out of business.

Chip Averwater's Retail Truths #138 [from the 2012 book *Retail Truths: The Unconventional Wisdom of Retailing*] wrote as follows:

"A rep is a bridge over the abyss between manufacturer and retailer. Manufacturers and retailers live in different worlds. A manufacturer knows little of retail locations, display, salesmanship, advertising, and the myriad of other challenges and expenses a retailer faces. Likewise, a retailer knows little of product development, patents, sourcing, factories, quality control, distribution, and other manufacturing necessities. The rep is the assigned interface tween the two disparate factions, charged with forging and maintaining mutually profitable relationships. He brings the manufacturer's offerings and messages to the retailer and encourages and facilitates transactions. Smart manufacturers rely on the rep to bring back market feedback and suggest ways products and business could be improved."

In researching this column, I reached out to a few of my MI retailer friends (some who were willing to go on the record; others who preferred anonymity when sharing their thoughts). What I discovered was that little has changed in the last 30 years. Although there are certainly harmonious passages in the relationships, there are still areas of concern.

Consider the following observations from Joseph Fox, of Fox Music House, Charleston, South Carolina: "I have found that vendors are working just as hard as we have been the last few years. To a larger extent, the bigger ones are battling employee issues as they are in major metro areas. One major drawback of their tightening during the pandemic is the loss of experienced and qualified tech staff. This is not isolated to a single vendor either. I have found that getting a timely response and RMA needs from vendors is much more frustrating.

Additionally, I have fears that as manufacturers worked to quickly get things out the door as a way to combat supply

chain delays, could cause increases in quality issues down the road. Further burdening the tech staff."

Anonymous One's story was simply stated:

"Accuracy, accuracy, accuracy of order entry, billing, and shipments would be appreciated. Since COVID, we have seen more shipping errors (items not included but billed for). Still, the supply chain is getting better..."

Anonymous Two's story was a bit more dire:

"The owner of our store had a great relationship with our banker. When we needed more credit, we always got it. In 2019 inventory was flowing. At the beginning of 2020, we ordered more products, but because of COVID and supply chain issues, we didn't get them. In 2022, the inventory started flowing in once again, but couldn't sell it fast enough. Our inventory level in January was way too high. When our friendly banker retired, we had a real problem. In 2023, we continue to struggle because our cash flow is overly dependent on one aspect of the business. I don't know exactly what's going on, but I'm optimistic and hopeful we will dig ourselves out of this."

An important part of the leadership team of High School Music Service in San Antonio Texas is Darren Kuper. His perspective is unique because he started out his career as a manufacturer's rep with Command Music Instruments back in the 1980s. Kuper was very enthusiastic about the commitment Command Music made to education. He said, "Education resulted in increased sales. If you had a good rep, that knew the product, and that knew how to sell, the retailers would sell the product." This was a simple formula for a win/win relationship.

Kuper continued by saying that today quality education is hard to find. Much of the rep/owner conversation centers on setting expectations. The rep would ask, "How many can you sell? How fast can you sell it?"

Let us close with another gem from Chip Averwater. Here is Retail Truth #229:

"Training is an investment with guaranteed returns- increased efficiency, better organization, improved reliability, more satisfied customers, more successful employees, et cetera.

Trained salespeople produce more sales than untrained salespeople do. Customers appreciate their knowledge, listen to their recommendations, sense their conviction, and respond to their confidence. They buy from them and are grateful for their help."

Jaimie Blackman is president of BH Wealth Management, an organization dedicated to providing financial advice, education and business coaching. Jaimie is an adjunct music instructor at Lone Star College located in Texas.

“Smart manufacturers rely on the rep to bring back market feedback and suggest ways products and business could be improved.” – Chip Averwater

STAGFLATION

As Inconvenient as it is, the Phenomenon Presents a Hidden Opportunity



By
**Menzie
Pittman**

The vision behind the Small Business Matters column is to write about unique ideas and to focus on clever thinking and encourage smaller music retailers to find special ways of engaging and servicing their customers. Specifically, the idea is to explore Ideas that don't break the bank – ideas that are based in service, design, community, and education, as well as products. Simply put, the Small Business Matters column is a community service page, reflecting on innovative ways independent MI dealers can

compete in today's music retail world, and the business of music education.

Unfortunately, sometimes to be a good community page, we must deal with conversations that are difficult. We must delve into uncomfortable topics and reflect on current events that disrupt and devastate the flow of business.

So, welcome to the dance! Let's talk about stagflation and the challenges and opportunities it presents.

Stagflation: the word even sounds ugly. The simplest definition of stagflation is: "Inflation paired with slowing economic growth, and tight wages." The outlier this time with stagflation is we are not currently experiencing sustained unemployment, at least for now. Hopefully, it stays that way.

What does it mean for dealers who may not remember the last time we danced with this profit thief? Stagflation took place in the mid-'70s, and although the music of that period remains inspiring, stagflation does not!

Stagflation means all goods cost more. At the same time, consumers experience more financial pressure. Under these circumstances, customers are less likely to buy experimental retail goods, and they sometimes make the choice to postpone education temporarily. They redirect their money based on family priorities, such as food, fuel, and cost of living expenses, which because of inflation, are much higher.

What are the effects of stagflation, and how long does it last? What are our options as a business? Let us unpack this slowly.

What we know for sure is inflation is here in full force. We have little to no influence over that. What we do not know is how that affects our customers. As much as we want our products to feel equally important to the customer in terms of value, music products and entertainment are subordinate to one's daily needs. We need to begin with improving our most valuable assets, the assets that separate our business from other businesses. Of course, that comes down to our personal services.

I know, your first reaction is, "blah blah blah. You say that all the time in this column." You are right – I do, and there is a reason. Think of it this way: what gets a musician the gig, or a second look, or a call-back at an audition? Everyone at the audition can play, right? What separates "that guy?" Why is he or she the one that gets the gig? Chops? I doubt it. In this instance, chops and music gear represent the same thing. They are fancy, but in times of financial challenge, they are mostly unnecessary. Feel, style, and musicality? Bingo, you nailed it!

In this scenario your services are your "feel, style, and musicality." Your services separate you from the pack. They are the software of your business, and the allure of your business.

During a period of stagflation, your services are what will make customers stay engaged and remain connected to you. Shiny objects may get them in the door, but your personal services keep them connected to you when it gets more financially challenging. Great music education programs retain a better "sticky factor" during challenging times. Personal services, repairs, customer service, and education bring customers peace of mind. Just for the record, that is exactly what stagflation steals from us: peace of mind!

To survive, you must adjust your thinking a bit. What if we believe our services are already top-shelf? Believe me, I know you are already going above and beyond, but get a step-stool and reach higher. This is a good chance for conversations about the benefits of music education. Commiseration is not always my favorite tool, but people still want to talk about how frustrated they are, so do that from a productive stance. Instead of complaining, introduce solution-based thinking. During a time when people are feeling stifled, what could be better than a parent knowing their children have a haven and a chance to grow creatively?

Stagflation be damned; it is a passing tone. On an oddly positive note, it causes customers to speak freely about their frustrations and through commiserations, giving you a window to talk about the most important thing – the benefits of music education! This is the true opportunity stagflation brings us. If we do not lose our minds in the process, we can look at this moment as a gift and win the audition. So, pack your gear: we have a show to play! **BRUCE**

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."

“During a period of stagflation, your services are what will make customers stay engaged and remain connected to you.”

The NAMM Show 2023 Buyer's Guide

ACCESSORIES

New Lineup of Connoisseur Series

Meyer Bros. Mouthpieces: Band of

Bros.

Players have asked and jj Babbitt is delivering. Introducing new Meyer Bros. mouthpieces for soprano, tenor, and baritone saxophones. These new models are an expansion of the already popular Meyer Bros. alto sax mouthpiece and are now a new collection in jj Babbitt's Connoisseur Series. The Meyer Bros. Band of Bros. soprano, tenor, and baritone mouthpieces are designed to match the sound and personality profile of the existing alto sax model featuring incredible control with flexible, warm, dark, and powerful sound.

"With the overwhelming popularity of the Meyer Bros. alto sax mouthpiece we worked hand-in-hand with our artist partner, Mike Smith, to create this exciting new lineup," said jj Babbitt president Steve Rorie. "Mike's experience as a professional sax player combined with jj Babbitt's history of unique manufacturing and hand finishing processes allow us to continually develop elite mouthpieces sought-after by professional players world-wide."

The Meyer Bros. Band of Bros. is the answer to converting an entire sax section to a single mouthpiece collection and for the individual player who plays multiple sax instruments and seeks consistent playability.

The jj Babbitt Company, Inc. has produced millions of saxophone and clarinet mouthpieces in Elkhart, Indiana since 1919 and is legendary throughout the world for superior craftsmanship and quality, as well as exceptional value. Mouthpiece variations are sold exclusively through music distributors under the brand names Otto Link, Meyer, jj Babbitt, and Hite. Custom mouthpieces with private labeling are also available. The principal OEM supplier to the world's largest instrument manufacturers, jj Babbitt made mouthpieces are played by musicians ranging in skill from school children to some of the world's most famous professionals. More information is available at

www.jjbabbitt.com • Booth #9921

ACT Entertainment Showcases Lil' RAT at NAMM 2023

ACT Entertainment, an industry-leading manufacturer and distributor of music and live performance equipment, will feature its Lil' RAT distortion pedal at the 2023 NAMM Show (Booth 11514). At just two inches wide, the Lil' RAT is a compact version of the company's classic RAT pedal, complete with matching controls and tonal quality.

A versatile pedal that can be used as a primary distortion, the Lil' RAT is especially powerful with arena rock rhythm tones and



soaring leads. The pedal can also be used as a boost for solo performances even if a user already has a powerful amp.

With its compact size, the Lil' RAT conserves priceless pedal-board real estate while also providing full-sized RAT pedal tones, attack and sustain.

www.rapcohorizon.com • Booth #11514

DYNAMO Strings from Thomastik-Infeld

Connolly Music, the U.S. representative of Thomastik-Infeld Strings, is honored to announce the forthcoming release of truly groundbreaking violin strings.



Unlimited patience and passion, along with over a century of expertise from leading innovator, Thomastik-Infeld based in Vienna, Austria, has resulted in a set that has even surpassed the developers' dreams of what a string can do.

DYNAMO allows musicians to perform as they never have before. Untethered by convention, previously disparate qualities are now possible in one set.

To illustrate: they have a broad sound AND an excellent response, they possess a wide dynamic range AND sound colors can be modulated to the fullest extent, they sound great on most vintage AND new instruments – and more. These combined qualities were not previously possible, and from earliest sound trials on, we hear that they are really making an imprint among players.

Violin Set Price: MRP \$142.95

www.dynamo-strings.com • Booth #8702

Get'm Get'm Releases New Spring 2023 Collection: Guitar Straps Meets High Fashion

Fresh styles have hit the store for Get'm Get'm in time for the first day of Spring. Featuring finishes and colors inspired by the same trends seen in the Spring runway shows of high end design houses, the Spring 2023 Collection is not to be missed.



Shine like a rock star this spring with the new Distressed Vernice straps from Get'm Get'm. Featuring a crinkled and distressed textured faux leather in a foiled shine finish, with molded black metal hardware, and available in 6 colors: Black, Green, Fuchsia, Gold, Pewter, and Silver.

The brand new Ostrich strap from Get'm Get'm features beautiful faux ostrich leather facing, bringing new texture and color to their line up for spring. Made with molded black metal hardware. The strap is available in three fun color options: Neon Green, Yellow, and Burgundy.

The new JD strap features a gorgeous watercolor style printed velvet in two color ways, both with beautiful antique brass metal hardware. Choose a strap with shades of silvery white to deep dark brownish-black with pops of bright color in either Magenta or Teal. Due to the print style, each strap is completely unique. Guaranteed to stand out!

Rounding out the Spring 2023 Collection, Get'm Get'm has

NAMMbuyer's guide

added to their much loved Aussie Gator line with some new softer colors. Now available in gorgeous Mocha Brown, Caramel, Western Cream, and Dusty Lilac – all made with beautiful shiny nickel hardware.

All of the new strap styles come in their standard 2-inch width, and are a fully adjustable 65-inches in length. The Distressed Venice, Ostrich, and The JD straps are priced at MSRP \$109.99. The Aussie Gator straps are priced at MSRP \$124.99.

All of their collections are handmade in the USA with a portion of every sale donated to animal rescue groups.

Check out the new Spring 2023 Collection digital catalog: tinyurl.com/GetmGetmSpring2023

www.getmgetm.com • Available for appointment

Lock-It Straps Announces New Series of Art Deco and Vintage Inspired Jacquards

Lock-It Straps is pleased to share these vintage inspired designs for 2023. 2 inches wide and extendable to an extra-long 60 inches in length, these eye-catching straps feature the same patented Lock-It mechanism known for keeping your electric and/or acoustic instrument safe from both accidents and scratching/abrasions caused by traditional strap locks.

Manufactured in Sheridan, Indiana, and distributed in the by OMG Music, you can see these as well as the entire Lock-It offering at NAMM booth #5629

www.omgmusic.com • Booth #5629



IK Multimedia Releases TONEX Pedal

IK Multimedia releases TONEX Pedal, completing the TONEX ecosystem and bringing AI Machine Modeling Tone Models to any venue for live performance or recording. With the included TONEX software, users can capture and model their own gear, and tap into the unlimited user-created Tone Models available for TONEX to use with the pedal.

A Limitless Collection of Tones

From rare one-of-a-kind vintage amps to modern rigs, TONEX Pedal can store up to 150 Tone Model presets at a time and comes with over 1,000 Premium Tone Models of the included TONEX MAX software that can be installed a-la-carte with its new librarian feature, plus gives access to ToneNET with over 6,000 more user Tone Models, growing daily, free to download and play.

With the new TONEX librarian feature, presets can be quickly organized, archived, and transferred to the pedal's banks, for gigs or recording sessions and a limitless supply of sonic inspiration, anywhere. Finally, there's a smart and affordable solution to travel and play with the world's best rigs, including one's own.

A Seamless Ecosystem of Tones

TONEX is more than just a pedal, it's an ecosystem of tone with a full range of hardware, software and apps to transport tones everywhere. Tone Models can be played not only from the TONEX Pedal, but also from the included TONEX software and TONEX iOS app. Users can go seamlessly from a DAW and plug-ins for studio production, to a mobile device for impromptu practicing, and now to the stage for performing.

Unlimited Amp and Cab Rigs in One Pedal

TONEX's groundbreaking technology lets users model everything from a single pedal to a full-pedal, amp-and-cab rig. TONEX



EX Pedal goes even further, providing all the tools needed to shape sound live on stage. The pedal can load 150 separate Tone Model presets in any combination of pedal, amp and whole-rig models. Users can also load and swap in their own IRs or use IK's award-winning multiple impulse response VIR™ cabinet and mic simulation technology built right in. TONEX presets can also be further edited with an advanced noise gate, analog-modeled EQ and compressor, five stereo reverbs derived from the award-winning AmpliTube X-SPACE pedal, and more.

High-end Design for Pristine Tone

With 24-bit, 192 kHz processing, massively wide 5 Hz-24 kHz response, and 123 dB of dynamic range, TONEX Pedal ensures each instrument's tone is as good as it's ever been heard even before it hits TONEX's incredible modeling. These high-end audio features, combined with the astonishing capacity of AI Machine Modeling technology to capture the true-to-life sound and a feeling behavior of real amps in a way that is virtually indistinguishable from the real thing, make playing TONEX Pedal a whole new performance experience.

Full Studio Integration

TONEX Pedal tone experience goes beyond the stage. The included TONEX software not only models any rig, but also works as a standalone or a plug-in integrated with a DAW or directly with AmpliTube 5 to enjoy the exact same tone used live in studio productions. And for maximum convenience, TONEX Pedal also includes a full version of AmpliTube 5 and its over 180 iconic gear models, to integrate Tone Models within the most powerful amp and effects software on the planet. Plus TONEX Pedal also doubles as a 24-bit/96 kHz USB audio interface, so no other gear is needed to plug into a studio for recording and tone-tweaking.

Tour-ready Build and Features

Designed and manufactured in Italy, TONEX Pedal features a compact chassis made from anodized aluminum that can withstand years of tour abuse. The stereo output can also be configured as mono with and without the cab sim for maximum flexibility. With full MIDI in/out, TONEX Pedal can be connected to a complete programmable pedalboard and real-time control can be added over any parameter using the expression pedal input.

Pricing and Availability

TONEX Pedal is shipping now and available from the IK Multimedia online store and from IK authorized dealers worldwide, for only \$/€399.99 – including AmpliTube 5, TONEX MAX and power supply.

www.ikmultimedia.com • Booth #s 15302, 5115

No Nuts CymRings Now Available in Translucent White

Originally launched in black, the No Nuts CymRings in Translucent White will complement the other cymbal sleeve colors.

The typical method for supporting and positioning cymbals from underneath has been carried out with felts, which fit loosely over the No Nuts Cymbal Sleeve or any standard plastic cymbal mounting sleeves. With the No Nuts patented taper, by stacking felts or having thin, thick combinations of felts under the cymbal, the cymbal movement and resonance can be adjusted as the cymbal moves up the tapered sleeve.

The No Nuts CymRings are compression fit rubber rings designed to eliminate and/or cooperate with felts to provide exact positioning of each individual cymbal on the No Nuts Cymbal Sleeve, providing cymbal customization control to the drummer with a single universal cymbal mounting system.



The No Nuts CymRing were designed and refined just for this purpose. By combining the proper dimensions in conjunction with the proper hardness of the elastomer, the CymRings provide a number of benefits. The CymRings have been designed to fit tightly onto the sleeve under the cymbal or on top of the cymbal to provide the drummer with performance control. The CymRing is able to be specifically positioned due to its tight fit on the No Nuts Cymbal Sleeve. No product exists on the market today that not only supports the cymbal from underneath, but also can be used above the cymbal to tighten it down and prevent it from dismounting from the NNCS. Positional stacking of cymbals is also possible, as in the case of a splash or a china.

CymRings are quickly moving into the Hi-Hat clutch space. While drummers have been almost exclusively using felts on the Hi-Hat clutch, the CymRings are the new game in town. The CymRings do not change shape over time and will last a drummer for years on their Hi-Hat clutch. The increased compression from the rubber offers a direct response from foot to Hi-Hat that is very noticeable. This improved direct response and control will not slowly shift and change like you find with the compression and eventual flattening of felts.

www.nonutspercussion.com • Booth #7731

DigiTech/DOD Relaunches DOD Envelope Filter 440 Effects Pedal

DigiTech/DOD announces the eagerly anticipated relaunch of the DOD Envelope Filter 440 effects pedal. Suitable for guitar and bass players, the 440 is known for its vowel-like sounds, crying out with slow-filter sweeps that react to pick attack. The new 440 is a faithful recreation of the vintage pedal, with the helpful

addition of an up/down toggle that allows players to control which part of the sweep is emphasized. Whether players are doing funky chordal work, simulated wahs, or trippy drawn-out filter sweeps, the 440 delivers with a versatile range of expressive, dynamic tones.

The update of the Envelope Filter 440 aims to stay faithful to the original while giving today's guitarists more utility and improved tone preservation. It all starts with a Level knob that allows players to control the sensitivity of the envelope based on pick attack and playing styles. Range Control adjusts the frequency range of movement of the envelope's sweep, allowing emphasis of low, mid, or high frequencies to match the instrument plugged in. DOD now takes the versatility a step further, adding the up/down voice switch that enables users to emphasize either the rise or fall of the sweep. The up setting provides the classic 440 wah-style effects. Flick the switch down for a subterranean dive that adds body to bass tones or gives the guitar synth-like attack.

Overall, DOD's warm and funky analog circuit design is based on the original, but like the brand's other updates, it's now wired for true bypass. It accepts a standard 9V DC adapter or battery. The chassis is now a lightweight aluminum and has a new crisp blue LED status indicator so it can be easily seen on stage. Both the input and output are quarter inch, with a 1M Ohm input impedance.

MSRP is \$181, MAP is \$129.99

www.digitech.com • Booth #7013



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PRO AUDIO

Royer Labs Celebrates 25th Anniversary with the Introduction of the R-10 'Hot Rod' 25th Anniversary Microphone

To kick off its 25th anniversary celebration, Royer Labs announces the R-10 "Hot Rod" 25th Anniversary microphone, a passive mono ribbon microphone designed for use both in the studio and on live stages. The limited-edition R-10 "Hot Rod" is fitted with a custom Anniversary Edition transformer, has 5dB hotter output than the standard R-10 with a punchier, more open sound characteristic, and comes with a 25th Anniversary trim package that sets it apart from the standard R-10.

Like the original R-10, the R-10 Hot Rod handles extremely high SPLs (160dB @ 1kHz), has an internally shock-mounted ribbon transducer and 3-layer wind screen system that combine to give the ribbon element excellent protection (making it their best choice for live work), features lowered proximity effect that make it an excellent for close miking instruments and singers, and carries a 5-year warranty with the first re-ribbon free. Like all Royer microphones, the R-10 Hot Rod is hand-built in Royer's Burbank, CA facility.

www.royerlabs.com • Booth #15716



Sheerlink by RTX

Radio robustness is key for a well performing wireless system. To accommodate this, Sheerlink already features the patented radio scan, channel selection, and the system synchronization allowing seamless deployment of multiple systems near each other e.g., in a rack mount. In addition, each system now supports flexible and user selectable compromise between number of active transmitter units per receiver (up to 4) and the latency – ranging from below 3ms to 6ms. Thus, being able to build systems ranging from 4 to 16 transmitters or more.

The new flexibility allows the end-user of a product, based on the Sheerlink solution, to expand his/her system as the need arises, while keeping his/her valued performance criteria in focus. So, whether the priority is high number of transmitters and/or low latency, the road is paved with the Sheerlink solution.

Sheerlink product solutions by RTX include recommended designs for analog and digital circuitry as well as antenna designs. Additional support packages give customers the freedom and flexibility to get products to market within a very short time frame without necessarily being radio experts.

www.rtx.dk • Booth #7003



FRETTED

New Taylor 400 Series Sunburst Guitars

Taylor Guitars brings an eye-catching new aesthetic to its highly regarded rosewood/spruce 400 Series. The solid-wood, U.S.-made guitars feature a tobacco sunburst top with a brand-new "Finial" inlay design. The update includes the arrival of the first 400 Series Grand Pacific model – the 417e – Taylor's round-shoulder dreadnought shape, appealing to those look-

ing for a warm and robust sonic output. Updated models include the 414ce (Taylor's classic Grand Auditorium shape) and the smaller Grand Concert 412ce. The guitars are available now at authorized Taylor dealers worldwide.



The 400 Series update includes three models:

417e

Joining the 400 Series for the first time is Taylor's round-shoulder dreadnought Grand Pacific 417e. The Grand Pacific body style offers a broader, more versatile option to a traditional slope-shoulder dreadnought-style guitar. Powered by V-Class bracing, the 417e produces clear low-end power and a warm, seasoned personality. The guitar includes a tobacco sunburst top, nickel tuners and a faux tortoiseshell pickguard along with onboard ES2 electronics and deluxe hardshell case. Street price: \$2,999.

414ce

Showcasing Taylor's flagship Grand Auditorium body shape, the 414ce serves up dynamic, full-spectrum sound in a package meant for all types of guitar players. Rich lows and clear, assertive highs with a scooped midrange allow the 414ce to play especially well in arrangements with other instruments and vocals that tend to occupy the midrange sound spectrum. The solid Indian rosewood and Sitka spruce tonewood pairing is appointed with white binding and Finial fretboard inlays in Italian acrylic. As with the entire 400 Series, the guitar includes a deluxe brown hardshell case for maximum protection. Street price: \$2,999.

412ce

The smallest body shape in the 400 Series, the 412ce Grand Concert acoustic-electric delivers a slightly scooped midrange, warm lows and pristine highs that all tie together for a notably articulate, clean sound that responds well to a light touch and records exceptionally well. The tobacco sunburst top headlines this model's appointment package, along with a Finial Italian acrylic inlay suite and a single-ring agoya shell rosette with gloss-finish body. The guitar comes with onboard ES2 electronics and a deluxe brown hardshell case. Street price: \$2,999.

www.taylorguitars.com • Booth #7202

ESP Guitars Announces LTD Kirk Hammett Signature Series KH-V

ESP Guitars has announced the debut of a brand new Signature Series guitar for Kirk Hammett, lead guitarist of iconic heavy metal band Metallica. The LTD KH-V is being made available in three finish/hardware choices: black sparkle, red sparkle, and metallic gold.



The LTD KH-V is the newest addition to the Kirk Hammett Signature Series. It's available in three different versions: Black Sparkle with black hardware and black pickguard; Red Sparkle with gold hardware and gold pickguard; and Metallic Gold with gold hardware and cream pickguard. The KH-V offers neck-thru-body construction at 25.5" scale with korina body and a three-piece extra-thin U-shaped maple neck. Its Macassar ebony fingerboard features pearloid wave inlays and 24 extra-jumbo frets. The sound of the KH-V is powered by a set of Kirk's signature EMG Bone Breaker pickups, with the BB-B ceramic bridge and the BB-N alnico 5 neck pickups for crisp, crushing leads or

smooth, rounded rhythm tones at the flip of a switch. Controls of the KH-V include volume, tone, and a three-way pickup selector toggle. Other pro features include a TonePros bridge with string-thru-body and LTD locking tuners. The LTD KH-V includes a deluxe ESP hardshell case.

www.espguitars.com • Booth #208AB

CASES & STANDS

Frameworks' New Speaker Wedge Stands – Minimalist Design, Maximized Sound

Gator Frameworks has announced the launch of its new angled studio monitor/speaker wedge stands designed to provide an optimal listening experience, while being mindful of compact setups.



Offered as a pair, the wedge stands are perfect for small to medium-sized desktop, bookshelf, and computer speakers or studio monitors, offering an innovative solution to achieve the ideal sound quality without occupying too much space on desktops or workstation surfaces.

Each speaker stand is designed with a tilt lip that keeps the speaker in place and ensures that it remains secure on the stand. The non-slip base provides additional stability, preventing any unwanted movements that may disrupt critical moments, such as mixing or monitoring. Soft EVA foam padding protects the speaker enclosure against scratches and provides sound absorption, allowing for both a clearer and more accurate sound.

The compact size of these wedge stands makes them an ideal choice for minimalist workstations or any space that requires a clutter-free setup. They can be easily flipped around to point speakers down if needed, making them a versatile option for any user's setup.

Gator Frameworks' angled wedge stands deliver a straightforward and efficient solution to elevate your listening experience in the studio, enabling you to maximize the potential of your studio monitors or playback speakers.

Frameworks offers an expansive variety of studio accessories guaranteed to enhance the overall recording experience, from ergonomic stands and furniture to acoustic foam sound treatment.

www.gatorco.com • Booth #s 6615, 6815

BAND & ORCHESTRA

Buffet Crampon USA Announces New Products for 2023

Buffet Crampon Group is excited to return to The NAMM Show for the first time since 2020 and is pleased to introduce several new innovative woodwind and brass products for 2023 in Anaheim this April.

ClariMate is the world's first digital clarinet mute and is designed to afford clarinetists the ability to practice and "play anywhere, anytime." ClariMate works on any B-flat or A clarinet and is inserted between the mouthpiece and tuning barrel. It features a stand-alone mode and also syncs up to the ClariMate



app, available on most desktop and mobile platforms. More may be learned about ClariMate by visiting clarimate.us.

The BCXXI B-flat clarinet was introduced in late 2021 to the Buffet Crampon professional clarinet line as a new acoustic paradigm. Featuring a new bore design, the BCXXI features a longer lower joint, improving intonation and allowing the musician to play low E-flat, as well as a long B-flat above the break. Now, the B-flat is joined by the BCXXI professional A clarinet in 2023, allowing players to have a matched set of this exciting new clarinet model. With design input from International Clarinetists Nicolas Baldeyrou and Martin Fröst, the BCXXI A clarinet will be previewed at NAMM and available this summer.



The B&S 795 4/4 CC tuba is a design concept from B&S artist Dan Perantoni (Mr. P.) that was introduced in late 2022 with the idea of offering the tuba community a high-quality CC tuba with a lot of power that is easy to play, very rewarding, and economical for players. Taking blueprints from a York-style inspired design, our engineers were able to create something quite unique by collaborating between our master craftsmen on the research and development team in our German workshops and the brass craftsmen in our company-owned production facility in Beijing, China. The B&S 795 is currently available to any Buffet Crampon USA authorized dealer.

Coming soon, the new B&S MRPC Piston CC Tuba is another great product from the design collaboration between B&S artist Dan Perantoni (Mr. P.) and the B&S Research and Development team. In similar fashion to how the MRPC rotary CC



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tuba has taken the security of the B&S 3098 (with rotors) to provide a presence uniquely found on a B♭ tuba, this design takes the security of the B&S 3198 to do the same thing – but with pistons. The B&S MRPC Piston will be available in May 2023 through the Tuba Showroom.



The new Antoine Courtois 335 Confluence trumpets are a result of the extraordinary meeting of French talents: Clément Saunier, Trumpet with *Ensemble Intercontemporain* and Antoine Courtois performing artist, Adrian Jaminet, expert French Craftsman/Designer, and our Antoine Courtois Research and Development team. Together, we have produced a series of B♭ and C trumpets with an elegant sound representative of French repertoire. The Confluence Series trumpets will be previewed at NAMM and available in May 2023 following the official launch at ITG in Minneapolis.

The new Besson 969 Sovereign Euphonium is the result of our development with International Soloist and Besson Performing Artist, David Childs to provide an instrument that can blend easily with wind bands. By experimenting with many variables, David Childs and our German engineers were able to bring out more core and better response while keeping the sound profile within what is expected from a Besson Sovereign Euphonium. The Besson 969 will be previewed at NAMM and available in Summer 2023.

www.buffetcramponggroup.com • Booth #8713

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PIANO & KEYBOARD



Roland Introduces GP Series Digital Pianos

Roland announces the GP digital piano series, the latest generation of instruments in the company's premier digital piano lineup. The GP series represents the pinnacle



of Roland piano development, merging advanced technologies with finely crafted grand piano designs that bring elegance and grandeur to any space. These stunning instruments deliver world-class sound and touch to satisfy the most advanced players, coupled with inspiring modern features for learning, entertaining and everyday enjoyment. From the flagship GP-9 and GP-9M to the mid-size GP-6 to the uniquely compact GP-3, there's a model to bring piano luxury to every environment. Roland's digital benefits are infused throughout, including Bluetooth audio/MIDI connectivity, deep integration with the Roland Piano App and more.

The GP series embodies signature piano elegance with flowing curves, solid lines and striking high-gloss finishes. Like traditional acoustic grands, each model features a top lid that opens for broader sound projection and an integrated keyboard cover to hide and protect the keys when not in use. Minimalist controls smoothly flow into the panel designs for an organic look. The GP-9M, GP-9 and GP-6 feature touch buttons that disappear when the backlighting is turned off, maintaining the acoustic aesthetic and eliminating distractions while playing.

The GP-3 is available in the U.S. now starting at \$3,999.99. The GP-6 and GP-9 will be available in March starting at \$6,299.99 and \$10,999.99, respectively. The GP-9M will be available in May starting at \$18,999.99. Availability for the GP-6, GP-9 and GP-9M white models will roll out in the coming months, beginning in March.

www.roland.com • Booth #7713

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XCHANGE HD

NEXT-GEN INTEGRATED GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION



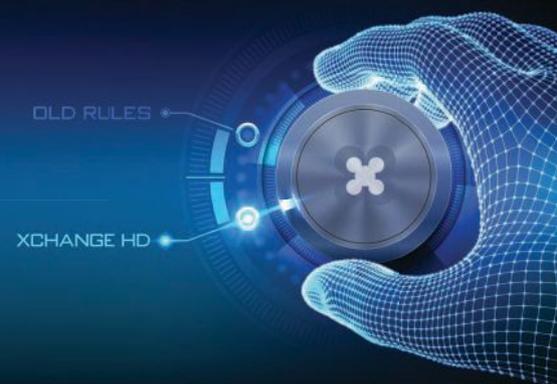
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XCHANGE HD is a next-generation, integrated global logistics platform that improves hardware distribution by introducing, inserting, and outsourcing services that multiply efficiencies and profits. XCHANGE HD provides a carefully curated, strategically located, network of Logistic Centers around the globe that provide local and regional distribution of products on demand.

The Logistic Centers are world-class, leading-edge, vetted companies with decades of experience and operate with efficiency, transparency and speed. XCHANGE HD adds Marketing, Service and Experience Centers to deliver a powerful, innovative, secure and flexible evolution of traditional distribution. XCHANGE HD is available now! We are ready when you are.



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