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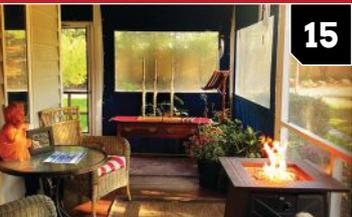
MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW



Adaptive Players:
NAMM's Believe
in Music Week
Spotlights a Resilient
Industry



**All in the
F.E. Olds Family**



Guest Editorial:
Selling Flutes in the
Time of COVID-19



8 BANG THE DRUM ...Quietly

Electronic Drum Kits Offer Options and Versatility



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- ✓ Simple setup
- ✓ No inventory costs
- ✓ NFRs for your sales team

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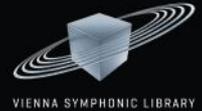


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C O N T E N T S

MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

FEATURES

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Cover photo courtesy of ddrum

New Products & New Year Deals!

New! Amahi Handpan Drum

FREE FREIGHT

Your Price: \$599.00

MAP: \$999.00

- (1) Amahi Handpan Drum
 - (1) Matching Padded Drum Bag
- Includes Free Freight



Amahi Steel Tongue Drum Package

(2) of Each Size Drum, *Pick Your Color!*

8 Drum Package with FREE FREIGHT

Your Price: \$499.00

MAP: \$892.00

- (2) 6 Inch Steel Tongue Drums
- (2) 8 Inch Steel Tongue Drums
- (2) 10 Inch Steel Tongue Drums
- (2) 12 Inch Steel Tongue Drums
- (8) Matching drum bags and set of mallets



Amahi Steel Tongue Drums

6", 8", 10", and 12" Steel Tongue Drums are available in Blue, Red, Bronze, Black and Teal colors. Drums include a padded bag and mallets.

MAP: ~~\$69.00~~ ~~\$89.00~~ ~~\$129.00~~ ~~\$159.00~~

6 INCH

8 INCH

10 INCH

12 INCH



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DISPLAYS AVAILABLE

Troubadour Series Ukuleles Brand New for 2021

Available in soprano size and includes carrying bag

MAP: \$49.00 ea.

**New! Amahi Ukuleles Troubadour Series
10 Soprano Ukulele Package
with FREE FREIGHT**

**Your Price: \$259.50
(Must Mention This Ad)**

Package **includes** the following 10 soprano (ABS plastic back & side construction) Troubadour ukuleles and matching **gig bags**, as well as **free freight** with purchase:

- HCLF220 Mahogany
- HCLF225 Spruce/Mahogany
- HCLF330 Zebrawood
- HCLF335 Bamboo
- HCLF445 Bocote
- HCLF550 Flamed Maple
- HCLF660 Koa
- HCLF770 Spalted Maple
- HCLF880 Quilted Ash
- HCLF990 Ebony
- (10) Matching Bags



DISPLAYS AVAILABLE



Mahogany Spruce Zebrawood Bamboo Bocote Flamed Maple Koa Spalted Maple Quilted Ash Ebony

I Didn't Get My In-N-Out, But Otherwise No Complaints

By Christian **Wissmuller**



Well, that was quite a week. The world's largest musical instrument and equipment show went virtual and it all panned out... pretty darn well, honestly. A strictly online experience such as Believe in Music Week can never, of course, tick *all* the boxes of a real-life show, but there were some unexpected highlights to this year's experience and NAMM deserves a tip of the hat for what they managed to pull off.

Most of us missed being able to grab a coffee or a quick bite with colleagues and friends who we only ever see face-to-face at these sorts of annual gatherings, but there's no getting around the fact that however "impersonal" a Zoom chat may be in comparison, it's a lot easier to hear one another when there isn't an enthusiastic trumpet player or drummer in the booth 10 feet away. I'm also sad to have been deprived of encountering so many glorious ponytails, dreadlocks, and mullets, but my feet and knees do appreciate not having walked over 30 miles in five days (No joke – I wore a pedometer at my third NAMM Show in 2004 just to see exactly how far I was scooting around the Anaheim Convention Center floor and surrounding neighborhood).

**"The NAMM crew has been a pleasure to work with – even as we all have been collectively building the plane while we're flying it in some cases."
– Jeff Hawley, Allen & Heath USA**

While it wasn't a *replacement* for a NAMM Show, much of the actual *business* that takes place during that yearly get-together went on as usual. An enormous range of instruments and gear was introduced and, while the product announcements weren't accompanied by finger-food and complimentary drinks, many I spoke with – both dealers and suppliers – felt that they were able to make as many or more professional connections as in "normal" years.

"It's been just as busy as a traditional NAMM Show for us," said Taylor Guitars' VP of Sales Monte Montefusco. "You know, when I'm talking to our sales reps, both here, based in California, and around the world, they've had just as many meetings... actually, more meetings, than they would normally have. Now, you have access to every dealer that is a Taylor dealer, where at the NAMM Show, you might be dealing with maybe 25 percent of the dealers who actually make the trip to Anaheim."

Allen & Heath USA's Jeff Hawley agrees: "We have been pleasantly surprised with the number of quality engagements and the size of livestream crowds throughout the week... The NAMM crew has been a pleasure to work with – even as we all have been collectively building the plane while we're flying it in some cases."

I'm among those who hope that we'll be able to leverage some of the "virtual benefits" that came to light during Believe in Music Week while also resuming in-person NAMM Shows ASAP, but – again – the whole NAMM team really did a fantastic job and so many others put in a ton of effort to really showcase the agility and resourcefulness of our industry. Kudos!

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge Victoria Wasylak who has been *MMR's* associate editor for the past four years – almost to the day – and who is leaving us after this issue goes to print. The quality of her work and her professionalism are matched only by her warm nature and quick wit. Thank you, Victoria.

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D'Addario Acquires Super-Sensitive

D'Addario has announced the acquisition of Super-Sensitive Musical String Company, whose inception dates back to the 1930s. This acquisition enhances the options D'Addario can provide educators and students, including Red Label, a legacy brand in the orchestral, student string market.



In the short-term, D'Addario will transition the production of Super-Sensitive's product portfolio to Farmingdale, New York, with keen attention to rebuilding retailer's and wholesalers' inventory needs. This will also allow D'Addario to include Red Label and other Super-Sensitive products in their global distribution network.

In Brief

TRADE REGRETS

Fred Tinker

More details at [mmr.news/tinker](#)

Robert "Dan" Polen

More details at [mmr.news/polen](#)

Allen & Heath celebrated a number of NAMM Believe in Music wins.

More details at [mmr.news/mvp](#)

Gator celebrates 2021 with the re-brand of Gator Frameworks.

More details at [mmr.news/gatorre](#)

Moog Music invites artists worldwide to design a new factory mural.

More details at [mmr.news/m mural](#)

Korg USA has expanding its Marketing Communications and Customer Service teams with two new hires.

More details at [mmr.news/korgtwo](#)

Roland honors Nick Rhodes with Lifetime Achievement Award.

More details at [mmr.news/duran](#)

Crafter Guitars named EMD Music as its U.S. distributor.

More details at [mmr.news/craftemd](#)

Chauvet has appointed Scandec its exclusive Norwegian distributor.

More details at [mmr.news/chauvetscan](#)

Taylor Guitars rallied more than 50 Taylor artists to produce "I Know What Love Is."

More details at [mmr.news/taylorlove](#)

Taylor Guitars Transitions Ownership to its Employees

Taylor Guitars has announced its transition to 100 percent employee ownership through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan ("ESOP").

Taylor's new ownership structure supports continuity. Taylor Guitars will serve its customers, suppliers, and broader community with the same passion and innovation it has before. Bob Taylor, Kurt Listug, Andy Powers and other members of Taylor's leadership team remain committed to the company. There will be no changes to management structure, operations policies, or practices.



Korg USA Announces Acquisition of Aguilar Amplification Company

Korg USA has announced the acquisition of Aguilar Amplification LLC. As per the agreement dated January 1, 2021, Korg is a direct investor in the new entity, Aguilar Musical Instruments LLC (AMI), which operates as a separate company under the Korg USA portfolio of brands.

Dave Avenius will stay on as managing director of AMI, and Dave Boonshoft will continue to lead product development as a consultant. Business will operate as usual and AMI's ability to process and ship orders will remain unaffected. The factory address will stay the same, but all business correspondence should be forwarded to the new address of: Aguilar Musical Instruments LLC, 316 South Service Road, Melville, N.Y., 11747.

AES Welcomes Jonathan Wyner as President

Jonathan Wyner has started his term as president of the Audio Engineering Society (AES) beginning January 1, 2021.

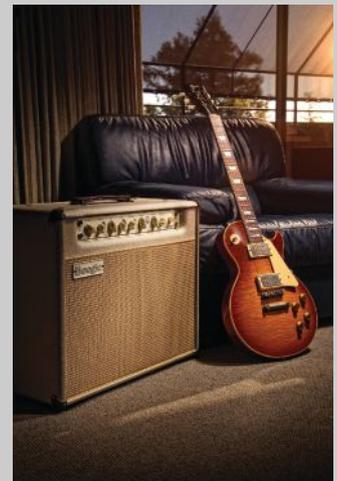
President Wyner's experience includes 30-plus years as both an active AES member and as an audio technologist. Wyner's professional industry involvement currently includes his roles as chief engineer at M Works Mastering, education director for iZotope in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and professor at Berklee College of Music in Boston.



Gibson Announces Acquisition of Mesa/Boogie

Gibson has announced the acquisition of Mesa/Boogie, founded 51 years ago by Randy Smith. Smith will join Gibson as master designer and pioneer of Mesa/Boogie and beyond.

"At Gibson we are all about leveraging our iconic past and leaning into the innovative future, a quest that started over 100 years ago with our founder Orville Gibson," says James "JC" Curleigh, president & CEO of Gibson Brands. "Today this quest continues with the addition of Mesa Boogie into the Gibson Brands family, along with the visionary leadership of Randy Smith and his Team who, for the past 50 years, have created an iconic and innovative brand that has stood the test of time. This is a perfect partnership based on our collective professional experiences and passion for sound."



NAMM's Believe in Music Week Spotlights a Resilient Industry

By Victoria **Wasylak** and Christian **Wissmuller**

"Believe in Music Week was conceived last August when it became clear that the physical NAMM Show would not be possible," explains NAMM president and CEO Joe Lamond. "From that humble starting point, we kept our members needs in mind and built a platform that welcomed our community with new products, education and training and engaging live streaming to advocate for music and music education. We learned a ton and can't wait to explore the exciting opportunities this virtual event has created."

While nobody (nobody that we spoke with, anyway) would suggest that even the most well organized and presented streaming events, videos, and Zoom meetings – in this case over 600(!) hours of content – could replace the experience of an in-person convention, the whole week could only be considered a runaway success. NAMM and participating companies and organizations managed to put together a meaningful experience under extremely challenging circumstances.

In all, Believe in Music Week was attended by 93,226 individuals with 1,227 brands "exhibiting" and hosting just under 700 events. 187 nations and territories were represented with international participants making up over one third of the total number (33,379). Additionally, over half a million dollars were raised for 12 nonprofit beneficiary organizations as well as other NAMM Foundation charities that work to advance access to music-making.

Chris Martin, NAMM Chair and CEO of Martin Guitar, said, "As you may have heard, the guitar business is pretty good despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic. While some of us are doing ok, other members of our association and the communities they serve to continue to struggle. Believe in Music week served to help those in need while benefitting the industry at-large with education and the opportunities to connect."

Voices from the (Virtual) Show Floor

"We have been pleasantly surprised with the number of quality engagements and the size of livestream crowds throughout the week. The live chats have been lively and feedback from attendees has been great so far. After hosting about a dozen unique NAMM live events yesterday we are coming up on about 10K total impressions, so I'm feeling good about the overall ROI for the week already. The NAMM crew has been a pleasure to work with – even as we all have been collectively building the plane while we're flying it in some cases. Thanks to Joe and everyone for staying positive and innovating and listening to exhibitor and attendee feedback along the way. Here's to another successful day today as we wrap up the week!"

– **Jeff Hawley**, marketing director, Allen & Heath USA

"It was a very impactful and positive experience! In addition to our virtual booth, we hosted 15 virtual sessions that were attended by thousands of music retailers and consumers, far more than we would have reached in a traditional setting. In the absence of the physical show, it was great for our staff to connect with our retailer customers in a special way, outside the normal course of

doing business. We also connected with store employees who normally don't attend the NAMM Show. From a marketing perspective, BIM Week provided a huge, broader reach. Our virtual sessions are now available on demand and viewable by anyone that wants to see them, not just the fortunate few that get to attend the NAMM Show."

– **Larry Morton**, CEO, Hal Leonard



Taylor Guitars' Monte Montefusco and MMR's Christian Wissmuller enjoy a Zoom meeting during Believe in Music Week

"It's been just as busy as a traditional NAMM Show for us. You know, when I'm talking to our sales reps, both here, based in California, and around the world, they've had just as many meetings... actually, more meetings, than they would normally have. Now, you have access to every dealer that is a Taylor dealer, where at the NAMM Show, you might be dealing with maybe 25 percent of the dealers who actually make the trip to Anaheim. And then, in the following weeks, you end up having calls with the dealers that didn't come to Anaheim.

So what our reps are doing is, once the dealer views our product-launch videos, they set a follow-up meeting to discuss dealer programs, what type of goals we're setting for this year, and additional products that might not have been in the launch videos. And for me, my job is basically coaching, cheering, and inspiring our team to have those long days. And we've got team members here in California that are starting at 5:30 in the morning with their meetings. Some of them have dealers on the East Coast, so they want to get started early. Even myself, I was on Zoom meetings this week late night with Singapore, New Zealand, last night was South Korea. It's also really been nice to wake up in my own bed every night!"

– **Monte Montefusco**, vice president of sales, Taylor Guitars

"Yamaha connected with thousands of dealers, educators, artists, and sound professionals and inspired our customers with a powerful Yamaha experience during NAMM Believe in Music Week. We live for these relationships, and though we were physically separated, we were present at every moment of the virtual show – from dozens of product demos to our Night of Worship and 'The Sound of Us' documentary streaming events. We strive to empower our customers to progress personally, make an impact and come together with others through music. Their reaction to our presence humbled us. We will keep working to make certain they can rely on Yamaha to help them make waves."

– **Tom Sumner**, president, Yamaha Corporation of America

"We at D'Addario were so incredibly impressed by the support and laser-fast communications we received from the NAMM Believe in Music exhibitor support team. Understanding that the platform was new to all of us, the NAMM team were extremely collaborative, responsive and accommodating. As event managers,

physical or virtual, NAMM continues to prove to be best in class.”
 – **Chris Griffiths**, chief sales officer, D’Addario & Co.

Tours Galore

Albeit not quite an up-close-and-personal experience, virtual factory and facility tours reigned supreme at Believe in Music Week, as both major brands and up-and-comers guided fans and retailers through their workstations. Viewers were transported as far as Brazil (Tagima) to peek inside factories and facilities, and while there certain were a fair share of guitar companies jumping on the trend (PRS, Cole Clark, Breedlove), the tours available ran the gamut of the MI world. JodyJazz, D’Addario Woodwinds, Tycoon Percussion, Electro-Voice, Mojotone, and Santa Cruz Gear Company also welcomed folks into their homes and headquarters. It’s an opportunity that in “normal” circumstances likely wouldn’t happen (who wants to watch a screen on a gorgeous day in Anaheim?), but fit the needs of the moment. Booth tours are so 2020.

36th Annual TEC Awards

Winners of the 36th NAMM Technical Excellence and Creativity (TEC Awards) were virtually announced on January 22 during Believe in Music Week, celebrating the wide-spanning audio work in music-making, live performances, video games, television and films.

“Despite the global pandemic, the industry continued to innovate, creating one of the largest collectives of product nominees in the 35-year history of the awards,” shared Eric Geer, TEC Entries & Nominations supervisor. “And given the world engaged in virtual interaction on an unprecedented level, the products honored helped connect us all by delivering music and sound across the world.”

The biggest winner of the day was Universal Audio, who won four awards, followed by JBL and AKG, who won two awards each. New inductees to the TECnology Hall of Fame include the Western Electric 639A Ribbon Microphone (1938); RCA Mark II Sound Synthesizer (1957); 3M M56 16-Track Recorder (1968); Constant Directivity Horn, Don Keele (1975), and the Near Field Monitoring, Ed Long (1977).



The Parnelli Awards

Also on Friday, the Parnelli Awards honored past award recipients in special event, “Keep the Torch Lit, 20 Years of Parnelli Awards” retrospective. The two-decade highlight reel also offered a memorial video saying goodbye to those we’ve lost this year, and some well-wishes and words from Parnelli Awards executive producer Terry Lowe, chairman of the Board of Advisors Marshall Bissett, and TPI’s Michael and Elizabeth O’Keefe.

Top 100 Dealer Awards



Friday, January 21 saw the virtual NAMM 100 Dealer Awards, with the industry gathering to celebrate independent music retailers. Beaverton, Oregon’s Five Star Guitars was selected as “Dealer of the Year.” A full list of honorees can be found at mmr.news/t100

NAMM Museum Renovations

On January 20, viewers were able to learn about the renovations made to NAMM’s Museum of Making Music, located in Carlsbad, California at NAMM’s global headquarters.

Originally launched to honor the centennial anniversary of NAMM, the museum staff felt like it was time to give the museum a bit of a facelift, especially since so many visitors to the museum comes from outside of the industry.

“Over the years, we came to serve hundreds of thousands of people and visitors from the general public,” shares Carolyn Grant, executive director of the museum. “Also, interestingly, most of those people were not familiar with the music products industry. We felt we were missing an opportunity to really reveal and interpret our industry for the general public and especially to invite them into this unique and rich, and vibrant world.” Because the museum had initially been organized to celebrate NAMM’s centennial, its story ended in the late 1990s. Paired with some outdated technology in the exhibits, Grant says they finally hit a tipping point in recent years and made the decision to renovate, raising over \$1 million in grants and donations.

2021 She Rocks Awards

The She Rocks Awards were presented on January 22, the final day of Believe in Music Week, swiftly transitioning to a virtual format for 2021. Esteemed women in music, such as The Go-Go’s, Nancy Wilson, Margaret Cho, and Amy Lee (of Evanescence), accepted honors from the comfort of their homes.

“It means so much when you’ve been doing this for 45 years and you’re recognized by your peers – your *true* peers, women in rock and roll,” shared The Runaways’ Cherie Curie, as she accepted the “Ground Breaker Award.”

Other musicians honored include drummer Cindy Blackman Santana, pianist Starr Parodi, engineer Ann Mincieli, as well as music industry professionals Gwen Bethel Riley (SVP of Music for Peloton Interactive) and Kim Warnick (executive director of Calling All Crows).

MMR readers will recognize Sharon Hennessey, president of On-Stage, as the recipient of the “Excellence Award,” celebrating her decades of service in her family’s Connecticut business.

“I’ve had the incredible opportunity to grow up in the music industry – I attended my first NAMM Show about 1988, and [saw] the Peavey booth with the line wrapped around the hallway to get a glimpse at Eddie Van Halen. Well, I did the responsible thing. On the way home on the plane, I decided to quit my first job, and join the family business.”

The surprise honoree of the evening was Laura Clapp Davidson, who was surprised with the “Champion Award” by Laura B. Whitmore, founder of the Women’s International Music Network.

At present, Summer NAMM 2021 is scheduled to take place July 15-17 at Music City Center in Nashville.

Bang the Drum... Quietly

Electronic Drum Kits Offer Options and Versatility

By Christian **Wissmuller**



The continued challenges brought about by the current global pandemic have forced many musicians to get creative when it comes to practicing, performing, and sharing their art. Happily, today's electronic drums benefit from features and a degree of sophistication that can satisfy even the most demanding players, while also allowing music to be created at a small fraction of the volume compared to a traditional acoustic kit (read: housemates and neighbors are far less likely to lose their minds as drummers hone their craft).

With recent lockdowns, certain instrument categories have seen an uptick in sales. Due to the quieter nature of electronic kits, as compared to acoustic, have you also seen increased consumer interest?

Matthew Rudin: With many people still homebound, we have seen an increase in new musicians, specifically acoustic drummers looking for quiet sets to practice or even record with at home. The electronic kits are fantastic for new students, allowing them to play with confidence without disturbing those around them, while our more advanced electronic kits are being purchased by the more experienced drummers looking to practice, or record performances to share on social. Not only have our electronic drum sales increased, but there has also been a surge in acoustic drummers using the EAD10 to record drums at home or in the studio, share videos online, and give virtual lessons.

John Emrich: Alesis has been looking at steady growth in electronic drums for the last four to five years. Electronic drums have been outselling acoustic drums broadly for the last few years. They're another tool that is needed to be a gainfully employed drummer. In fact, a lot of players have made careers out of performing and teaching at home. Electronic drums make that a lot easier!

Gary Ingrassia: The interest in electronic drums is at an all-time high. E-drums provide a quiet creative outlet for drummers and other musicians to continue to stay engaged without driving the household crazy. And with the quality of E-drums getting better and better in entry level price-points, it has reignited interest in young drummers and drumming in general.

Pat Kennedy: Absolutely. Drummers of all levels have found the use of Roland V-Drums to be extremely valuable and beneficial during these challenging times. The range of applications that are possible and achievable by using electronic drums are virtually endless: professionals are using V-Drums to continue creating music to sustain their livelihoods and provide much needed live-stream entertainment; educators and students are utilizing V-Drums to provide high-quality lessons

online to continue their growth as a musician; hobbyists are discovering or returning to the joy of playing music at home thanks to V-Drums; families are investing in their physical, mental, and social health by setting up V-Drums at home as a welcome activity, unleashing much needed fun and enjoyment – proudly referred to at Roland as “Waku-Waku!” Music has the power to help heal and we are thankful that Roland V-Drums can impact all people in a positive way.

For your brand, what's currently the top-selling electronic drum set?

JE: Alesis Drums has offerings at every price point. The number-one in total number of sales last year was the Nitro Mesh Kit. If you're a young drummer, the Nitro Mesh Kit gives you the most for your money. We just introduced the E-Drum Total which has lowered the entry-point of all-mesh drum kits without sacrificing any of that same quality. We are also extremely proud of how our Strike MultiPad has been welcomed into the market by electronic and acoustic drummers alike.

PK: Roland V-Drums provides a wide range of products to fulfill any and all needs. Currently, one of our best-selling kits is the TD-17KVX – a very powerful drum kit with many features such as Bluetooth connectivity, coaching functions, and USB connectivity for high-quality home recording. We also recently launched the TD-07KV – a new entry-level kit conveniently compact and ideal for drumming at home, while delivering the superior expression and playability of high-end V-Drums in an affordable package. The award-winning V-Drums Acoustic Design series kits are also providing drummers with the look and feel of acoustic drums, while delivering superior audio control and sonic creativity, ideal for live-stream events and unrivaled studio recording performances.

GI: In 2020 the DD Beta XP 2 kit was our top selling E-kit. 2020 has been a transitional year for ddrum as we have phased out of all of our E-kit SKUs and will be releasing a new lineup in Q2 of 2021. With interest in drumming increasing across the board, our hybrid drums have also seen record sales for us after being in our product mix for 10 years.

MR: Up until recently the DTX402 Series was hands down our top selling electronic drum set, this includes the DTX402K, DTX432K and DTX452K. However, with the new DTX6 Series launch in November, we've seen the DTX6K-X take over the top-selling spot. The New DTX6K3-X is also doing very well, selling on par with both the DTX432K and DTX452K kits.

“E-drums provide a quiet creative outlet for drummers and other musicians to continue to stay engaged without driving the household crazy.”

– **Gary Ingrassia**, ddrum Brand Director





“Drummers of all levels have found the use of Roland V-Drums to be extremely valuable and beneficial during these challenging times.”

– **Pat Kennedy**

Product Manager, Drums & Percussion, Roland Americas



Any advice on strategies to market and sell this type of gear during these challenging times?

PK: At Roland we work happily alongside our dealer partners to help reach consumers directly and highlight all of the benefits of V-Drums mentioned here. From providing live-streamed events online to hosting customized training sessions, we work to educate consumers and customer service representatives so that they are equipped to make the best decisions for their drumming and business needs. Likewise, Roland offers an extensive array of video streaming products such as the VR-1HD AV Streaming Mixer or GO:MIXER PRO Audio Mixer for Smartphones that, when coupled with our V-Drums kits, provide a complete solution to successfully connect and share music during these socially-distant times.

GI: I truly think that a strong focus on market demand is key. Currently every imaginable pricing slot starting from \$299 is filled with quality products. The key is breaking out of the pricing game by incorporating unique feature sets that will help steer consumers away from focusing on just the price. Even more important than the implementation of these feature sets is demonstrating these through comprehensive video tutorials and demonstrations.

MR: Stay flexible and be creative. These are interesting and challenging times, to say the least, but they are not without opportunity. With the increase in online engagement, our tactics to connect through social media, virtual events, blogs and newsletters have been successful. Staying agile and using the tools and channels available to share stories that resonate with our audience has helped us build awareness for our new products and keeps customers engaged with Yamaha. No matter what we create, we strive to ensure what we are putting out is original, insightful and reflects our passion for making music and creating products that inspire others to make music.

JE: If you're a retailer today then you must have an online presence with a backend that can support it. You can no longer rely solely on people walking into a store off the street.

Have you been noticing any other trends with respect to electronic drum kits? What are your expectations for this market



“These are interesting and challenging times, to say the least, but they are not without opportunity.”

– **Matthew Rudin**, Marketing Manager, Drums, Yamaha



segment in the coming months?

JE: Electronic drums are where the action is! They're constantly evolving. Technological advances are coming faster than ever and it's very exciting to build new products right now. We look forward to the next few months. It's also encouraging that traditional musical instrument shops are becoming more receptive to placing electronic drums on the same sales floors once reserved just for acoustic sets. People are starting to realize that electronic drums aren't just toys. With COVID-19, teaching has become very difficult, and electronic drums make learning so much more accessible.

MR: All signs seem to indicate that the electronic drum market will continue to grow. We will continue to focus on customers looking for a high-quality electronic drumming experience by delivering versatile and durable products with high-definition sound and that are, most importantly, fun to play.

GI: I have seen the same trend that continues to exist in the



“With COVID-19, teaching has become very difficult, and electronic drums make learning so much more accessible.”

– **John Emrich**, Director of Product Development for Alesis



acoustic drum world – a race to the lowest possible price-point. The positive side of this trend is that the instrument is now being exposed in a much better way than the past to the consumer goods world. This will expose the world of drumming to more children who will hopefully stay with the instrument, or music in general. I feel this trend will continue for the foreseeable future. I do not see the end of the COVID-19 situation changing the current trends. It will only help other categories that have struggled.

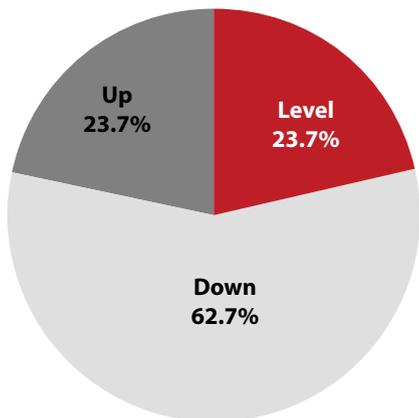
PK: Musicians, and drummers in particular, are innate problem-solvers. Their creative minds allow them to pivot quickly, adapt to ever-changing circumstances, and successfully discover innovative solutions to thrive in any environment. As society continues to overcome the challenges of the future, we look forward to the continued growth and acceptance of Roland V-Drums as a necessary tool to ensure the success of the music and drumming community across the globe. 

Riding (and Crashing, Hi-Hatting, Splashing) Out the Storm

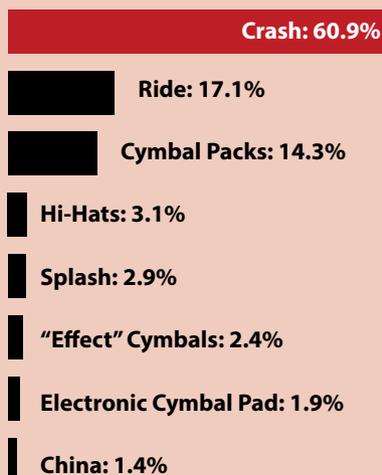
MMR Reaches Out to over 300 Cymbal Retailers By Christian Wissmuller

While some are finding success via the low-volume alternatives presented by electronic drum sets (see page 8) during pandemic-related lockdowns, the majority of MI retailers participating in this month's survey (62.6 percent) report that current sales of cymbals are down. Though still a small portion of overall sales – not even two percent – dealers are observing that v-kit cymbal pads are slowly on the rise, as are the types of effect cymbals we profiled in our November 2020 issue.

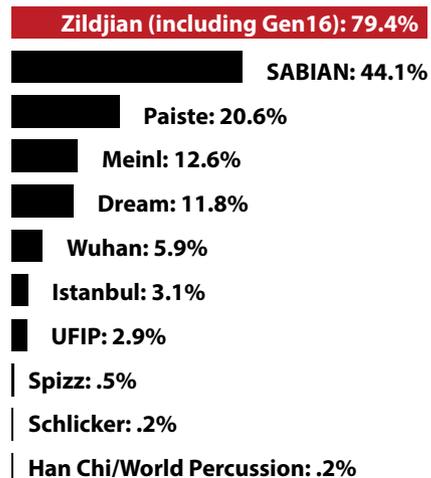
Compared to last winter, sales of cymbals for your business are...



In terms of volume, which types of cymbals sell most at your store?



What brands of cymbals generate the most profit for your operation?



Are there any significant current trends when it comes to cymbals – on either the end-user or supplier sides?

"[Zildjian and SABIAN] generate the most profit dollars based upon the fact that the sales volume is great. As a percentage of the individual sale, Dream cymbals are the most profitable. We simply sell fewer of them."

Jonathan Breen
The Music Shoppe, Inc.
Normal, Illinois

"I've sold three cymbals in the past year and they were all Zildjian. This has been my worst year in 43 years."

Dan Yadesky
Yadco Music
North Versailles, Pennsylvania

"We are seeing continued interest in cymbal box sets, and effect style cymbals, like stackers. I personally feel we're starting to chip away at alloy snobbery – people are buying a cymbal if they like the sound as opposed to what materials they are comprised of."

Shane Kinney
Drum Center of Portsmouth
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

"Almost all crash cymbals sold this year were 18", 19", and 20"

Evan Miller
Rupp's Drums
Denver, Colorado

"Digital cymbals are slowly picking up steam – primarily Zildjian's Gen16 series."

David St. John
Music & Arts
Glendora, California

"People are looking for less expensive hi-hats. If there [was] a gig-worthy pair for less than \$250, they'd sell like hotcakes."

AJ DeLong
The Music Den
Randolph, New Jersey

"Cymbal manufacturers seem to be rushing to broaden their lines, offering more variations, and are pushing cymbals that look non-traditional. Intentionally warped cymbals and cymbals with harsh finishes may not attract the retail buyer's eye as much as the manufacturers seem to hope. Traditional cymbals became traditional for a reason, so those are still what sells the best."

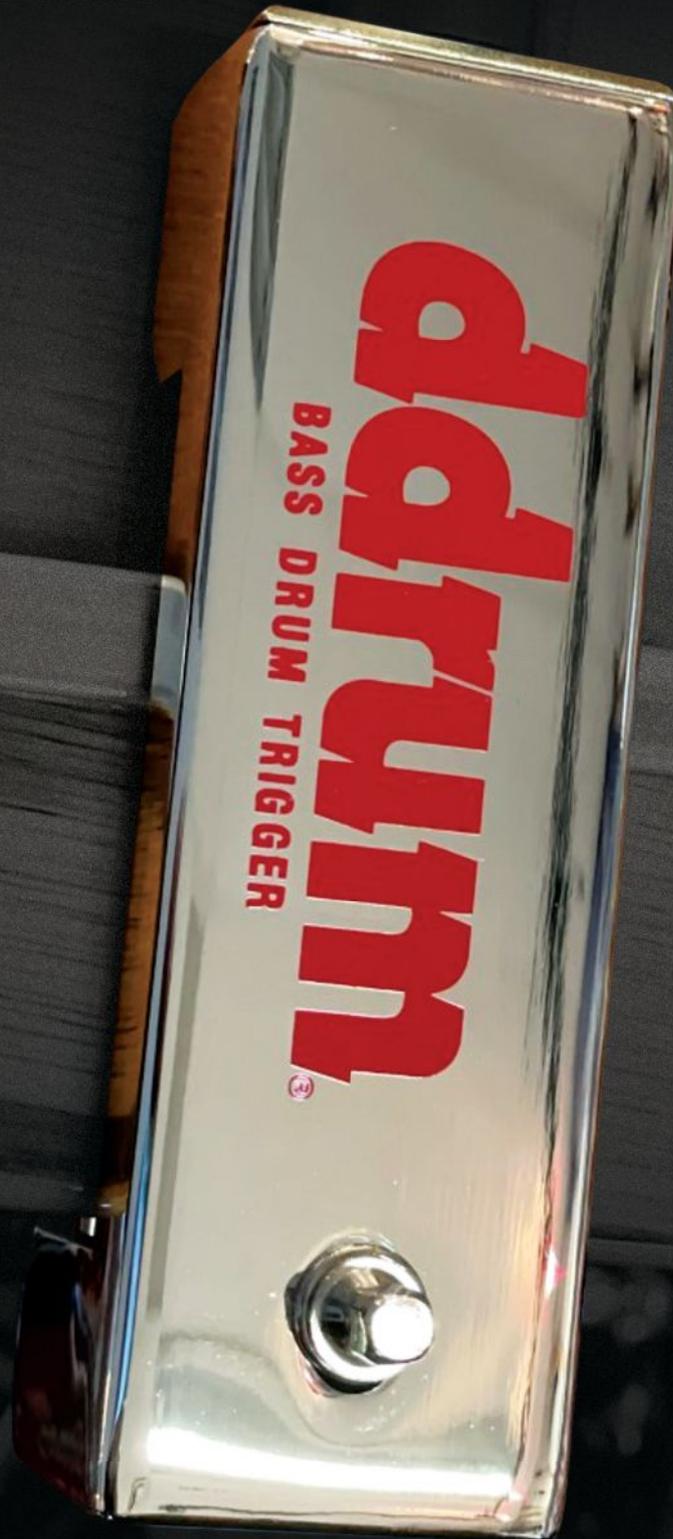
Allen McBroom
Backstage Music
Starkville, Mississippi

"Cymbals with holes – i.e. Ozones – get lots of attention"

Derek Sharp
Supersonic Music
Topeka, Kansas

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Over 110 years ago, F. E. Olds founder Frank Ellsworth Olds could never have fathomed what the brand would become by 2021. Founded in 1908, the storied American instrument supplier has mushroomed over the course of the past century, but especially since 2017, when current owner and president David Benedetto purchased two additional brands: Dakota Saxophones and Phaeton Brass. Now three names strong, the F.E. Olds family is poised to serve band & orchestra programs across the country, as they navigate this particularly gnarly time in music education.

David Benedetto first became involved with F.E. Olds in the 1980s, making him present for a major portion of the company's existence. When the opportunity came for him to purchase Dakota Saxophones and Phaeton Brass from Peter LaPlaca, he saw the potential rooted in both boutique – but professional-grade – brands.

"LaPlaca saw the opportunity to bring two unique lines of instruments to the market that offered distinctive engineering and design features," Benedetto says. "The stunning finishes for both Dakota and Phaeton set us apart from all other horns on the market. We have a growing roster of endorsing artist for both brands who use the instruments for rehearsing, performing, and recording. All of our artists grew up playing other brands, so their switch to Dakota and Phaeton tells us we have very special instruments that they rely on for their livelihood."

All three brands are made overseas, but Benedetto recognizes the unique benefits that come with having intimate relationships with the companies' longtime manufacturers. F.E. Olds products have been made in China for the past 10 years, and both Dakota Saxophones and Phaeton Brass have been produced at separate Taiwan-based factories that specialize in horn instruments.

"Our close relationships enable us to suggest changes and improvement to constantly refine the products," Benedetto says. "This give us a great deal of manufacturing consistency which is vital when repair or replacement parts are needed – a must for the school rental

market. We are sourcing the instruments from different factories that produce what they are best at making. Bringing in product from one source is logistically easier, but doesn't always bring the best items to market. I have developed strong relationships with my suppliers over the past 10 years. This has been especially important over the past year with the entire world impacted from COVID-19. My manufacturing partners have all seen business almost grind to a halt and are remaining patient until we all emerge from this economic slowdown."

Even in unpredictable times, Benedetto maintains a balance of smart business practices and genuine attention to the current limitations facing music students and teachers. In light of the hardships brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, Benedetto says he's holding dealer prices at the 2020 level, and offering financial flexibility with customers.

"Nowadays the focus for the brand is towards the student market, with instruments designed to help first time players get started on their musical journey," he explains. "Selling these three brands mean we have products to offer dealer for the musicians just starting out, to one that are moving to the professional level!"

Dakota Saxophones and Phaeton Brass are also priced lower than other brands, offering another level of accessibility to players. Top sellers among all three names include the F.E. Olds NTR110PC trumpet, the Dakota Raw Bronze Series, the Phaeton Las Vegas Trumpet, and the Phaeton performance trumpets with a black chrome onyx finish.

F.E. OLDS
DAKOTA PHAETON
 Now three brands strong,
 F.E. Olds is keeping quality
 instruments in classrooms
 By Victoria **Wasylak**



David Benedetto showcasing the Dakota SDB-XR-62 Baritone Sax



The Phaeton Las Vegas Trumpet PHT-LV-1200

"I have a thorough understanding of the school rental market and have structured the price list to provide both profit margin for the dealer and lower acquisition costs," he adds. "In addition, a minimum buy-in amount is not required to get started. I see no reason to push dealers to buy products they don't need just to fill a purchasing requirement. I've always believed buy only what you can pay for."

Prior to pandemic disrupting schools across the country, Benedetto says he felt confident in students' continued interest in school music and desire to learn how to play new instruments ("People recognize the importance of music as part of their education and they enjoy the fun and social aspects -- besides, playing an instrument is an activity you can continue to do well after someone finishes school," he comments). In the meantime, Benedetto feels that business won't quite return to "normal" until full-time in-person lessons return, as well.

"Virtual schooling has caused beginning band and the rental of instruments to be almost non-existent," he shares. "Dealers have told me that their rental business is 10-25 percent of what it was the previous fall. However, I am encouraged that the market will rebound. Now that vaccinations are being administered, it seems more likely that the next school year will be able to be in person."

"The market is fragile now, but school music business will weather this hurdle as it has so many times previously," Benedetto concludes. "My job is to set our corporate direction and provide dealers a reason to start promoting our brands. I recognize dealers have many choices when selecting band instruments to sell. I'm here to give them a push in our direction. I believe once they take a look, they will be glad they did."



The F.E. Olds NA370 Euphonium

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Southpaw Guitars

Out in 'Left Field' for 40 Years

By Christian **Wissmuller**



Jim Duncan and Omar Ibrarra

A little over five years ago, we profiled a unique MI retailer catering exclusively to left-handed guitarists – ‘It Ain’t Right, It’s Left – 35 Years at Southpaw Guitars’ (*MMR*, October 2015) – *without* the typical up-charge associated with such instruments. While math isn’t my strong-suit it nonetheless didn’t take long to realize that this past year marked a significant milestone for the business. Though it’s not been all that long since we touched base with the team over at Southpaw, when we reached out to talk about the store’s 40th anniversary, we found that quite a lot has changed.

“Omar Ibrarra is now the store manager,” explains owner Jim Duncan. “And we now carry Ibanez, Ortega, Hohner, and Godin.” Those brands join the already impressive roster of lefty instruments from the likes of Airline, Eastman, Eastwood, Fender, G&L, Gretsch, Heritage, Hofner, Ibanez, Jackson, Martin, Music Man, Rickenbacker, Schecter, and Taylor.

Another significant development for the Houston, Texas-based retailer since the last *MMR* profile makes all the sense in the world, given their proximity to the border. “We also have developed a new niche,” Duncan says. “Many will laugh, but we’re earnest in tapping the ethnic Hispanic music scene. We now sell accordions, bajo quintos, requintos, and other instruments directly aimed at that market. Lefty accordion, anyone? Seriously – we all speak Spanish, so it’s a natural.”

Of course, 2020 did its best to dampen any festive thoughts for many, but Southpaw Guitars saw its 40th year in business bring some robust sales trends. “We never slowed down, really,” says Duncan. “Business has, if anything, increased. Funny story there: On the first of the mandatory shut-down here in Houston a police officer came in aiming to give us a \$2,000 fine for being in the store. He asked if we were open. We re-



“We never slowed down, really. Business has, if anything, increased.” – **Jim Duncan**

sponded, “Not to the public.” He then asked who we were open to? I told him we were open to all of our clients via the Internet. He said, “Well, that’s good because I did not want to fine you because I bought my kid’s guitars here.”

As reported in the pages of *MMR* a few times during the past year, some MI retailers – particularly fretted instrument dealers – have been doing quite well during the pandemic. “Business has almost doubled,” Duncan reports, noting that the sales are to pretty much all types of customers: first-timers, pros and semi-professionals, and people who are reconnecting with guitars after an extended break. While sales were brisk during Southpaw’s anniversary year and beyond, the team has been taking the health of both staff and customers very seriously. “First, masks are required of everyone coming in,” he says. “We have free ones at the door along with hand sanitation and wipes. We sanitize everything we sell, from picks to guitars to amps.”

So, there have been no in-person parties or raucous events to celebrate 40 years, but the store has still managed to get the word out. “We have recently started a YouTube channel to keep our customers aware and informed of some of the products we carry,” says Duncan. “We’ve been offering free logo masks, pick cards, and stickers to our customers and, in some cases, our 40th anniversary t-shirts.”

Jim Duncan capped our 2015 profile on Southpaw Guitars with a heartfelt thank you to the store’s “friends, customers, and competitors for spreading the word and helping us to gain international notoriety and a great 35 years.” Half a decade and another major anniversary later and that message remains valid and the operation’s mission statement remains consistent: “To offer the highest quality products at a reasonable price with a mind on variety.” 

As for so many in the Music Retail Industry, the past many months have been a severe challenge and game-changer for Flute Pro Shop. Buoyed by PPP and EIDL, Flute Pro Shop was holding its own for many months, the government loans allowing us to continue to pay salaries, purchase some inventory, and keep our online presence going strong. We advertised in all the virtual flute events and sponsored others, and our newsletter kept our customers informed and enthused while also offering affordable and fun promotions such as the “Mystery Bag.” Flute Pro Shop was going along at a fairly good clip.

Then the PPP ran out in early July 2020.

Still, we had the EIDL funds to continue operations.

Then EIDL ran out.

And then the sales slowed down.

Was it time to admit that COVID had beaten us?

No. And here’s why: Back in 2015 we’d purchased an RV known as the Minnie Winnie, which, at 31 feet long, hadn’t seemed so mini to us! But my business partner, Kristen, and I learned how to drive her, mastered all the systems, and used her to travel to underserved, mostly rural, populations in states like West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania. It did not take long to realize that these people did not have the funds for good flutes. They depended on “Aunt Sally’s Flute,” or the one which had been in the attic for a few decades, often decimated by pad bugs. They were guaranteed to smell bad and play even worse. All these customers could afford were band-aid type repairs, reducing our profit margin to the point that the trips became unprofitable. We lost confidence in the Minnie Winnie concept, and she was put in mothballs for a few years.

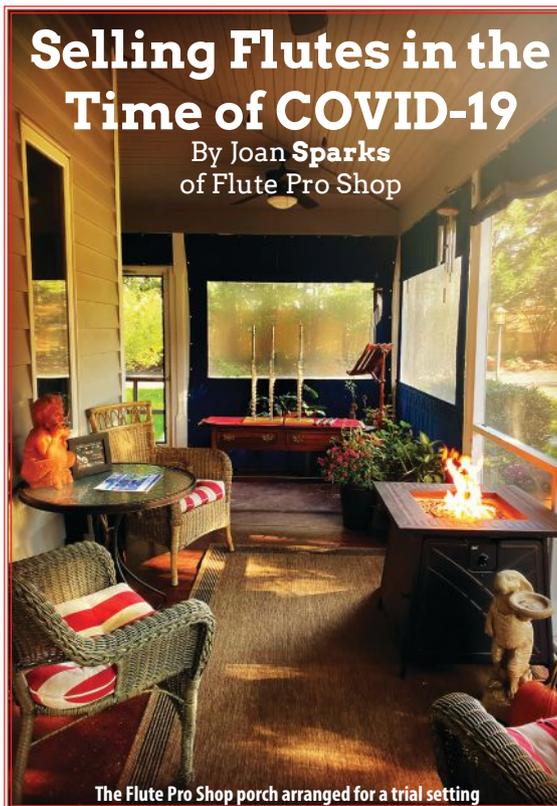
Then came COVID.

Suddenly the Minnie Winnie had a purpose! We put her back on the road. Here is why.

Because Flute Pro Shop, recognizing music’s enduring ability to create beauty and enhance inner peace, has made a bold decision to take on these chaotic COVID-19 times in proactive and creative ways. We are working within the box of the virus by thinking outside the box of our usual business practices. We’re adapting by organizing safe outdoor events: creating venues – both at our own office and on the road – in which isolated flutists can safely meet, purchase much-needed supplies and music, play, and safely socialize. And we’re selling our own flutes.

Here is how.

To meet the needs of flutists everywhere, we have created traveling, socially-distanced outdoor events. Our specially adapted RV offers a base from which the events take place, and is our own office-away-from-office. We have all we need in terms of inventory and sales tracking, while our customers get a rare and most welcome opportunity for gathering with other flutists. In a beautiful park or campground with plenty of open space, customers can audition flutes, browse music, look over accessories, and even play in ensem-



bles together. In addition, we can offer masterclasses, solo concerts, and competitions that are otherwise too risky to hold indoors. On safely-distanced tables stocked with hand sanitizer, we display music, accessories and trial flutes, all the while monitoring safe distancing and mask-wearing. We’ve written, and we follow, a strict protocol for the sanitization of trial flutes between each use. Our customers often bring an entourage of people with them to assist in the purchase, and their audience sits at a safe distance in lawn chairs, ready with critique and help. The result is that, while other music businesses are forced to limit customers or even close their doors, Flute Pro Shop has been able to safely gather groups of flutists whose overwhelming sense of gratitude convinces us that we are, indeed, bringing a music event that creates beauty and enhances inner peace.

We run Flute Pro Shop from a home office, where a large, screened porch provides amply distanced space for flute trials. For the colder months, we roll down canvas “walls” to cover the screens. We light the firepit, and turn on space heaters so that all are comfortable for most of the usually mild Delaware winter.

In addition to students, one of our most important demographics is amateur flutists who have retired and for whom music is food for their soul. We sold a flute yesterday to a woman who, immediately upon playing her first note, said, with wonder in her eyes, “Oh. I can’t believe this!” She cradled the flute in her arms, her blue eyes bright with tears. These are the moments Kristen and I live for. They are also the moments that will sustain us through this surreal time.

Moving On

These recent Minnie Winnie tours have been so successful, we’ve been emboldened to do something daring and innovative. We’ve upgraded to a Class A motor home, 32 feet long, 14 feet high, with plenty of space for inventory storage, as well as onboard systems, office-away-from-office capability, and driving comfort to make long trips to far-flung customers feasible. Inspired by the lessons we learned from the Minnie Winnie, and the fact that this Class A motorhome can be used year-round, we’re now planning tours for early- to mid- 2021.

Earlier in the COVID-19 crisis, the newsletter of a small business owner here in Delaware told of a saying that one of his key employees, a retired Marine, used to keep spirits up during tough times. It is: *Adapt. Improvise. Overcome.* Both Kristen and I wrote that down. Kristen placed it on her computer. Just now I realized that this is what we have done. We’ve adapted to this pandemic by taking our business on the road. We’ve improvised by developing our own affordable yet high-quality flutes. We’ve overcome the limitations of the COVID-19 box through creative thinking and plain, old-fashioned determination.

Adapt. Improvise. Overcome. May it work for us all in the Music Retail Industry. May we all at the end of this crises have learned lessons that will allow the music to play on. 🎷

Trust: The Holy Grail of Sales



By **Menzie Pittman**

In an Instant, Trust is Won or Lost

More fickle than a Gemini, trust is the unknown, illusive component that can create a customer for you for life or lose a customer in a single action. Trust is also the least understood aspect of a retail relationship. Without trust, the sales relationship is friction-filled and volatile, and although you may still ring a sale, the long-term customer relationship is unlikely. So how do we win or lose trust? Let's delve into the ins and outs of trust, starting by stating the obvious...

Authenticity is the Gatekeeper of Trust!

Authenticity is the number-one buzzword in the music business today, and there is a reason. Authenticity is immutable – that's why it is so important. You never lose with authenticity as a core principle, and it can't be a core principal in business unless it's a core principle in your life. That's the beautiful Catch-22, regarding authenticity – it can't be faked. Your interactions with customers must be based in truth; there simply can't be any hidden agendas. Sounds simple enough, right? Let me give you an example where retailers drop the ball regarding trust.

Spam is Top on My List

Let's say you intend to buy a product as a gift for someone. However, because of recent events and restrictions, you choose to call the local retailer first to make sure it is in stock. You interact with a salesperson who lets you know the product is, in fact, in stock, but it will need to be shipped from their local warehouse because they don't have it "on the floor."

Well-trained to be super friendly, the salesperson asks if you, the potential buyer, understand all the options. In fact, he is so nice on the phone that you want to invite him to dinner, as this salesperson seems *genuinely invested* in the quality of your experience. Now, because the product needs to be shipped, the salesperson asks for all your information, including your email, and he reiterates he understands this transaction is time-sensitive because it is a gift, and off we go. Now, fast forward a few days – the email blasts arrive like a round from a 9 mm gun, one right after the other.

The first email announces the product has shipped. The second email proclaims the product has been delivered. The next email expresses the hope that you are satisfied with the product and enjoyed the interaction with the staff. The final email contains the survey. Eventually after a while, spam continues to pick up the pace, and as many of us do, we unsubscribe.

If the salesperson had been truly authentic, knowing that this transaction was a gift, he would have not sent a personal email inquiring about my experience with the product. This is the same person who put the gift receipt in the box, so the recipient could exchange it.

Let's review that transaction. Why would the company lose that customer?

As the buyer, it's not that we don't want to hear from the company. Hearing from a company is satisfying. It can make you feel special. When a company tracks data through A.I. (arti-

ficial Intelligence) though, and only fills in fields on a template, then the outreach is more disingenuous. The first few follow-up emails are informative, but then the buyer is bombarded with spam.

We all know that's the reason spam doesn't work. It causes the customer to feel disrespected when he becomes a number instead of a customer. All true personal interaction goes by the wayside. That's why email platforms created the junk mail folder in the first place. It is true that most people don't normally expect that kind of behavior from a small business; but when it does occur, the cost of that approach can result in a loss of trust.

How do we Stay in Contact, Remain Connected, and not Lose Trust?

My first suggestion is to think as the customer thinks. To communicate is fine, but to spam is unproductive, and the reason is that you lose the customer's respect. A big box might be able to afford that, but a smaller business is more vulnerable. The thought here is that it is not a crime to send select emails, but now more than ever you should not send that begrudged spam.

“You never lose with authenticity as a core principle, and it can't be a core principal in business unless it's a core principle in your life.”

Most everyone is aware that the new fad is "spam texting," but just like robo-calls, this makes the customer resentful. Feel free to send an informational text message, but now more than ever, avoid the unnecessary ones. Junk is out in any format in 2021.

We Must Never Forget: Trust is the Foundation on Which Business is Built

Because 2020 was the year it was, most customers are reverting to traditional values. This doesn't mean they will abandon new or current methods of outreach, or communications. It means they are less tolerant of invasions on their privacy. And because of the virtual workplace necessity, they are "screened out." More than ever the customer wants respect, and the trend that I'm witnessing is that the customer is once again willing to give respect – but only if they can trust they get it in return.

And you can trust me on that! 

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."

Accessories

Fold from Delta Sound Labs

Fold from Delta Sound Labs is a unique distortion synthesis plug-in utilizing wavefolding. By using an assortment of modules in an in-series FX chain, Fold imbues input signals with harmonically rich overtones and, if pushed to the extremes, completely transforms them with a unique form of distortion. Fold's combination of oversampling, distortion, and wavefolding results in tones that are timbrally rich on one hand, and over-the-top destroyed on the other, even with simple periodic input signals. To tame the sound, Fold comes with an analog emulation of a resonant low-pass filter that offers more control over any unhinged results. Each parameter is also syncable to its own LFO, each of which has an amount slider and may be synced to a host tempo within a DAW.



www.ILIO.com

Slash Signature Slinky Strings from Ernie Ball

Ernie Ball's limited edition set of custom-wound Slash signature Slinky strings are the culmination of over three decades of Slash and Ernie Ball's ongoing pursuit to create strings that provide more durability and tuning stability without sacrificing tone or feel. These new sets consist of his preferred 11-48 gauge Slinkys wound with Paradigm core wire and plasma-enhanced nickel-plated steel wrap wire, while the Paradigm plain strings are constructed with a heavier brass wire reinforcement at each of the ball ends for better tuning stability and strength.



www.ernieball.com

Relaunched Rousseau Mouthpieces

Following its acquisition of the famed Rousseau Mouthpiece company, JodyJazz has completed its relaunch of the Rousseau mouthpiece range. Players will see a new, sleeker look to the mouthpieces, more contemporary packaging, and most importantly, far greater consistency overall in the mouthpieces themselves. All Rousseau mouthpieces are now expertly hand-finished, gauged, and play tested at the JodyJazz factory and held to the highest quality standards.



www.rousseaumouthpieces.com

Face Masks from Hosa Technology

Hosa face masks use a polyester outer layer, cotton inner layer, and come with one 5-layer filter which can be easily replaced. These masks are washable and reusable, reducing waste from disposable surgical masks that workers and gigging professionals have used since returning to work from the pandemic. They are also stretchable and non-restrictive, made with a material that allows for good breathability without sacrificing what makes masks effective in the first place. MSRP: \$24.95.



www.hosatechnology.com

Cases & Stands

König & Meyer's 12195 Laptop Stand

König & Meyer's 12195 Laptop Stand mixes a steel base with aluminum elements to ensure the perfect balance of stability and light weight. Made in Germany, its visual appeal matches its functionality. Ideal for mobile DJs and musicians, it also does double duty at the home studio or office. The stand folds flat for easy transport and features individually adjustable pins adjust to fit a variety of laptops, mixers, CD players, and more. Its height extends to 10.5" and folds flat to 2.5" Protective support pads and anti-slip rubber feet ensure protection. The stand comes in gray powdercoat finish. MAP: \$149.99



www.k-m.de/en

Pro Audio

EXM Mobile Sub from Yorkville

Yorkville Sound's EXM Mobile Sub is the first ever battery powered, portable, bass reflex subwoofer with Bluetooth technology. Weighing in at only 30 lbs, the EXM Mobile Sub can be carried in one hand. The new sub is compatible with all products in the EXM Mobile series including the EXM Mobile, EXM Mobile 12 and the newly announced EXM Mobile 8.



www.yorkville.com

Fretted

Reverend Six Gun HPP Model

The Reverend Guitars Six Gun now sports the new standard in pickup configuration: the Reverend Six Gun HPP. The bridge humbucker has tons of growl, while the pair of p90s have a clear, open tone. Players can combine the three pickups with the 5-way switch, do dive bombs with the dialed-in Wilkinson trem, or get creative with the bass contour control. The Reverend Six Gun HPP is available in Coffee Burst and Chronic Blue with a Pau Ferro fingerboard or Avocado Burst and Midnight Black with a roasted maple fingerboard. This guitar has a Korina body, a Boneite nut and locking tuners, Reverend's Bass Contour Control, and a dual-action truss rod.



www.reverendguitars.com

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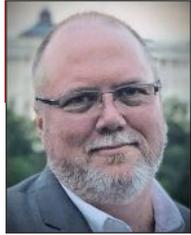
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By Mike Lawson

Weeping and Gnashing of Frets

Randy Smith, founder of Mesa Boogie (one of my favorite amp companies), announced he was selling the company to Gibson Brands. Randy is 75, he has been at this a long time, and he deserves to hand the company off and ease into retirement, right?

Before the Mesa Boogie news was official and announced, the blogosphere and Facebook user groups lit up with alarmist reactions. "This is the end of Mesa Boogie!" "Boogie is doomed!" "Your pre-Gibson Boogie is now going to double in value!" "Gibson is going to kill Boogie and rename them!"

OK, I get it. No, I really do. Under Henry Juszkiewicz, Gibson did some pretty bone-headed moves in not only what companies they acquired, but what they did after acquisition. I can't list all of the bad acquisitions and screwups here, I don't have the

space. Bottom line: it was a scorched earth disaster of epic proportions.

As I often participate in these user groups, I had to chime in. And what I got smacked back with was lots of folk trying to school me on the history of Gibson's screwups of acquisitions and beloved brands. It was as though many of the people replying were not aware that Gibson has new ownership and management. Some didn't know Gibson was not in bankruptcy now. They don't mention that the new management of Gibson gave Tom the rights to his own name back for free. Maybe they don't know or forgot. They don't know a lot, but they have strong memories of what they think they know, and that is going to be a continuing challenge for Gibson.

Those who didn't know were the easiest to get to consider that maybe, just maybe, this is not bad news, but good news for Mesa Boogie, and for Gibson. Then there were the diehards who are convinced the new management is just as bad because

they heard Dean was sued for trademark infringement, or that dang video (you know the one) from Mark Agnesi that probably shouldn't have been made or released.

The weeping and gnashing of frets was in full force. No amount of reassuring them that the new Gibson is not Henry's Gibson will convince them, so Gibson is just going to have to prove them wrong.

My message to them was simple: this isn't Henry's Gibson anymore. I bought three new Gibson models since 2019, an SG with Maestro and a TV Yellow Les Paul Special, plus a red ES-335 made in Nashville. These guitars are excellent. The finish, the craftsmanship, the sound, feel, tone. And if you read my piece in *MMR* July 2019, you'll know that I was looking at the new management through the lenses as a highly skeptical former employee, and somebody with enough inside knowledge to know if the new management was full of it. And my conclusion was that they were not, and they seem like they are going to be good stewards of the historic, storied brand, and not good pulling a "Henry" left and right.

Gibson's battle for some time going forward is to stay on track making great products, continuing their quest to raise QC, making it easier to be a dealer for any of their lines, and over time instill confidence in consumers as they slowly chip away at the reputation damage Henry did over the course of a couple of decades. That's a tall order. I think they can do it. I can't imagine that the Cesar and JC I've met and interviewed are going to muck up Mesa Boogie when they seem to be guys who "get it."

So, sit back, relax. Things are going to be fine. I assure you of this, if I perceive a screwup at Gibson, in this acquisition, or just in business dealings period, I'll gladly call them out. So far, I'm seeing a turn-around success story in the making, and enjoying my new guitars, with my (older) Mesa Boogie. For full disclosure, Gibson Foundation recently donated some guitars to a charity I am involved with, but donation or not, my opinions will not be tempered when it comes to Gibson. While I want them to succeed as a lifelong fan, I will call them out in a heartbeat if something is wonky and I see it. I am not a disgruntled former employee. I am a Gibson player. I own two dozen or so. I always want more. So far looking into the new ownership, I don't think Mesa Boogie is in any trouble. 

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