

# M M R

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

Est. 1879

## Hitting All the

## *Right Notes*

### Examining a Robust B♭ Trumpet Market

avantis

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SQ

2022 MMR DEALERS CHOICE AWARD Product of the Year

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# C O N T E N T S

# MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

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MMR Musical Merchandise Review® (ISSN 0027-4615), Volume 182, Number 1, January 2023, founded in 1879, is published monthly by artistpro, LLC, 7012 City Center Way, Suite 207, Fairview, TN 37062, (800) 682-8114, publisher of School Band and Orchestra Plus and Modern Band Journal. Periodicals Postage Paid at Fairview, TN and additional mailing offices. *MMR* is distributed free to qualified individuals and is directed to music dealers and retailers, wholesalers and distributors, importers and exporters and manufacturers of all types of musical instruments and their accessories, related electronic sound equipment, general musical accessories, musical publications and teaching aides. **POSTMASTER:** Send all UAA to CFS. **NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES:** send address corrections to Musical Merchandise Review, PO Box 16655 North Hollywood, CA 91615-6655. The publishers of this magazine do not accept responsibility for statements made by their advertisers in business competition. No portion of this issue may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Copyright ©2023 by artistpro LLC, all rights reserved. Printed in USA.

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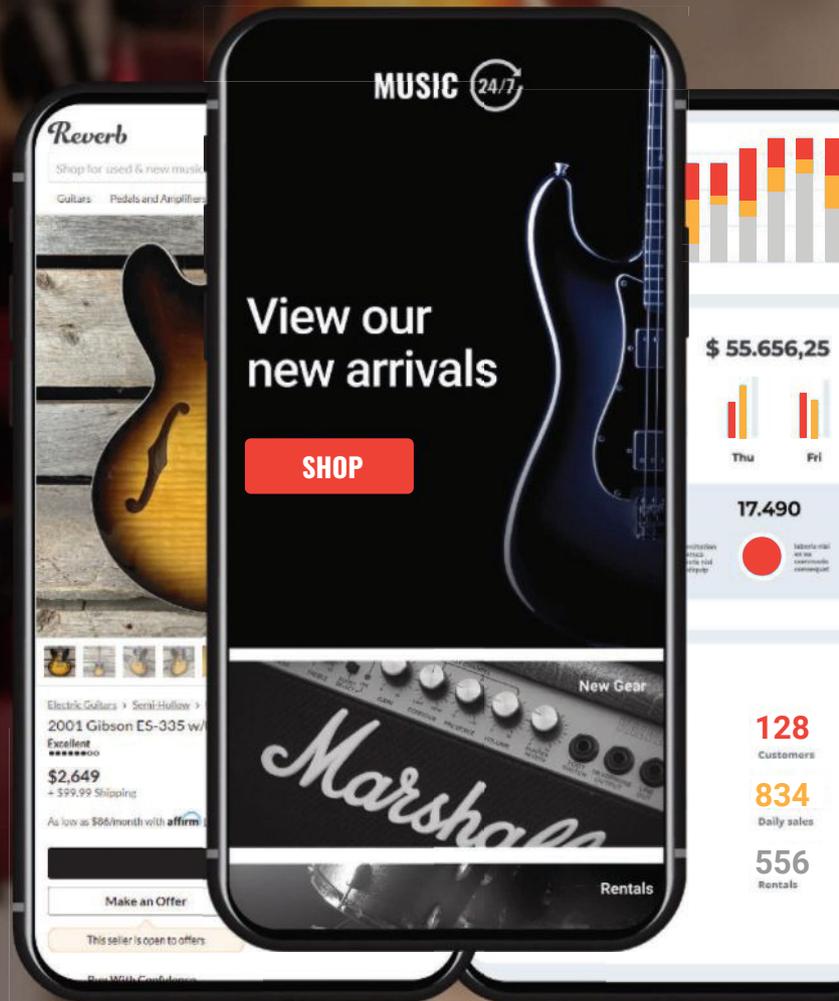
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## It's Up! It's Down! It's... Mostly the Same as Always

By  
**Christian  
Wissmuller**

In mid-December, the U.S. Commerce Department reported the biggest decrease in retail sales in 11 months. Reuters noted that the dip, "was likely payback after sales surged in October as Americans started their holiday shopping early [in order] to take advantage of discounts by businesses desperate to clear excess inventory."

Overall, retail sales fell 0.6% in November, against a projected decline of 0.1% – a "small" distinction in most arenas, but the difference of a half-percent here is fairly considerable and worthy of attention. It might be reasonable to assume, given that supply chain struggles and longer than usual order/delivery times are still very real things in the realm of MI, that it's unlikely many retailers have been especially "desperate" to unload large quantities of superfluous instruments and musical gear (Readers – by all means, please shoot me an email if you *have* been wrestling with tons of surplus inventory). However, that same Reuters coverage observes, "There were also decreases in receipts at general merchandise stores as well as sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument and book stores."

Ok, so folks started their holiday shopping earlier than usual and some vendors (in other industries, anyway) were employing slash-and-burn sales tactics in order to divest themselves of unwanted stock. Fair enough. So we got a stronger than projected October, followed by a slower than normal seasonal sales bump in November and December. A little bit of a mental reset and structural juggling of future projections and so be it: back on track, right? Many economists would seem to think so, with less strident inflation encouraging spending in 2023 (hopefully).

**“A great deal success in MI retail is always – whatever the state of the economy or national sales trends – in the hands of the practitioners.”**

ReserachAndMarkets.com is fairly bullish on MI, as well. In December, the market research group shared that, "The global sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, and book stores market is expected to grow from \$430.06 billion in 2021 to \$469.66 billion in 2022 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.2%. The market is expected to grow to \$641.3 billion in 2026 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.1%."

So, while nobody can predict the future, it seems there's plenty to be cautiously optimistic about when it comes to market conditions conducive to brisk business in the coming months, and even years. That said, a great deal success in MI retail is always – whatever the state of the economy or national sales trends – in the hands of the practitioners.

As David Benedetto of F.E. Olds and Phaeton Brass states in this month's cover feature on B♭ trumpets, "The most effective selling method for our retailers is when they can put our trumpets in the customer's hand. Then the trumpets sell themselves." Yamaha's John Goldman echoes such sentiments, saying, "Once in the hands of the customer, Yamaha trumpets help sell themselves."

Substitute the word "trumpet" with "guitar" or "mixer" or "drum set" or whatever you like – the message is evergreen and universal: put the product in the customer's hand.

Getting those potential buyers *in the store* and actually trying out gear is the big trick, of course, but, happily, one that many *MMR* readers are masters at solving. Go get 'em!

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PRINTING/FULFILLMENT

**artistpro**  
PUBLISHING

Liberty Press

1180 N. Mountain Springs Pkwy.  
Springville, UT 84663

artistpro, LLC

7012 City Center Way, Suite 207  
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## Settlement Between ClearOne and Shure

In mid-December, ClearOne, Inc. (NASDAQ: CLRO) (“ClearOne”) and Shure Incorporated (“Shure”) jointly announced that they have reached a global settlement of all pending legal disputes. In order to avoid the expense, burden, and uncertainty associated with litigation and to resolve their pending cases against one another, the companies entered into a confidential settlement agreement.

The companies have agreed to file dismissals with prejudice in all pending cases to fully and finally resolve their disputes. Both parties have agreed to release the other party from all claims and to cross-license all patent rights involved with the cases, such that each party will be free to sell their products without restrictions going forward.

The companies have also agreed to cross-license certain additional patent rights and have made covenants not to sue. Certain terms of the agreement between the parties are conditional on court action and/or approval, which the parties will promptly seek. Neither company has admitted any wrongdoing or liability as a condition of settlement.

## MakeMusic Acquires Fons

MakeMusic, makers of MakeMusic Cloud, formerly SmartMusic, announce that they have acquired Fons, the award-winning, streamlined and automated scheduling and payment platform for appointment-based business.

MakeMusic is thrilled to partner with the Fons family, a community of music teachers, academic tutors, coaches, personal trainers, and wellness pros, all supporting each other to share ideas and encouragement, whose goal is to elevate, simplify, and improve the business landscape for those that make their living through sharing their knowledge, skills, and time.

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- Enhance client communications
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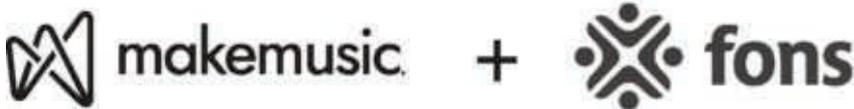
Eric Branner, Fons founder and VP of Business Development says, “Our team is delighted to introduce Fons into the MakeMusic family. I chose brands like Alfred Music and Finale as a full-time music teacher before founding Fons, it’s an honor to be included among them. We look forward to working together to

create a meaningful impact on our community.”

“The Fons team has built a wonderful product and community and we are honored to bring them within our family of brands. We’ll now work together to offer the Fons platform to thousands of private music educators,” says Greg Dell’Era, president of MakeMusic and Alfred Music. “We’re building the MakeMusic ecosystem to allow more people to experience the joy of making music. MakeMusic Cloud is already the reference music practice platform for academic teachers and students. With the Fons platform being the best tool for private teachers, we’re now ready to welcome private teachers and students, with exclusive content like Suzuki, Alfred Basic Piano Library, Edition Peters, and many others.”

For the time being, Fons will remain an independent and stand-alone product outside of the MakeMusic Cloud platform. However, Fons, MakeMusic Cloud, and Alfred Music customers can expect exciting and exclusive advantages and perks as part of our overall ecosystem in the future.

For general inquiries, contact the Fons Team at [hello@fons.com](mailto:hello@fons.com) or visit [fons.com](http://fons.com) for more information.



## Modal Electronics Partners with American Music & Sound to Expand Distribution

Modal Electronics, a leading global synthesizer manufacturer, has announced the appointment of American Music & Sound an Exertis | JAM business, as their exclusive distribution partner for their ground-breaking synthesizer portfolio in the United States of America.

Since 2013, Modal Electronics has cemented itself at the leading edge of forward-thinking synthesizer technology. Fusing sophisticated analogue and digital circuitry with an innovative approach to synthesizer design, Modal Electronics’ current portfolio is regarded as the pinnacle for users seeking modern synth-centric tools engineered for the forward-thinking creative. Whether it’s the Wavetable-fueled ARGON-Series or the Beyond Analogue COBALT-Series, users are empowered with unparalleled cre-

ative possibilities and the convenience of a 1:1 standalone app- and plugin-based control courtesy of MODALapp.

The growth and success of Modal Electronics demand a sales/distribution entity in the all-important US market with a thorough understanding of all aspects of the international music equipment marketplace. Modal Electronics identified exactly those qualifications and capabilities in American Music & Sound (AM&S). With extensive experience distributing some of the world’s top musical instrument and pro audio brands, AM&S aims to deliver top-flight service for Modal Electronics’ next-generation synthesizer portfolio via strategic routes to market and their wealth of proven first-hand expertise.

“Modal is a company we have admired for years,” notes Patrick Sullivan, presi-

dent of American Music & Sound. “The design, functionality, and quality of their products make them an essential part of any keyboard for recording artists. They continue to innovate, most notably with MODALapp which connects the Modal synthesizer ecosystem and provides a modern platform to help their customers create. We are extremely excited to partner with them in the United States.”

Christian Stahl, VP of Marketing of Modal Electronics, adds, “AM&S has been carefully chosen for their professionalism and ability to connect and support an extensive retail network for Modal Electronics’ product portfolio. We are excited to share our passion for synth technologies with the AM&S team and work with them as business partners for the U.S. market.”

# United Sound's 'Composer Project' Eliminates Barriers Schools Face in Performing Works by Composers from Minoritized Communities

United Sound, a not-for-profit organization that provides students with disabilities equal access to the musical performing arts, has launched a bold, new initiative designed to break down barriers school music programs face in performing works by composers from minoritized communities.

The Composer Project actively assists emerging composers of classical and jazz music and related genres who are not represented equitably in published and performed literature. To accomplish this, United Sound has assembled a team of mentors who will provide these aspiring individuals with free masterclasses and recording partners who will work with them to refine and ultimately record their music. In addition, The Composer Project will make recordings and sheet music accessible to educators, providing them with lists of music by underrepresented composers, recordings of new music, and free music for lower-income schools.

"I didn't have any spare time when I was teaching, so the only new music I heard was what I could listen to on my drive to and from work," said Julie Duty, United Sound's founder and executive director. "Our goal with The Composer Project is to help emerging composers gain the vital information and connections needed to launch their careers faster. At the same time, we will enable educators to search for music by composers from historically minoritized communities as easily as listening to the radio."

Brian Balmages, a member of The Composer Project Advisory Board, said, "This project is an incredible opportunity to give back and inspire a new generation of composers interested in writing music for all levels. To be a part of a team that is so visionary, talented, and passionate is as exciting for me as it may be for the young composers who will participate in the workshops and masterclasses. We hope to help foster a musical landscape that celebrates composers of all backgrounds and helps inspire a new group of composers as unique and diverse as the people in this beautiful world of ours."

Omar Thomas, famed composer and Composer Project Advisory Board member, said, "Our ultimate goal is to create a system that puts a wider range of musical styles, written by more varied composers, in front of younger students to push back against any implicit biases that may arise from a less diverse musical repertoire."

Duty stresses that this new initiative amplifies United Sound's peer mentoring program for students with disabilities, for which the organization is best known.

"Our mission is to remove barriers and foster social change through music," said Duty. "Initially, this was done through a peer mentoring program that enabled students with disabilities to get involved in instrumental music."

Financial support for The Composer Project is provided by Yamaha Corporation of America. Yamaha and United Sound share the mission to build meaningful diversity measures that benefit students, educators, composers, and performers.

For more information about United Sound and The Composer Project, email [info@unitedsound.org](mailto:info@unitedsound.org) or visit [www.unitedsound.org](http://www.unitedsound.org)



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## AP International Music Supply Announces W-Music Distribution Exclusivity for Floyd Rose in Europe

Floyd Rose, maker of the iconic double-locking tremolo system which bears its name, is pleased to announce that they will be opening a sole Floyd Rose European distribution channel to handle all affairs on the continent. Longtime associate and industry veteran W-Music Distribution will begin handling all distribution of Floyd Rose products in European territories beginning January 1.

The move aims to satisfy the global increase in demand as well as provide better product service and allow for more concise brand focus. "Having worked with W-Distribution in Germany for many decades, this relationship will allow us to fulfill the needs of players throughout Europe by expanding the Floyd Rose line into new territories while offering consistent brand support," says

AP International company president Andrew Papiccio.

In addition to taking on sole Floyd Rose distribution in Europe, W-Distribution will be representing the many other offerings of AP International Music Supply, including Pure Tone Jacks, ProRockGear, and their upcoming comprehensive hardware line, AxLabs Hardware.

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## Yorkville Sound To Distribute Hosa Technology in Canada

Canadian pro audio manufacturer and distributor, Yorkville Sound, and leading supplier of analog and digital connectivity solutions, Hosa Technology, announced a new distribution partnership. Effective immediately, Yorkville Sound will distribute Hosa products in Canada.

Since 1984, Hosa has become widely known for their price-conscious interconnect and guitar cables, data/DMX connectors, cable testers, and much more. Hosa is a family business committed to creating reliable connectivity solutions with unparalleled service, passion, and care.

Hosa Technology's director of sales, Ken Fuente, comments on Yorkville's shared values and partnership: "We are excited to announce Yorkville Sound will be taking over Canadian distribution. Yorkville Sound's long standing in the musical instrument and pro audio business, along with the stellar reputation of Mr. Jack Long and his family, and the work ethic of the team, make for a logical fit. We are very happy about this opportunity and look forward to many years of a solid partnership."

Jeff Cowling, Yorkville's vice president of sales and marketing comments: "Hosa products are visionary, world-known, and in line with Yorkville's experience of providing solutions to musical instrument and pro audio end users. Hosa set the gold standard for cables. We are excited to have this exceptional brand as part of our distribution family."

Hosa Technology products are available in Canada through Yorkville Sound. Contact your local Yorkville sales representative to learn more about this addition to Yorkville's catalogue.

## Algam EKO to Handle Italian Distribution for Ashdown Engineering

Ashdown Engineering has announced a partnership with Algam EKO for exclusive distribution to the Italian as of January 1st 2023.

Ashdown is proud to be represented in Italy by a great team of individuals at Algam EKO, A family business who share a passion for the music industry and all that comes with building and supporting brands. With the network of dealers supported by Algam EKO Ashdown is excited

## L-Acoustics Obtains Prison Sentences for Loudspeaker Counterfeiters

In partnership with Chinese authorities, L-Acoustics was recently involved with tracking down five counterfeiters who were subsequently found guilty and sentenced to jail for producing and selling counterfeit L-Acoustics loudspeakers in China. The suspects were arrested, and a batch of counterfeit signs, molds, and other items was seized in Shiji Town, Guangzhou. A public hearing was held in The People's Court of Panyu District where the suspects presented their defense against the filed physical and documentary evidence, expert opinions, witness testimonies, and the victim's statements.

The court found the suspects guilty of counterfeiting a registered trademark and were initially sentenced to at least one year in prison, fined, and their activity suspended for varying years. Since probation for similar activities had been revoked in previous cases, the counterfeiters ended up with prison sentences of up to three years.

L-Acoustics loudspeakers are in high demand by artists worldwide, making the brand rider-friendly. It's no surprise that people want to create copycats to profit from its renowned reputation. However, these counterfeits pose enough dangers to make people think twice about that cheap price tag. Aside from the risk of prison sentences, various safety risks are associated with deploying untested and uncertified counterfeits.

Deployed fake L-Acoustics sound systems will not deliver the same performance as their originals and expose operators and the public to hazardous safety risks and even more severe legal liabilities if an accident occurs. There's also the risk of a safety inspection from local authorities during a show. A lack of genuine certification of conformity can cause authorities to shut down a show or production altogether.

to have the opportunity to grow within the Italian market once again.

The brand will become part of the EKO Division catalogue.

From '97 to today, Ashdown has provided bassists with an unmistakable sound on stage and in the recording studio thanks to a complete range of heads, cabinets, combos and effects pedals.

Now with a team of 24 reps across Italy representing the line, the agents of the

EKO Division will be hitting the road to explain the brand's new commercial policy for the Italian market.

"After spending some time recently in Italy with the team at EKO, this appointment is a significant moment for us and a huge thanks to Stelvio, Maxi, Andrea and all in the EKO team for their excitement to launch with Ashdown in the Italian market." – Dan Gooday MD Ashdown Engineering.

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**Casio America** has announced that **Lacy Privette** has been appointed as the company's Southeast regional sales manager, effective immediately. He reports to Mark



Amentt, director of sales, Electronic Musical Instrument Division, Casio America.

In his role, Privette is responsible for promoting and directing sales efforts for the company's award-winning Electronic Musical Instruments in Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington, DC.

"Lacy is an accomplished music industry professional who has done an exceptional and consistent job of leading sales teams," says Amentt. "He is a great match for Casio and will help build the success of our key accounts. I am confident that he will strengthen our company's overall sales strategy for many years to come."

Privette began his career as a manager of the keyboard/technology department at Sam's Music in Brentwood, Tennessee, and joined Yamaha in 2000 as a district manager for the company's Pro Audio & Combo Division. In 2012, he was named Eastern U.S. sales manager for Yamaha subsidiary Steinberg North America, where he climbed the ranks to become national sales manager, director of recording, and ultimately national sales manager, Recording/Steinberg/Pro Audio in 2017.

"Casio is partly responsible for motivating me to work in the music industry, as my first recording experience was on a Casio keyboard that I received when I was 12 years old," says Privette. "I want to work for a company that inspires me, and that pushes the boundaries of innovation to new levels. Casio is leading the way with new technologies that not only make Casio keyboards a premium choice in the music industry, but also inspire more musicians to create music with these instruments."

**Allen & Heath USA** is proud to announce the hiring of industry veteran **Christopher Melendy** as regional sales manager for the Central territory. Melendy joins Allen & Heath with over two



decades of experience in pro audio and system integration.

After obtaining a degree in recording technology, Melendy started his professional career as an audio engineer – working in recording and mastering studios, as well as regional and live festival events. Melendy also has extensive experience in integration as a system designer and consultant. He later transitioned into the manufacturing sector as a product manager and OEM sales manager for several notable A/V brands. More recently, Melendy sold the A/V electronics manufacturing company he co-founded in 2016.

"I am thrilled to be joining the team at A&H," notes Melendy. "I love the brand and the people associated with it. I look forward to continuing the tradition of quality and integrity Allen & Heath is known for and supporting the brand partnerships with reps and customers."

"I am pleased to welcome Christopher to the team" says Allen & Heath USA national sales manager Pat McConnell. "His audio background, mad design skills, industry experience, and his can-do attitude helped him to land the gig through our extensive interview process. He will be a great fit culturally, which is essential. Our culture as a team is a significant contributor to our success and we are happy to have him as our new central sales manager."

**Korg USA** announces the retirement of **Loren Molinare**, an M.I. industry veteran whose career has spanned several decades. He has been a part of the Korg USA family as Blackstar product manager/artist relations since 2011, when the company acquired distribution of the Blackstar Amplification brand in the U.S. Prior to that, he served as U.S. business development manager for the stand-alone Blackstar U.S. organization, and also held positions with Aviom (director of sales Western states), ESP Guitars (Eastern regional sales manager) and Line 6 (Eastern States sales).



Aside from his work for prominent manufacturers, Loren is an in-demand performer and producer in the punk and hard rock scenes. He is currently a member of Los Angeles rock stalwarts Little Caesar and has been a member of The DoGs/Detroit, Cruzados and several other acclaimed acts.

Brian Piccolo, Korg USA director of brand management, states, "Loren is the most positive, fun, and high-energy employee/friend I have had the pleasure to work with. His positive outlook and passion towards products, artists and our overall business was inspiring to be around. His presence will be missed. I am excited for Loren and his family as they enter this next chapter of their lives."

"For over a decade I have been lucky to work with Loren and witness his commitment to representing our brands with integrity and enthusiasm," shares Joe Castronovo, president and CEO of Korg USA. "We are extremely grateful for everything he has done and thank him for making a lasting impact with his colleagues and artists."

On behalf of all the Directors of Blackstar Amplification, Joel Richardson, Blackstar director of marketing, remarks, "It's been a pleasure to work with Loren for well over a decade. Loren planted those first Blackstar flags in the USA and was huge part of breaking into the U.S. market. Loved and respected by all, an incredible musician, wordsmith, colleague and, above all, friend. Loren's legacy in the Blackstar story will remain forever."

**Hal Leonard** is excited to announce that **Eric Jimenez** has joined their education team as account manager – education technology. In this role, Jimenez will focus on serving school districts with the resources, curriculum, technology, methods, repertoire, and professional development that Hal Leonard has to offer.



Eric Jimenez has been revitalizing music programs throughout the Houston area for over 12 years, earning Division I and "Best in Class" ratings at UIL and numerous other festivals. He is the recipient of Hamilton Middle School's Teacher of the Year Award in 2012, LULAC- League of United Latin American Citizens – Educator of the Year in 2015, a GRAMMY Educational Award for his work at Davis HS in 2015, Prairie View A&M University's top 40 under 40 in 2016, and Yamaha's top 40 under 40 in 2021. He is a co-host of The Score Podcast and a clinician, mentor, and consultant for arts education programs throughout the United States. Eric is a 2009 graduate of Prairie View A&M University and earned his Master of Education in Education-

al Leadership from Lamar University in 2014. He is a current board member of the Houston Music Advisory Board and CMA Foundation.

"Eric's extensive experiences in the classroom, along with his deep knowledge and passion for music education, make him a perfect fit for our team," says John Mlynczak, VP of Music Education & Technology for Hal Leonard. "We are excited to further our music education offerings to support the needs of all students and know that Eric will be a great representative for us."

**C.F. Martin & Co.** has announced that **Dr. Mary Haas** and **Brian Richardi** have been elected to the company's board of directors.

Haas is a Fortune 500 executive and materials scientist with more than 20 years of leadership experience. Currently CEO and president of Sustaera, Inc., she is leading the scale-up, manufacturing, and commercialization of the company's Direct Air Capture process and equipment. Prior to joining Sustaera, Mary held roles of increasing responsibility at Air Products and Chemicals, most recently serving as executive director of the company's \$200 MM Global Cryogenic Equipment Division, completing two acquisitions as well as profitable geographic expansion.

Mary received an Air Products Chairman Award for Leadership in 2018, and an Air Products Innovation Award in 2013. She is a Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt with experience in strategy transformation, manufacturing excellence, safety leadership, technology commercialization, and organizational development. She holds eight patents, has a Ph.D. in materials science from Princeton University, and she lives in Emmaus, PA with her husband and two sons.

Brian Richardi currently leads the Finance Data Science team at Stryker. He has over 15 years of experience as a finance leader supporting multi-billion-dollar businesses, with a passion for leveraging data analytics to maximize finance's strategic partnership and optimize business processes. Brian has led several data analytics initiatives and



teams over his career that specialize in a variety of business areas ranging from finance, R&D, manufacturing, marketing, and sales.

Brian began his career as a business analyst at Domino Sugar where he was heavily involved in BI and data initiatives, while also earning his SAP certification. He then transitioned to finance, and became the Chief Finance Leader for the US commercial business, where he led a team responsible for all FP&A and accounting duties while also continuing to drive advancements in data analytics. He graduated from Muhlenberg College with a degree in economics, and earned his MBA from Rutgers University with a dual concentration in finance and entrepreneurship.

"We're proud to add two very accomplished individuals to our board of directors," says Martin executive chairman, Chris Martin. "Their professional accomplishments and commitment to sustainable business growth will help us remain a family business and help us lead the music industry forward."

**Gordon J. Snyder** joins the **SBO+/MMR** sales team from Orlando, Florida and has served as a band director and fine arts director for the last 15 years but has worked with music groups for 20+ years. He has served in both the public and private sectors as well as worked with middle school, high school, and collegiate level ensemble. Snyder received degrees in music education as well as is working towards a masters in music education/worship both from Liberty University.



Coupled with this, he has developed a variety of soloists and groups who are performing in a variety of genres. In addition, Gordon has worked with merchandising, product specialization, and customer service for Integrity Music Inc., a music publishing company. Together, these experiences provide Snyder with a unique first-hand knowledge and understanding of what directors, performers, and students need.

Snyder's most recent teaching position was at The First Academy in Orlando, Florida where he served as director of fine arts and band director overseeing performing, visual, and digital arts areas including staffing, classroom needs, and facility management as well as related budgets. Snyder was responsible for overall direction and creative development of the department. Formerly, Gordon served ten years as the director of instrumental music, fine arts chair, and Kannapolis Performing Arts Center coordinator at A.L. Brown High School in Kannapolis, North Carolina. His extensive experience in show development, music administration, theory, concert and jazz bands, event stage and lighting also led him to serve in roles at Catawba College in popular music and music business. Gordon's efforts have not gone unnoticed as he was the 2016 recipient of the Music and Arts National Teacher of the year award. Snyder brings a wealth of knowledge to and experience and looks forward to collaborating with your organization to help get your message out and grow and develop your programs. Gordon can be reached at [gordon@sbomagazine.com](mailto:gordon@sbomagazine.com). His cell is (407) 676-2054, through the artistpro LLC switchboard (800) 682-8114, Ext 6.

## traderegrets

**Michael Lefferts** (4/19/41 – 12/19/2022) passed away on Monday, December 19, 2022 in Homosassa, Florida. Michael, son of Ben and Naomi Lefferts, was born in Brooklyn, NY, and raised in Mount Vernon, NY. He attended Clark University, where he met his first wife, Marilyn Gitelstein Lefferts (1942- 1993), with whom he had two children, Matthew and Jonathan. Michael married Jackie Prescott Lefferts in 1995, and they remained married until his death.

Lefferts attended St. Johns Law School, but spent his career in the music publishing industry, and was considered by many to be the "king of heavy metal" for sheet music, including Guns 'n Roses. His professional career highlights include running Alexander Broude Publishing in the '70s and early '80s, and later working at Cherry Lane Music and, finally, at Warner Brothers Publications until his retirement in the late 1990s.





## 'To Better Serve the Customer'

by Christian Wissmuller

regional and a south regional manager, Daniel Miller and Jason Ratliff. And then David Strong, who was our former sax shop manager, has now stepped up to manage all things Bloomington. So, we have three individuals that manage the retail operations at Schmitt Music.

**Got it. The big news prior to the recent headquarters shift was the summer '22 opening of the Apple Valley, Minnesota location. What was the catalyst that led to that store's opening?**

The typical: lease expires and that starts the discussion of, "What should we do next?" And that was our old Burnsville store that we had closed down. It was a fairly large store in a shopping center that I think was losing foot traffic. And there was a major, major anchor tenant that was going away, so we were hesitant to sign another five- or 10-year lease there. We also wanted to downsize, frankly. COVID really put a halt to our lesson business. We didn't know how the lesson program would bounce back and if we would need another 12 teaching studios. So, we found an opportunity in Apple Valley in and the MacPhail Center for Music has their lesson business operating out of that facility, as well. So, we have a small 3,000 square-foot or less retail space and then we thought, "Well that might be an interesting partnership." And now MacPhail is operating the lesson business, we're operating on the retail side, and it seems to be going well out of the gate.

**That sounds like a nice symbiotic relationship that doesn't really require a ton of overhead on your part, but still provides that service to your customers.**

Yep. And until, you know, we're kind of back in normal times – and I still think we're not quite there yet, post-COVID – we won't fully understand how that may continue to work.

**Can you talk a little bit about what had been the previous flagship store and what prompted the decision to enter the new space?**

Yeah, so our lease expired of our Edina location, which was in the southwest metro of the Twin Cities – just north of Bloomington actually, very close to where our current facility is here in Bloomington, but that lease expired and we had, I would say a 14,000 to 15,000 square foot store with 27-plus teaching studios. With that amount of space and no students, it was hard for us to sign another extension there. And we thought, let's go look for

**M**idwest MI retail powerhouse Schmitt Music has undergone some significant changes in recent years. 2021 marked the 12-store chain's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary and also saw longtime president and CEO Tom Schmitt hand the reigns over to his son Peter, with Tom now serving as executive chairman. 2022 was distinguished by some structural reorganization and new store openings – most recently (and significantly) a brand-new flagship store and HQ in Bloomington, Minnesota that welcomed customers in early December of last year.

We recently sat down with Peter Schmitt to talk about his role as fifth-generation CEO of this widely respected family business, the new headquarters, and expectations for both Schmitt Music and the MI industry, as a whole, in the coming months.

**Nearly everybody loves the idea of family-owned businesses that stay in the family. When did discussions begin regarding you succeeding your father as CEO of Schmitt Music?**

Well, I've been working with the company around eight years in total and, dad and I, Tom Schmitt, had multiple conversations over the years about a future transition. We never really set in stone when that would take place. We kind of figured time will tell when it's right. I would say for six months we were actively discussing how and when the transition would happen. So the time just felt right, I think, for him. And he asked me if July [2021] seemed like a good time for me to step in, and I said, "Yeah, let's do it." And then we had made the transition.

**Have you, either purposefully or just sort of incidentally, implemented changes to the operational mode of Schmitt Music?**

I did restructure the organization, starting with defining roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team. There was a slightly different structure when my dad was CEO. And then that change in the leadership level also impacted the next level of leaders at the Schmitt Music Company with promoting Jeremiah Babcock to the VP of sales role. He had to step out of the things that he was doing in the past, and we had to elevate people up. And that brought in regional managers. So, we now have a north

“I think the business is there, back to 2019 levels, it's just now a matter of getting the product when we need it.”

a smaller location with fewer studios. And we went out on the hunt and kind of came up empty-handed. There were no great options we found to relocate in the southwest metro. We were looking for 8,000 to 10,000 square feet. So, in that search, I came across this building, the former Lifetouch building in Bloomington that had been vacant for about two years. I had this wild thought of, "Why don't we combine our then-flagship MI store in Brooklyn Center and what was, or was at the time, our flagship keyboard store in Edina into one and have a flagship Schmitt Music location?"

That gave us the opportunity to take what we've learned in the MI business and the keyboard business over the past X number of years and design one facility that supported our growing business. Our facility in Brooklyn Center was around 50,000 square feet in total, and the facility we've moved into now is just over 90,000 square feet.

**Wow. So how many employees are on hand, both full and part-time?**

Over 100.

**Are there any teachers on staff at that location?**

We don't have teachers on staff. Teachers are independent contractors. We do have eight teaching studios in Bloomington.

**Got it. And do you have repair and/or a rental on-site?**

We do, yeah. We have a band instrument repair shop and a luthier team. I think we have around nine band instrument repair techs and we have seven luthiers.

**This is quite the staff.**

Yeah. We have a big staff on repair. Our main retail store footprint is around 20,000 square feet and it's divided up into the store-within-a-store model with The Specialty Shops. So, within The Flute Gallery, we have a space for Katie Lowry, who is our master-flute technician. In The Saxophone Shop, we have a space for Randy Jones and the folks at Tenor Madness. And then in The Paul A. Schmitt Violin Shop, Peter Bingen, our head luthier, works out of there. Additionally, there's The Trombone Shop and The Trumpet Shop. And then behind all of those retail shops is our larger production shop.

**Is there anything else specific to the new location that makes it unique, that makes it a different arrangement other than what you've already covered, which is already substantial?**

One of the things I love about the building is we have a 14-foot ceiling, so we're able to air condition our entire warehouse facility, which helps with the humidity extremes. So, I think our pianos and string instruments and wood clarinets are all going

to be much happier this summer. Also, our educational reps have a place to pull their vehicles into our facility, which is an added benefit in contrast to our Brooklyn Center facility. Now they can load and unload outside of the elements.

**Aside from feeling the MI industry is not yet 100 percent back post-COVID, do you have any other observations on the past calendar year? And what are your expectations specifically for MI in 2023?**

I'm optimistic about the coming calendar year. You know, we had supply chain challenges this past year and the year prior, and the year prior, maybe if I'm counting on one hand. But, you know, in speaking with our key suppliers, they feel that we're maybe are not going to go through that again because they're getting on

top of manufacturing. We had shortages this fall in our back-to-school season, and we were turning customers away based on availability. So, I think the business is there, back to 2019 levels, it's just now a matter of getting the product when we need it. It's such a short window. Those kids are needing their instruments.

Also piano – we're not seeing piano sales lighten up at all right now. The acoustic and digital keyboard market is still pretty strong for us. It's more normalized now, it's stabilized. I don't think we're looking at the peak of COVID as the new normal, you know. That was flipping the radar. But things have normalized and sales are back to pre-2019 levels and we're glad it's back to those levels.

**Excellent. Is there anything else either pertaining to the recent store openings, or other big plans for the coming months?**

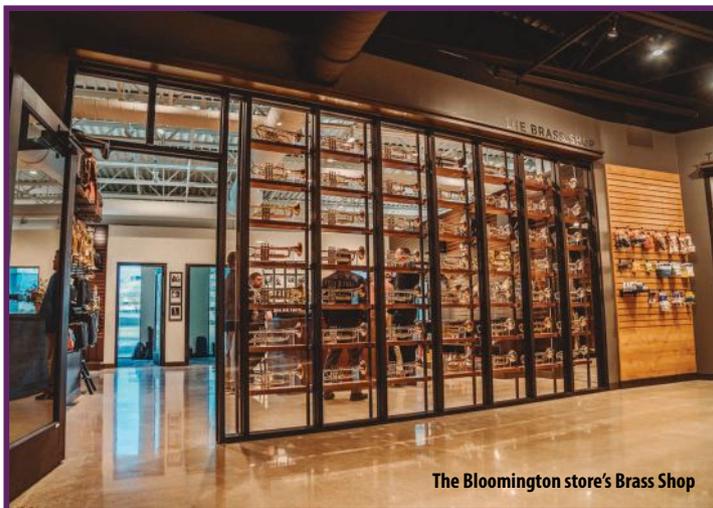
Oh, yeah. We were mindful of, as we built out the offices and the retail and the ware-

houses... It was really about having an employees-first approach, making spaces that would encourage staff to come in and work in our facility, be a place they want to be, spaces to collaborate, spaces to gain a sense of community.

We've also identified what we've referred to as our experts, kind of how we have gained expertise in our shops. The clarinet gallery, the flute gallery, the brass shop has a combination of high-brass and low-brass saxophones and violins. And each one of those shops has an individual who's responsible not only for the inventory, but making sure that we have the products and the service to fit the needs of the varying consumer types that would be entering Schmitt Music in Bloomington. So, whether it's the beginner or the intermediate or the professional musician, we have that resource to better serve the customer. 



The entrance to the Bloomington flagship store's dedicated Saxophone Shop



The Bloomington store's Brass Shop

# Hitting All the *Right Notes*

## Examining a Robust B♭ Trumpet Market

By Christian Wissmüller

Likely the most widely used type of trumpet, B♭ pitched models of the instrument are key components of some of the most popular music being recorded and performed today. These transposing instruments can be prominently heard in jazz, concert band, pop, rock, marching band, and beyond. The flexibility to create sounds ranging from loud to soft and bright to dark make B♭ trumpets appealing to many players of all skill levels and styles.

MMR recently touched base with five major suppliers in this segment of MI to learn about current trends, challenges, and expectation within the market.

**For your brand, what models of B♭ trumpets are currently hot sellers?**

**Michael Summers:** Our best-selling student model trumpet is the JTR700A. For intermediate, it's the JTR1100S, and for professional the XO1602S.

**Andrew Lott:** The 180 and 190 B♭ trumpets continue to surpass our expectations and sell out faster than we can build them. The improvements we've been making on those lines have been incredibly well received by consumers and dealers.

**Warren Kus:** The most popular B♭ trumpet model distributed by Buffet Crampon is the reliable B&S Challenger One – perhaps

offering the best value in the market being a German crafted professional trumpet and made 100 percent in the traditional way. A newer member of the B&S family that has seen increased demand since its launch is the MBX Heritage – an extremely versatile instrument for the best of players.

**David Benedetto:** Our Olds student model, NTR110PC, continues to sell extremely well. It is a solidly built, good playing trumpet that dealers use for their rental and lease fleets. On the professional side, the Phaeton PHTF-2030 and PHT-2060 models lead the way. Players love the sound from both models and their unique finishes separate them from the rest of the market.

**Jonathan Goldman:** The Yamaha global R&D team has worked hard to create many best-sellers over the years. The flagship Xeno trumpet lineup appeals to players across genres. The Xeno family also includes the Chicago and New York Artist Models, the trumpet of choice in the country's top orchestras.

**Is this market segment being particularly impacted by supply-chain issues of late?**

**AL:** As a U.S. manufacturer, we're uniquely positioned to have less impact than other international manufacturers, but we have had to overcome similar material shortages just like everyone else.



“The most effective selling method for our retailers is when they can put our trumpets in the customer's hand. Then the trumpets sell themselves.”

– David Benedetto, Owner and President,  
F.E. Olds and Phaeton Brass





“The 180 and 190 B $\flat$  trumpets continue to surpass our expectations and sell out faster than we can build them.”

– Andrew Lott, High Brass Product Manager, Conn Selmer/Bach



**JG:** Yamaha instruments are moving through the supply chain and shipping to dealers regularly. The current challenge is producing the outstanding level of demand we are seeing in the American market. Year-over-year growth has been beyond expectations.

**DB:** The entire trumpet market along with all wind instruments have been affected by supply chain issues. Delays continue to stem from overseas manufacturing stoppages, transportation delays, and labor shortages.

**WK:** Buffet Crampon has been fortunate to have maintained a steady and flexible production plan to combat any supply chain issues facing the industry on student and professional B $\flat$  trumpets. Availability of B $\flat$  trumpets made in our facilities in China have been quite steady, especially for a new development that has been met with a growing demand over the past few years. The increased demand despite the everchanging export challenges from China is all thanks to the support of our dealers. What we've seen is that transparency between intercompany communication and our global dealer network regarding deliveries has helped build even stronger relationships.

**MS:** Yes, our entire winds division continues to be impacted by supply-chain issues, including trumpets.

**What display and promotion strategies have you observed successful retailers embracing when it comes to these types of instruments?**

**JG:** Yamaha has created a growing library of cooperative marketing assets for dealers to use in marketing Yamaha products. Dealers who use these assets with a well-merchandised product display (in-store or online) can effectively drive customers toward a purchase. However, a Yamaha trumpet truly is its own best salesperson. Once in the hands of the customer, Yamaha trumpets help sell themselves because of their quality of sound and construction.

**WK:** For professional instruments, nothing can replace an in-person tryout session with musicians, educators, and students. For our student trumpets from Besson and B&S, our dealers understand the needs of their community best so similarly, we offer product trials and demonstrations with repair techni-

cians, educational representatives, band directors, and teachers.

**MS:** In our experience, retailers don't often display student models because they are used primarily in rental pools. Promotional strategies for step-up and professional instruments include manufacturer rebates and add-ons such as stands, mouthpieces, and mutes.

**DB:** The most effective selling method for our retailers is when they can put our trumpets in the customer's hand. Then the trumpets sell themselves. Dealers that provide easy opportunities to try the horns along with financing options have been very successful.

**AL:** We've seen such great demand for our B $\flat$  trumpet portfolio that promotional activity has been about getting up on the wall and out to consumers.

**Have you noticed any particular trends in terms of buying habits and end-user preferences when it comes to B $\flat$  trumpets?**

**DB:** Consumers continue to look for a good value on any purchase. After a sale, a consumer is confident they made a smart decision selecting Olds and Phaeton, which offer solid products, competitive pricing, and top shelf support

**AL:** As the only manufacturer using anti-microbial lacquer on all our brass instruments, we've answered consumer demands for safer instruments. We've also seen the request for lead-free mouthpieces arise, and we are now offering the entire line of trumpet and trombone mouthpieces in lead-free brass.

**JG:** One trend of note in the step-up market is that players are looking for a B $\flat$  with a more flexible sound and trumpets that can blend and stand out in the broader range of musical styles. This allows players to explore new and unique sound concepts. Yamaha wants to be a partner in that journey of exploration.

**MS:** Consumers purchasing student trumpets often look at warranties, availability of parts, and educator recommendations. Our ten-year "Good through Graduation" warranty is very attractive, and we have all parts available for immediate shipment from our Tennessee warehouse. An increasing number of educators approve and recommend our brands every year.



“The current challenge is producing the outstanding level of demand we are seeing in the American market.”

– Jonathan Goldman, Senior Product Marketing Specialist, Yamaha Corporation of America



## ■ roundtable



“Buffet Crampon has been fortunate to have maintained a steady and flexible production plan to combat any supply chain issues facing the industry on student and professional B $\flat$  trumpets.”

– Warren Kus, Brass Product Specialist,  
Buffet Crampon USA



**WK:** It is sometimes difficult to track trends since choosing a professional instrument is such an extremely personal experience. That said, we have found that many trumpet players prefer to prioritize playability, efficiency, and sound over other attributes.

**Does your brand have any recent or upcoming B $\flat$  trumpet model introductions you'd like to draw MMR readers' attention to?**

**MS:** We launched a trumpet flugelhorn combo pack in Q4 of this year that includes our most popular intermediate trumpet in lacquer, paired with our most popular flugelhorn, and includes a backpack case. The model is the JTR1110R+JFH1100R and is being well received by our dealers.

**WK:** As we strive to meet the demands of newer generations, we work closely with the best musicians around the world to continually improve our current range of trumpets. We have recently released our new Prodigie Series of student trumpets with the goal of providing a professional experience at an affordable price. This past winter at the Maurice Andre Competition in Paris, France, we also launched a reinvented range of Antoine Courtois Confluence Series B $\flat$  (and C) trumpets with the help of renowned artist Clement Saunier, ensemble inter-contemporain and professor at the National Conservatory of Music and Dance in Lyon, France.

**JG:** The second generation Custom Z and LA trumpets, developed with iconic trumpet artists Bobby Shew and Wayne Bergeron, were introduced recently and continue to be an outstanding choice for musicians searching for an authentic, live or efficient-playing instrument. Both instruments are quite versatile and fun to play. Also of note for any doublers is the recent second generation Custom flugelhorns that began shipping this past fall, which was also developed in partnership with Shew and Bergeron.

**AL:** 2023 will be huge for Bach as we launch new products and improvements to our entire line of professional trumpets. The Bach 180S37 is already the world's most-sold trumpet and we're excited for new improvements that are in production today. We'll also be reintroducing an improved line of 190 trum-

pets and an all-new 170 Apollo, an entry-pro trumpet that balances professional 180-style sound with approachable ease of playability. The apollo-model reversed leadpipe and two-piece bell create a forgiving and responsive playing experience and a centered and rich timbre. The new 170 Apollo calls back to the Bach Apollo professional trumpets of the '20s and '30s, which were the only Bach models to historically feature two-piece bell construction.

**DB:** We are always looking at expanding the product offerings. The plan is to introduce some new models in the next 6 to 12 months.

**What are your projections for sales of B $\flat$  trumpets in the coming months?**

**WK:** Heading into 2023 with many students looking to either pick up their trumpet for the first time or make an equipment change for the better, we are optimistic in being able to deliver many great products from Buffet Crampon that meet the trumpet community's many needs. B $\flat$  trumpets are available from B&S, Besson, Antoine Courtois, or Johannes Scherzer through your local Authorized Buffet Crampon dealers.

**DB:** I see strong sales for 2023. Student trumpets are needed for rental programs and school purchases remain strong as they replenish worn out inventory as well as purchase additional inventory due to health and safety concerns.

**JG:** We anticipate every level of the trumpet market to continue seeing strong demand over the following months and beyond. Demand for student instruments is strong, and Yamaha is working hard to be a stable partner for all our dealers. The value offered by step-up Yamaha trumpets is the foundation for year-over-year sales growth. There is an option in the catalog for every type of player.

**AL:** We continue to see double-digit growth and demand for our trumpets, and we can't wait to see how the market reacts to the introduction of our new line of pro horns in 2023.

**MS:** Largely due to increased educator acceptance, we expect to have continued success in moving large quantities of student and intermediate trumpets, and we will continue to gain traction in the professional trumpet market. 



“An increasing number of educators approve and recommend our brands every year.”

– Michael Summers, Wind Instrument  
Brand Manager Altus | Azumi | Jupiter |  
XO, KHS America, Inc.

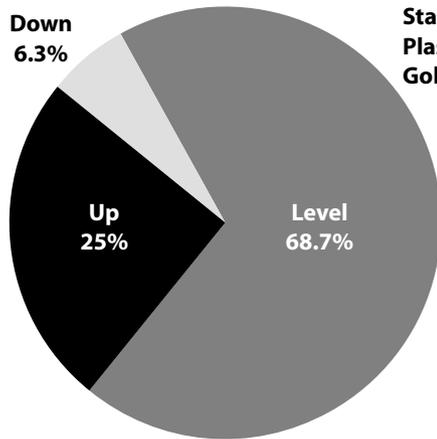


# Piece(s) of the Action

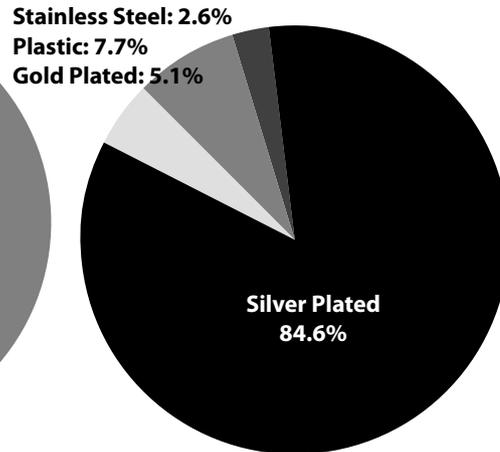
## Sales Trends of Trumpet Mouthpieces By Christian Wissmuller

**R**obust sales post-pandemic, greater player embrace of custom units, trending brands – in this report, MI retailers share thoughts on these aspects of the trumpet mouthpieces market and more in 2023. Read on to learn what they had to say in this month's dealer poll...

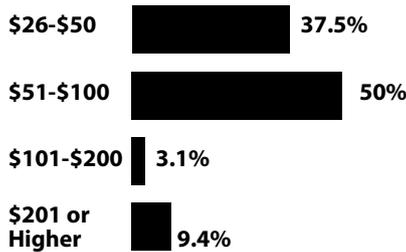
When compared to this time last year, sales of trumpet mouthpieces are...



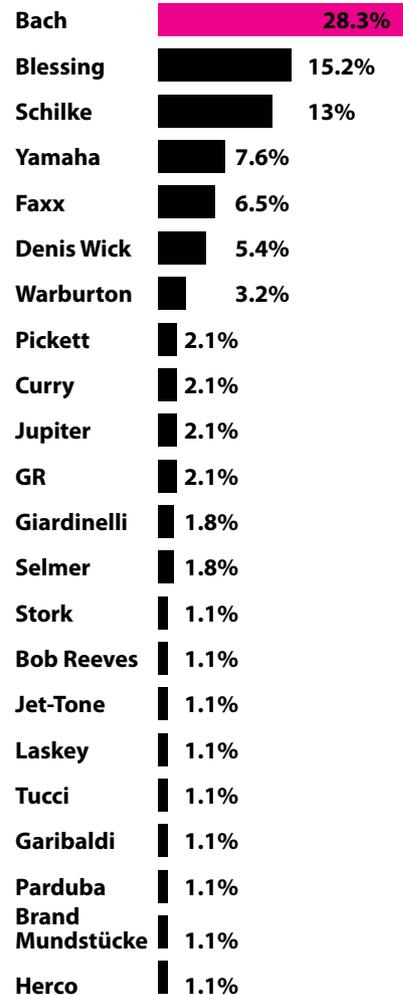
What types of materials are favored by your customers?



What's the most popular price range for trumpet mouthpieces?



Which brands are the top sellers for your store?



### Have you been observing any significant trends when it comes to trumpet mouthpieces?

"Stepping away from COVID had brought lots of players to our store to 'step-up' in both their instruments and the accessories they use. Mouthpieces are a major part of that including custom pieces from both Pickett and Warburton. We insist that younger players try the mouthpieces before purchase and we carefully clean everything afterwards."

**Drew Parker**  
Separk Music  
Lewisville, North Carolina

"The Hispanic players demand the double cup mouthpieces by Garibaldi and Parduba."

**Ed Intagliata**  
Casell's Music  
San Fernando, California

"Custom fitted mouthpieces such as Warburton are trending a bit more these days. We are finding that more of our customers, locally and afar, are searching for that perfect size option."

**Andy Bailey**  
Giant Steps Music Corporation  
Chattanooga, Tennessee

"Faxx and Bach mouthpieces have been consistently on backorder all year. It has been hard to keep the popular sizes in stock."

**Joni Dey**  
Herter Music Center  
Bay City, Michigan

"With professional level players, the custom makers are taking over the market!"

**Doug Barta**  
Music & Arts  
Lone Tree, Colorado

"In our area, we've always had a pretty steady business for mouthpieces. Both students and teachers consistently experiment with new sizes and models to find that 'perfect' sound."

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

"Everyone wants the special mouthpiece with the 'high notes' in it!"

**Adam Bestler**  
Bestler's Pro Music  
Long Lake, Minnesota

# The Expanding Multi-Scale Guitar and Bass Market

by Ralph Novak

**E**stablished manufacturers can be slow to embrace new concepts unless they can see a large market. While, today, many large companies as well as individual luthiers offer the multi-scale and extended-range options to meet growing demand, the road to larger market acceptance was long and arduous.

## A Brief History of Multi-Scale Design Development

When luthier Ralph Novak got a U.S. Patent for his unique “Multiple Scale Fretboard” (Patent # 4,852,450) in 1989, he didn’t realize how powerful this design would be in reshaping the future fretted instrument market. “I was just trying to make a better guitar and bass,” he says. “My initial prototypes, although crude and hastily constructed, proved the concept in several ways: the design had ergonomic benefits for players, tonal response was enhanced, and those crude prototypes played more ‘in-tune’ than traditional single-scale length instruments.” His multi-scale design concept (trademarked Fanned-Fret®) arose from his extensive guitar repair experience, where he was able to become intimately familiar with the effects of scale length on the tone of guitars.

When Novak first exhibited his “Novax®” guitars at a Guild of American Luthiers Convention in 1990, his unique design was looked at with curiosity and doubt by other luthiers. However, one luthier, Sheldon Dingwall, was entranced.

“We immediately formed a close bond,” Novak recalls. “Sheldon is an accomplished builder and designer, he saw the advantages of the design as applied to his own instruments. His enthusiasm and design skills impressed me and he became my first official licensee.” His innovative basses, endorsed by ace bassist Leland Sklar, continue to lead the industry with cutting-edge bass design.

Design refinements and input from players visiting Novak’s shop led to further development of the concept. In 1992, Novak won an Industrial Design Excellence Award for the concept, and in 1995 he gave a talk at a Guild of American Luthiers convention where he discussed the relationship between scale length and tone. Varying the scale length of the bass and treble strings is the foundation of the concept. The instruments exhibited by Novak at the convention exposed a larger audience of luthiers to the concept, thereby spurring a growing interest in multi-scale design as luthiers and players were able to experience the benefits.

Subsequent exhibits at NAMM and various guitar shows often brought skepticism from players until they played the instruments. The playing experience changed players’ perspectives from skepticism to enthusiasm.

The response from manufacturers about licensing the concept was less than enthusiastic, however. When Novak approached large manufacturers about licensing he was often rebuffed with comments like, “There’s no market for weird guitars” or “You’re nuts!” Seeing first-hand the players’ responses, however, Novak was convinced that there was a market and persisted with development despite lack of interest from large companies.

One player of note, Charlie Hunter, recognized the benefits of applying the concept to his unique “hybrid” bass/guitar technique and commissioned Novak to build an 8-string guitar capable of performing in both bass and guitar range. The multi-scale concept is ideally suited to expanded tuning range.

While the 8-string guitar was not a new concept in itself, the incorporation of a bass scale-length and guitar scale-length fretboard was the key to making such instruments perform well. It was this “marriage” of multi-scale design with

the expanded tonal range of bass and guitar that enabled these two niche markets to grow together.

Additionally, Hunter’s groundbreaking playing style was generating a cadre of inspired “copyists” as he toured with the Disposable Heroes of HipHoprisy, and later with his own trio and quartet, becoming recognized among his peers as a jazz innovator.



Charlie Hunter was active in developing and finalizing the 8-string concept with Novak. He would suggest design changes and Novak would create prototypes which Hunter would use in performance, then come back to Novak's shop with additional suggestions. After many such prototypical instruments, the design was formalized and the Charlie Hunter 8-string was born. Availability of these instruments combined with Hunter's innovative style and extensive tours has inspired players world-wide since 1996, further expanding the market for extended range instruments. The growth of interest in 7- and 8-string instruments has ballooned in the past decade due in large part to Hunter's inspiring playing style and the availability of the Novax Charlie Hunter 8-string.

### Recent Market Growth of Multi-Scale Design

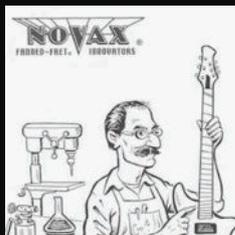
In 2016, Ibanez/Hoshino received industry recognition for their multi-scale bass, winning *MMR's* "Electric Bass of the Year" Dealers' Choice Award. The multi-scale concept was finally gaining widespread industry acceptance after decades of Novak's efforts to attract large scale manufacturers to the growing player demand.

Today, the demand for "more than 6-string" guitars and expanded range bass instruments by players recognizing the benefits of multi-scale design have enlivened the fretted instrument market. These two "niche markets" have grown up together and manufacturers are now jumping in. The performance advantage of the multi-scale concept has enabled a growing numbers of players to embrace instruments with expanded tonal range. Companies like Hybrid Guitars, Ormsby, and Dingwall Designer Basses that started as small independent shops have grown to meet the increasing demand for these unique instruments. Parts suppliers like HipShot and industry-leader GraphTech have geared up to

produce multi-scale bridges, nuts, and other multi-scale accessories to meet builders' demands.

The benefits of multi-scale design and the growing player demand have attracted many larger companies who had previously shied away from the concept to now enter this market. At the 2023 NAMM show in Anaheim you'll see and be able to experience multi-scale offerings by dozens of renowned manufacturers large and small, as well as independent luthiers. Dingwall, Jackson, Ormsby, Spector, Ibanez, ESP, Kiesel, Dean, Strandberg, B.C. Rich, and more will be exhibiting their multi-scale instruments at NAMM this year. Players' fascination with altered tunings, ergonomics, and expanded tonal range have made multi-scale instruments prominent in today's fretted instrument world. Multi-scale has become the growing market segment for fretted instruments. 

*Ralph Novak has been actively repairing, modifying, and building custom guitars and basses for over 50 years. He won an Industrial Design Society "I.D.E.A. Excellence" award in 1992 for the multi-scale concept. 2014 was the 25th anniversary of Novax Guitars, a company he started upon receiving U.S. Patent #4,852,450, for his multi-scale guitar design. At NAMM that year he introduced his 25th anniversary "Annie" model, which incorporates player-suggested design features and a proprietary circuit delivering unique tones. These instruments continue to be popular for their player-friendly features.*



*Currently retired from building custom instruments, Novak's handcrafted instruments are prized by musicians world-wide.*

# Connect with at the 2023 NAMM Show!

The NAMM Show is just around the corner (April 13-15, 2023) and now is the time to position your operation for maximum efficacy – both at this annual industry gathering and beyond! *MMR (Musical Merchandise Review)* invites you to make your appointments today with one of our sales or editorial staff while in Anaheim to discuss the various promotional and outreach opportunities our team can provide your business.

We offer any number of advertising prospects to deliver your brand's message directly to key decision-makers at thousands of MI retailers across North America:

- Print Editions of *MMR*
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- Broadcast E-mail Campaigns
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# 'The Marshmallow Challenge'

## Kids Are Our Best Teachers



By  
**Jaimie  
Blackman**

**M**y two- and four-year-old granddaughters live in Houston. I recently moved from New York to Houston to get a front-row seat to the greatest show on earth: grandchildren!

Through extended time with my girls, I have come to understand and deeply know that these "little people" have organically figured out the secret to being successful in business while living a happier life, which I am now going to share with you.

You see, for many of us, as we get older, we lose the child-like magic, the sense of wonder, the passion, and the spontaneity to accomplish what is important to us without consideration for financial benefit or to gain status. Not so with kids, especially those that are under 7 or 8 years old.

This realization regarding children's natural aptitude to figure things out became clear when Peter Skillman, a designer, and engineer introduced a competition called, "The Marshmallow Challenge." Teams of four had to build the tallest freestanding structure in eighteen minutes using 20 sticks of spaghetti, one yard of tape, one yard of string, and one standard-size marshmallow. The only requirement was that the marshmallow had to be on the top of the structure when completed. By the way, business school students were competing with kindergarten students. No contest? Not so fast.

It turned out the time limitation and lack of team effort were major obstacles for business school students, because they allocated the first critical minutes to strategizing with excessive talking. Not so for the kindergarten students who quickly got to work, whizzing through the challenge to handsomely beat their competitors.

Through observation, it became clear that when adults come together, they spend too much time orienting themselves to the task. They strategize, they plan, they talk more than they listen and most crave status, power, and attention. As a result, valuable time is wasted and the goal gets fuzzy. In the end, they followed their business school training, trying to find the one and only best solution. This approach led them to erect the structure first, and then place the marshmallow on the top last. Only after they were committed to building the structure did they bother testing to see if it could hold the weight of the marshmallow. When the marshmallow came crashing down, the team went into crisis mode. Sound familiar?

On the other hand, the kindergarten students used an iterative approach, which kept the marshmallow on top as they

were building out the support structure. The actions of the kindergartners appear disorganized on the surface. Things were indeed messy. However, when you viewed them as a single entity, their behavior is efficient and effective. They moved quickly, spotting problems and generously offering help. They loved to experiment, had no fear of risk taking, while being aware of outcomes, which guided them toward effective solutions. In dozens of trials, kindergartners built structures that averaged 26 inches tall, while business school students built structures that averaged less than ten inches.

For those readers who still have young children or grandchildren, you have to be nodding your head when I say that watching these kids play, can be very entertaining, and life changing. The human tendency, especially in well-established organizations, is to rely on routines and familiar rules. Kind of like the jazz instrumentalist who attempts to improvise by playing the same riffs repeatedly. This routine-based bias, blocks our capacity to learn, innovate, and grow as artist.

Kate Turley, principal of City and Country School, which pioneered the idea that children learn through play, said the following at the school's centennial celebration:

"Children are naturally curious with an internal motivation to learn and be independent. Children want to understand the world around them, and their curiosity kindles their passion to know more. They are fearless in their learning. Undeterred by mistakes or failures, they are able to step back, look again, and try a different solution. Their imaginations are free. They take joy in creating their buildings, their games, their dramatic play, their store advertisements, their historical characters. They make sense of the world through trial and error- their research, their hypotheses- and their learning is in their doing."

Not too long ago, an MI retail owner told me a challenging part of his job was to generate new value creation ideas with his team. Perhaps business owners can take a few tips from kids.

Here are four observations from children that business owners ought to pay attention to:

1. Routines: shake it up. Create new patterns by approaching tasks from a new direction.
2. Belief that a solution exists. Kids are born optimists.
3. Enter an activity for its own sake without the burden of attachment to an outcome.
4. Take turns. Share the spotlight. 🎤🎤🎤

*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.*

“The human tendency, especially in well-established organizations, is to rely on routines and familiar rules.”

# A Matter of Degree



By  
**Menzie  
Pittman**

Independent music stores have a few unique tools to attract and keep customers actively engaged, but there are two that really make a difference. The first is the reputation of the business and their sales and service staff, and the second is the reputation of the store's music education program and teaching staff. Music lessons are the backbone of many independent music stores, and if you are one who has an education faction to your music business, I think you will agree that music lessons keep the customers consistently engaged with your store.

This week someone asked me about the importance of a music degree and whether you can teach without one. This is quite a debatable topic, so I thought this would be a good time for us to have "the talk." Feel free to weigh-in and leave a comment online, if you feel obliged to do so, because you may have a vetted opinion on what qualifies us as educators. A healthy debate is always a good thing.

I thought I would begin by sharing my favorite trait about the music industry: diversity. I believe diversity is the life-blood of MI. The pursuit of great art often means breaking boundaries and embracing new and different approaches that align us with the art of expression. One of the first things music teaches us is that we are only as limited as our imaginations.

We do tangle up a bit when we opine about what is considered "good-music." However, even then, the camps under the big tent of music seem to be able to debate with a modicum of consideration. But that's the discussion on music performance; for some reason, when the discussion turns to music education, postures change, and considerations wane.

When we enter discussions on the legitimacy of what qualifies us to teach the art of musical expression, some educators default to the idea that if you don't have a degree in music you can't be a qualified music teacher or for that matter, you can't be a legitimate professional musician. So, let's kick it around!

Everyone knows a music degree is a respected, "hard-earned" certificate of recognition from an accredited institution. The certification allegedly evidences an individual's expertise, and reflects the countless hours of hard work and study it took to achieve it. Unfortunately, when you spend hundreds of hours gaining expertise from back porches in Tennessee, or dive bars in Detroit, you are not issued a certificate. But that doesn't discount the amount of hard work a porch picker, or a self-taught, ear-trained musician puts into learning his craft. The takeaway here is that music is, indeed, a craft and, just as important to note, so is teaching.

This is where the debate around hiring teachers begins. Should music stores only hire teachers that have music degrees? That's the rule in public education. But if that were the case in local music stores, think about all the great, self-taught, ear-trained teachers we would lose. It is my observation that most musicians who began learning by ear have gone on to become masterful sight-readers as well because that skill is important for communication.



Over the years I have noticed that there are many traits that good, self-taught musicians possess, usually to a very high level. There are two that really stand out. They generally have a great ear, and secondly, they have a formidable sense of time. I believe there is a reason for that. When you have learned to play by ear, your listening skills develop to an impressive level.

Of course, all of this is completely debatable, and I believe that is the point I'm trying to make. True musicians focus on the expression of the music. Great teachers have developed the skills of communication, empathy, discipline, and leadership. You can be both, and you may have a degree or not. But the truth is, if you are a great teacher – you're a great teacher!

## Some Final Thoughts

Music degrees should be respected; they are certificates of completion of a program of study in music.

The ability to perform should also be respected for exactly what it is: the capability to execute music proficiently under pressure.

The ability to teach isn't measured by either because it is a communication skill that is based on multiple factors. Here are a few to ponder:

- Understanding the subject matter (knowledge)
- Understanding the personality of the student (empathy)
- Understanding the complexities of the instrument (mechanics)
- Possessing the ability to communicate on the student's level cognitively, technically, emotionally, and artistically (communication)

Clearly, any topic surrounding the arts can be tricky, but in this debate, if you positively affect a child's life through your teaching skills, good on ya! You absolutely have my respect! 

*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."*

**“Music is, indeed, a craft and, just as important to note, so is teaching.”**

## DRUMS & PERCUSSION

### Donner Releases DED-20 Drum Pad for Portable Practice

Donner has rolled out the new DED-20 Electric Drum Pad. An innovative practice device for drummers on-the-go, the high-performance DED-20 features a built-in speaker that boasts high-quality sound source samples taken from real acoustic drums. Featuring seven drum sounds – including one snare, one crash, one ride, one hi-hat and three toms – the DED-20 also offers 12 demonstration songs and nine accompaniments set up to accommodate the needs of live performance.



The DED-20's two stereo speakers deliver powerful, impactful sound that reach the volume level of an electric drum kit and can be adjusted to nine different volume levels, so drummers can easily adjust accordingly to their current volume setting.

Crafted from high-quality, soft silicone, players can roll up the pad and carry it with them in a backpack to practice wherever, whenever. The soft silicone construction also reduces noise when drumming. For even quieter practice, the DED-20 supports a 3.5-mm headphone output, so players can practice with headphones.

Additionally, a 3-minute-long (180-second) recording function can capture a drummer's moment of inspiration, enhancing their creative potential.

Available standard with a MIDI-out jack and USB MIDI-out jack, drummers can connect the DED-20 to their computer to produce music or play games, as well as connect external speakers for live entertainment.

The DED-20 comes complete with one electronic drum pad with mobile power charging support, one power adapter, one USB data cable, one 3.5-mm audio cable, a pair of drumsticks and two drum pedals. With all these accessories included, the DED-20 also makes a great starter pack for kids or adults wanting to learn how to play the drums.

#### DED-20 Key Features:

- Built-in speaker boasting high-quality sound source samples taken from a real drum source.
- Two stereo speakers delivering the powerful sound that reaches the volume of an electric drum kit and can be adjusted to nine different volume levels.
- 3-minute-long recording function to capture in-the-moment musical inspiration.
- High-quality soft silicone construction so the pad can be easily rolled up and transported.
- 3.5-mm headphone output.
- Comes complete with one power adapter, one USB data cable, a pair of drumsticks and two drum pedals.
- Free 40 Drum Lessons by Melodics

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

### TAMA Announces Release of New STAGESTAR Series Kits

New for 2023, TAMA has announced the release of their new, super-affordable STAGESTAR drum kits.

STAGESTAR provides a full sounding drum set with durable hardware and functional cymbals. 100% Poplar 6ply 7mm shells produce full, dynamic tones for each drum. Hardware stands feature double braced legs – Boom stand with multi-angle adjustments, snare stand with adjustable snare basket and hi-hat stand with a



strong clutch that holds tight. The bass drum pedal is equipped with separate spring tension and beater angle adjustments to provide customized pedal feel, according to player preference. The 14" hi-hat and 16" crash cymbals use thicker gauge brass than is common at this price point and provide increased volume and durability. Also included with this kit is a double-braced drum throne with spindle height adjustment. This design is more secure and easier to position up/down than is a fixed bolt height adjustment. The last feature that differentiates STAGESTAR is the TAMA Omnisphere Tom Holder. It incorporates a ball/socket tom arm design for flexible positioning and secure hold. Additionally, the L-arms do not penetrate the tom shells when connected, which allows the tom shell to resonate more freely than other conventional mounting systems. TAMA's STAGESTAR is the next generation of entry-level complete drum sets for the value-conscious consumer. It includes everything players need (except drumsticks) to get started on a full-sized drum set.

#### Features

- 100% poplar Shell 6ply/7mm
- Omnisphere Tom Holder
- STAGESTAR Brass Cymbal Set
- Drum Pedal & Drum Throne
- Finishes: Black Night Sparkle, Cosmic Silver Sparkle, Lime Green Sparkle, Sea Blue Mist
- ST52H5C
- Drums: 22"x16", 10"x8", 12"x9", 16"x15", 14"x5.5"
- Hardware: double tom holder, hi-hat stand, single drum pedal, snare stand, boom cymbal stand, drum throne

LIST: \$1,100 • MAP: \$659.99

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

## PRO AUDIO

### Audio-Technica Introduces ATH-M50xSTS StreamSet Models, World's First Streaming Headsets

Audio-Technica has announced the release of its ATH-M50xSTS and ATH-M50xSTS-USB StreamSet streaming headsets. These models are the world's first headsets specifically developed to address the needs of live-streaming content creators. Based on the critically acclaimed ATH-M50x professional monitor headphones and incorporating technology from the iconic 20 Series microphones, the ATH-M50xSTS and ATH-M50xSTS-USB deliver full-spectrum, studio-quality for users and listeners on the receiving end.



The headsets are equipped with the same 45 mm large-aperture drivers to provide exceptional clarity throughout an extended frequency range, with deep, accurate bass response. The streaming headsets come with two sets of distinct earpads: M50x earpads that stress audio quality and sound isolation; mesh and leatherette earpads that emphasize breathability and comfort.

Both models use a cardioid condenser capsule on a flexible boom arm, allowing for ideal positioning even with head movement. The result is a rich, studio-quality vocal presence without background noise and output at a consistent level. The headsets' microphone can be muted quickly and efficiently simply by flipping the boom arm into the up position.

The ATH-M50xSTS uses a 2-meter (6.6-foot) permanently attached cable with 3.5-mm (1/8-inch) headphone input (plus 6.3-mm [1/4-inch] adapter) and XLR microphone output. The ATH-M50xSTS-USB uses a 2-meter (6.6-foot) permanently attached cable with USB-A connection (and USB-A to USB-C adapter) for

plug-and-play connectivity to PCs and Macs. In addition, the ATH-M50xSTS-USB includes an A/D converter with a sampling rate up to 24-bit/96 kHz and sidetone circuitry that lets vocals be heard in the headset (with volume controlled by a dial on the earcup) for a more natural, conversational feel.

The ATH-M50xSTS is available with an MSRP of \$199, and the ATH-M50xSTS-USB is available with an MSRP of \$229.

[www.audio-technica.com](http://www.audio-technica.com)

## Solid State Logic Introduce SSL 12 – A New Class of Audio Interface

Solid State Logic announces that it is expanding its line of Audio Creation Products (ACP) with SSL 12. The new SSL 12 is a 12-in 8-out USB bus-powered audio interface that combines truly professional features, performance, and flexibility in a portable desktop format. Building on the success of SSL 2 and SSL 2+ interface models, SSL 12 expands in almost every way; more microphone preamplifiers, enhanced headphone performance, advanced routing and monitor controls, ADAT input as well as next-gen converters delivering superior audio performance.



SSL 12 is a high quality, value-based, centerpiece for a home or project-based studio control room. Included are 4 SSL-designed microphone preamplifiers (with Mic/Line and HPF), 2 Hi-Z instrument inputs for guitars, bass or vintage instruments and 2 professional grade headphone outputs along with next-generation 32-bit /192 kHz AD/DA converters – guaranteeing pristine audio at all times. Advanced routing and monitoring options combined with ADAT input supporting 8 additional channels of digital audio offer a total of 12 tracks of simultaneous recording and 8 channels of playback brought together in a rugged, portable design.

### Custom SSL Control Room

Contained within its SSL 360° software mixer, SSL 12 features a customizable SSL control room. Here users receive instant feedback from detailed I/O metering, assign functions to SSL 12's three front panel switches, including key monitor controls; Alternative Monitor Switching, Mono Sum, Invert Phase Left, Dim, Cut, as well as access to an on-board talkback microphone. Creating up to 4 independent near zero-latency foldback mixes is quick and intuitive thanks to its SSL console-style routing and recalling sessions a breeze via Save/Load function. In addition to this, users can choose between modes (Standard, High Impedance, High Sensitivity) to best suit different headphone types or create additional line outputs via re-purposing the headphone outs.

### Producer Toolkit

Producers and content creators are catered for with a tool kit to keep creativity flowing. Users can configure where SSL 12's Loopback feed is taken from: Record the output of a media player (e.g. via Playback 1-2) or create a custom sub-mix of your podcast via one of the Aux Busses (e.g. Line 3-4). Both headphone mixes and line outputs 3-4 are also accessible for absolute production flexibility. In addition to this, electronic music producers and vintage instrument enthusiasts will appreciate the comprehensive control offered by the DC-coupled outputs for creating Control Voltage signals, and MIDI I/O.

### SSL Production Pack

Included with SSL 12 is the renowned SSL Production Pack, a value-packed suite of software instruments, sounds, plug-ins and DAW (worth over \$1000), that includes the Vocalstrip and Drumstrip 2 plug-ins as well as 3-month access to SSL's Com-

plete subscription and other 3-month licenses from the likes of Antares and Output.

### Features

- USB bus-powered (with on/off switch), Mac/Windows compatible; power is provided by USB 3.0, audio via USB 2.0
- 4 SSL-designed microphone preamps with unrivaled -130.5dBu EIN performance and enormous 62 dB gain range for a USB-powered device.
- Per-Channel Legacy 4K circuits, providing analogue colour enhancement for any input source (inspired by SSL 4000-series console).
- 2 Hi-Z instrument inputs for guitars, bass or vintage instruments.
- 2 Professional-grade headphone outputs.
- 4 x dedicated balanced outputs and precision Monitor Level, with stunning dynamic range  
Use Outputs 3-4 to connect an alternative monitor set to or as additional line-level outputs.  
DC-coupled for controlling CV input instruments & FX
- 32-bit/192 kHz AD/DA Converters boasting >120 dB line output dynamic range .
- ADAT IN supporting 8 additional channels of digital audio.
- Built-In talkback mic and 3 user-assignable front panel switches to assign monitoring functions / talkback mic operation.
- MIDI I/O.
- SSL Production Pack Software Bundle included, providing 3-month subscription to SSL Complete, Vocalstrip 2 and Drumstrip, plus an exclusive collection of, virtual instruments, plug-ins and DAW.

SSL has been designing cutting-edge mixing consoles and processing tools for the world's finest recording studios for over five decades, and the addition of SSL 12 into its family of interfaces puts the power of SSL in the hands of a myriad of modern musicians, producers and content creators.

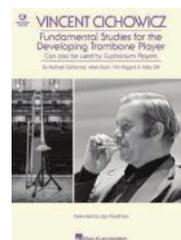
SSL 12 is priced at \$499.

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

## PRINT & DIGITAL

### Hal Leonard Releases New Vincent Cichowicz Trombone Studies

Hal Leonard has published *Vincent Cichowicz: Fundamental Studies for the Developing Trombone Player*. The new collection by Michael Cichowicz (Vincent's son), Mark Dulin, Tim Higgins, and Toby Oft features studies that represent the core principles of Cichowicz's teaching.



Vincent Cichowicz (1927-2006) was a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1952-1974 and a faculty member at Northwestern University from 1959-1998. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential brass pedagogues of the 20th century. His book *Fundamental Studies for the Developing Trumpet Player* is a standard of brass publications.

The studies in *Fundamental Studies for the Developing Trombone Player* represent the core principles of Cichowicz's teaching adapted for trombone and euphonium players. Each study has been professionally recorded by Tim Higgins (principal trombone, San Francisco Symphony) and Toby Oft (principal trombone, Boston Symphony Orchestra). The price of the book includes access to the demonstration audio tracks online for download or streaming. The tracks include PLAYBACK+, a

## newproducts

multi-functional audio player that allows players to slow down audio without changing pitch, set loop points, change keys, and pan left or right.

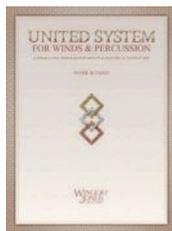
The book is split into four sections: Long Tone Studies, Flow Studies, Lyrical Studies, and Articulation Studies with information and instruction for each. It features a foreword by Jay Friedman, principal trombone, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, as well as additional content from the authors about Cichowicz's teachings and how to best use them to become a better player. It also features photos and maxims by Cichowicz and other brass players to round out the collection.

It retails for \$14.99.

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

### United System for Winds & Percussion from Wingert-Jones

Wingert-Jones Publications is excited to announce the new release of *United System for Winds & Percussion, A Mixed-Level Program for Groups and Individuals*. An innovative solution for middle school directors presented with mixed instrumentation and varying ability levels, *United System* provides a versatile and practical approach for students to successfully play together while reinforcing fundamentals.



Developed and written by full-time public school music educator & popular composer Peter Sciano, *United System's* units and lessons are presented in three different levels – bronze (.5-1), silver (1-1.5), and gold (1.5-2+) – all of which can be played together within one book. Essentially containing three books in one, *United System* unites students, both literally and conceptually, onto the same page.

Thoughtfully laid-out, progressive in nature, and a ready-to-go tool, *United System* reinforces fundamentals in a progressive manner. Students can jump in at their appropriate level, and *United System* guides students to advance progressively as their skills improve. For example, *United System* allows a student to read from the easier bronze line, while playing the same study alongside more advanced students reading from the silver or gold level line of music, motivating and engaging young musicians and bringing flexibility to the next level. The book contains original exercises, scales, etudes and warm-ups, including thoughtful writing specifically for percussion instruments.

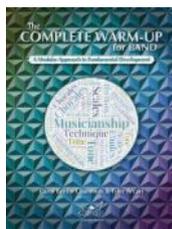
*United System* is ideal for both differentiated full-band instruction and for use in lesson groups, including those in smaller band programs and those with scheduling issues or "pull-out" instruction styles, resulting in significant progress with a variety of students in a limited amount of time. The new book is also a great asset for private lesson teachers as well as all band directors with young or mixed-level ensembles.

*United System* is available from music retailers everywhere and from the publisher at \$9.99 per student book and \$34.99 for teacher edition.

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

### The Complete Warm-Up for Band, a Fundamentals Book from Excelcia

Excelcia Music Publishing is thrilled to announce the release of *The Complete Warm-Up for Band, A Modular Approach to Fundamental Development*, written by prominent composers, clinicians and music educators, Carol Brittin Chambers and Tyler Arcari. A new everyday book to be used in middle



school and high school band classes of any length, *The Complete Warm-Up for Band* provides well-rounded fundamental warm-ups that can be used by ensembles in short increments or in longer, more intensive rehearsals. Using a modular structure, *The Complete Warm-Up for Band* offers flexible options and a thorough approach, regardless of class length, to develop tone, technique and musicianship for the concert band.

Written by veteran music educators and composers Carol Brittin Chambers and Tyler Arcari, *The Complete Warm-Up for Band* is structured using six modules: body, tone, scale, technical, rhythmic and ensemble modules. On the spot, band directors can pick one or more exercises in each of the modules to lead their ensembles in a comprehensive warm-up designed by educators who have been exactly in their shoes. Whether the director has 5 minutes or 25 minutes, each warm-up will include thoughtful exercises in breathing, stretching, long tones, scales, technical etudes and rhythmic studies, plus 40 chorales for use in ensemble development.

*The Complete Warm-Up for Band* is available from music retailers everywhere and from the publisher at \$8.99 per student book and \$39.99 for teacher edition.

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

## FRETTED

### Charvel Launches Frank Bello Signature Pro-Mod So-Cal Bass

Frank Bello, hard-hitting bassist for thrash metal legends Anthrax and New York alternative favorites Helmet, is known for his dynamic, energetic stage presence and inventive bass style. Primed to thrash, the Frank Bello Signature Pro-Mod So-Cal Bass PJ IV features a poplar body paired to a bolt-on maple neck with rock-solid graphite-reinforcement rods to withstand extreme climate changes and a heel-mount truss rod adjustment wheel for pain-free neck relief tweaks.



Engineered to deliver unrivaled playability, the 12"-16" compound radius maple fingerboard with rolled edges, 20 jumbo frets and black block inlays allows for effortlessly fast playing and comfortable chording and bending. A set of EMG Frank Bello Signature P/J pickups serves up warmth and low-end punch, along with tight mids and dynamic high-end. The no-nonsense control layout consists of individual volume knobs for the bridge and middle pickups. A Charvel HiMass bridge, Graph Tech TUSQ XL nut and open-gear tuners combine for stellar tuning stability with improved note punch and sustain. Available in Gloss Black with mirror pickguard and chrome hardware.

Key Features:

- Poplar Body
- Bolt-on Maple Neck with Graphite Reinforcement
- 12"-16" Compound Radius Maple Fingerboard with Rolled Edges and 22 Jumbo Frets
- Black Block Inlays
- Graph Tech TUSQ XL Nut
- EMG Frank Bello Signature P/J Pickup Set
- Dual Volume Knobs
- Charvel HiMass Bridge
- Open Gear Tuners
- Mirror Pickguard
- Heel-Mount Truss Rod Adjustment Wheel

Price: \$1,299.99

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

## Recording King's All-New Madison Banjo w/Whyte Laydie Tone Ring

Recording King's all-new RK Madison OT26 is the perfect companion for old-time musicians, as the Whyte Laydie tone ring gives the banjo traditional tone with a percussive lilt that's the perfect accompaniment to the classic singing style.

With a hand-rubbed satin finish, a maple neck with adjustable truss rod, and a true steam-bent maple rim, the Madison RK-OT26 is a vintage-style picking machine. The traditional scalloped Whyte Laydie tone ring is prized for its warm but punchy tone, allowing each fundamental note to speak clearly without distracting overtones.

Add features like the maple neck, no-knot tailpiece, and precise tension control from the 24-bracket tension hoop, and players have all the essentials for the classic old-time sound. RK outfitted the OT26 with lots of traditional features, but made some changes where modern performance counts: the dual coordinator rods & truss rod, Remo FiberSkyn head, and Mastertone-style armrest all combine for an exceptional playing experience. Finish it off with RK's scooped fretboard for strumming and a steam-bent maple rim for woody, traditional open-back tone, and you have a pro-level banjo you can take anywhere.

- 2-ply Maple Rim
- Maple Neck
- RK Whyte Laydie Tone Ring
- Dual Coordinator Rods
- Brown Satin Finish with Star Headstock Inlay

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



## Jackson Launches Pro Series Signature Josh Smith Soloist

Jackson has launched the Pro Series Signature Josh Smith Soloist SL7 ET in collaboration with the prolific metalcore guitarist, Josh Smith. As a founding member and songwriter of the band Northlane, Jackson is proud to add Smith to the Signature family. His lush walls of sound and thoughtful harmonic structures provide striking contrast to Northlane's signature thunderous tone. At the core of Smith's ability is his Jackson 7-string. Now, players can tap into their own sense of tonal discovery with a design that is tastefully pared down allowing players to take ownership of the instrument.

Formed in 2009, Australian progressive metalcore act Northlane emerged as trendsetters in the space, constantly evolving and ambitiously chasing uncharted territory with each album. Smith is central to the band's expansive and pummeling sound, and Jackson is proud to present the all-new Pro Series Signature Josh Smith Soloist SL7 ET in his honor.

This model delivers on all these promises of reliability, but it is far more than just a road ready guitar. Thanks to its signature Josh Smith Bareknuckle Impulse pickup set and lengthy 27" scale, this Soloist retains a shocking amount of clarity even when being played through dizzying amounts of gain stages and down-tuned to oblivion. Optimized equally for lightning fast riffs and chugging power chords alike, the alder body is sculpted for ultimate comfort across all playing styles. The Pro Series Signature Josh Smith Soloist SL7 ET is a bastion of quality and tonal excellence that will not only allow players to stop worrying about their instrument making it through each gig, but give them the freedom to redefine what a down-tuned instrument is capable of.

Price: \$2,699.99

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



## CASES & STANDS

### Frameworks Flexes New 6-Pack Mic Stand Bundle with Affordable Price Tag

Gator Frameworks releases a new microphone stand set with an included carrying bag, delivering Frameworks-level quality to users at a budget-friendly price.

To ensure users get the best bang for their buck, the bundle includes six reliable, fixed-boom mic stands at a street price of only \$249.99.

For convenience, a zippered carry bag hauls all the stands together in one trip, making for hassle-free transport and load-outs for live performances, studio or house of worship setups, band rehearsal spaces, and any other situation where multiple mic stands are required.

Each lightweight mic stand features a single-section boom arm for getting mics set at the best distance from the audio source. An ergonomic-grip twist clutch at the center controls the stand height, permitting both quick and easy adjustments.

Both boom angle and distance are independently adjustable, providing fine-tuned placement options for hitting the more challenging mic positions. A sturdy tripod base promotes stability while also being mindful of footprint real estate.

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



## AMPLIFICATION

### Roland Announces JC-120 Jazz Chorus Roland 50th Anniversary Limited Edition Guitar Amplifier

Roland announces the JC-120 Jazz Chorus Roland 50th Anniversary Limited Edition, a commemorative version of the iconic JC-120 guitar amplifier. Offered in a one-time production run of 350 units, the JC-120 Jazz Chorus Roland 50th Anniversary Limited Edition comes in a natural cherry wood finish and features a dark gray grille cloth and a badge with a hand-engraved serial number.

Trendsetting rock, pop, and jazz guitarists have used the JC-120 on the most influential songs in music history. And when leading producers look to drive tracks with killer clean tones, the amp is always the top choice.

The standout feature of the JC-120 is its lush "Dimensional Space Chorus," delivered in true stereo through dual 12-inch speakers. This stunning analog effect provides a playing experience like no other amp, instantly making the sound wider, deeper, and more alive. Soon after the JC-120's release, the effect was ported to the BOSS CE-1 Chorus Ensemble, the first in a long line of CE series pedals to come.

The JC-120's distinctively warm and punchy voice is unmatched for clean guitar tones and provides a great platform for pedal-based effects. The flagship JC-120 remains at the top of the Jazz Chorus family tree, which also includes the mid-size JC-40 and ultracompact JC-22.

The JC-120 Jazz Chorus Roland 50th Anniversary Limited Edition offers the inspiring "JC clean" tone, immersive stereo chorus, and control layout of the standard model. Taking inspiration from Japan's famous cherry blossoms, the cabinet features a natural cherry wood veneer with a deep burgundy open-pore finish. Each amp has a special badge on the grille with a hand-engraved number that denotes its place in the 350-unit production run.

The Roland JC-120 Jazz Chorus Roland 50th Anniversary Limited Edition Guitar Amplifier will be available in-store in February for \$1,999.99.

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





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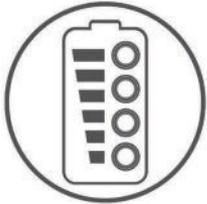
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