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**Upfront Q&A**  
Fender's Tammy Van Donk

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# C O N T E N T S



MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

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## Forging Partnerships, Rather Than Merely Conducting Business

By  
**Christian  
Wissmuller**

**“W**e’re here to be your friends and support you as best as we can, and it’s a very collaborative sort of journey rather than something that’s very top-down,” says Scott Marquart of Nashville-based Stringjoy in this issue’s cover feature (page 10) when discussing his company’s attitude towards partnerships with MI retailers. His VP of global sales, Chris Gilchrist, has a similar focus: “I want to be the best supplier for these dealers. I

don’t want to push them around. I don’t want to ask them for minimum buy-ins or call them up in January and say, ‘You didn’t hit your minimum. You gotta place this order.’”

The philosophy has served the young fretted instrument string supplier well, as the past nine years have seen the company grow from an initial total investment of \$500 to now being stocked by over 400 MI dealers and played by hundreds of thousands of end-users, including some big-name, high-profile artists. The lesson to be learned? If you have quality product priced competitively and treat people fairly, with courtesy and respect – go figure, they’ll want to work with you!

On the retail side of the equation, Roland’s Corey Fournier offers some advice for MI retailers in this month’s Roundtable on the Home Digital Keyboard market (page 16): “Focus on understanding what the customer is looking for in a piano and finding the right piano for their situation. Do they need portability? Is it for a venue? How the piano fits into their home and family’s lifestyle is also a significant consideration.”

Again, the basic concept is simple: be attentive, learn about your customer’s needs, and work with them to provide the very best purchasing experience and they’ll wind up satisfied, you’ll make the sale, and in all likelihood a new and lasting consumer/retailer relationship is formed. Everybody wins!

Why, then, if the importance of “good customer service” is so seemingly universally agreed-upon and obvious. Is the need for focusing on that aspect of doing business an evergreen clarion call in this – and nearly every other – industry? As anyone who reads *MMR* regularly is aware, Menzie Pittman’s “Small Business Matters” column frequently stresses the importance of MI retailers making a commitment to superior service. From his June entry: “Customers tend to cling to the smallest incentive, and the special touches a business can offer them. And it is precisely these things that keep customers loyal. Whether the customer mentions the gratitude or not, they notice and appreciate the courtesies and interactions. Now, more than ever, those small civilities will keep your customers loyal to your business.”

Do you find that all too cerebral, too hippy-dippy, or not of true relevance to financial success as a business? “Why do so many companies overlook customer service?” asked Purdue University entrepreneurship educator Angie Stocklin in a recent *Indianapolis Business Journal* column (“Why Companies Must Not Overlook Customer Service”). “Traditionally, customer service has been viewed as a cost center instead of a revenue driver, and it’s hard for companies to allocate funds to activities that aren’t moving the needle.” She explains that, for her own business, it became very clear, very quickly that, “Customers that had a problem successfully solved by our team were more likely to repurchase compared with customers who never voiced a concern. These metrics were directly related to our topline revenue growth and allowed everyone in the company to value customer service as more than a bottom-line hit.”

Successful MI suppliers, up-and-coming entrepreneurs on a skyward trajectory, NAMM Dealer of the Year Award winners, educators and successful investors – everyone’s in agreement that “the personal touch,” and just plain decency is vital to doing business properly (and profitably).

However, some – too many – seem to forget this very simple approach from time to time, or treat it as an aspect of business with “secondary” importance. Those are usually the folks who complain about losing sales to online retail, big-box dealers, or whatever else. If you treat your interactions with consumers solely as commerce, that’s all it will ever be. Partnerships and relationships with end-users can – and consistently do – present an appealing alternative to purchasing gear or an instrument with a click on the screen of an online retailer. It should be obvious at this point, right?

So why do I suspect Menzie and others (myself included!) will continue to feel obliged to passionately advocate for this approach to business...?

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## Alfred Music Announces Exclusive Rental Library Agreement with Presser

Effective July 1, 2023, Presser exclusively represents Alfred Music's rental library, which includes esteemed repertoire such as Robert Shaw and Robert Russell Bennett's *The Many Moods of Christmas*, classics like Donald Hunsberger's *Carmen Fantasia*, and Jean-Baptiste Arban's *Carnival of Venice for Symphonic Band*. Alfred's catalog also features music from film soundtracks from *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit*, and the *Harry Potter* film series, as well as the blockbusters *Batman Begins*, *Gremlins*, and *Elf*, featuring works by Howard Shore, Danny Elfman, Alan Silvestri, and Hans Zimmer.

Heath Mathews, SVP for Alfred Music, said, "We're delighted to have Presser administer our rental catalog. We think that the experience and expertise of the Presser team will help to expand the reach of our rental titles and allow new audiences to discover this great repertoire."

Sonya Kim, president & CEO of Presser, said, "We are thrilled to welcome the Alfred catalog to the Presser rental library. Such diverse selection of concert music spanning across multiple genres is sure to delight audiences of all ages and interests. We look forward to bringing this exciting music to performing ensembles in all corners of the world."

## Peavey Partners with Riversong Guitars to Expand U.S. Distribution

Peavey announced a U.S. distribution partnership with Canadian guitar manufacturer Riversong Guitars. The collaboration was officially unveiled at the 2023 NAMM Show in Anaheim, Calif., solidifying a strategic alliance between the two companies in which Peavey will distribute Riversong's acoustic guitars throughout the United States. With Peavey's extensive distribution network and their mutual commitment to innovation, the partnership aims to provide dealers with a diverse range of high-quality acoustic guitars that cater to a wide spectrum of musical styles.

Headquartered in British Columbia, Riversong Guitars has gained international recognition for innovative designs and unparalleled sound. Founder Mike Miltimore's passion for guitar-making is deeply rooted in his upbringing. His father Lee Miltimore owned Lee's Music, one of Peavey's largest dealers in Canada for the past 30 years, and Mike was likewise inspired by Hartley Peavey's ingenuity. The business and creative insights Mike gained over the years led him to wonder if there was a better way to construct his favorite instruments. That curiosity culminated in Riversong Guitars, blending modern, cutting-edge manufacturing techniques with a master craftsman's at-



Mike Miltimore and Courtland Grey

attention to detail.

Over the years, Riversong Guitars have earned numerous awards, graced prestigious stages worldwide, and garnered critical acclaim for their excellent quality and tonal versatility. A centerpoint is the patented neck-thru design that increases resonance by decreasing bulky bracing. Most

recently, Riversong captured the prestigious *MMR Dealers' Choice Award* for their River Pacific P2P Acoustic Electric Guitar, beating out international guitar brands Martin, Taylor, and Yamaha.

Still, breaking into the highly competitive U.S. market presented a unique challenge for Riversong Guitars. At the same time, Peavey recognized the absence of traditional acoustic guitars within the \$600 to \$3,000 price range in their own product portfolio, aligning with their demands as well as the needs of their domestic dealers. In a serendipitous meeting, Miltimore and Peavey COO Courtland Gray engaged in a conversation that inspired the agreement.

The distribution of Riversong Guitars through Peavey's U.S. channels has already commenced following the NAMM Show. Guitar enthusiasts, retailers, and musicians alike can look forward to experiencing the high quality and craftsmanship that define Riversong Guitars.

## NAMM Announces New Leadership for Executive Committee

The NAMM board of directors has elected a new executive committee to continue the organization's legacy of service to NAMM members and the industry at large.

In a vote at the recent board meeting, Tom Sumner, president of Yamaha Corp. of America (and previously NAMM's vice chair), was named chair of the NAMM board of directors. The board also elected Chris White, president of White House of Music, as vice chair, where he will serve in an ex officio role as chair of The NAMM Foundation board; Barbara Wight, chief financial officer of Taylor Guitars, as treasurer; and Whitney Brown Grisaffi, president of Ted Brown Music, as secretary of the executive committee.

"It's been an honor to serve on NAMM's executive committee for the last six years, and I'm thrilled to continue that work as chair during this pivotal moment in the industry," said Sumner upon his election. "NAMM is dedicated to creating a more musical world. Going forward, it's our goal to engage the industry and work together in achieving that vision."

Sumner also welcomed Grisaffi to the executive committee. "Whitney's deep industry knowledge, experience and servant leadership style will be the perfect complement to the NAMM executive committee. We're so honored to welcome her and look forward to her contributions."

"As a longtime NAMM member, I'm

excited by the opportunity to serve the industry in this new role," Grisaffi said. "I look forward to working with the board of directors in driving NAMM's vision, mission and objectives — and contributing on behalf of all NAMM members globally."

During the board meeting, the outgoing NAMM board chair and president of Menchey Music Services, Joel Menchey, was thanked for his eight years of leadership and service to the organization.

With the election, the NAMM executive committee retains its balanced composition of retail and commercial members in leadership roles to help the organization fulfill its mission. The appointments to the NAMM board of directors executive committee are effective now.

## Casio America, Inc.

is proud to announce that **Tomoo Kato** has assumed the role of chairman and CEO, effective immediately. A veteran with over 32 years of industry experience, Mr. Kato is anticipated to lead the company into a prosperous new era.



As chairman and CEO, Kato will shape Casio's U.S. strategy and operations with an emphasis on enhancing customer satisfaction, accelerating market share growth, and driving technological innovation. He will also be instrumental in aligning U.S. operations with Casio's worldwide initiatives.

Kato succeeds Makoto Ori, who successfully led Casio America, Inc. the past three years and will be taking on a new role within Casio. This transition heralds an exciting new phase for Casio, with Kato primed to leverage his vast experience in consumer electronics to build upon Ori's successes.

Reflecting on his appointment, Kato commented, "It's an immense privilege to be taking the helm at Casio America. I am eager to build on our robust legacy while spearheading our pursuit of cutting-edge innovation and superior customer satisfaction. With a dedicated team and a brand recognized for its creativity and contribution, I am confident that Casio's future in America is bright."

Since starting his career in 1991 at Casio Computer Co. LTD in Tokyo, Japan, Kato has made significant strides within the company, particularly in the business development of the European and North American markets including serving as managing director of Casio Europe. Over his illustrious 32-year career at Casio, he has demonstrated effective leadership and strategic prowess across multiple divisions.

**Gibson** has announced the promotion of **Beth Rasnick** to the role of chief of staff to the CEO, Gibson Brands, reporting to Cesar Gueikian.



In her new role, Rasnick is empowered to act strategically as representative for the Office of the CEO internally and externally, collaborating with the Gibson leadership and extended leadership teams to determine and prioritize business strategies and action plans. She will lead the CEO Office with sponsored high-impact projects, as well as strategic business ini-

tatives from ideation to implementation.

"Beth will be instrumental in driving our strategic priorities, leveraging 130 years of history shaping the sound of music, and focusing on our future through strategic actions in service to music fans around the world," said Cesar Gueikian, resident and interim CEO, Gibson Brands.

"I'm honored and so excited to be taking on this important role in leading Gibson Brands into the future alongside an exceptionally talented team whom I know very well," said Rasnick. "My focus will continue to be on shaping our thriving world class instruments, sound and media/entertainment business across the global landscape and supporting our team through the limitless opportunities ahead."

Throughout nearly a decade at Gibson, Rasnick has held diverse key positions spanning finance, accounting, treasury, business acquisitions and divestitures, transformation initiatives, and corporate strategy. She is an emerging player of rhythm guitar which she has learned from her father. Prior to joining Gibson, Rasnick held leadership positions in Voya, Inc's strategic finance group including during the company's IPO and rebranding initiatives. She began her career at Ernst & Young serving multiple clients in Ernst & Young's assurance practice. Rasnick holds a Bachelor's degree in business administration and a Master's degree in accounting from the University of Georgia.

**RBI Music** announces the appointment of **Dave Cywinski** as director – national sales.



Cywinski brings a wealth of experience to RBI Music, having spent 22 successful years at Hal Leonard, a renowned music publishing company. During his tenure, Cywinski held various positions of increasing responsibility, demonstrating his expertise in sales, sales management, and his commitment to the music industry. In 2003, he served as district sales manager, overseeing the development and growth of his assigned territory. In 2008, Cywinski was promoted to key accounts manager – book trade & mass markets, where he played a vital role in bringing music learning products to a broader market while collaborating with mass merchants. In recognition of his outstanding contributions, he was promoted again in 2017 to sales manager, where he successfully managed the drums & percussion wing of Hal Leon-

ard's musical instrument distribution division, representing its most iconic percussion brands to all accounts across the United States, including managing KAT Percussion.

Cywinski's appointment marks a significant milestone in RBI Music's commitment to excellence and continued growth. With his extensive background in sales management and deep knowledge of the music industry, RBI Music is poised to further strengthen its position as a leader in the musical instrument market.

## Audio-Technica

recently announced the appointment of **Matt Markgraf** to the position of strategic partnership/alliance manager. The announcement was made by Kurt Van Scoy, Audio-Technica U.S. vice president of product, business alliances, and marketing, and expands A-T's global focus on certifications and integrations with third-party manufacturers.



In his new position, Markgraf will be responsible for leading A-T's global planning and implementation of aligning partners for certifications and integrations with various brand partnerships. This process begins at the product ideation stage and culminates with a successful certification or third-party integration, to assure A-T customers the highest level of interoperability possible. In addition to identifying, developing and executing new strategic partnership opportunities for A-T, Markgraf will also be responsible for cultivating and maintaining relationships among A-T's existing strategic partners, addressing challenges, communicating their needs, and creating overall synergy among the brands. Additionally he will work closely with Audio-Technica's marketing department to develop key end-user programs designed to maximize A-T's relationships with its strategic partners in their target markets.

Markgraf comes to A-T from Industrial Training Services, where his latest title was director of Strategy & Client Success. He has experience in strategic planning, product development, and project management to align with long-term company goals and vision. He also has experience with digital media, graphic design, brand development, journalism and news directing. He holds degrees from Murray State University: a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing and a Bachelor of Science in theatre.

## Moog & inMusic: A New Chapter of Innovation and Collaboration Begins

Moog Music, the iconic U.S. manufacturer of electronic musical instruments, is thrilled to announce they are joining the inMusic family. This exciting development brings together two leading forces in the music technology industry and marks a significant milestone in the ongoing legacy of Moog Music.

inMusic is dedicated to delivering high-quality musical experiences for musicians worldwide. The addition of Moog Music to the inMusic family represents a strategic alignment of shared values and a shared vision for the future of electronic music.

Maintaining Moog Music's commitment to uncompromising sound, quality, and manufacturing philosophy, this partnership with inMusic presents new opportunities to overcome long-standing challenges and strengthen the company. Leveraging inMusic's global distribution and supply chain network will facilitate greater accessibility for Moog instruments around the world. Furthermore, Moog Music's deep expertise in analog synthesis will enhance the capabilities of inMusic and its exclusive brands.

Under a seasoned leadership team that includes Steve Dunnington, long-time Moog engineer and former student



of Bob Moog, Moog Music will continue to develop and build instruments in its hometown of Asheville, North Carolina, USA.

In recent conversations, members of Moog Music's team had the pleasure of engaging with inMusic CEO Jack O'Donnell. Jack shared his personal journey with a Moog modular system, highlighting the profound impact that Bob Moog's vision and instruments have had on his career. During O'Donnell's visit to the Moog factory, he witnessed first-hand the passion and dedication that drives the Moog Music team every day.

The collaboration between Moog Music and inMusic will usher in an exciting new chapter of innovation, introducing a range of groundbreaking instruments for creatives worldwide. This partnership will expand Moog Music's reach into new communities while continuing to push the boundaries of music technology. The shared values, mission, and legacy between the two companies make this alliance a remarkable opportunity for Moog Music and its dedicated community.

Moog Music is grateful for the unwavering loyalty and support received along the way, and it eagerly anticipates unveiling the extraordinary advancements that lie ahead.

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# Fender's

## Tammy Van Donk

Examining the Widespread Popularity of the Player Series Line of Guitars and Basses

By Christian **Wissmuller**



**F**irst released to the public five years ago, Fender's Player Series instruments recently surpassed 500,000 units sold. Upon reaching such a significant milestone, Tammy Van Donk, EVP of sales at FMIC, spoke with *MMR* about what features make these guitars and basses so appealing to end-users, what specific models are top-sellers for the brand, and the many high-profile artists who have embraced the Player Series.

**Fender recently shared that, with over a half-million units sold, the Player Series is the company's best-selling line of electric guitars and basses. What features of the line do you feel contribute to the wide appeal?**

When the Player Series was first introduced in 2018, it ignited a demographic shift within the industry, attracting a diverse, passionate, and inclusive new universe of guitar and bass players.

These players love the pickups, which give the guitars and basses a legendary vintage tone, as well as modern "C" neck profiles to support easy playability. They also have traditional body radii handcrafted with players in mind for improved comfort, 22-fret necks for extended range, and upgraded bridges for improved performance and easier setup. The most important things are the new colors which are seafoam green and candy apple red. I have been so impressed with the attention our product team has given to every detail of the Player Series.

The series also brings a bit of a "badge of honor" as it's consid-

ered the first official step into Fender's electric guitar product line. Players feel like they have "made it" into the Fender brand and we are happy to have them!

**The recent news begs the question: prior to this announcement, what had been Fender's top-selling electric guitar line?**

Prior to this, it was the Standard Series, which the Player Series evolved from.

**For those who follow Fender closely, many took the launch of the Player Series in 2018 as a simple "rebranding" of the pre-existing, popular Mexican Standards. What about the Player Series sets those guitars apart from their Mexican Standard predecessors?**

With the launch of the Player Series, we wanted to set a new benchmark of quality at a velocity price tier. I really want to emphasize the attention to detail our product team gave to every aspect of this series. As a result, there are several things that set it apart from its predecessors including:

Player Series pickups have very different construction than Standard Series pickups. All Player Series pickups use Alnico magnets to give it a crystalline, bright, touch sensitive Fender tone. These are much more "classic" Fender sounding, but with more focused mid-range and output. In comparison, the Standard Series had ceramic magnet pickups.

Player Series guitar models have some modern features like 22 fret necks (Standard had 21), and 2-point tremolos with a tone for the bridge pickup on the Strats (Standard had vintage-style trem with no bridge tone).

We dialed in more traditional body radii and contours on the Player Series, as well as changed to a traditional Fender spaghetti logo on the headstock decals.

All Player Series instruments come with neck plates stamped with a Fender "F" logo. Standard Series neck plates were blank. And of course, we can't forget about the 5 new colors we've introduced!

**What's your perception of the musician drawn to Player Series models: those looking for an entry price-point to the Fender brand, players looking for a "step-up" guitar who are graduating from a beginner's/student instrument, serious gigging guitarists and bassists seeking a reliable back-up, modders who want a solid base to begin their journey with?**

The Player Series is for guitarists who are ready to take the next step in their musical journey with Fender's iconic models. It can be a player looking for an entry into the Fender brand, a musician who's looking to go on tour, or an intermediate player upgrading their first guitar – whether their dreams lie on a big stage, in a garage band or beyond.

Player Series stands out for players not only for its price point accessibility, while still providing premium sound and style, but also for its playability and durability.

You will never regret buying a Player Series guitar!



The Linda Lindas with their Player Series bass and guitars

**Speaking of gigging guitarists who have embraced Player Series models, a number of high-profile artists have been drawn to the line. Can you talk about some of those well-known players and how important association with high-profile musicians has been to the success of the Player Series?**

The Player Series is played by so many incredible artists across different genres including Turnstile, Cherry Glazerr, Saya Gray, Japanese Breakfast, Beach Bunny, Soccer Mommy, and White Reaper. Fender Next 2023 artists are also joining the mix as our 2023 Player Series campaign artists, Cafuné, Jean Dawson, Cecilia Castleman and Luna Li!

**Currently what are the most sought-after Player Series models?**

Since 2018, the most sought after Player Series model has been and continues to be the Player Stratocaster in Polar White. After that, the second most popular is the Player Tele in Butterscotch Blonde. Both are pretty hard to resist!

**Fender's reach, and that of the Player Series, is global. What countries and regions, in particular, have taken a shine to the Player Series?**

We work hand in hand with our trusted global dealer base of more than 2,500 retailers across 100 countries worldwide. This includes the U.S., Canada, Latin America, UK, all over Europe, and APAC regions.

In one week alone, the Player Series campaign reached 1.3M impressions across our owned social channels globally on Instagram, Instagram Stories, YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter – from the U.S. to the UK, APAC, and Latin America.

**Any recent or upcoming product introductions or news relating to the Player Series that you'd like to share with MMR's readers?**

This year we're also really excited about the artists supporting our 2023 Player Series campaign. Fender Next 2023 artists Cafuné, Jean Dawson, Cecilia Castleman, and Luna Li, who kicked off

The Fender Player Series line of instruments

the campaign in a launch compilation film, as well as "Tales of Regret," a social dedicated series that will include featured artists talking through their best and worst purchases. In addition, the Grammy-nominated, powerhouse trio of sisters, HAIM, will star in a video this spring, and be included in the "Tales of Regret" series. Singer, songwriter, actor, and guitarist Dominic Fike will also support later this summer with his very own episode in the coveted serialized series "Fender Sessions," which highlights artists from around the world via a mix of live song performances, techniques, and a conversation about their personal journey. [@fender](#)

Scott Marquart

# Stringjoy

## 'We Ended Up Finding a Lot of Ways to Make Strings Better'

by Mike Lawson

It is not often in the world of MI that one gets to see a dynamic, successful startup in a traditional product line like guitar strings. It's not as if string winders and related supplies are as easy to source as, say, guitar-making supplies and tools. But a then 24-year-old (now 33-year-old) Scott Marquart did just that, in Nashville, Tennessee, in 2014. I have been watching his operation from a distance, and kept hearing about his Stringjoy strings from fellow guitarists in town, and finally decided I should reach out and visit the factory. It was a delightful experience, because not only did I discover a cool new line of great guitar strings, but I left feeling like I was witnessing the birth of a brand that will be here long after I have shuffled off this mortal coil.

**“Strings, at the end of the day, work way better in a brick-and-mortar context than they do through direct sales.”**

### **When did you start Stringjoy?**

November 2014 was when we sold our very first pack of strings. I've always been into music and guitar was the way that I would express that most frequently. I knew I wanted to start a business and I wasn't sure what. I took this long undertaking of evaluating all the things that I could do, and one thing came to my mind, which is in high school, at some point, I started fiddling around with guitar string gauges. It was just everything I could do with a guitar back then that I could afford to or had the know-how to, I would want to customize and change. I started buying a couple different sets of strings and mixing around the gauges. Initially, I had played a 10-46, then I liked the 10-52 set. But I wanted something in between there, so I started buying a pack of 11s and a pack of 10s and mixing them together.

And then, later on in this process when I'm trying to think of what can I do, what value can I deliver to the world, that was one thing that came up. I was like, "I wonder if anybody else has this weird habit of buying different sets of strings and mixing them around." I could never find the same brand or the same style in the certain gauges that I wanted.

So my first thought was, what if I just make this easier? I contacted a guitar string manufacturer and got them to agree to make me 12 of every single gauge of string for electric and acoustic guitar, which I didn't realize until later was, like, such a pain for him to do. I launched Stringjoy. I knew enough about how to code out a website from what I had done in the music industry, and I knew a little bit of marketing. I launched it as just a custom string shop. And that was the pitch at the beginning. It wasn't like, "Hey, these strings are amazing," per se. It was, "Do you play in a weird tuning or play a seven or an eight-string guitar?" Which at the time was just starting to become more and more popular, but there weren't a lot of strings for them. If any of these things apply to you, email me. I'll work with you and find a perfect set for exactly what you're doing on your instrument. And I'll package it, put it together, ship it out to you.

Our second month in business we did about \$2,500. I was [then] bartending, I was like, "Hey, that's some serious money. There might be something here." I started ordering larger quantities of each individual string and just in the process of the way that my brain works around things, I started to dive really deep into what makes a string a string. Learning about the different materials, of course, but also learning about different ratios that you could use with a thinner core or a thicker wrap wire to make the same gauge. I started calling the guy who was making my strings, same guy who made the 12 of each, and saying "Hey, I want these, but this time on the 36s, could you use a thinner core wire? I want to use a 14 instead of a 15. I want to see what that does. I think it'll work a lot better in certain sets that I'm building for people." And he only put up with that for just a couple of months. I'll never forget the phone call. He called me [and said] "I'm selling you two winding machines and you're gonna never ever call me again about this stuff." So at the time, I never really had any money to work with. My parents are teachers. I had 500 bucks when I started the business. I was trying to figure out how I could get a loan to buy these two winding machines. They were not incredibly expensive, but, you know, I didn't even own a car.



### **What did they cost?**

So those early ones, I got two for 30 grand. I would have been 26 by the time that happened. I certainly didn't have it. I didn't have family money I could draw on. I dove into how to get SBA financing, was able to get an SBA loan for a little bit more than that, because I had to buy wire too, and got these two machines. They're still in service. They're very manual. They're basically built in the early '80s. I've completely swapped out every single part on these two to make them work the way that I wanted to.

He showed me through how they do it, how they made their strings, so I would understand how to operate the machines. And it wasn't 24 hours that went by after I had these delivered to Nashville and was making strings that I was completely changing the way that they worked and saying, "Oh, okay. I see how this works. But what if it didn't work that way? What if it worked a little bit differently?" We continued this constant curious process for a long time and ended up finding a lot of ways to make strings better. This is what led the transition from the early days of being a custom string shop to being a company where it's like, hey, the strings are the thing. Even if you're playing the same gauge that you're playing with a different company, we can make them better and get you performance out of your instrument that you haven't had before. That led to that big transition towards Stringjoy becoming really a traditional guitar string brand, rather than kind of an niche service online.

### **What is the origin of the Stringjoy name?**

Well, in the early days, when I was thinking about it, ultimately, and I was thinking all about gauge at the time, because it was all custom gauge in those early days. I noticed from talking to other players and asking people why they use certain strings and why they like certain configurations was always that, they were like, "Yeah, I use D'Addarios because they're good. I use Ernie Balls because they're fine." But, not one person ever, ever told me, "These strings made me want to play my guitar more. They brought me joy." I was thinking about that and how that might interweave to the name, we settled on Stringjoy to try to fulfill that promise of whether it's through gauge or through craftsmanship, or all the different parameters that we put into making our strings unique, we want to give you a set of strings that [cause you to] feel joy when you put them on.

**Over the past couple of decades, the secret of the string world is that only a handful of companies manufacture them in the USA, and those companies OEM/custom package for**

some historically well-known string brands, with the end-users usually not having a clue about that. Stringjoy started out selling OEM strings, now you make your own. How did you work to get word out that you actually make your own strings?

You wouldn't believe how many players still to this day don't believe us when we tell them that we really make them because of that. I [called on] a dealer that was not too far away from us, and he was like, "Hey, I heard that you guys don't make 'em. They're just somebody else's. We're not interested." And I was like, "Hey, you hear that noise behind me? That's the winding machines. You can drive here and I'll show you."

**Let's talk about the retro-style packaging. I like the hard boxes, and design. They look like an old brand I should have been playing for years, but they are new.**

When we came up with the packaging – and it was a big labor of love – I spent many years kind of perfecting it, it was really important to me because I felt the strings inside deserved to be packaged a certain way that would raise the player's expectations. I want them to have really high expectations when they get the string set in their hand. I didn't want it to feel like this brand new, very sleek, new brand. I wanted it to feel like something that's always existed, maybe, and it have that quality and substantial feel to it. We individually seal every string in a nitrogen flush barrier pouch so that you can pull out your high E-string if you need it, and keep the rest of the set fresh.

**There are only "X amount" of wire suppliers in the U.S., right? One of the first things that I learned and was delighted to hear is that you actually get your wire in Tennessee.**

The vast majority comes from Tennessee. Our secondary supplier's just over the state line in Kentucky. We do have a few suppliers in other parts of the country for specific things that I like.

**One of the things I enjoyed about the factory tour was watching your enthusiasm when you went into minutia on the number of wraps after the ball end's put on. I thought, "You know, in 30 years of being**

**"We had to go out and build our market ourselves. Strings are not something that was necessarily easy to just convince a dealer to take on."**

**at NAMM I've never seen anybody talk to me about string wraps that way." As a guitar player, I really dug that because I felt like, okay, I don't have to think about that. This guy's thinking of this for me and he's making a better product.**

Yeah. This guy's gonna wake up in the middle of the night with an ah-ha moment about how we carry the tension on the wrap wire as we apply it, and I'll benefit from that without having to be the guy thinking about it.

I think, it's a very old industry. I mean, there are a number of families in Europe that have been making strings for 300 years and there's really awesome things about that, being able to pass information from father to son or father to daughter over generations. The thing that falls off a little bit there, though, is you accept something as

the way that it is, because that's the way my granddad told me. But when you get into something the first time, you question all those things and everything, there's no, oh, because that's the way we do it. You wanna see what happens if you don't do it that way and you're willing to break things and not really have to bend the tradition.

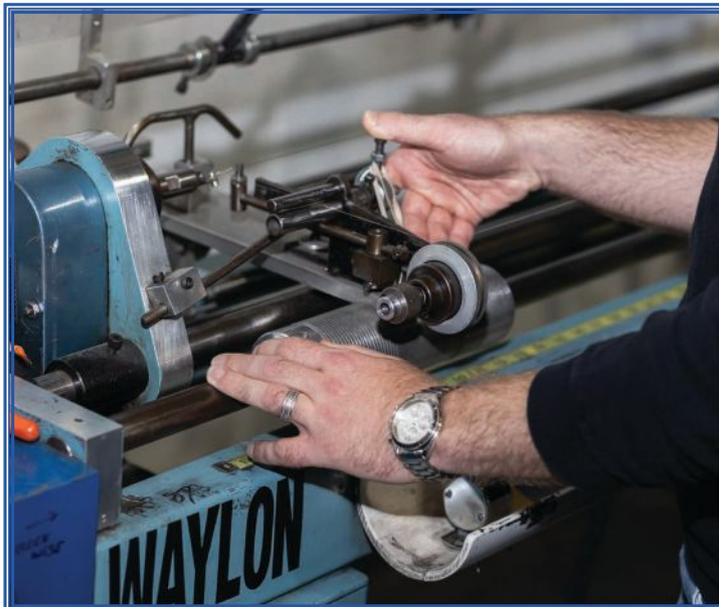
**Your journey began with online, direct sales. When did you turn the corner and say, "I really need to start focusing on dealer sales" and what steps did you take at that point to go to retailers?**

I think people had a notion that I was anti-retail because we were selling direct. But the truth is, any dealer that we could talk to said, "Well, you don't have any customers." And I said, "Well, I don't have any stores." We had to go out and build our market ourselves. Strings are not something that was necessarily easy to just convince a dealer to take on. They wanted to know their customers already had demand for these strings. So we set out to create that demand on our own through direct sales in the early days.

Once we started making the transition into working with music stores, it was a very different equation because it was, "Hey, I asked my customer base or asked my employees. Several of these guys already use your strings and they buy them from you



Marquart with racks upon racks of core wire



Stringjoy's very first string winding machine

direct. Can I put them in my store?" And the answer of course is, "Yes, absolutely. We'd love you to."

But we're only a couple years in, probably about four or five years in, on truly starting to focus more on mom and pops. And we're getting a ton of momentum there now. It's a huge focus for the business now because strings, you want to have them available everywhere. I don't want to lose a customer because they have a gig coming up, they ran out to their local music store and they didn't have Stringjoy and they had to buy something else. So getting in those stores and being a string that they're willing to recommend and believe in, themselves, is absolutely huge for the brand and it's pretty much where all of our focus is on now.

I think we're over 400 stores now and hopefully have many, many more soon. We're keeping that marketing budget exactly where it is as a percentage of the overall revenue, so that we can continue to drive that awareness. And what we hear a lot when our sales guys will call a store that hasn't reached out with just a cold call, initially somebody will answer the phone and be like, "Who? I haven't heard of you." And then, somebody in the background, I kid you not, this happens all the time, will be like, "Did you say Stringjoy? No, that's what I use. I love those." And it turns out that's either the customer standing at the counter or the other guy that works there at the same time, which is just, you know, a super awesome thing. And we really just couldn't have done it any other way than going out and creating that demand and finding 100,000, 150,000 users of Stringjoy strings.

**Dealers are very conscious of selling direct. And of course, they don't like it and they don't want to compete with the supplier where you're making literally three times the margin that they are. What kind of margins the dealer can expect when they open up themselves as a Stringjoy dealer?**

The thing that we always tell dealers is strings, at the end of the day, work way better in a brick-and-mortar context than they do through direct sales. For one, guitar players don't anticipate their needs as well as they maybe could. So they usually suddenly need a pack of strings and they can't wait a few days for them to be shipped out. For two, guitar players like going to the store. It's not like buying Clorox. You wanna go to the store and see what they've got and strings are the excuse. When I was a kid, my dad would

drop me off at our local Guitar Center, in Indianapolis. There weren't as many local music stores, and I would stay there for an hour and a half and he'd come back and pick me up. And I'd buy a pack of strings at the end of the day after I had played every single guitar in the entire store.

To the margin question though. We offer 45 points of margin to dealer. Most dealers we talk to, they're like, "I don't make money on the strings." We're like, "Well, you'll make money on our strings." It's important for us to have a fair shake with the dealer, because at the end of the

day, well, we're bringing a lot of customers into the store. Our ultimate goal is to continue to grow the brand and continue to grow the customer base. And we know that not only having great strings, but also having a way for dealers to make money and share in that sale in a substantial way, is a great way to encourage dealers to wanna spread that message and want to tell people about them and get them to try them.

We've always been really passionate about having great customer service, because it's so important when it comes

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Marquart next to the company's newest winding machines

**"We want to be the string that the dealer recommends, because we're the easiest to work with."**

to strings. But the other big piece of it is Chris Gilchrist, my VP of global sales who came to us from a very large company in our world, where he was very used to having to have a lot of requirements for dealers, in terms of minimum buy-ins and what they had to do to be a dealer consistently. And his focus, was *I want to be the best supplier for these dealers. I don't want to push them*

*around. I don't want to ask them for minimum buy-ins or call them up in January and say, "You didn't hit your minimum. You gotta place this order."*

We have no minimums. We have good margins. We ship quickly and handle them all very fairly. We want to be the string that the dealer recommends, because we're the easiest to work with. I think new dealers quickly kinda realize that, that we're here to be your friends and support you as best as we can, and it's a very collaborative sort of journey rather than something that's very top-down, where, "Hey, if you want to be a Stringjoy dealer, you have to spend X amount of dollars." We don't do that at all. We work with people at all different levels.

**So you'll open up a dealer on a box of 12-strings or a pack or whatever, just to make that introduction, is what I'm hearing?**

We will. You know, and ultimately, what those guys, our sales team work with dealers on more than, like, trying to get a certain minimum level of sale. It's to try to make sure that they're stocking enough SKUs that they're gonna have something for what people want. Sometimes people are like, "Yeah, give me just some 10s and some 12s of those." You're like, "Well, you're not gonna effectively be able to take customers that might be shopping at your store that buy from us direct, unless you have several different options." But they'll even sometimes split boxes of 12 to make sure, "Hey, we'll load in 8 SKUs. You only have to buy six packs at a time just to make sure you've got what you need to fully test this thing." That really is their focus and they're always very cool about working with people to try to achieve the goal of getting the strings that their customers need rather than just filling the wall with as many SKUs as humanly possible.

# Let's talk about the elephant in the room...

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**I would encourage you to make sure that that is a lifelong policy that never changes. Because you're establishing your brand and your sales around that kind of philosophy and, man, you get successful and the day that changes, it bites you hard. Believe me. Dealers wanna feel supported, loved, and profitable. They want to sell the cool products. That's what brings people into the store.**

My sales guys have more recently realized that with a lot of dealers on our cold calls, we kind of have to retrain them a little bit. They're so used to getting such poor margins from the big brands and having to sell them at such a low price because there wasn't M.A.P. in place for a long time, where they were making a dollar a set. That initially they're like, "Yeah, what's really the point?" Where for us, with our margins and how good we are with respecting everyone and evening out the playing field, you're making between \$5.50 to \$8 per set. So we've had to explain to people, like, "Hey, this isn't the big piece of your business where you sell a \$50,000 Les Paul and get a giant margin on it. But if you focus this year, you can pay your rent on just your string sales."

**Well, let's talk instruments themselves here. Electric guitar. It's six-string, seven-string, eight-string, electric, 12?**

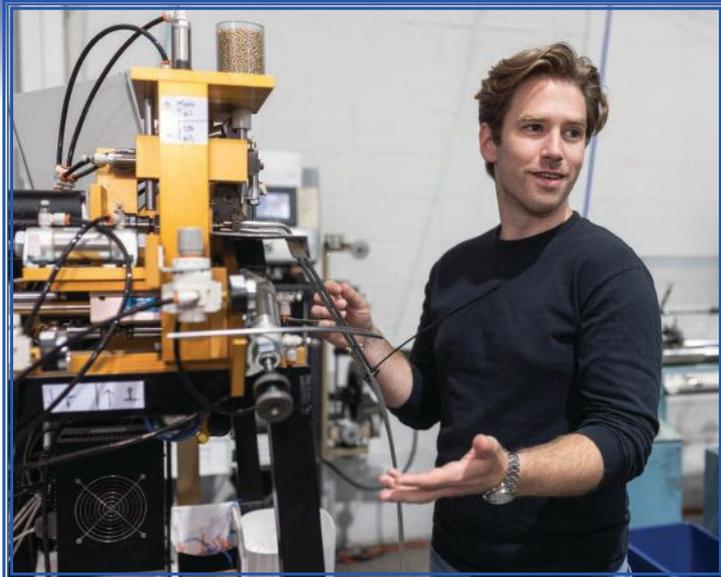
As well as baritone and pedal steel.

We have three different lines of electric guitar strings. Our Signatures, which are our most popular – that's our nickel-wound or nickel-plated steel – they're available in the widest variety of sets. So seven-string, eight-string, baritone, Bass IV, and all that. Our Broadways, hence, the name, it's a very Nashville product, those are our pure nickel round core vintage style string, those we only offer in six-string guitar right now. They're a little bit more niche and they're a little less likely that you're gonna use them for an eight-string guitar. And then, our Orbiters are our newest addition to the electric guitar string world. That is our coated electric string which is an even brighter sounding string than our uncoated string, which is pretty rare. Those right now are available in six-string sets, but we probably will be expanding them soon. We've been getting a ton of requests for seven or eight or baritone sets in those as well. So we likely will expand that quite a bit whereas the Broadways will probably stay a little bit more limited and more of a classical sort of offering.

Mandolin strings, we are launching in July.

In acoustic strings, it's basically 6-string, 12-string, and we make a baritone set as well. Our Naturals, which is our uncoated phosphor bronze, those are available similarly in the widest array of gauges. And then, our Foxwoods have been what's been really kinda setting things on fire lately. That's our coated phosphor bronze. Same as I mentioned with the Orbiters.

It's gonna be a brighter string than their uncoated counterparts. They're really awesome for Taylors or Gibson or a Martin as well. Those have been really, really exciting SKUs and moving really quickly in retail as well. And we do offer an 80/20 Bronze line or Brights as well, which is a little bit more of an old school, classic thing, very similar to the Broadways for electric. More of a limited offering, but for players that love those, that's absolutely the thing. Now our mandolin strings will



Core wire on ball-ending machine

be offered in Naturals, Brights and Foxwoods, so some coated on, coated and 80/20 all together. We're not throwing out one gauge for mandolin. We want to really do it and give people the broadest array possible.

**If I'm a dealer and want to carry Stringjoy, where do I start?**

Sales@stringjoy.com is the easiest way to start the conversation if somebody's interested in getting ahold of us. 

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# the keys to the Kingdom

## Home Digital Keyboard Sales in 2023

By Christian Wissmuller

Home digital keyboards have been having a moment of late. Features such as the ability to play and practice in close quarters *quietly*, which had already been significant selling points, took on greater importance during COVID-related lockdowns. “The pandemic demonstrated the importance of music-making in everyone’s lives,” observes Cory Callies of Kawai America Corporation; Yamaha’s Ben Harrison adds, “Playing through headphones allows privacy while practicing and lets players enjoy their instruments without disturbing others.”

Some of these home models boast functionality rivalling the most advanced stage and recording keyboards, but hold greater appeal than those similarly powerful instruments for some home owners and renters because of visual aesthetics. “Home digital keyboards are not only musical instruments, but also attractive pieces of furniture that complement home décor,” says Eric Wang of Donner.

Those factors and more have made this segment of MI particularly robust in recent years and continue to drive sales for many dealers across the country and the globe. Read on to learn more about trends in the market, successful selling techniques, and the most popular models in 2023.

### For your brand, what model, or models, of home digital keyboard are currently the hottest seller(s)?

**Ben Harrison:** DGX-670, P-45, P-125a, YDP-184, YDP-165



**Eric Wang:** The best-seller is the wood grain series of digital pianos, with the DDP-80 being a favorite among many cus-

tomers. The DDP-80 is not only used as a practicing and performing piano, but also serves as a decoration in many households. Other traditional digital pianos like the DEP-20 are also one of the best-selling digital piano by Donner, which is frequently recommended by schools and educational institutions for teaching activities or practice.

**Cory Callies:** The CA series – We offer four models that feature all-wood keys on all 88 notes. Our new competition concert grand piano sound is getting rave reviews.

The Novus Hybrid instruments are also seeing high consumer demand which continues to exceed our current production capacity.

**Mike Martin:** Casio offers the best keyboards for users that fall into three distinct categories. The Casiotone CT-S1, a 61-key portable keyboard, has been doing extremely well since its introduction. Its combination of minimalist design, portability, great sounds and affordability has differentiated it from the rest of the market. Similarly, our CDP-S360 digital piano is doing very well. There is nothing else in its class that offers so much, making it attractive for both beginner and experienced musicians. Last, our flagship Privia PX-S7000 premium digital piano has been our best-seller, appealing to users who place a high value on inspirational design in their living space.

**Corey Fournier:** The new GP Grand Pianos we recently introduced have been incredible sellers for us thanks to the all-new “Piano Reality” technology that sets a new bar for the digital piano playing experience. We also expanded our lineup with a new GP-3 mini grand piano that allows customers to enjoy a grand piano in the same footprint as an acoustic upright, and the GP-9M full-size grand features moving keys, which have been a popular request from customers.

**Luciano Minetti:** KORG’s best-selling home piano is currently



“Casio is looking forward to strong back to school and holiday seasons, and we are working closely with our retailers to help them achieve great success throughout the year.”

– Mike Martin, General Manager of Marketing, Electronic Musical Instruments, Casio America, Inc.





“Product knowledge and qualifying the customer are paramount, and our most successful dealers are always participating in our product training.”

–Corey Fournier,  
Sr. Product Manager, Piano, Roland Americas



the Liano, the latest edition to our piano lineup. This ultra-portable and affordable solution appeals to players of all skill levels, offering KORG's high quality Italian Grand sample in an ultra-portable package. With built-in speakers, battery operation, USB connectivity, and an easy to use sound dial, the Liano is a great all around solution that allows musicians to make music anywhere.

**What features are buyers of home digital keyboards in 2023 most drawn to?**

**EW:** Donner has always been committed to understanding the needs of our users, and we have conducted in-depth user research. The data we have gathered reveals that in 2023, consumers are most concerned about the key touch sensitivity, excellent sound quality, and meeting their piano practice requirements when it comes to electronic pianos.

**MM:** Casio has many features and technologies that make our pianos and keyboards play and sound wonderful, but design has to be the main quality attracting buyers. In particular, products like our Privia PX-S7000 redefine how a piano can be the musical centerpiece of the home.

**LM:** Specifically in the home digital piano market, USB connectivity is essential. For beginners, this offers a seamless way to connect with piano learning software to provide real-time feedback when learning to play. For players looking to integrate into a recording setup, all KORG pianos equipped with USB also function as an audio interface, allowing for easy recording and monitoring.

**CF:** Buyers are looking for connectivity to apps to enhance their learning and entertainment through lessons and the ability to play along with their favorite songs. Roland pianos offer Bluetooth audio and MIDI connectivity for smartphones and tablets for music playback and to the Roland Piano App, which provides access to Roland Cloud's expanding content library.

**CC:** At Kawai, it all comes down to touch and tone. Our proprietary harmonic imaging technology really resonates with consumers – pun intended. And our weighted, balanced wooden key

action brings people as close as possible to an acoustic piano experience.

In addition to Kawai's

authentic touch and tone that replicates those found on the finest acoustic pianos, our customers expect intuitive operation that is easy to navigate and connectivity to the devices we use every day. Every Kawai digital keyboard can be operated via app through the usual Android and iOS devices.

**BH:** Graded, weighted keyboard action delivers a feel-and-touch response like an acoustic piano. This helps develop players with proper finger strength and technique and provides the realism more advanced pianists require. A high-quality grand piano sound that responds to the player's expression through the keys is essential. It not only aids in development and practice, but is also a significant contributor to the overall enjoyment of playing the instrument.

Customers are drawn to app connectivity for easier operation and added functionality (Smart Pianist for Yamaha digital pianos) and for lessons (flow key). The ease of control and access to additional functionality and content through a smart device they already own adds great value to their digital piano.

While the feature is ubiquitous among digital instruments, headphone connectivity is one of the main reasons a customer would choose digital over acoustic. Playing through headphones allows privacy while practicing and lets players enjoy their instruments without disturbing others.

**Have you noticed any “best practices” adopted by MI retailers who are especially successful in marketing, displaying, and promoting home digital keyboards?**

**LM:** A simplified and easy to understand feature/benefit approach to marketing digital pianos is essential. At KORG we are now expanding our marketing efforts on Amazon, and it is evident that the most successful amazon retailers rarely focus on specifications that are difficult for new customers to understand.

**CC:** Actually, our best retailers are the “brick and mortar” dealers who have embraced e-commerce sales channels to reach a broader audience. Their longstanding experience with communicating with customers face-to-face in the store makes them a



“Our best retailers are the “brick and mortar” dealers who have embraced e-commerce sales channels to reach a broader audience.”

– Cory Callies, Vice President of Corporate Strategy,  
Kawai America Corporation



# roundtable



“We have noticed that many sellers have started combining home digital keyboards with home styles and lifestyles in their marketing strategies.”

– Eric Wang,  
Director of Research and Development, Donner

targeted source for customers who prefer to buy online.

**CF:** Product knowledge and qualifying the customer are paramount, and our most successful dealers are always participating in our product training. In our training we focus on understanding what the customer is looking for in a piano and finding the right piano for their situation. Do they need portability? Is it for a venue? How the piano fits into their home and family's lifestyle is also a significant consideration.

**BH:** Home digital pianos vary so much in price and features that customers often need clarification about the differences and value. The most successful retailers are well-versed in demonstrating the quality and features and explaining the value of all the instruments they offer. They begin their sales process by focusing on the best quality instrument they offer. While the “top-of-the-line” might be out of the customer's budget, understanding what quality and features they sacrifice as they move down to lower prices helps influence their decision. They often spend a little more than planned to get a better instrument that will make them happier and keep them engaged in the long run.

**MM:** Creating original online content that emphasizes the store's salespeople as experts and encourages customers to come in and see and play the products is the best practice. In addition, Casio has been working closely with our retailers to ensure they have our in-store displays. An attractive display that evokes how the instruments might look in their home is important in closing the sale.

**EW:** We have noticed that many sellers have started combining home digital keyboards with home styles and lifestyles in their marketing strategies. Home digital keyboards are not only musical instruments, but also attractive pieces of furniture that complement home decor. This marketing approach broadens the audience for digital keyboard buyers and stimulates consumer purchasing desires from different perspectives.



**For your brand, to what degree are supply-chain issues still challenging when it comes to manufacturing these instruments?**

**MM:** Casio was only

minimally impacted by supply-chain issues during the pandemic compared to other brands. Our only supply issues were due to our conservative estimates of how successful products like the Privia PX-S5000, PX-S6000 and PX-S7000 would be.

**EW:** In recent years, we have indeed encountered some issues such as rising raw material prices and the inability to deliver goods on time in the supply chain. However, we have already made sufficient preparations for this. The critical components and raw materials in our production are procured in advance through various channels, reducing our reliance on suppliers. Therefore, we are fully capable of meeting production demands in terms of the supply chain.

**BH:** Supply chain issues have subsided, and manufacturing has returned to normal (pre-pandemic) levels.

**CC:** We weathered the storm pretty well. Right now, most of our digitals are in stock and ready to ship. The exception is the Novus NV5s and NV10s, which due to global demand are still catching up.

**LM:** While certain models in our digital piano lineup continue to experience component shortages, we are generally experiencing improvements in our manufacturing capabilities.

**CF:** Fortunately, we are not experiencing any supply chain issues. Our factories and parts suppliers are back to pre-pandemic performance.

**Does your brand have any recent or upcoming home digital keyboard models you'd like to draw MMR readers' attention to?**

**CF:** The FP-E50 entertainment piano is an exciting new instrument that is the closest thing to playing in a band, without the band. It provides a complete, portable playing experience to jam along with backing styles and enhance singing with advanced vocal harmonies. It also includes Roland's SuperNatural piano tones and the latest ZEN-Core synthesizer sounds. Plus, it is infinitely expandable with new ZEN-Core sounds and backing styles available through Roland Cloud.

**CC:** The most recent additions to the CA line-up are the CA401 and CA501. With significant upgrades from the previous models,



“A simplified and easy to understand feature/benefit approach to marketing digital pianos is essential.”

– Luciano Minetti, Brand Manager, KORG Tech.





“Playing through headphones allows privacy while practicing and lets players enjoy their instruments without disturbing others.”

– Ben Harrison, Product Marketing Manager, Keyboards, Yamaha Corporation of America



we feel these two are among the best instruments available in their price range. In fact, our CA (Concert Artist) series instruments are all new in 2023 and are our best ever instruments at bridging the gap between acoustic and electronic instruments.

**LM:** The KORG Liano has received much attention since its release last year. The size of Liano is extremely impressive featuring a design that’s only 2.87 inches thick and 13.23 pounds. Powerful built-in speakers make Liano perfect for at-home playing and practice, and players can perform anywhere with six AA batteries for up to eight hours of playing time.

**BH:** Yamaha launched the revolutionary P-S500 earlier this year. This is an incredible sounding, 88-weighted key portable digital piano that features “Stream Lights” technology which helps players learn by showing the correct keys to play and the timing of when to play them. When paired with Yamaha Smart Pianist (iOS/Android), users can access hundreds of built-in songs and lessons that utilize the Stream Lights. Yamaha also has an exclusive partnership with Flowkey, the top lesson platform available today, which has a library of thousands of popular songs to learn, all of which take advantage of our Stream Lights technology.

**EW:** We are expecting to introduce a new model in July, which is the Donner DDP-60 digital piano. This model features a compact design with a semi-weighted keyboard, offering consumers more choices in terms of appearance and size. Also its appearance is fit for a modern home decoration style.

**MM:** The Privia PX-S7000 has won additional awards, including the iF Design Award and two New York Design Awards. This is on top of the music products industry accolades we received, including an Editor’s Choice Award at NAMM and MMR’s Dealers’ Choice Award.

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

**EW:** We believe that the niche market of home digital pianos will continue to expand in the future. As the market grows, there will be a significant increase in product homogeneity among the flagship models. Brands must leverage their core competitive advantages in product development and have a keen insight into consumers’ actual needs to gain a larger market share in this industry.

**MM:** Casio is looking forward to strong back to school and holiday seasons, and we are working closely with our retailers to help them achieve great success throughout the year. Our product line offers something for everyone, wherever they are in their musical journey.

**LM:** At KORG, along with other MI retailers, we are currently in the process of optimizing our e-commerce presence, as this is the biggest opportunity for the home piano segment. This optimization which has been taking place will offer a renewed presence for KORG on platforms such as Amazon, which will allow us to reach an even wider audience.

**CF:** Players who started playing or returned to the piano during the pandemic will make it an ongoing part of their musical lives. Where they may have started with online lessons like those offered by our partner Pianote, they will enhance their studies in-person with a piano teacher. From a music retailer’s point of view, we anticipate that these players will look to upgrade their beginner pianos as their skills and commitment continue to grow.

**BH:** We expect strong demand for home digital pianos, with a continued focus on console-style (full cabinet, pedals and bench) instruments. As we head into the fall and the holiday season, we expect normal seasonal increases in demand for entry-level instruments.

**CC:** We expect to see growth in the rest of the year as consumers discover how remarkable the Kawai digital instruments really are. The pandemic demonstrated the importance of music-making in everyone’s lives. Kawai will continue to produce Digital Keyboards that exceed the expectations of our customers, enriching their lives and those of their families.

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# Investing in Employee Education at Sweetwater

## Jeff Radke Discusses How Sweetwater University is a Cornerstone of the 'Sweetwater Difference'

By Christian **Wissmuller**

Initially formed nearly 25 years ago, Sweetwater University has evolved from a small group study session into an immersive, 13-week training initiative where employees receive in-depth education on all aspects of how to be true "Sales Engineers." Chief sales officer at Sweetwater, Jeff Radke recently chatted with *MMR* about how the innovative program strives to provide the tools and knowledge necessary to best serve customers and position the individual Sweetwater team members to achieve success, themselves.

### Can you talk about the catalyst for the launching of Sweetwater University back in the '90s? What prompted that initiative?

We've always had a very technically savvy team and they were doing a lot on their own to build their level of product knowledge and keep up with technology. For all intents and purposes, Sweetwater University started with groups of sales engineers who were simply meeting after work to learn about new products and share their knowledge and experience with each other. When we hired new sales engineers, we found that they needed to intern for a year or so with an experienced sales engineer to become comfortable working directly with customers themselves. As we grew, it became obvious that this wasn't scalable. More importantly, this wasn't an ideal way to ensure that each new sales engineer knew everything they needed to know because so much depended on the one person they were working with. By developing a more structured holistic program that included not just gear training, but sales, communication, organizational skills, etc., we've been able to ensure that each customer receives a consistently high level of service. One cool fact is that the same person has been the manager of sales training (I call him the dean of Sweetwater University) since its inception!

### While most people understand how crucial it is to have well-informed sales personnel in a music retail store, what about Sweetwater's approach within the 13-week training program targets skill sets of most value to the staffer, the customer, and the business model? What specific areas of knowledge and communication are targeted within the training program?

It really is an all-encompassing training model. One of the critical differences at Sweetwater is that we want each sales engineer to be in the mindset of running their own business or "store," so they aren't just doing a job. Furthermore, being a sales engineer is a career, not a day gig or stepping-stone position. The very first sales engineer that founder of Sweetwater, Chuck Surack hired is still taking care of some cus-

tomers he's worked with for over 34 years! I want each sales engineer to have an owner mentality in all they do.

In terms of specific areas of knowledge, there are a few core elements to Sweetwater University. First, there is the technical. We view this as a kind of graduate degree that covers literally every single product category we carry, with tech exams that must be passed before a sales engineer can graduate from Sweetwater University. Then, there is the sales and communication training. For us, sales = problem solving and communication. The ability to discuss extremely complex system designs and articulate nuances of feel and sound is incredibly important. Ideally, we will speak to a customer on the phone to help them with their purchase; it's just much more efficient than any other form of communication. We do a lot of role-playing to work through customer situations and give the sales engineers a high degree of comfort in addressing whatever kind of call comes in. However, sales engineers also must be able to communicate well via email and text. Finally, we also have classes on personal finance, goal setting, and exercising cultural and emotional intelligence in all communication.

### Much has changed since the '90s. How is Sweetwater's employee education program different in 2023 from back when it was launched all those years ago? Has Sweetwater leveraged emerging tech to advance the program throughout the years?

Sweetwater University has changed a lot as we've learned and evolved. Back when it started, the internet was still in its infancy in terms of retail. Customer expectations and the way they prefer to communicate have all changed dramatically... texting wasn't a



A session at Sweetwater University

**“One of the critical differences at Sweetwater is that we want each sales engineer to be in the mindset of running their own business or ‘store,’ so they aren’t just doing a job.”**

**- Jeff Radke**



Jeff Radke

thing back then! Obviously, the gear has changed in a truly revolutionary way.

We are still kind of old school with training in that we prefer to have a live person in front of the group who is a great presenter and can adjust to each specific group and interact with them based on their needs. We film every one of those training sessions and stream them on our internet so that people in various departments of the company can tune in if they'd like. Our onsite physician is even known to watch the product trainings on a regular basis! The love of music and knowledge of gear really does extend to every corner of the building.

We have an expert team of in-house developers to help us create tech that is unique to use in how we train. Other technologies include things like Microsoft Office 365 which allows us to share information with students (OneDrive for example) and communicate with them in ways that were previously unavailable. We also include some eLearning outside of the classroom for deeper dives with specific vendors/tech. We have also done a lot of work on the Confluence platform in the past few years, which is a collaborative workspace we use to host and organize all our training manuals among other things. People are floored when they see how complete and up-to-date our documentation of policies and procedures are.

**I'd imagine that employees who enter Sweetwater University do so with wildly varying degrees of pre-existing knowledge and skills. How does the program adjust and cater to the individual strengths and weaknesses of employees?**

We work really hard to find employees who have existing broad and relatively deep knowledge of music gear. That being noted, we've never hired somebody who knew everything about everything so we are always working on ways to quickly elevate them past the 101 stage so they can keep up with the rest of the class. One thing we look for during the interview process is the aptitude and hunger to learn. Within the first few days a

class starts, they already know who they can turn to within the class for questions on areas they aren't strong in, and they also know they will be surrounded by incredible resources who will help them learn and get the answers they are seeking. Prior sales experience is great, but we really do build this from the ground up for every new hire to ensure they are maintaining the standard we've developed over the years.

More importantly, learning doesn't stop when they graduate from Sweetwater University. We have three hours of training every week in addition to vendors coming in for Office Hours (think of this as a mini-trade show), doing lunch and learns, certification training and more. We also have a sales resource center where sales engineers can check gear out to use in their studios or on gigs. We work in a toy store; we need to play with the toys!

**Are there any recent or upcoming developments within Sweetwater University and within Sweetwater's com-**

**mitment to employee education that you'd like to share with our readers?**

I've recently created the position of "director of training," who has the responsibility for every aspect of technical and professional training for the sales team. This goes beyond Sweetwater University and will allow us to better coordinate all training for my team. I'm super excited about further elevating the training for our department and consider it one of the key differentiators that will drive our future success. One big initiative that we're currently working on is what I'll call "continuing education," which is the development of multi-level training modules that will allow self-paced deeper dives in specific product categories or even 101 training for other employees.

PHOTO: JEFF RADKE

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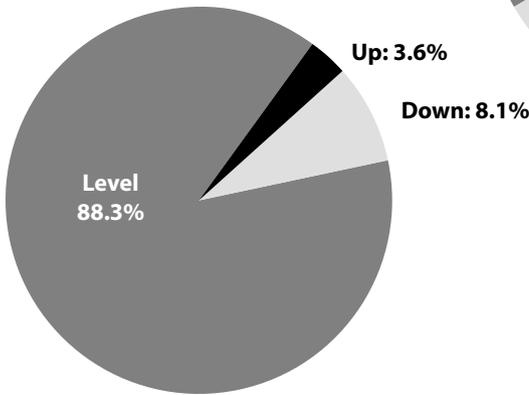
# 'Gimme Shelter'

## Keyboard Cases, Gig Bags, & Covers

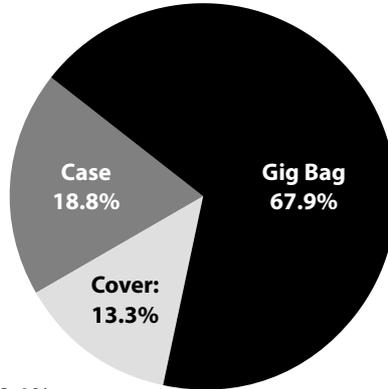
By Christian **Wissmuller**

**W**e recently surveyed over 400 MI dealers to learn more about trends impacting sales of keyboard cases and bags in 2023, what types of these products are favored by today's players, and what specific brands are driving business.

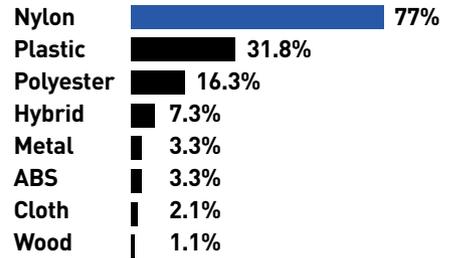
So far, sales of keyboard cases, gig bags, and covers in 2023 have been...



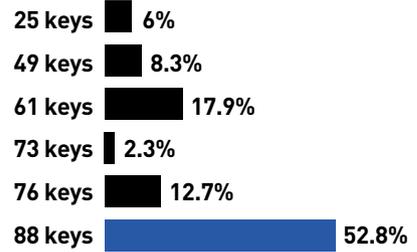
Of the three options – case, cover, gig bag – what sells the most for your business?



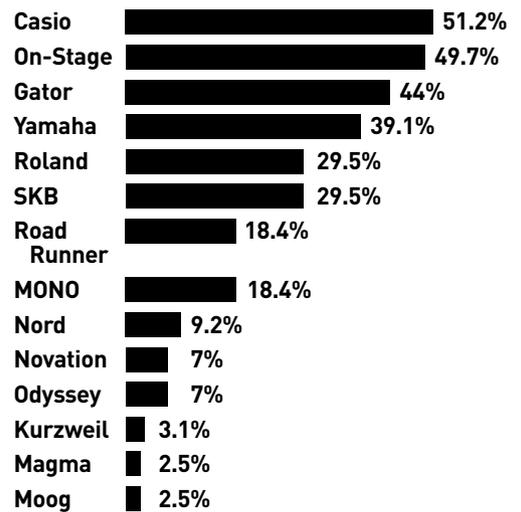
What types (primary material) of these cases are most popular?



What size (keyboard capacity) sells the most?



Which brands are the top sellers for your store?



Have you been observing any significant trends regarding this type of gear?

"Keyboard case & bag sales have leveled off this year after a big surge in sales last year."

David St. John  
Music & Arts  
Glendora, California

"Keyboard and digital piano sales are way down this year compared to last. I think it's because vendors were playing games with MAP last year and, while that might make some short-term cash for them, it devastates the retail dealers."

Anthony Mantova  
Mantova's Two Street Music  
Eureka, California

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# Giving Back



By  
**Menzie  
Pittman**

Recently I was invited to attend an awards ceremony for a professional friend in a different field of work than the arts. My friend is a retired sports pro, and was receiving an award for outstanding accomplishment in his field. Years prior, I had the pleasure of teaching his son, and over time we became friends throughout the process.

There was a luncheon after the ceremony and it gave us a good chance to catch up and talk and share laughs about life's crazy ride. He had a new shiny trophy, but it was

apparent he had long since packed up his passion, purpose, and drive – and sadly his sense of contribution.

As the conversation meandered, we talked about giving back and I mentioned to him that now that he was no longer competing, perhaps he should consider teaching and opening a school under his name. The benefits of his teaching would be numerous, and he could provide a leg up to young rising athletes in his field. His sport certainly aided him in attaining a hearty position of wealth, so I illuminated the fact that he could establish a very unique school, built around his vision, his specialized knowledge, and his recognizable name.

To my surprise he recoiled, rebuffing the suggestion. His justification was that he had achieved his personal success because of his unorthodox approach, and he not only felt it was unteachable, but in today's game he believed his method would be dismissed. I quickly attempted to point out that was the exact reason why he *should* teach.

He was indeed unorthodox, an iconic rule breaker, and he did ruffle feathers. That's exactly what he could teach, as well as why. That knowledge could benefit many rising in his field. It was his gut instinct that was uniquely valuable, and beneficial to so many. But he shut down the conversation quickly, so I changed to a different approach. I said, "Well, if not a school, how about a book?" His response was, "I'm not a writer." Of course, anyone who knows me knows the next words out of my mouth were, "That's why they invented ghost writers."

It is your specialized knowledge that matters, lots of people can help you get it organized. Why take it with you? It's your unique gift to share. Again he shut down the conversation. So I let it be, but it bugged me, and that's the point of this column.

The old adage "Those who can, do; and those who can't, teach," is absolutely BS, and true for either side of the discussion. This athlete was totally intimidated by the thought of having to explain his instincts, or trying to find the best way to explain what was natural to him. There is no debate that performance garners the best understanding of a craft. But teaching is also a craft, and it benefits both the teacher and the student – and we are both, on any given day.

My friend and I differ in philosophy. There is an art form to performance, teaching, and writing. That much is irrefutable, but the



bigger point that was being overlooked is the understanding that giving to others and sharing specialized knowledge is a higher calling than performance alone. There; I said it! Teachers and writers take a bow.

The secret is that you meet yourself in every sharing. When you teach, you grow as well as the student and that serves the industry as a whole. When you write, you reflect, and that also serves the art form. Any form of sharing advances the art.

Even lousy execution advances the art form or the sport. Lousy is counterpoint; it sheds light illuminating excellence. Without "lousy," you have no way to understand "excellent." So every aspect of expression matters, and if you don't find ways to give back, you are a bottle of fine wine that is never opened.

I walked away from the moment with the oddest feeling. I knew I had figured something out, something that my friend hadn't yet discovered. It's giving something away that empowers us, because it's never ours in the first place. Whatever our specialized knowledge is, if not shared then that knowledge diminishes in value. When you don't share your specialized knowledge You are a chef with no restaurant, you are an athlete with no field, you are a musician with no instrument. It is giving away our knowledge that makes us hunger for more. We return to being the student, and that is the best seat at the show.

It's simple really: leave it better than you found it. 

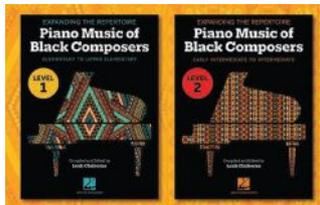
*Menzie Pittman is the owner and director of education at Contemporary Music Center in Virginia (CMC). Following a performance and teaching career spanning more than 32 years, he founded CMC in 1989 and continues to perform, teach, and oversee daily operations. He has 50 years of musical experience as 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."*

**“Whatever our specialized knowledge is, if not shared then that knowledge diminishes in value.”**

**PRINT & DIGITAL**

*Piano Music of Black Composers* from Hal Leonard

Hal Leonard is proud to announce the launch of the *Expanding the Repertoire* series which aims to bring previously unsung piano literature to students and teachers for memorable discoveries. The first two volumes *Piano Music of Black Composers Levels 1 and 2* feature music of Black composers in progressive order and includes pedagogical notes by Leah Claiborne, an expert in the field.



Although there have been collections of advanced repertoire by Black composers, Claiborne has gathered works for beginning students from composers who often were writing specifically for their own students of all skill levels. Having this music available at the most fundamental levels of a student's development sets the tone for what can and should be expected as the student progresses. When teachers introduce Black composers at the earliest stages of study, the student will not be surprised to be learning a piece by a Black composer later when they are more advanced.

Each piece in these collections was specifically chosen to help address some of the most fundamental musical and technical challenges that young pianists encounter. A student currently in a primer or early beginning method book would be able to use these pieces to help reinforce many concepts. Both books are in progressive order so that representation by Black composers is available to them throughout their musical journey. The editor includes pedagogical notes for each piece to assist with learning.

"The pieces in these books not only celebrate Black composers but also aim to celebrate diverse student populations studying classical piano music. When students see themselves represented in the music that they study, it encourages and normalizes their own musical pursuits. With such a wide variety of music spanning over two hundred years, students and teachers will gain great appreciation and enjoy learning these piano works by Black composers for beginning pianists." – Leah Claiborne

Level 1 features 16 pieces by James & John Johnson, Ulysses Kay, Ignatius Sancho, Hale Smith, Blanche K. Thomas, and editor Leah Claiborne for elementary to upper elementary students. Level 2 features 14 pieces by Francis Johnson, Ulysses Kay, Estelle Ricketts, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, Ignatius Sancho, Hal Smith, and Blanche K. Thomas for early intermediate to intermediate-level students.

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

**Innovative Jazz Ensemble Music Released by Excelcia Music Publishing**

Over 20 engaging new works from returning popular, veteran composers as well as new-to-the-roster voices are part of Excelcia Music Publishing's new *Jazz Ensemble Music Catalog*, released for 2023-2024. A full range of grade levels and a variety of styles are featured in the release, including blues, ballads, swing, shuffle, samba, and funk, alongside charts that defy classic genres. Accompanying the music, the release is packed with various resources, both for directors' easy review and selection – like the interactive online catalog – as well as tools for use in practice and rehearsal with students – like the Solo Practice Tracks.



"I'm certain that this year's release from Excelcia Music Publishing will help to spark creative ideas in programming for band directors.

The new music is interesting, engaging, and innovative," said Blair Bielawski, jazz editor. "We have an extremely talented group of composers and I'm excited for directors and ensembles to experience the charts they've created."

Live professional recordings, ScoreVideos of each piece, and Composer Insights videos are available via an interactive online Jazz Ensemble music hub (<https://excelciamusic.com/jazz-hub-2023>).

All new *Jazz Ensemble* charts come with free play-along practice tracks, jazz solo practice tracks, for practice of improvisation skills, featuring rhythm section accompaniment over the solo section changes. Keeping with the publisher's focus on accessibility, a guitar chord frame chart for each piece is included in grades 1 and 1.5, showing both basic and advanced options for the guitar player. There are opportunities in the music at each grade level for multiple students to be in the spotlight with an improvised solo. At the easier levels, the solo changes are designed for less experienced improvisers, with background musical parts provided as support for the soloist. Sample written out solos are also included.

Each score, and its accompanying parts, are meticulously-edited and beautifully set for ease of reading and include unique features to increase accessibility and help facilitate efficient rehearsals. Published in Excelcia Music Publishing's signature color-coded series, the 2022-23 *Jazz Ensemble Music* charts are grouped into five levels that range in difficulty: jazz odyssey series (grade 1), jazz exploration series (grade 1.5), jazz horizon series (grade 2), jazz voyage series (grade 3) and jazz zenith series (grade 4 and up).

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

**FRETTED  
EVH Unveils MIJ Series Signature Wolfgang**

EVH announces the Signature Wolfgang, the newest addition to the MIJ Series. Meticulously crafted by talented EVH luthiers in Japan, this exclusive model is stacked with Eddie Van Halen's preferred touring specs and the behemoth sounds expected from an instrument bearing his name. This guitar provides players with impeccable quality, versatility, and performance.



Custom-wound EVH Wolfgang Alnico 2 humbucker in the bridge and an alnico 3 custom-wound EVH Wolfgang humbucker in the neck give a perfectly-balanced tone with dynamic pick attack

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**Godin Guitars Launches the Stadium Pro**

The new Godin Stadium Pro builds upon the best features of previous Stadium models by adding several high-end treats to create an incredibly versatile guitar that excels at everything from country fingerstyle licks to hard rock barre chords!

The TV Jones Starwood at the neck produces a fat, warm tone with a dynamic and



transparent top end and just the right amount of spank. The Lollar T Special at the bridge is punchy and powerful. These pickups are controlled by a plate-mounted three-way switch and volume and tone controls. Together, this combo serves up a delicious tone and is hum-free in the middle switch position. Rounding out the package is the Godin Custom-T Bridge with brass saddles that are fully adjustable for precise intonation.

Made in Canada, the Stadium Pro features a Laurentian Basswood body paired with a Rock Maple neck. The choice of wood, combined with Godin's signature custom high-gloss finish, provides a natural acoustic tone and allows the instrument to breathe. The guitar is available in high gloss finishes of Ozark Cream or Sunset Burst, with either Rosewood or Maple fretboards.

A Limited Edition Pacific Blue MN is available until the end of 2023, each signed by Simon Godin himself.

USA MSRP price: \$ 1,715

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

## SOUND REINFORCEMENT

### YXL10SP — Yorkville's Most Affordable 10-inch Subwoofer

Canadian pro audio manufacturer, Yorkville Sound, has created the YXL10SP powered subwoofer for the working DJ & musician. The YXL10SP is the latest addition to the YXL Series, Yorkville's line of high quality & affordable powered cabinets.

The new 10-inch YXL10SP weighs in at just over 30 lbs, and opens up an option to deliver hefty bass with a small footprint. Providing 1000 watts with efficient speaker components, the YXL10SP is extremely loud for its size.

Jeff Cowling, Yorkville's vice president of sales and marketing comments, "The YXL10SP provides an affordable solution to add bass to your live sound without overwhelming the mix in intimate venues – the small club, rehearsal space, or house party. The beer-case-size design makes the YXL10SP a lightweight option for any performer to provide more bass where there is less space."

The YXL10SP is the third subwoofer in the YXL series, joining the YXL15SP & YXL18SP. "The vision for the YXL Series is to provide great sound to musicians and DJ's in an affordable and durable package," says Cowling. "With the subwoofers alone, we have solutions for the small party to the booming nightclub."

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



## CASES & STANDS

### Frameworks Premier's New Elite Series Racks for Stylish Storage of Guitars and Cases

Frameworks, a division of Gator Co., recently unveiled two new wooden guitar racks in their Elite Furniture Series lineup. These innovative racks are designed to offer an elegant and efficient solution for storing and displaying guitars and guitar cases in a wide range of environments, including studios, living rooms, showrooms, classrooms, and more.

Frameworks' new Elite Series Guitar Racks are constructed with sturdy 1 1/2-inch-thick laminated plywood for superior durability and stability. The textured wood grain surface offers a premium look and feel available in driftwood grey, dark walnut brown, and natural maple matte finishes. However, for those who prefer classic black, the standard black colorway is available to satisfy their taste.

The Elite Guitar Racks come in two sizes: a 3-space option and a 5-space option. The 3-space rack is easily configurable to fit three to five instruments or a combination of both guitars and cases. The



5-space model accommodates five to eight instruments, up to seven cases, or a combination of both. Frameworks provides cable storage hanger hooks on both models, providing a convenient place for keeping instrument cables in close reach.

Adjustable divider pegs with rubberized protective layering keep instruments and cases safely stored and separate from each other. The racks hold most acoustic, electric and bass guitars, including instruments with offset bodies. Soft padding on the base of the cradle prevents guitar bottoms from contacting the wood, along with non-slip rubber feet beneath the rack to protect floors from scratches.

Frameworks' Elite Series Wooden Guitar Racks are a must-have for any musician looking for a stylish and efficient way to store and display their guitars and cases. The racks are available now at select retailers and online stores.

Visit [www.gatorco.com](http://www.gatorco.com) to browse all the products that form the Elite Furniture Series. Gator Frameworks offers everything needed for keeping guitars safely stored and organized, along with a wide assortment of accessories designed for both studio and live applications.

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

## ACCESSORIES

### BOSS Introduces DM-101 Delay Machine

BOSS introduces the DM-101 Delay Machine, a powerful and innovative analog delay pedal for modern musicians. Driven by eight BBDs under smart CPU control, this inspiring pedal delivers 12 unique modes, stereo operation, and a wide array of tonal colors, all while maintaining 100 percent analog signal processing throughout. And with 127 user memories, tap tempo, carryover, MIDI, and more, the DM-101 offers the features and versatility of an advanced digital pedal—but with the vibrant, characterful sound that's only possible with authentic analog BBD circuitry.

Analog delays based around BBD (bucket-brigade device) microchips emerged in the 1970s as a compact and cost-effective alternative to the standard tape delays of the era. Their warm, saturated, and highly musical sound established a distinctive style of delay that remains favored by many musicians and audio engineers. With its modern CPU control approach, the DM-101 supercharges this classic effect with enhanced capabilities for today's music makers.

The DM-101 flows effortlessly between gritty vintage echoes and modern analog delay tones with extended high-frequency clarity. Multiple internal circuit elements are switched to define each of the 12 modes, including the number of active BBDs and their connection order, low-pass filter settings, and clocking rates. Twisting the Variation knob cycles through parameters unique to the different modes. And like a traditional analog delay, users can drive the effect into saturated self-oscillation by cranking the Intensity knob.

A major benefit of the DM-101's CPU control is the ability to realize sophisticated stereo sounds not available with other BBD analog delays. For example, Pan mode routes each BBD and its feedback loop to alternate points in the stereo field, while Dual Mod shifts the modulation phase for each output to generate a wide, spacious delay effect. Six of the 12 modes support stereo operation, providing everything from short reverb-like sounds and expansive modulated delays to pattern delays for intense rhythmic effects.

The DM-101 offers all the creative benefits of an advanced modern delay pedal. Tap tempo and note subdivisions are available with most modes, and there's carryover for maintaining repeats when the effect is bypassed. Users can store and recall favorite setups with four onboard memories and connect up to two footswitches



## newproducts

or an expression pedal for extended real-time control. MIDI I/O takes things further, providing remote access to 127 user memories, MIDI sync, and more. The stereo audio outputs are set for blended operation by default, but they can be easily reconfigured for wet/dry rigs and wet-only parallel setups.

### Availability & Pricing

The BOSS DM-101 is in the U.S. for \$499.99.

[www.boss.info](http://www.boss.info)

## PRO AUDIO

### TASCAM Debuts the DR-10L Pro 32-Bit Float Field Recorder and Lavalier Microphone

TASCAM is pleased to announce the introduction of the DR-10L Pro 32-Bit Float Field Recorder and Lavalier Microphone. The new DR-10L Pro is an ultra-compact, lightweight, portable 32-bit float recorder with clip-on microphone. Featuring exceptional sound quality, long battery life, provisions for remote control, the ability to sync to timecode and more, the DR-10L Pro makes an exceptional choice to record premium audio for events like weddings, on-location cinema shoots, YouTube/content videos, and general dialog interviews where the rock-solid capability of a wired lavalier recorder is proven and assured.

It employs dual ADCs to capture sounds across a huge dynamic range without distorting or introducing excessive noise—making it a great choice to capture a whisper, a scream, and everything in-between. The TM-10L lavalier microphone captures clear, detailed audio while handling loud sound pressure levels without distorting.

The DR-10L Pro's ultra-compact and lightweight form factor makes it the perfect choice when stealth is a priority. Fitting in the palm of one's hand and weighing in at just 65 grams, this recorder is easy to hide at film shoots, weddings, stage performances, and similar events where invisibility is crucial. The included belt clip attaches easily and securely to clothing, facilitating the capture of great sounding audio without compromising the talent.

The new DR-10L also benefits from exceptional, long duration battery-enabled shooting sessions. Just two lithium AAA batteries can power the DR-10L Pro personal recorder for up to 24.5 hours (16 hours with alkaline batteries), minimizing concerns over battery changes during the shoot that could interrupt workflow. In addition to its excellent battery duration time, the DR-10L Pro offers huge storage capacity, with support for microSDXC cards up to 512GB. Combined, the system offers both exceptional recording time and storage capability.

Field recording specialists will certainly appreciate the fact that up to five DR-10L Pro units can be remotely controlled using the optionally available AK-BT1 Bluetooth dongle. DR-10L Pro recorders can be controlled from iOS, iPadOS and Android devices wirelessly with the free DR-10L Pro CONNECT app. In addition to controlling up to five DR-10L Pro units remotely, the DR-10L Pro CONNECT app enables videographers to check device status and view the recorded waveforms real time for operation confirmation. Names and colors can be applied to individual devices for easy identification. Also, Metadata (project name, scene name, take number) can be recorded in the recording file (BEXT, iXML).

For those requiring timecode synchronization, the optional AK-BT1 Bluetooth dongle also enables the DR-10L Pro to wirelessly sync timecode with supported Atomos products. This enables videographers to perfectly align audio recordings with video, even when there is no audio on the camera. Timecode is crucial when videographers are dealing with multi-camera video shoots, and it saves valuable time in post-production.

The DR-10L Pro's high-visibility OLED display makes it easy to



check battery level, recording status, and input levels, with all advanced functions only a couple button presses away. And there are no irritating LED lights on the product which can leak through fabric and compromise a shot.

Just as the DR-10L makes it easy to confirm various settings, it is equally easy to monitor input and recordings. The DR-10L Pro is equipped with a headphone output for monitoring convenience. This provides the ability to monitor the input before or during recording, and check the quality of the recordings immediately without having to first transfer them to a computer.

The DR-10L Pro is bundled with f RX Elements, iZotope's groundbreaking audio repair and noise reduction software. RX Elements brings videographers powerful audio restoration capabilities that must be experienced to be fully appreciated. With RX Elements, the ability to seamlessly remove coughs and background noises, as well as reducing wind and ambient noise is just a few clicks away. For addressing a variety of post-production challenges, RX Elements is the ideal choice. Equally notable, the new DR-10L Pro provides a USB Type-C port that enables connecting an extra battery as well as facilitating easy data exchange with computers.

The TASCAM DR-10L Pro package includes the following items:

- DR-10L Pro
- Belt clip
- USB cable (Type A – Type C)
- TM-10L Lavalier microphone
- Microphone clip
- Windscreen
- Start-up guide (including warranty)
- TASCAM ID registration guide
- iZotope RX Elements download card

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

## DPA Announces New Microphone Kits for Professional Sound Engineers

After an incredible response to its new DDK4000 Drum Microphone Kit, DPA Microphones launches several new professional sound microphone kits. The new kits provide audio engineers with the ultimate selection of high-quality condenser mics for a range of purposes. With DPA mics in-use everywhere from stage to screen, the brand has created bundles of its popular solutions, including the DLK4000 Live Microphone Kit, DSK4001 Studio Microphone Kit, DRK4001 Ultimate Recording Kit and DLS4000 Location Sound Kit.

Designed with durability and versatility at the top of its requirements, the kits will fill a vital role for sound professionals.

Offering an ideal microphone and accessory selection for touring sound engineers, the DLK4000 Live Microphone Kit features 20 mics and capsules, along with a multitude of useful accessories that will enhance sound quality, clarity and consistency. For those miking more in the studio than on the stage, the DSK4001 Studio Microphone Kit offers a premier solution for small home studios and large professional spaces alike. Additionally, the DRK4001 Ultimate Recording Kit features even more top-of-the-line professional microphones to make a trip to the recording studio a breeze, and can also aid in live stage recordings. Finally, the DLS4000 Location Sound Microphone Kit features all the standard TV/film production miking solutions, along with cables, holders, concealers, adapters, clips and more.

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





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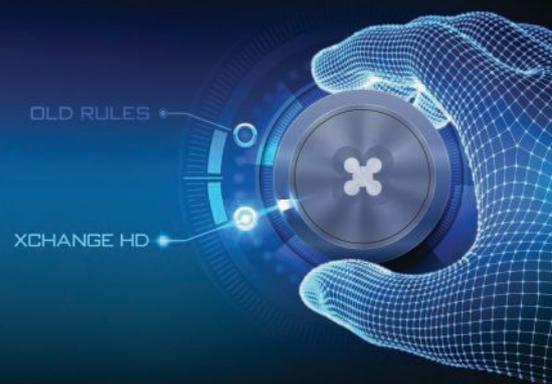
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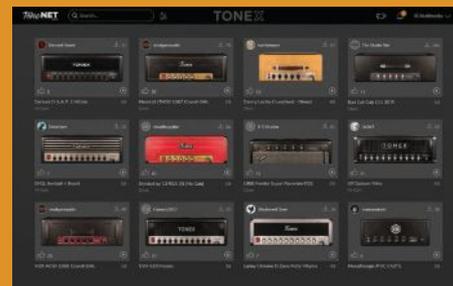
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