

# MMR

## MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW



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Exploring Casio's 40 Years of 'Creativity and Contribution'



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# RETRO RIOT!

Vintage-Styled Guitars are Striking a Chord



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*MLTSELPRO4XR remote works with the MultiSelector PRO via a standard XLR mic cable.*



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**ALLEN & HEATH**

# THE CONVERSATION IS



Levi Osborn host of *Ambiance Podcast* with guests Tameeka Murphy, creator and designer of Alani Taylor, Tyler Nicole, model and Bebe Couri, stylist (call in).

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# C O N T E N T S



MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

**FEATURES** Vol.179 SEPTEMBER 2020 No. 9

## Survey

### Hitting Their Straps: Guitar & Bass Strap Sales in 2020 15

With more participants in this month's dealer survey reporting that guitar & bass strap sales are either up or level than down, when compared to the summer of 2019, it would appear this market segment is holding its own

## Roundtable

### Retro Riot: Vintage-Styled Guitars are Striking a Chord 18

"Retro" guitars have long appealed to certain players who long for the classic vibe of instruments from the past, but who don't necessarily have the cash to purchase the real thing. We touched base with representatives from five brands that help define this market segment to learn what's new in 2020

## Annual Holiday Buyer's Guide 22

MMR has compiled a stocking guide for stores to peruse before you pick which items to line your shelves with this fall and winter. Because, after all, shopping isn't just for your customers!

## Anniversary

### Exploring Casio's 40 Years of 'Creativity and Contribution' 28

There comes a period in any long-lasting company's life when it's appropriate to tackle, impress, and astound a new generation of players. For Casio, the timing couldn't be better than the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their branching out into the musical instrument world.



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# THE *Dean* COLT BIGSBY



Loaded with DMT designed pickups, a Piezo, and dual passive outputs, what else could you need? How about a real Bigsby bridge to put it over the top. This is the perfect guitar for anyone who like that warmth and flare of classic Rock and Roll to the complex Travis picking masters. Maple Neck and Body for depth and brightness balanced with a Pau Ferro fingerboard to take the edge off with endless electronic options puts this guitar ahead of the herd.



**COLT B AQA**

**COLT B VWH**



# We're All Your Customers

By Christian **Wissmuller**



**T**his issue marks the second installment of *MMR* associate editor Mike Lawson's new "Last Word" (page 36) column. Both of these have drawn heavily upon Mike's extensive experience as an accomplished guitarist who has spent countless hours on stage and in the studio, providing insight, not just from the perspective of a MI trade magazine observer, but also as a passionate musician.

I don't say the above to brag about or compliment Mike, necessarily (although he is quite good – check out mikelawson.com), but because through his first two "Last Word" entries, I've been reminded how uniquely positioned – and lucky – we at *MMR* are with respect to our staff and the collective insight into the culture of music making. Terry Lowe, our president, is an experienced drummer, marketing director Matt King is bassist in a well-known Boston band, associate editor Victoria Wasylak received the 2019 Boston Music Award for "Music Journalist of the Year" (and her significant other is the guitarist for a popular local band – my own band's label mates), vice president William Vanyo is a multi-instrumentalist, and it wouldn't surprise me to learn that others on the payroll have musical abilities I simply haven't been exposed to yet.

**“If there's a significant development in the MI industry (oh, I dunno a global pandemic, say), we're not just rooting around to report hard, cold data – we're personally impacted, too.”**

That means we're all your customers – not just folks with journalism or marketing degrees who randomly landed at this company. I don't only dig up stats and get quotes – though I do that, too, of course; I genuinely care about all this stuff, as do all on board here at Timeless Communications.

Ok, the above is pretty much just bragging. But I'll stand by it.

Between my hallway, bedroom, living room, basement, and practice space I have the accumulated instrument and gear purchases from over 30 years of practicing, gigging, and recording. A conservative estimate would put the total value at... slightly less than my home, but not by much. I know King has an even more extensive "collection" than myself (Matt, seek help).

If you make it, odds are decent that somebody over here at *MMR* has it. If you sell it, odds are also pretty good that we are – or eventually will be – either walking through your door or ordering something from your site.

If there's a significant development in the MI industry (oh, I dunno – a global pandemic, say), we're not just rooting around to report hard, cold data – we're personally impacted, too.

The entirety of this Editorial could, understandably, read like shameless back-patting. I realize many, if not most, in this trade play instruments (or used to), so it's not as if I believe we're singular in that distinction. Reading over Lawson's newest column, however, made me reassess things I already knew about my coworkers and appreciate what we (hopefully) are able to bring to the table when putting these issues together.

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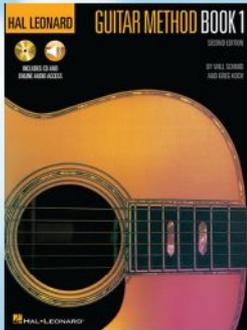
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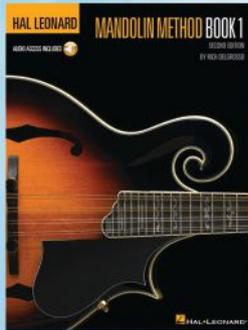


# HAL LEONARD TEACHES THE WORLD TO PLAY

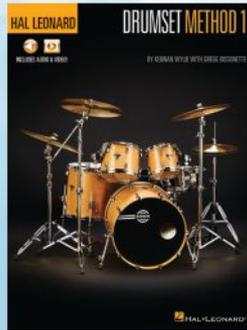
These days, instrument sales are booming and we know all those new owners will need to learn how to play them. You can count on Hal Leonard to have the methods you and your customers need!



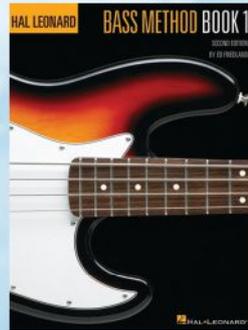
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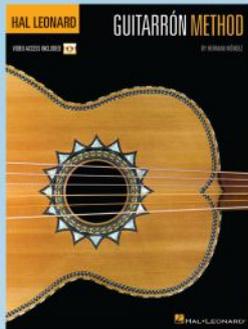
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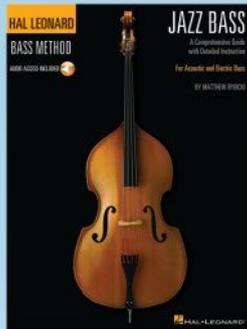
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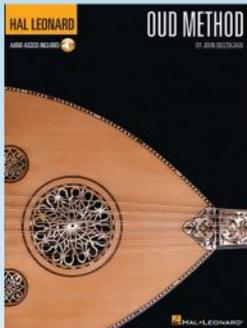
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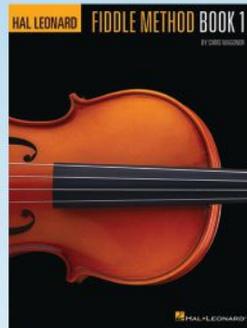
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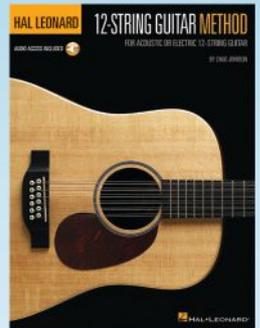
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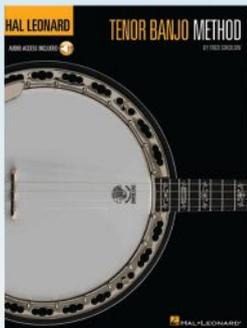
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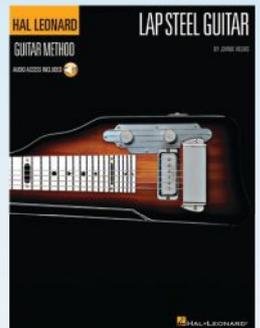
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MAP: **\$892.00**

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



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Total MAP: \$595.00

Ukuleles MAP at \$99.00 ea.

Package **includes** the following 6 ukuleles and matching **gig bags**, as well as **free freight** with purchase:

- (3) Aztec Concert Ukuleles
- (3) Masterpiece Concert Ukuleles
- (6) Matching padded bags



DISPLAYS AVAILABLE



# Industry News

## Letters

Christian,

Saw your recent [news item] "Reverb Announces Plans to Change Selling Fees." The company is trying to play up that they will be providing more resources and getting out in front of more buyers to justify an increase from 3.5 percent to 5 percent. That's more than a 40 percent increase in fees! As a reseller, that's extortion! Etsy paid \$275-million in cash for Reverb. For them, it's only about one thing – the bottom line profit. The money's already there.

Four pages after the above mentioned story in the August issue we get introduced to the company's new CEO David Mandelbrot [Upfront Q&A, pg. 12 – Ed.]. I notice in the story you don't mention much of his background. He's neither a musician nor music oriented. Mandelbrot comes from Yahoo and the crowdfunding platform Indiegogo.

Reverb was founded by David Kalt. He wanted to provide an outlet for musicians [to sell instruments and gear] without being gouged by the likes of eBay with fees. Sadly, it looks like Kalt has taken the money and been phased out by Etsy, with Mandelbrot brought in to make them more money. Somebody's got to pay back the \$275-million cash outlay – and it looks like it will be us musicians.

— Ken Voss

## Chauvet Expands U.S. Operations With New Vegas Facility

Chauvet has doubled its capacity to serve customers in the west region of the U.S. by opening a 35,000



square foot satellite facility in Las Vegas. The new office-warehouse-service center complex is twice the size of the company's West Coast Burbank, California satellite facility that it replaced on August 10.

Combined with the company's Global Headquarters in Florida, the new Vegas operation gives Chauvet the capacity to ship to any point in the 48 contiguous United States within three days, maximum.

- Industry News
- Supplier Scene
- Trade Regrets
- Letters
- People on the Move

## 2021 Winter NAMM Show Cancelled, NAMM Announces Believe in Music Week

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and with the health and safety of NAMM members as the first priority, NAMM is reimagining how to connect all facets of the industry while benefiting those most deeply impacted by COVID-19 with the launch of Believe in Music: The global gathering to unify and support the people who bring music to the world.

Believe in Music, to be held over the week of January 18, 2021, will feature a mix of comprehensive programming and professional education at BelieveinMusic.tv, as well as an interactive marketplace to connect buyers and sellers – all designed to elevate the innovation and inspiration found across the industry while offering support for those most deeply affected by COVID. While not The NAMM Show or a virtual tradeshow, the initiative will meet the immediate business needs of NAMM member companies through thought-leader led education for all segments of the industry, networking and AI matchmaking, and business-to-business-focused opportunities to reaffirm and grow business connections, launch new products, share brand initiatives, and engage with customers in real-time.

The weeklong celebration will welcome domestic and international

NAMM members from the music instrument, pro audio, live sound, and live event industries, artists, media, and policymakers, along with participants from GenNext (college music students and faculty), Music Education Days (school music administrators and buyers) and Nonprofit Institute (NAMM Foundation grantees and nonprofit affiliates). Emerging and established musicians and fans are invited to connect with brands and in special music-making projects and opportunities to showcase their talents and performances throughout the week, opening the potential to gather music makers in a capacity not restricted by location.

The Top 100 Dealer Awards will also be celebrated during the week. Now in its 10th year, the annual awards honor music retailers who have demonstrated a commitment to best practices, creativity, and innovation in retail. The submissions process is now open for NAMM retail members and will close on October 2, 2020. Learn more and submit now at [www.NAMM.org/Top100](http://www.NAMM.org/Top100)

Additional details of these events, receptions and other activities will be provided in the weeks to come. For those interested in participating or to learn more, visit <https://believeinmusic.tv/> to sign-up for future updates.

Official Hashtag: #BelieveinMusic

## Essential Elements Interactive Expanding

Hal Leonard's Essential Elements Interactive, the online component for its Essential Elements methods for band and strings, crossed over a half million student users this past school year. Hal Leonard credits this milestone to Essential Elements Interactive's critical role in helping music directors move their programs online as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The online resources and communication tools helped students and teachers stay connected and continue to learn music.



Essential Elements is expanding this fall to offer:

- Student video recording and submission via the EEi Music Studio
- SoundCheck™ performance assessment in Noteflight Learn for book 1-3 exercises
- EE Digital Access purchase that offers access to both EEi and EE Books online
- EEi integration with Google Classroom and other learning management systems
- Free 60-Day subscription to Sheet Music Direct Pass for all EEi teachers and students (via parents)

Access to Essential Elements Interactive is included with each method book purchase. EE exercises are also available to Noteflight Learn users to use with SoundCheck™, powered by MatchMySound™.



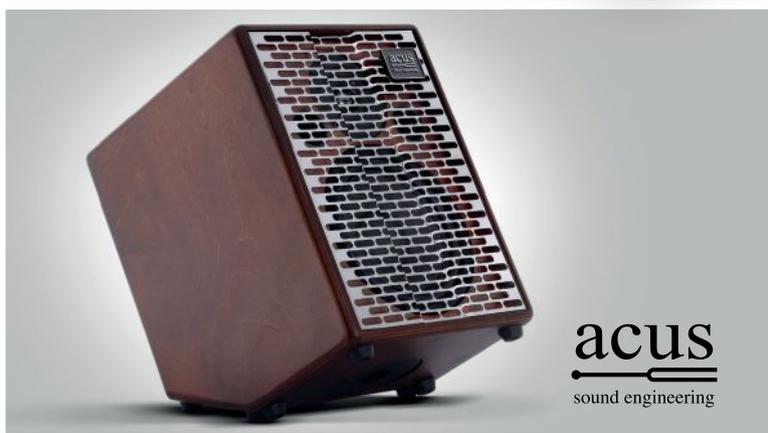
  
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# Supplier Scene

## Walden Guitars Now Distributed in U.S. by KHS America

After several years of absence from the market, Walden Guitars were re-introduced at the 2020 NAMM show this past January, and will be distributed in the United States by KHS America. Founded originally in 1996 by Jonathan Lee and KHS Musical Instruments, Walden offers steel-string, classical, and baritone guitars that offer unique low-mass bracing and neck reinforcement designs to meet the needs of discriminating players.



"I'm so excited to be working closely with KHS America to offer Walden guitars to U.S. musicians and dealers once again. My vision has always been to infuse every Walden with the best balance of musicality, stability, appearance, and affordability," says Jonathan Lee. "I always felt that the Walden story was not over, so when I had the opportunity to secure and re-awaken Walden, I had to take it. Today's Waldens are the best yet and it is my hope that your 2020 Walden experience will be a wonderful one."

"Adding Walden guitars to the KHS family of brands makes so much sense as it gives our retail partners more reasons to grow with us," said Kevin Philbin, director of sales and marketing for Combo brands. "Jon Lee has done a terrific job designing an innovative and competitive product line and we look forward to renewing this partnership."

## Los Angeles Unified School District Announces Partnership with SmartMusic

MakeMusic Inc., creators of SmartMusic, have partnered with Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to provide all LAUSD elementary, middle, and senior high school music teachers and students with subscriptions to the innovative web-based practice and assessment platform.

"After vetting many music apps available to music educators, I am proud to announce that we will be collaborating with SmartMusic to continue our mission of offering high quality music education to our students. This decision is overwhelmingly supported by our music teachers in elementary, middle, and senior high schools. We strongly believe that the brilliance of SmartMusic will enhance our amazing music programs throughout the District by providing our dedicated teachers with the necessary tools to meet the needs of both virtual, and when the time is right again, in person music instruction," says Dr. Steven J. McCarthy, director of Arts Education, division of Instruction, Los Angeles Unified School District.

With Los Angeles being one of the hardest hit counties in the COVID-19 pandemic, and with virtual learning as the

chosen direction to start the school year, SmartMusic is the natural solution for remote music instruction. The web-based practice tool offers an unrivaled repertoire library, game-changing practice tools, and helps teachers connect with and track student progress, allowing students to continue their musical development and growth from home.

"The SmartMusic team is tremendously honored to be able to support the teachers and students of LAUSD now and in the future," says Johann Gouws, senior vice president, Global Customer Team, MakeMusic. "Since the initial round of school closures, we have worked tirelessly to evolve and develop our music practice platform, allowing teachers and students to remain connected and continue sharing in the joy of making music – whether in person, or remote. We commend LAUSD for their proactive efforts to ensure educators are well equipped to address the unique challenges of the virtual music classroom. Through working together, we are committed to further advance SmartMusic as we support the needs of and collaborate with LAUSD teachers and students."

## Conn-Selmer Launches New Online Learning Initiative

Conn-Selmer, Inc. has launched a completely new digital solution to include professional development tools for educators, online learning programs, and digital event management strategies for both music industry professionals and local educational communities.

To facilitate this initiative and the expansion of these online learning programs, training, consulting, event management solutions, and professional development tools for educators and music industry partners, the company has chosen Elisa Janson Jones to take the helm as their new senior manager of Online Learning. Elisa will expand available support and training for Conn-Selmer's dealer network and also ensure the Division of Education's online initiatives are actively serving and growing the instrumental music industry around the globe.

Over the last few months, Conn-Selmer has been testing the expansion of its Division of Education to include new online support and services for music educators and professional organizations within the music industry.

The company recently transformed its annual Conn-Selmer Institute (CSI) into a completely online multi-day event, renamed CSI Connect, and served over 2,000 attendees from all 50 states and twelve countries.

Now, Conn-Selmer is adding new online learning solutions as a service to instrumental educators asking for increased help and resources as they navigate a hybrid and ever-changing educational landscape.

"I am very excited to join Conn-Selmer's outstanding team of industry leaders and music education professionals," shares Jones. "As we all begin to navigate this new virtual landscape both within music manufacturing and music education worldwide I look forward to fostering new relationships and pushing the boundaries of how we support our various partners and communities."

To learn more about Conn-Selmer's CSI Connect workshops, educational clinician network, stimulus funding, or new online learning programs, visit [education.conn-selmer.com](http://education.conn-selmer.com).

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## Trade Regrets

On July 23, NAMM's Dan Del Fiorentino shared the following sad news:

Our dear **Phyllis Fender** passed away yesterday in her home in Fullerton, California, not far from the factory where her late husband made his famous electric guitars.

After reading several publications on his life's work, it was a refreshing treat to hear about the man behind the workbench

when Mrs. Fender sat down for her NAMM Oral History interview in 2003. She recalled Leo's passion for his work and how he would wake up in the middle of the night with an idea. She spoke of their marriage, his love of ice cream and the illness that took him from her in 1991. Phyllis was the proud keeper of his flame, providing presentations about him whenever she was asked.



## ON THE MOVE

**LOUD Audio, LLC** has announced the appointment of their new CEO, **Alex Nelson**. Nelson has been with the company since 2006 (then named LOUD Technologies, Inc.). He became president of Loud's Retail Brands in 2011 and president of the company in 2018.



Nelson has been engrained in the audio industry since 1988, where he turned his love of music into a career. He has held a wide range of positions across many facets of the industry including service, retail, sales, marketing, and a variety of executive leadership roles.

**Yamaha Corporation of America** announced that **Randy Beck** has joined the company as vice president, Integrated Marketing. He reports directly to Matt Searfus, corporate vice president, Integrated Marketing. In his new role, Beck is responsible for managing and leading YCA's key marketing departments, including consumer audio, guitar, keyboard, percussion, professional audio, and winds & strings.



**Guitar Center** has announced several appointments and promotions that reflect the company's omni-channel sales and growth strategy.

**Mohit Parasher** has been hired as president of Guitar Center's Business Solutions. In his new role, Parasher will help drive both top- and bottom-line growth and expand the scope of GC's Business Solutions, the company's business-to-business (B2B) arm.



Additionally, GC.com executive **Bob Buckborough** has been promoted to senior vice president of Direct-to-Consumer and long-time Guitar Center executive **Michael Doyle** has been appointed senior vice president, Guitars & Tech Merchandising.

**Earthworks Audio** has brought **Mike Dias** on board as VP of Global Sales & Marketing. Dias spent five years as the director of sales and marketing for Ultimate Ears prior to making the move to Earthworks.



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# Hitting Their Straps

## Guitar & Bass Strap Sales in 2020

By Christian Wissmuller



**W**ith more participants in this month's dealer survey reporting that guitar & bass strap sales are either up or level than down, when compared to the summer of 2019, it would appear this market segment is holding its own.

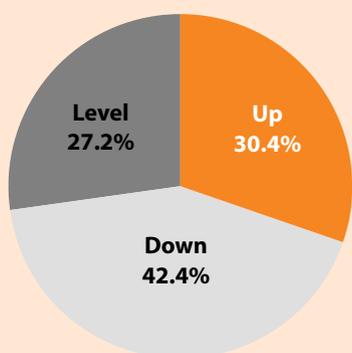
With respect to trends, many observed that higher-end product is doing well this year and more than a few pointed to a spike in popularity for Jacquard straps. Of course, to the surprise of nobody, the factor most commonly referenced is the pandemic and its impact on business.

However, even on that there was no consensus. For every MI re-

tailer who pointed to COVID-19 as the driving force behind slower sales, there was another who claimed lockdown and social distancing have helped. For example, Ted Parrish of Viroqua, Wisconsin's Parrish Music says, "Sales of straps are down the same as other product categories are down due to the pandemic." Meanwhile, Mantova's Two Street Music's (Eureka, California) Anthony Mantova enthuses, "Guitar sales have skyrocketed since COVID-19, I guess people finally had enough of 'Oprah' and daytime TV and they are thinking, 'What a good time to learn guitar!'"

Strange times, to be sure.

### Compared to last summer, sales of guitar & bass straps for business are...



### In terms of volume (number of units sold), which types of strap sell most at your store?

Nylon: 50.8%

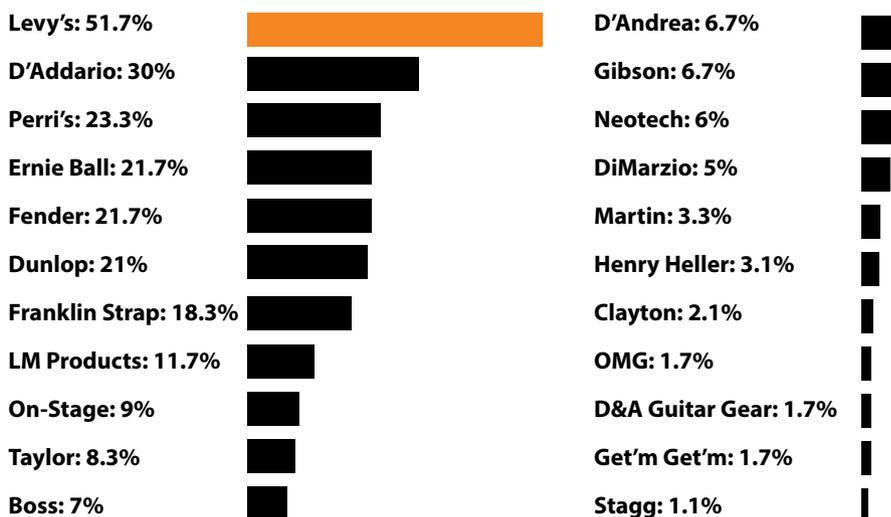
Leather: 23.8%

Polyester: 12.7%

Cotton: 11.1%

Neoprene or Memory Foam: 1.6%

### What brands of guitar & bass straps generate the most profit for your operation?



### Have you noticed any significant shifts or trends when it comes to guitar & bass straps, on either the end-user or supplier sides?

"We will ramp up our selection significantly within the next few months, including many exotic and boutique models. We also order additional hand-crafted leather straps made by a local artisan, and can offer custom tooling as well, for the discriminating holiday shopper."

**Jerry Vesely**  
Vesely Music Co.  
Parowan, Utah

"Buyers are less interested in entry-level straps, and more interested in higher-end straps."

**Allen McBroom**  
Backstage Music  
Starkville, Mississippi

"The faux leather straps at \$19.95 sell incredibly well and we make a full 50 per-

cent margin on them. Also, the Jacquard straps which are reminiscent of the straps of the '60s and '70s are on a huge upswing in sales."

**Ed Intagliata**  
Cassells Music  
San Fernando, California

"Too often a nice guitar strap is treated like an afterthought during a guitar sale. Selling a \$100 strap is no different than selling a \$100 pedal, *but...* you have to sell it. If the customer just spent \$3,500 on a new guitar don't you think they'd spend \$100-plus for a nice leather strap? Of course they would."

**Tim Bascom**  
Morgan Music Services, Inc.  
Lebanon, Missouri



### Note From Joe

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## Believe in Music—Belong to NAMM

**Being part of a larger community means you never have to go at it alone, especially during a pandemic.**

On behalf of the NAMM team and our volunteer Board of Directors, we want to thank you and express our deep appreciation for your membership and involvement in the NAMM community. We recognize and share the difficulties created by our current global health crisis and remain committed to supporting our members through this trying time.

We thank you for your past support and would appreciate the honor to continue to serve your business. We are committed to providing a variety of benefits to help our industry thrive. Please let us know how we can best serve you. Our membership team is here to connect any time!

**Joe Lamond**  
NAMM President and CEO

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I want to thank NAMM for the numerous webinars on various topics as we navigate these unprecedented times. It has been VERY timely, informative and encouraging!

Angela Gammon, Owner • Third Rock Music Center



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I don't think I could've accomplished as much without all of the hard work that NAMM has put in to supporting its members.

Steven Eichler, Contract CFO • Gryphon Stringed Instruments, Inc.



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**“R**etro” guitars have long appealed to players who long for the classic vibe of instruments from the past, but who don’t necessarily have the cash to purchase the real thing (or who don’t want to get onstage at a dive bar with a \$30,000 guitar slung over their shoulder).

We touched base with representatives from five brands that help define this market segment to learn what’s new in 2020. These vintage-styled guitars – and we’re not talking “reliced” or even, necessarily, custom shop exact reproductions of iconic models (although two of the participants in this month’s Roundtable touch upon the latter) – are seemingly more popular now than ever, with new models and entire lines being introduced, players of all ages and backgrounds snapping them up, and well stocked dealers turning a tidy profit.

**What is it about electric guitars with a “vintage” appearance that appeals to certain players? What types of folks are drawn to these instruments?**

**Laurie Abshire:** Vintage doesn’t always mean classic, but with our reborn 5/51 line, our goal was to get a classic looking and feeling guitar out into the market for players on a budget, and to bring life back into the 1960s Framus Vintage Studio Archtops. With Framus having such deep roots in the 1960s and 1970s worldwide guitar history (largest European guitar manufacturer of the late 1960s), these archtop style guitars are in our blood.

Vintage style guitars have always held one of the top spots among guitarists, both tonally and aesthetically. All types of players have some level of respect for these timeless designs. Whether you’re picking one up because your dad or grandpa had one just like it back in the day, or simply the fact that you’re looking for a guitar to fill a specific hole in your arsenal, these guitars have the potential to find a happy home with every player.

**Mike Lewis:** I think it’s the body of work they represent. We all have our favorite Fender artists. And those artists have written, recorded and performed music on or with these guitars. So when you see them or hear them, it hits you right in the heart. You identify with it. It spans the whole spectrum. We have players of all ages, backgrounds and skill levels.

**Lincoln Smith:** The guitar industry is always reflecting a great deal of nostalgia. The 1950s and ‘60s were a hotbed of



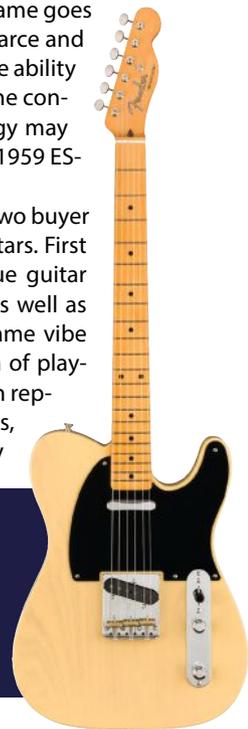
new and exciting innovations for the electric guitar. Guitarists have been drawn back to the styles of this era consistently through the decades after. Our goal has been to dig up some of the less-known or less-celebrated designs of that era, and give them the spotlight they deserve. Besides – not everyone wants a guitar that looks like everyone else’s. A large majority of guitars on the market today point back to a specific few designs from the 1950s. We let people celebrate the nostalgia without the often associated monotony – or price tag.

We’ve seen a huge demographic bandwidth shop our models. Sometimes it’s the experienced player who’s looking to branch out from their standard Gibson and Fender rut; sometimes it’s someone looking for their first guitar, and they’re drawn in by a particular style or finish. I would say that most of Eastwood’s customers are those of us who have an affinity for obscure vintage brands and models, but are turned off either by the poor build quality or the astronomical prices of the originals. Usually both! We’ve made it our goal to kill two birds with one stone and build stage- and

studio-ready guitars that are affordable to a broad spectrum of players.

**Mat Koehler:** The guitar market is mostly comprised of platforms that are many decades old. Some say that’s because guitarists tend to be conservative in their tastes, but another possibility is that guitars have only evolved so far. A 1930s flattop acoustic is tough to improve upon as an instrument. Same goes for a 1950s electric guitar. But since those are scarce and extremely valuable, the sliding scale becomes the ability to recreate the same value as an instrument in the context of modern music. The peripheral technology may improve, but you’re not going to “improve” on a 1959 ES-335 as a guitar, if that makes sense.

**Frank Thompson:** At Italia, we have noticed two buyer personas that gravitate to the “retro” vibe of guitars. First are the players from a generation that had true guitar hero role models that they aspired to be like, as well as sound like, that are after capturing that very same vibe for themselves. Secondly is the new generation of players that is looking for something unique, that can represent that uniqueness in themselves as players, that doesn’t look like the same three main body

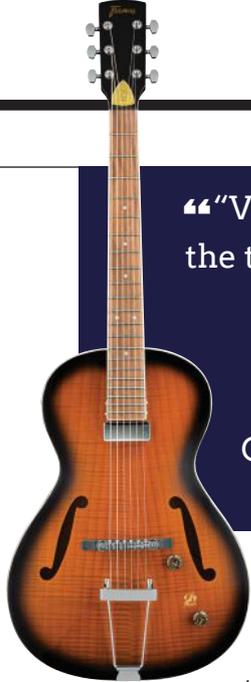


**“So many rock anthems have been written on, and recorded with these guitars over the years, I don’t think they’ll ever go out of style.”**

**Mike Lewis, VP of Product Development, Fender Custom Shop**

“Vintage style guitars have always held one of the top spots among guitarists, both tonally and aesthetically.”

**Laurie Abshire, General Manager USA & Canada Operations, Framus & Warwick Music USA, Inc.**



styles that have dominated the electric guitar market for decades. These players want to have a sound, style, vibe, and look that separates them from the masses, and is a true extension of what makes them truly their unique self. Italia has always focused on capturing that vibe and attitude of yesteryear, but without having the playability issues that are common to many of the original vintage instruments that still remain, and can buy them without breaking the bank, and having to worry about damaging, losing or – God forbid – having the irreplaceable instrument stolen. They can enjoy all of the benefits without the worry and expense of owning the originals.

**For your brand, what specific model (or models) of this type has/have been selling particularly well lately?**

**MK:** One of our most popular models is the Original Collection Les Paul Standard 50s. It's \$2,499 USD Minimum Advertised Price and really the most reverent and accessible equivalent to a 1959 Gibson Les Paul Standard – the holy grail guitar played by countless music legends which sells for at least about a half-million dollars these days. We also make a Custom Shop 1959 Les Paul Standard Reissue, which is virtually indistinguishable from the vintage model and priced at \$6,499. Either way they look like a pretty incredible value when compared to the original 1959 models.

**LS:** Lately, we've been seeing a lot of love for models that buck the traditional layouts and tunings. Our tenor guitars, baritone guitars, bass 6, lap steels, and electric mandolins seem to command the attention of guitarists looking for a next challenge, or trying to push themselves into a new creative space. Our Warren Ellis line embodies that spirit, with the original Warren Ellis Signature Tenor serving as a template for things you don't see every day like our Mandocello, or concepts that are altogether new such as our Tenor Baritone or the Warren Ellis 5.

Given the circumstances for many around the world, I would imagine that people, and guitarists in particular, have been looking for new hobbies and challenges while quarantining. What a better way to occupy your time than by learning a new instrument with new chord shapes, scales, and voicings?

**FT:** Italia has had a few models in the lineup for decades now, and continue to find their place in the market, but some of the most recent models [already] have found their place in the market. The Italia Maranello Cavo is a short 30" scale semi-hollow body 4-string bass that packs enormous punch in a very comfortable package. Older bass players who have been lugging around these big, heavy basses for years and years are tired of the back issues that come along with that, and are looking for something that's lighter, has an amazing, unique tone, and that they can play for hours without the pain. The Cavo has a very tight low-mids tone, with amazing definition of sound. It works perfectly as a studio bass, or for playing at the clubs once we are back to a normal COVID-less scene.

The JF6, which is a little more traditional than most of Italia's lineup has been a real performer. Developed in cooperation with Jeffrey Foskett of The Beach Boys fame, the three-pickup JF6 has a very wide palate of sound possibilities, with access to every possible pickup combination – all with no pickup selector switch. You can "dial in" any combination and fine-tune variation between all three pickups using blend control pots, so you choose exactly the right combination ratio of sound that you want from each pickup. It represents maximum control for just the sound you are looking for from the three Italia Mini Humbuckers.

**ML:** Certainly the Stratocaster and Telecaster models. In the Custom Shop, we offer just

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“We let people celebrate the nostalgia without the often associated monotony – or price tag.”

**Lincoln Smith, Client Relations Manager, Eastwood Guitars**

about anything from any era. If I had to call out one model, it would probably be an early 1950's Telecaster – '51, '52, '53. This year we brought back the Limited Edition 1950 Broadcaster (predecessor to the Telecaster) for the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. It's been very well received.

**LA:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our original release date for these guitars has been rescheduled for late September. However, the Vintage Parlors have been buzzing for quite some time, and have gained an exciting amount of traction within the U.S. We had excellent feedback in January at NAMM. With a MAP of \$599, these guitars are extremely attainable and sound and play great. With three beautiful high polish color options – Solid Black, Honey Sunburst, and Burgundy Blackburst – and a beautiful Tiger Stipe Ebony fretboard, these guitars fit perfectly with the modern reprisal of vintage instruments while still keeping that modern Framus edge.

**For players who are into the vintage aesthetic, what are the benefits to purchasing a “retro-style” new guitar, rather than simply buying an instrument actually made in the '50, '60s, '70s, and so on?**

**LS:** The hefty price tags associated with the vintage guitar market are no secret. We specifically tackle designs that aesthetically scratch the itch of those pining over a vintage piece without the astronomical cost and poor playability that are usually associated with these guitars. If you do find a guitar from the '60s that fits within a casual budget, more often than not, it's going to require a neck reset and/or other repair costs to wrestle it into an easily playable condition. At Eastwood, when replicating a vintage design, we focus not just on keeping the model affordable, but meeting a modern guitarist's standards of playability and adjustability. Throughout our catalogue, you'll see that most models feature adjustable bridges and truss rods, allowing a player to dial in their preferred action with precision. You just won't find that in a lot of the source material – for example, vintage Airline models.

**FT:** As touched on earlier, it's very common for an actual vintage instrument from that era to have playability and reliability issues. As materials age, some will become brittle and break, there can also be neck and action issues, and the wear that comes from decades of play. The other issue, and perhaps more important, is the risk of damage or theft/loss to such a rare and often irreplaceable instrument. You need to treat it with such care, that for most it's not worth the risk of damaging such a prized possession.

Buying a new retro just makes sense for most

players. It removes the worry from all of those issues, and gives them the playability of the incredible and consistent quality of an instrument that Italia has been producing for years. The Mirr factory in South Korea has been renowned for making some of the finest quality electric guitars in the world for decades now and, being the owner of the Italia brand themselves, they give the Italia brand 110 percent of their attention to detail.

**LA:** For some, it is a safer financial investment than purchasing an “actual” vintage guitar – in cases where the actual vintage instrument has a higher price-tag due to it being antique, as well as the possibility of heavy-duty repair work that comes with true vintage guitars. The guitar may have been taken great care of and requires no “start-up” costs, or you may have to spend the next six months investing time and money into getting the instrument in working order. It is always a roll of the dice, especially with the current market and the uncertainty of purchasing an instrument online or sight unseen.

**Mark Agnesi:** Straight off the shelf, you're never going to have to worry about having to re-fret something or change the pots or change the integrity of the instrument. A lot of vintage guitars sound great and they have that look and feel, but then you go to play them [out], and realize there are potential downsides. With a brand-new guitar you know it's going to have fresh frets on it, you know when you get to the gig and you turn the volume pot, it's going to work. Certain things like that really are beneficial to the people who want to go out and actually play these things.

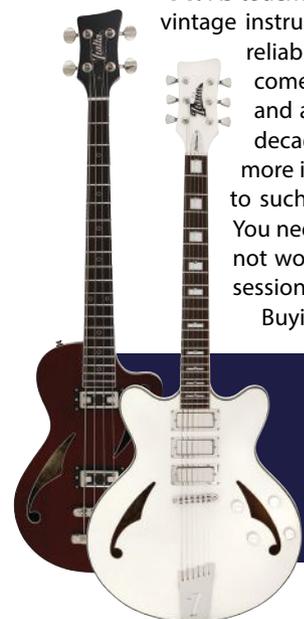
**ML:** We have many players who own original vintage guitars that just don't want to risk taking them out into the world. Some of these guitars are quite valuable, and actually irreplaceable. So they have us build something just like it for them to use at gigs and such. The added benefit here is the players can specify features to suit their individual needs without altering a vintage instrument.

**MK:** Because we've made them undeniable in comparison and actually improved upon certain elements, whether they be new aesthetic options or the fresh new frets or the lifetime warranty. Why buy a 1957 Les Paul Custom for \$40,000 when the Gibson Custom Shop makes one that is identical in every way for a fraction of the price? The only difference is the connection with history. But even that is something we strive to provide, with vintage-accurate cases and accoutrements.

**Have you noticed any trends with this particular-market segment of late? What are your expectations for the “vintage style” electric guitar market in the coming months?**

“It's very common for an actual vintage instrument from that era to have playability and reliability issues... Buying a new retro just makes sense for most players.”

**Frank Thompson, President, Italia Guitars USA**





“The trends I see concern guitars from the 1970s and 1980s. There is increased demand for designs from those eras.”

**Mat Koehler**, Head of Product, Gibson



**MA:** There’s always been an emphasis on the ‘50s and ‘60s guitars, but in terms of retro trends, right now the ‘80s are making a huge comeback. And what I see in the future is our other brand, Kramer, really stepping up here. I always tell people that ‘84 is the new ‘59. And those Kramer 84s – the guitar that kind of launched the shred revolution – is going to be making a big comeback here, I think, across genres in a very, very big way.

**LA:** I think the “modern meets vintage” take that a lot of manufacturers have been doing is a great move for the industry. It is such a unique experience holding up an actual 50 year old guitar next to a brand new one, and to see the history of this exact guitar, and what has changed between the two. I believe that the industry will continue to find a way to harmoniously

mix those timeless attributes and modern technology. It is exciting to see these new innovations crafting solutions for long time problems found in vintage instruments. I look forward to seeing what the industry does next.

**FT:** Italia has seen an uptick in interest in the retro style models, especially during this COVID lockdown period. I think people are getting deep into thought and scrutinization on their sound, their vibe, and their look, and really finding that special instrument that fits their unique style and taste. Italia provides an alternative to those that want to be unique.

**ML:** It’s always hot for us. So many rock anthems have been written on, and recorded with these guitars over the years, I don’t think they’ll ever go out of style.

**LS:** It’s important to remember that

most of the electric guitar market is “vintage style,” with the most popular models holding over from the 1950s. This instinct of tying nostalgia to guitar design, and the magnetic effect it has on players isn’t going anywhere as far as I can tell. Regarding the recreation of lesser known vintage designs, such as our Muscraft-inspired Eastwood Messenger, or the Yamaha-inspired SG2C Flying Banana, interest has never been higher. Every day we’re receiving requests and suggestions for models down the road, whether that be variations on existing Eastwood models or new tributes altogether. You can see the effect of this demand on our “Bring it Back” page on the Eastwood website, where interested customers are able to crowdfund new models and effectively vote on what model we produce next. 



“With a brand-new guitar you know it’s going to have fresh frets on it, you know when you get to the gig and you turn the volume pot, it’s going to work.”

**Mark Agnesi**,

Director of Brand Experience, Gibson



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2020

## Holiday Buying Guide

By Victoria Wasylak

It's been an unpredictable year for small businesses, to say the least, but if one thing is for certain, it's that holiday-fueled sales are still right around the corner. *MMR* has compiled a stocking guide for you to peruse before you pick which items to line your shelves with this fall and winter. Because, after all, shopping isn't just for your customers!

### Under \$25

#### Bourns Professional Audio & Lighting Rotary Encoder

For professional audio and lighting designs, the Bourns Model PEC11H rotary encoder is engineered with an innovative ball/spring design, which gives applications that require a rugged menu-select encoder a strong, positive detent feel. This high force detent feature satisfies demands for more noticeable and smooth tactile control feedback. Bourns' new rotary encoder also features quadrature output with a 100,000 rotational cycle rating and a -25 °C to +70 °C operating temperature range. Delivering design flexibility, the Model PEC11H is offered in various resolutions and knurled and flatted shaft lengths as well as with a momentary push switch option. \$0.90 - \$2.49 in certain quantities.



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

#### Chedeville Teeth & Mouthpiece Protector Cushions

The Chedeville Teeth and Mouthpiece protector cushions are smaller than many other cushions because too large a patch can deaden vibrations from the mouthpiece, which takes away some of the richness in the sound. This is the best clear mouthpiece cushion to protect your mouthpiece and the enamel on your teeth. Pack includes four mouthpiece cushions. MSRP: \$5.95



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

#### D'Angelico's Electrozinc Strings

Combining modern innovation with John D'Addario's original designs, D'Angelico's Electrozinc strings are the truest tribute to Bethanized™ Steel since the original. Designed to produce exceptional fullness and volume, Electrozinc strings provide modern players timeless vintage tone, and D'Addario's EXP technology coats every string to maintain that sound even longer. \$9.99



#### www.dangelicostrings.com Hercules Stands Accessory Hook

Hercules Stands have introduced the HA-700 accessory hook to provide musicians, engineers, DJs, and podcasters a "helping hand" while keeping their gear safe. Working musicians and podcasters need solutions when it comes to where to put many of their prized possessions, including headphones, which this hook holds with style. \$14.99



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

#### SIT Strings' American Roots Monel Strings

With the release of American Roots Monel, SIT Strings brings back a sound that hasn't been heard in decades. The vintage nickel and copper alloy create a warmer tone that takes you back in time sonically, when instruments first made the move to metal strings. American Roots Monel acoustic strings bring the rich tone and played-in feel from the past combined with the quality and consistency of SIT Strings state-of-the-art winding techniques and core material. \$14.99



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

#### Excelcia Music Publishing's Adaptable Quartets

Excelcia Music Publishing's *Adaptable Quartets* is designed for music classrooms where the number of students and instrumental make-up are unknown and changing by the day. It broadens options for music educators by providing genuine flexibility with quartets that can be used with any combination of wind and percussion instruments. *Adaptable Quartets* contains 21 new compositions or arrangements that are scored in four-line quartets and can be played with a small chamber group or expanded up to full ensemble. Books are available for flute, oboe, Bb clarinet/bass clarinet/Bb trumpet/baritone t.c., alto saxophone/baritone saxophone, tenor saxophone, horn in F, trombone/euphonium/bassoon, tuba, and percussion. \$14.99



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

#### The Black Mountain Thumb Pick

The Black Mountain Thumb Pick combines the feel and familiarity of a traditional flatpick with a patented, spring-loaded thumb ring, providing an easy, comfortable fit. The flat pick component is a modified 1.5 millimeter nylon pick with a beveled edge, providing excellent speed, string-feel, durability, and tone. The thumb ring is ergonomically sculpted to provide a universal fit while enabling the flat pick to flex along with the picking motion. Three picks for \$19.99



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

#### Hosa Technology's USB-306CC Cables

The USB-306CC USB 3.1 Gen 2 Cable features USB-C connectors on both ends and adds a protective weave around the cable jacket for added durability. The addition of USB 3.1 grants manufacturers the ability to transfer data and power at rates faster than ever before. SuperSpeed USB can be found in computers, televisions, tablets, smart phones, and many other devices. MSRP: \$24.50



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

## Under \$50

### Levy's Leathers Classics Series Padded Black Leather Guitar Strap

The M26PD leather guitar strap from Levy's represents the next generation of classic Levy's styling. It's made from top-grain leather with a generously padded garment leather backing for comfort that lasts all night long. \$29.99

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



### The Meredith Signature Quick-Change Acoustic Guitar Capo

This limited-edition signature quick-change acoustic guitar capo features a thoroughly modern, chromed-out Candy Teal finish, Kyser's low-tension spring, and a handwritten signature stamp, along with Kyser's classic Quick-Change shape. These capos are available in a limited quantity of 2,020 units and wrapped in a special-edition premium package. MSRP: \$29.99

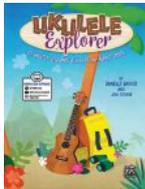
[www.kysermusical.com](http://www.kysermusical.com)



### Ukulele Explorer from Alfred Music

*Ukulele Explorer, 10 Ukulele Lessons with Strum-Along Songs* from Alfred Music is a must-have interactive software resource for any music classroom equipped with ukuleles. Each of the 10 units includes tuning instruction, chord drill, strum pattern practice, and a skill-building exercise, culminating with an engaging performance piece followed by an interactive assessment activity. The software comes embedded with fret diagrams, hand position photos, rhythmic chants for every new pattern, helpful "getting started" screens, plus appealing demo and play-along tracks. \$34.99

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



### Flying Fingers from Hal Leonard

*Flying Fingers* from Hal Leonard covers an expansive variety of styles and techniques – including recent innovations like percussive gestures, right-hand string-stopping, two hands on the fingerboard, and partial capos – through its 50 accurate transcriptions with historical and performance notes for each. Over 50 artists are featured, each represented by a single, characteristic piece. Recordings of the specific versions included in the book can be located easily and are specified at the beginning of each tune. All transcriptions are shown in standard notation and tab. \$40.

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



### DSA3200 Multi-Surface Cleanser Refill from On-Stage

Ideal for B&O rental dealers and studio and venue owners, the DSA3200 32-oz Multi-Surface Cleanser from On-Stage is a bulk refill option for smaller fine mist spray bottles. This cleanser safely reduces the spread of common bacteria and germs on virtually any surface. The DSA3200's alcohol- and fragrance-free formula leaves no scent and no sticky residue. \$40.99

[www.on-stage.com](http://www.on-stage.com)



### König & Meyer's Hand Sanitizer Holder

This stable, compact holder for hand sanitizer is fashioned to securely hold sanitizing solution and can be placed on a table or mounted to the wall. The plastic drip cup attached to the bracket can be mounted at two different heights to accommodate various bottle sizes and removes easily for cleaning. Included rubber pads ensure a secure stand and protect the table surface from scratching. \$49.99

[www.k-m.de/en](http://www.k-m.de/en)



## Under \$100

### G7th Performance 3 Capo with ART

The Performance 3 capo contains G7th's exclusive Adaptive Radius Technology, the groundbreaking string pad mechanism that actively adapts to match the curvature over the strings in every position, on any guitar neck. This means the pressure is always evenly distributed over the fingerboard, giving unrivalled tuning stability, and making it the best capo money can buy. Available now from Davitt & Hanser and KMC. Prices from \$54.99. [www.g7th.com](http://www.g7th.com)



### Sonny Terry Heritage Edition Harmonica from Hohner

The Sonny Terry Heritage Edition Harmonica from Hohner posthumously commemorates one of the most influential artists in the blues harmonica scene. The harmonica, a Marine Band 1896 with custom engraved cover plate and an orange/black lacquered pear wood comb, is specially a specially made 10-hole diatonic in the key of C. It is packaged in a beautiful vintage cardboard box that contains a replica of the stamp that blind musician Sonny Terry used to sign autographs. MAP: \$69.99



[www.hohner.de](http://www.hohner.de)

## Gooseneck Lamps & Accessories

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Littlite LED-3 task lights feature three selectable white light outputs: Cool (6500K), Daylight (5000K) and Warm (3000K). You choose the "just right" light you want when you want it.

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## JodyJazz Power Ring Ligatures

The JodyJazz Power Ring's self-locking CNC machined taper and concave inner design reduces the touch points on the reed thereby maximizing reed freedom and vibration. This increases the amount of harmonics which enables the fullest saxophone sound. The Power Ring will make the mouthpiece feel easier to blow and provides more power. Available for all JodyJazz mouthpieces and select other models. Constructed from virgin brass, the Power Ring Ligatures are available in 24kt gold-plated finish (MSRP: \$95) or sterling silver-plated finish (MSRP: \$75).



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

## THU from Overloud

TH-U is the world's largest collection of models in a single software, boasting over 239 models of amps, cabinets, fx, and mics including officially authorized models of highly-prized manufacturers.



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

## The Morley Hum Eliminator

The Morley Hum Eliminator is a two-channel isolation transformer device that breaks ground loop between two offending pieces of gear. Simply place on cable connects to get rid of hum. It also converts between unbalanced/balanced connections and converts between 1/4" and XLR connector types. The 1/4" "smart jacks" accept any combination on TS (Tip/Sleeve) or TRS (Tip/Ring/Sleeve). Equipped with Morley's own custom 1:1 isolation transformers. \$93



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

# Under \$250

## Whirlwind's DIRECT2 Direct Box

The DIRECT2 from Whirlwind combines features found on two of its DIRECTOR direct boxes in one unit. It's perfect for converting unbalanced signals from stereo keyboards, acoustic guitar preamps, CD and tape players, and computer sound cards. Each section features: 1/4" parallel wired in/out jacks; Ground Lift switch to help eliminate hum and buzz; -20dB pad switch for connection to "hot" input signals; and Uses Whirlwind's TRHL-M transformer with metal shield. The input and output grounds of each section are isolated from each other. This allows the DIRECT2 to be used as if were two completely separate DIs without fear of creating ground loop interaction. MAP: \$135.



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

## Loog's Electric Guitars with Built-in Amps

Loog's new line of electric guitars with built-in amps and speakers includes the Loog Mini Electric (Ages 3+), the Loog Pro Electric (Ages 8+), and the Loog Pro VI Electric (Ages 12+), the company's first six-string guitar. These models also come with access to the revamped Loog app. Structured as a game, the app stimulates kids to learn music to earn points, and has a new and revolutionary augmented reality feature that allows kids to learn chords using the selfie camera on their phone or tablet. Starting at \$149.



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

## Foxy Tone Box from Warm Audio

The new Foxy Tone Box from Warm Audio is a hyper-accurate recreation of one of the most sought-after and beloved fuzz pedals of all time, used in the early seventies by tone masters Billy Gibbons and Peter Frampton, and in the present day by folks like Adrian Belew, Nine Inch Nails, and Beck. Covered in thick velvet just like the vintage pedal, the Warm Audio Foxy Tone Box faithfully recreates the vintage circuit and brings you the huge tone, octave-up sounds, and look of the original. MAP: \$149



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

## Rovner's Platinum Gold Ligature

The Rovner Platinum Gold ligature offers superb facility and response, a rich, distinctive presence, and a darker aspect that helps synthetic reeds sound more like cane. Features 24-Karat gold-plated platinum. \$174.50



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

## Infinity 2 Double Looper from Pigtronix

The Pigtronix Infinity 2 is a stereo looping pedal with two independent loops and a streamlined user interface that has been designed to provide an intuitive musical workflow, right out of the box. \$199



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

## Luna's Uke Tapa Spruce

Luna's Uke Tapa Spruce is complete with a solid spruce top, mahogany back and sides, Aquila strings, and a Luna preamp to dial in your sound on and off the stage. Designed by Alex Morgan, this model features triangle pearloid inlays. Gig bag included. MAP: \$199



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

## Backline Gear Transport Pack from D'Addario

The Backline Gear Transport Pack from D'Addario is the ultimate solution for players on the move. The pack features more than eight specialized storage and transport compartments, as well as water-resistant zippers, and comfort-padded contact points. Compartments include a modular cable filing system, small and large accessory compartments, microphone and mic stand storage, and discrete laptop/tablet storage. \$199.99



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

## Allen & Heath ZEDi Series Mixers

Perfect for streaming, podcasting and going deep with the mix, ZEDi goes beyond the simple I/O of a straightforward audio interface. ZEDi offers pro studio preamps, sound-shaping EQ and the hands-on control of a real analog mixer, paired with a USB interface that has super-flexible options to match the creative process. Creators can select how the USB audio interface works from a variety of options – send individual channels to recording software for mixing inside a DAW, or mix on ZEDi and send a stereo mix direct to a USB feed. ZEDi also provides flexible options for monitoring the performance and listening to the output in software, via headphones or through monitor speakers. These mixers aren't just built for the studio desk or bedroom studio, ZEDi mixers are designed and built to Allen & Heath's touring grade standards to ensure a long life. Starting at an MSRP of \$239.



[www.allen-heath.com](http://www.allen-heath.com)

## Under \$500



### W.I.E.M.S. In-Ear Monitor by ProCo

W.I.E.M.S. by ProCo is the most compact wireless in-ear monitor system on the market. The WIEMS system has crystal clear 24 bit/48KHz digital transmission and operates at 5.8Ghz. It uses an internal rechargeable battery and offers low latency and a range of up to 30 meters line of sight. It accepts line level signals and has four selectable channels, giving you the ability to use up to four systems simultaneously. Comes complete in a hardshell case small enough to throw in your gig bag or guitar case. MAP: \$349.99

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

### Fender's Malibu Player Guitar in Natural

Fender's Malibu Player guitar in natural is a small-body, short scale acoustic-electric with a comfortable feel. Featuring a solid spruce top, mahogany back and sides, and 6-in-line headstock, the bold style and balanced, articulate sound make the Malibu Player a natural partner on stage and in the studio. Suitable for any playing style, the mahogany neck features a comfortable, slim-taper "C"-shaped profile, inspired by Fender's electric legacy. It features optimized bracing for superior resonance, a GraphTech NuBone nut and saddle, and a Fishman preamp system that allows you to reproduce the guitar's natural sound when plugged into an amplifier. \$429.99

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



### Omnisphere 2.6 from Spectrasonics

Omnisphere 2.6 is Spectrasonics' flagship synthesizer and is known throughout the world as the most elegant, flexible, and comprehensive virtual instrument ever. The magic of Omnisphere lies in its ease of use, despite its incredible depth and capabilities. You can simply browse its 14,000-plus included sounds, create unique variations of these sounds with one click, control it with a hardware synthesizer using Hardware Synth Integration, or dig deep into Omnisphere's broad synthesis techniques using intuitive graphics and controls. \$499

[www.spectrasonics.net](http://www.spectrasonics.net)



## Under \$1,000

### Lanikai's Bass Ukuleles

Lanikai Bass Ukuleles utilize many player-friendly features, such as a truss rod for easy action adjustments, a comfortable wide neck profile, select wood options and smooth action Black open back tuners. Lanikai premium quality components are standard, including Graph Tech NuBone XB nut/saddle, a Fishman pickup/tuner, and D'Addario Phosphor Bronze/Nyltech synthetic core strings for better intonation, tuning, and a round full tone. These satin finish basses are available in four wood options: mahogany, oak, figured bocote, or solid spruce top, with morado back and sides with a thickly padded gig bag. Starting at \$589.

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



### TASCAM's Model 12

The TASCAM Model 12 is a great-sounding, easy-to-use multitrack recording solution. The Model 12 boasts a classic analog mixer-style design that's both intuitive and immediate. Achieve precise control with 60mm faders, while tweaking your tracks with familiar EQ and Aux controls. High-grade preamps ensure top-notch sound that's easily captured on an internal SD card at 24-bit/48kHz resolution. DAW integration is simple, thanks to the Model 12's built-in 12-in/10-out audio interface. The Model 12 is lightweight yet rugged, and can be transported from studio to stage with confidence. \$599.99



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

### Luna's Fauna Phoenix Guitar

Luna's Fauna Phoenix acoustic/electric guitar features a soaring bird in abalone is stunning against the black lacquer-look finish of this cutaway folk body style instrument. The Fauna Phoenix is complete with a spruce top, mahogany back and sides, equipped with a Fishman preamp and on-board built-in tuner, and D'Addario strings. Abalone is also used for this model's crescent moon, moon phase inlays, and headstock logo. MAP: \$699



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



## Dean NashVegas Select

The Dean NashVegas Select makes an old favorite into a stylish new contender. This model is available in classic black or a stunning metallic red finish, and is available with a Floyd Rose 1000 series tremolo system. The Dean NashVegas Select comes with a basswood body and 22 fret bound ebony fingerboard on a sleek 3-piece maple neck. Plugged in, the exclusive Seymour Duncan SH-5 & APH1N pickups deliver all the tones from metal, blues, and sparkling cleans, while Grover tuners keep your tuning right on point. MAP: \$749



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

## Casio's CDP-S150 Digital Piano

The CDP-S150 features 88 scaled hammer action keys with simulated ivory and ebony key surfaces to prevent slippage. It has a great-sounding stereo grand piano tone, nine other essential tones, a metronome, duet mode, and a built-in MIDI recorder. You can use the included power supply or go mobile with 6 AA batteries. Stereo speakers are complemented by a headphone output for quiet practice. Connect via USB-MIDI to the free Chordana Play for Piano app for iOS/Android to control your piano, learn MIDI songs, view PDF scores, play audio files with pitch/tempo control, and more. For more piano authenticity, add the optional CS-46 wooden stand, and replace the included sustain pedal with the optional SP-34 portable three-pedal unit. MSRP: \$779.99



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

## Little Roamer 5pc Shell Pack from Dixon

When full-size drums are just too big and loud, the Dixon Little Roamer delivers great sound and options in an inspiring acoustic drum system. Compact for small spaces, volume control and easy transport, Little Roamer can be reconfigured down to its versatile 7"x20" bass drum to meet most performance requirements with little compromise. Available in two hand applied satin finishes: Natural and Coal Black. MSRP: \$819.99



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

## Under \$1,500

### VHT's D-Fifty Amplifier Head

The D-50H is the newest addition to VHT's line of affordable handwired guitar amps. The head is VHT's take on a rare and iconic boutique amplifier. Handwired on eyelet boards, like VHT's Special series amplifiers, the D-50H has three 12AX7 preamps and two Ruby Tubes 6L6GC output tubes. The D-50H has a single input, a three-way Bright switch, a Mid Boost switch, a Jazz/Rock voicing switch, and its unique Treble, Middle, and Bass controls provide a wide range of tone shaping options – and a distinctive classic boutique tone. The footswitchable Overdrive section has Drive and Level controls, and the Power Amp section has a Master Volume control and a Presence control. The D-50H comes with a two-button footswitch to engage the Preamp Boost and Overdrive functions. The D-50H also has a rear-panel international line voltage selector to accommodate 100V, 120V, and 230V AC lines. \$1,133.99



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



### Dean Exile Select 6-String Burled Poplar

Dean's Exile Select 6-String Burled Poplar is available in a 6 or 7 string model with either a Floyd Rose 1000 series tremolo system or string thru body, as well as a Burled Poplar or Quilt Maple top. This model comes standard with brushed nickel hardware and Mini Grover tuners. Combined with exclusive brushed chrome EMG 57tw/66tw pickups which can be split into single coil mode with the push/pull volume and tone pots. 5-ply body and headstock binding ties it all together with class and ferocity. MAP: \$1,199

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



### Masterworks Elite 77 Grand Auditorium Guitar from Alvarez

The Masterworks Elite 77 Grand Auditorium in Shadowburst/Gloss from Alvarez offers clarity and power from the all black walnut construction and MST1 Bracing System. The Pauna abalone purfling with ebony binding and thin bevel armrest round out the details of this stunning guitar. \$1,359

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

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## Under \$2,000

### Eastman's Romeo Guitar

Created by master luthier Otto D'Ambrosio, Eastman's Romeo features an entirely unique cutaway body style with a solid spruce top and mahogany laminate on the back and sides. The choice of woods speaks directly to Otto's vision of a lightweight, versatile, ergonomically constructed guitar that delivers maximum comfort. The addition of two Lollar custom wound Imperial Humbuckers provides an extreme flexibility of sound, making it one of the most versatile guitars in Eastman's lineup. The Romeo's voice combines the best plug-in signal, colored by its sweet semi-hollow body construction. The controls are simple yet provide a player with a full range of useful tones. \$1,869

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



### D'Angelico's Excel Style B Throwback Guitar

Back by popular demand and reimagined for the first time since its debut, the Excel Style B Throwback is a slimmed down non-cutaway archtop and time machine to the Jazz Age. A slim-C neck profile, shallow upper bout depth, and 25-inch scale length make the Style B Throwback a notably comfortable archtop while still maintaining robust acoustic tone. Old-school details and Throwback Collection appointments – including the scroll-style headstock designed by John D'Angelico in the '30s – make the Style B a visual stunner. Available in vintage natural and viola. \$1,999.99

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



## Over \$2,000



### Furniture Set Road Case from Gator

The G-TourLounge ATA Furniture Set Road Case from Gator is a set of road cases that transform into furniture. With this innovative set, users get two chairs, two ottomans, and a table that all convert into cases for transporting gear. Each cushioned case also features internal storage areas as well as sturdy casters for easy transport. \$2,749.99

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

### Gibson ES-335 Figured Guitar

The Gibson ES-335 Figured is crafted with a thermally-engineered maple centerblock, and thermally-engineered quarter-sawn Adirondack spruce bracing. Equipped with high-end appointments like Gibson's hand-wired control assembly with orange drop capacitors, Gibson's new Calibrated T-Type humbucking pickups, Vintage Deluxe style tuners, and lightweight aluminum ABR-1 bridge and stop bar tailpiece anchored with steel thumb-wheels and studs. \$3,699

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



### DG-30 Digital Grand Piano from Kawai

Kawai's new DG-30 Digital Grand Piano offers modern elegance, smooth responsive touch, and stunning sounds. True to Kawai's award-winning legacy, the DG30 digital grand piano expresses authenticity, inspiration, and beauty. The Responsive Hammer III keyboard action combined with the Shigeru Kawai concert grand piano sound delivers a genuine grand piano playing experience. \$7,499



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

### Furch Red Deluxe LC Guitar

The Furch Red Deluxe LC with a Grand Auditorium body is made from premium tonewoods, such as Alpine spruce on the top and Cocobolo on the back and sides. Bridge, fingerboard, and headstock overlay feature figured ziricote. A combination of unique manufacturing and construction technologies, such as Furch's proprietary top and back voicing process, precise robotic polishing, the revolutionary Furch CNR System, and the unique Full-Pore High-Gloss Finish significantly improves the guitar's resonance. Maximum playing comfort is provided by Furch's latest ergonomic feature, Bevel Duo. \$5,756

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



## New from JodyJazz & Chedeville

During these unprecedented times we've stayed busy creating new mouthpieces. Including collaborations with 'Beatbox Sax' pioneer Derek Brown and acclaimed clarinet international soloist Milan Rericha, these exciting new models are sure to entice customers in to your store.



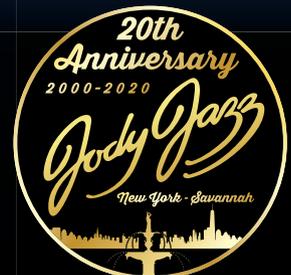
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Tenor



HR\* CUSTOM  
DARK Alto



Chedeville  
Umbra Clarinet



There comes a period in any long-lasting company's life when it's appropriate to tackle, impress, and astound a new generation of players. For Casio, the timing couldn't be better than the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their branching out into the musical instrument world.

The formal reintroduction started last year, a little shy of the notable milestone, when the brand went back to their roots to show young players the magic model that started it all: the Casiotone 201. Adjustments were made to the Casiotone to showcase it as "reborn" for a new generation via the CT-S200 model. Strategically, it set the metaphorical stage for the brand's special anniversary, and reestablished the Casio legacy with young players in a major way.

"Being able to share the 'my first keyboard was a Casio' with today's younger players provides a source of pride for those of us who remember how crucial those first steps are," says Mike Martin, general manager of marketing, EMI Division, Casio America, Inc. "Casiotone was the very beginning of our venture into musical instruments, starting with the CT-201. It was a first for the market, a polyphonic keyboard with full-size keys at an affordable price, it launched Casio's portable keyboard business. That legacy is important, not only to Casio, but the industry as many artists began their musical journey with a Casiotone."

The Casiotone CT-S200 marked a special moment for the company, of course, but also the music world as a whole. After all, most players have based their entire musical careers around their formative years with a Casio (and many still do).

Casio's story begins in 1946, when engineer Tadao Kashio established Kashio Seisakujo in Tokyo. After creating the world's first compact, all-electric calculator, the Japanese company tinkered with cash registers, scientific calculators, and Typuter, an electronic inkjet typewriter, all while expanding their footprint overseas in Europe and North America. It wasn't until 1980 that Casio would venture into producing electronic musical instruments, starting with the Casiotone.

Namely, Kashio wanted to create an instrument that would allow musicians to play multiple instruments – or at least their sounds – though one medium, allowing pianists to "play" other instruments through via their keyboard.

Toshio Kashio



## Exploring Casio's 40 Years of *'Creativity and Contribution'*

By Victoria Wasylak

Kashio started by reproducing the sounds of other instruments using a system of vowel-consonant synthesis. As the Casio website explains, "By modifying and combining the 'vowel' and 'consonant' elements that sound is composed of to create a single sound, he succeeded in recreating the sounds of 29 different instruments, making them playable on a piano style keyboard."

From the start, Casio made waves in the MI world with their affordable keyboards, opening up music-making to people with smaller budgets for instruments and gear.

"Our keyboards have been a great introduction to playing music because we provide the best possible value, encouraging the possibility of playing for those who otherwise couldn't

afford to learn an instrument," Martin explains, reflecting on Casio's long-lasting impact. "Casio's first introductions to the market were definitely milestones [through which] a number of people, myself included, were introduced to the concept of a portable keyboard that could provide so much more to music study."

The pattern repeated again in 2003 when Casio debuted its first Privia digital piano (PX-100), a much more economical choice for many people who wouldn't be able to afford a digital piano otherwise. The new model found its way into bedrooms and living rooms across the globe due to its status as a "private piano" – a model that was simple to move and could easily be stored in players' rooms.

"Casio changed the market with the first Privia pianos, which were not only smaller and lighter than most other pianos, but also more affordable," Martin elaborates. "The latest Privia PX-S digital pianos are even more amazing in that regard and it has been incredible to see them being embraced by musicians of all skill levels."

Now, Casio has over 11,000 employees worldwide and with offices in 20 countries, operating on an enduring "corporate creed of creativity and contribution." Their history is captured in a new video called "Regeneration," which highlights various Casio keyboards and digital pianos from the last 40 years.

In recent years, their innovation-driven motto has yielded tech like USB class-compliant models and the Privia PX-S, a remarkably slim and compact keyboard. Actually, the Privia PX-S boasts the title of the "world's slimmest digital piano."

"We're constantly looking for ways that new technologies can help us provide unique products that not only provide

Brothers Toshio Kashio, Kazuo Kashio (standing), Yukio Kashio, and Tadao Kashio





The Casiotone CT-S200, the “reintroduction” of the keyboard that started it all

The Casiotone 201, Casio’s first keyboard

The Privia PX-100, released in 2003

“Being able to share the ‘my first keyboard was a Casio’ with today’s younger players provides a source of pride for those of us who remember how crucial those first steps are.”

- **Mike Martin**, general manager of marketing, EMI Division, Casio America, Inc.

fun, but will help develop a lifelong skill,” Martin says.

The Privia PX-S in particular came from witnessing somewhat of a standstill in the digital piano market, he explains. “The digital piano market became stagnant, they all looked the same, bulky, angular, cumbersome; we wanted to make one that pushed the boundaries of portability without sacrificing sound quality or playability,” Martin adds. “Casio’s decades of electronic expertise include many milestones involving miniaturization – calculators and watches today are small and lightweight due to the pioneering of our engineers.”

Most recently, Casio debuted new Celviano models at the 2020 NAMM Show, including two new Grand Hybrid pianos and the AP-710. While the COVID-19 pandemic has halted many of the company’s anniversary celebrations (or forced them to go digital), the current situation has also demonstrated a trend amongst piano players that was already in-progress: more and more folks are starting their musical journeys from home.

“One important trend is that more and more people are playing at home, especially during the current pandemic,” Martin explains. “Our offerings line up very well with this, especially our Casiotone and Privia lines. Families are making music together, and many more musicians are getting their start while being stuck at home.”

Still, even after 40 years of technological innovation in the MI industry, certain sonic hallmarks from their early days of Casio still find their way into modern music of all genres. It’s not uncommon for records and songs to feature the same tones that first stemmed from Casio’s first keyboard models, adding a vintage and nostalgic touch to 21<sup>st</sup> century tunes. For some artists, the choice is purely sentimental; for others, it’s more of a tribute and sign of respect.

“There’s a sonic identity as well; the classic sounds from Casio’s vintage portable keyboards continue to be used in music today,” Martin says. “We’re very proud that today’s musicians find ways to incorporate sounds from the keyboards they’ve had for decades; that encourages our engineers to go further and continue developing groundbreaking features for the next generation of Casio keyboards.”

While the company’s next product rollouts remain under wraps, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, Casio continues to fuel music-making by supporting non-profits like Notes for Notes, which gives more children access to create and record

music from their homes.

Because sometimes, “creativity and contribution” takes its best form in philanthropy.

“What we can say is that we are committed to providing the best experience for musicians, students and teachers,” Martin concludes. “Casio’s mission is to provide fun, stimulate exploration of music study and inspire musicians everywhere.”

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# Corporate Clumsy

## A Mule is a Horse Designed by a Committee



By Menzie **Pittman**

**H**ave you ever had one of those moments when a person with whom you are speaking (in this instance, a sales manager for a large home goods retail chain) says something so bizarre you feel like you're not comprehending what they are saying?

Recently this happened to me, thus the expression: "A mule is a horse designed by a committee." It's fair to say the recent pandemic is forcing us all to make very difficult choices in order to reignite our businesses. At the same time, we are attempting to execute possible future business opportunities and relationships, and we are trying to manage costs where possible.

When people ask me how it's going, I often respond by asking if they have ever read or watched "Alice in Wonderland." I also share this quote with them: "It's no use going back to yesterday because I was a different person then." Sometimes I say, "It's tough to drive forward if you're looking in the rear-view mirror." The hard decisions we make today are the seeds of tomorrow's opportunities or failures, waiting to remind us that we didn't think it though.

The pandemic has brought us a plethora of opportunities to witness good and bad decision-making, both locally and nationally. One that really made me scratch my head, and falls in my "I'm not sure I understand this" category, was put in place by Bed Bath & Beyond (BBB).

Let's start with the good in this situation. I needed an additional digital thermometer, and due to the hoarding mentality that has swept the county, they are very scarce. It's the paper towel/toilet paper syndrome all over again. Thankfully, when I called Bed Bath & Beyond a few minutes before their official opening time, a very polite employee answered the phone. The BBB website indicated the item was in stock, and when asked to confirm, she informed me they did, indeed, have five. I asked her if she could set one aside in my name, and I would head that way. Again, she was very polite and said she would.

Here's where the tale gets strange...

When I arrived at BBB, per today's normal, I saw shoppers wearing masks of every style and nature. There were dog lovers masks, school logo masks, cowboy scarves, sports team masks, and standard masks as well. As strange a sight as this was, it almost felt like people had finally embraced the inconvenience of looking like a cartoon character and were trying to go on about life in the new normal. As I entered the store and began to walk around, what I saw was odd to my eye. Every third or fourth set of shelves was bare. It was that paper towel syndrome on steroids. I was puzzled by this. Was it a supply chain issue? Was it a hoarding issue? Was it a trucking issue? I figured I had run all the scenarios in my head, so all that was left to do was ask. So I did.

### The Answer? "Corporate Clumsy" at its Best!

I was told the corporate leadership of Bed Bath and Beyond made the decision that they wanted better inventory control and management. In the past, managers balanced inventory, sent

reports to regional managers, and it continued to move up the chain until inventory needs were filled. This way good managers in busy stores, with strong sell-through, were on top of what they specifically needed. A manager's job was placing restock orders quickly, and, reordering items based on what had sold, along with items that were selling well at their individual store locations.

In this pandemic era, apparently, corporate decides which inventory to send out to the stores. It selects what should and will sell, according to Artificial Intelligence and then appropriates stock accordingly. Those in the corporate office believe this model provides Bed Bath and Beyond the opportunity to reduce staff cost though management reduction.

So, the model Bed Bath and Beyond now embraces is...

- Fewer people involved in managing inventory, but more A.I.
- More dependence on computer selection of products
- Less knowledge of the individual Bed Bath and Beyond regions because of a reduction in human capital in the actual locations.

Wow! The result of this clumsy thinking is lots and lots of empty shelves, and fat cats at the top of the food chain ignoring frustrated customers; they have abandoned the old model where one awesome employee, who answered the phone when she wasn't required to do so, set aside a thermometer for a customer.

### The Pandemic Will Go Down in History as One of Our Best Teachers Ever

Whether we have made productive decisions, or unproductive ones, the truth will come out in the wash. I can't say for sure how any of this plays out, but I can say this: people want to deal with people. The little town I live in has made a few simple adjustments and now has allowed their restaurant owners to place tables where the parking places in front of their buildings once were designated. This simple act has enabled spacious and romantic outdoor dining stations. Amid the oppressive environment of COVID, when people just want to interact with other people, the town has made a productive decision for both business owners and customers – one that has enabled safely-distanced, outdoor dining to happen. The town also has allowed the restaurants to have space for tables on the side streets, creating a draw so strong that people drive miles to *enjoy a night on the town!*

Corporate leadership doesn't think that way. Why, you ask? Because a mule is a horse designed by a committee. 🐎

*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".*

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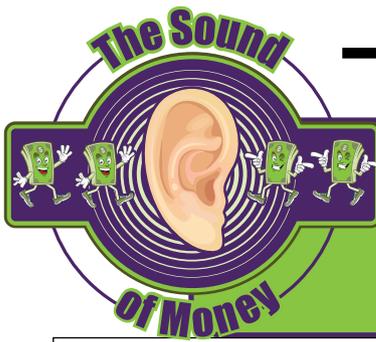
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# Keep Up with Me if You Can

By Jaimie Blackman

**I** believe I was 8 when I sold that Hohner Panther cherry-red accordion. I spoke a little Spanish, a fella walked in and wanted to play it. This was sitting front and center in the display case as soon as you walked in. I asked for the keys and told him the price; the instrument did the rest.”

Today, at 30, Joseph Fox, vice president of Fox Music House, still has the energy of an 8-year-old. Hearing him talk about Fox Music feels like listening to a preacher or rabbi speak about their house of worship. He’s that passionate! His liturgical vibe is not surprising, as Joseph majored in religion upon entering college, where his heart was set on becoming a rabbi. That all changed in his sophomore year when his dad had other plans for young Joseph.

After Joseph bought his dad’s turbo diesel car, Charles, the elder Fox, suggested that he spend the summer visiting 30 music stores, all people Charles knew personally. Joseph said it was basically like visiting the NAMM board. They were all very successful music retailers. After driving 8,000 miles up and down the East Coast, and spending time with the best MI ambassadors his dad could come up with, Joseph finally caught the music bug. When he returned to college, he quickly changed his major from religion, and graduated with a degree in business.

Joseph Fox is a fourth generation retailer, and is scheduled to receive the title of president, when the elder Fox passes the baton in 2021.

When the subject of competitors came up, Joseph gave me a smile saying that his grandfather grew the business to plus locations plus a service center in Charleston and from that tutelage, nearly every music store and production team in the area of Charleston once worked for Fox Music. He said, “I don’t treat them like competitors. Once you worked for Fox Music, you’re always part of our fabric.”

Perhaps that caring mentality is part of the family’s success. For example, the impact of Charles Fox’s contributions, like founding the Charleston Marathon as a sustainable funding source for arts programs in Charleston Public Schools, can be felt throughout the state to this day.

By nature, and nurture, caring is the central theme for Joseph. He tells his team, “When you become an employee of Fox Music, you are part of our family, and I’ve got your back.”

He tells of the time he brought generators and help cut down trees for his employees during a recent storm.

The Fox Music story had a modest beginning. The year was 1928, with the Great Depression right around the corner. Otto Fox, an accomplished violin player and luthier, decided to open a business which repaired string instruments. There were no sales. His repair skills were so superior that before too long, he was repairing stringed instruments for other music stores. And nearly

100 years later, service is still at the heart of their business.

Today Fox Music operates a magnificent new 22,000 square foot building, which includes a 200-seat recital hall. Fox Music was also recently awarded Yamaha South Eastern dealer of the year.

A dedicated music education center is located at a second location in Columbia, South Carolina directed by the dynamic teaching couple, Mack and Keri Bayne.

When I asked Joseph how the COVID pandemic has impacted his business, he said, “COVID turned on my ‘hustle button.’” He is working harder than ever, and so is his team. For example, he talks with reverence about Victor Quarterman, his oldest employee who has been with the organization for 45 years. “Victor is our guiding light. Before I even get into the store, he has already called 13 customers looking for referrals.”

One must speak to Joseph and look into his eyes to understand that these are not just words. Joseph is one of the rare leaders that insists on leading by example.

After Joseph graduated college, Charles didn’t make it easy to enter the family business. Ironically, he actually was trying to dissuade him. He insisted that Joseph first gain experience outside of music retail before joining Fox Music as his profession.

And so, he did. Joseph managed two retail stores for the paint giant Sherwin Williams. In less than two years, he realized that people never remember what color they painted a room, but they always remembered the musical instruments they played. The die was cast. His heart belonged to Fox Music and there he went.

Joseph personally makes several dozen calls a day to past customers and asks them one question, “Can you refer someone who likes to make music?” And when he gets frustrated, he will call another music store, far away from his, and ask the salesman, “What’s your favorite piano?” As he explained, that conversation would recharge his batteries, and he would get right back on the phone.

If you lead by example, you better keep up with Joseph, who is the chief tempo setter. As Joseph says, “Keep up with me if you can.” Please click on [fb.com/mmmagazine](https://fb.com/mmmagazine) to view my conversation with Joseph on “The Sound of Money Live.”



*Jaimie Blackman – a former music educator & retailer – is co-founder of BH Wealth Management. The organization offers financial advice, insurance, and succession planning services. Jaimie hosts The Sound of Money Live presented by MMR. Discover how much risk is in your portfolio. Visit [bhwealth.com/riskvideo](https://bhwealth.com/riskvideo). Registered Representative, First Allied Securities, Inc. Member FINRA/SIPC*

“Once you worked for Fox Music, you’re always part of our fabric.”

— Joseph Fox

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Like everyone in the world, the music business is having a tough time. Times are a changin' and it can be difficult to see the future when the present is changing every day. It will take vision, innovation and determination, but we're up for the task. It's what we do!

**This is our opportunity, for all of us, to create the future.**

Let me offer a heartfelt tribute to all of us; the women and men of this great industry. To all our partners around the world: manufacturers, distributors, builders, luthiers, techs, retailers, artists and weekend warriors.

**We thank you for your support, your ideas and suggestions, you have made us better at what we do.**

**I'm not a Leo Fender, but I do have the passion and the drive to try and be a part of the future of guitar performance, push the boundaries in materials and design, and at the same time, respect the look, feel, and tradition of the guitar, bass and ukulele. With over 50 patents and trademarks worldwide we aren't slowing down. My team and I will keep pushing the boundaries, from our TUSQ nuts, saddles, bridge pins, Ratio multi-g geared machine heads, to the world's lightest ukulele machine heads, Tune-a-lele's.**

**Let's get ready to break some new ground, explore some new ideas, and we'll meet on the other side, smarter, stronger, and better for it.**

Thank you one and all. We will meet again one day, in person, with a proper handshake to remember these days. We'll celebrate our achievements and see the future of this great industry that brings so much joy and love into this world.

**Until we meet again, Happy Trails!**

**To us and to all the Leos of the world, past, present and future!**

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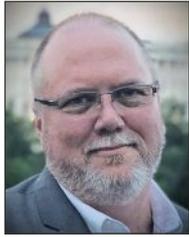
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By Mike **Lawson**

## Helping Your Customers Pick

**M**ost musicians are not performers relying on income from playing gigs. Oh, many are, but most are not. Now in my 50s, I am no longer solely relying on live music performance or touring, or any other large enough income from music to cover my “exorbitant lifestyle.” I do perform. Well, I did perform, I should say. As I mentioned in last month’s column, before the COVID-19 pandemic changed everything, my group did upwards of 35-40 shows a year, most of which were a bi-weekly house gig where we had performed for the past five years or so. It was income and, for what it was, it was decent income, but fortunately not all of my income.

The truth is, I now have more “invested” in my guitars, amp rigs, pedals, PA, lights, microphones, and other gear for gigging and recording than I will ever likely recoup unless I ever again play for much bigger pay over a few more decades. I know that won’t happen. I’m not delusional. I am, however, passionate. The fact is, I don’t really care anymore. Since this is just “what I do,” I am satisfied with getting to do it. I’m not unique to your customer list. I’m still buying stuff. It is a lifelong habit.

Since most of your customers do not earn their living by playing music (and likely never will), but do this out of their passion for music, the majority of your customers don’t care if their purchase from your store makes them rich and famous. That isn’t to say they don’t dream. They do.

With that lofty goal of stardom removed from the barrier to sales, you can really dial into why your customers shop with you and help them feed their impetus for walking in your store. When their “home base dealer” takes interest in their reasons for being there, or shopping the online store, or ordering by phone, it makes the customer feel good and increases the chance of the sale. It opens up the possibility to sell them things they weren’t even thinking of when they walked in that day.

It’s amazing how often in my lifetime that I have made some kind of purchase after I’ve had a salesperson ask me what kind of music I make, who some of my favorite artists are, how many guitars or other instruments I own, what brands do I favor, if I write, record, or perform, when getting to know me. Sometimes it’s just a small purchase as I’ve tested the water on the dealer/customer relationship, other times it’s a large ticket item. It’s not even always price-based. Many times, I’ve spent more money for musical equipment and accessories from small mom-and-pop dealers before to show support for their businesses, simply because the sales staff, or owners, took time to ask me about me, and why I am a music retail customer.

Questions from store personnel that pique my interest include, “What instruments do you play?” or “What kind of music do you like?” Follow-ups

like “Do you play out? Do you write and record?” or “What’s your favorite guitar?” or “What kind of guitar tone are you chasing?” show an interest in me when they have never seen my face, or only seen me on occasion. Even something as simple as “What kind of picks do you use?” led me from saying that I used Fender Extra-Heavy picks to having a dealer show me the boutique V-Picks acrylic product that I’m now an ardent devotee of using. That one question took me from probably buying nothing that day, to me dropping \$25 on a handful of their “Tradition” line in a couple of shapes. That one question changed my pick use after 40 years or so of playing, changed my pick approach to playing, and brought me back to their store later looking for more when I inevitably lost some, or my dryer ate them, or whatever happens to picks (and socks).

**“When their ‘home base dealer’ takes interest in their reasons for being there, or shopping the online store, or ordering by phone, it makes the customer feel good.”**

Cold openers like “Can I help you find something?” or “Let me know if you want to see something” tend to turn me off if the salesperson hasn’t found out what makes me a music store customer first.

Find out how long I have been playing, my musical tastes, the instruments I play, the instruments I wish I played, how and where and why I make music. I like that. That moves your store up a few notches from a place I might be browsing, or price-shopping for a pedal, to a place that I should be doing business with even if you can’t quite price match an online store, and maybe even moves me to not even ask you to price match or haggle, because you are showing interest in me, my passion, and want to know what makes me a music instrument retailer consumer.

These are questions not just for grizzled old middle-aged me, but just as important to ask that 12-year-old kid looking around, who you might turn into a customer for life. What music do those kids like? What instrument do they play or want to play? Do they want to someday perform, or write, or record music? The kid not making the purchase today is also the kid who sees the store as a place to help him engage in a lifelong passion for making music, who will go cut grass or babysit or spend their holiday gift money on those first purchases that will lead to a lifetime of buying music products. PHOTO: JEFFREY

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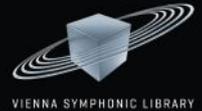


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