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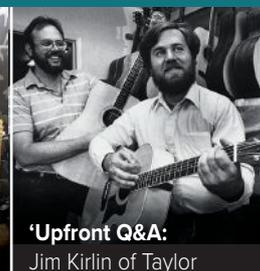


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By Christian
Wissmuller

Enough with 'It's Back!'

After an unbroken streak of NAMM Shows – both “normal” and Summer NAMM – from 2002 to 2020, my batting average has been less than All-Star caliber of late.

Immediately following the January 2020 gathering, for some reason there suddenly weren't industry gatherings to attend for a while, so that played a part. I did make it to all of the somewhat-odd, “Now we're doing the Show in Nashville again, but it's not “Summer NAMM”; it's “regular NAMM,” just at an unusual time” and “It's the NAMM Show in California! In... mid-Spring...” events, but just as the usual patterns – mid/late January, Anaheim Convention Center – began to reestablish themselves, other dark forces conspired to prevent my joining in on the fun.

Last year, for example, I broke my ankle and leg a month before the NAMM Show and was still quite incapacitated by the time a potential trip out West might have taken place (see my Editorial from our January 2024 issue if you'd like the details – along with a nifty graphic representation!). In winter of 2024/25, I was spared broken bones, but was obligated to once again opt out of attending our industry's largest trade show for personal/family reasons.

My own scheduling conflicts and medical disasters aside, however, for the past couple of years, many voices in MI have been enthusiastic in their assertion that the NAMM Show had rebounded, was in fighting trim, had regained its mojo. The phrase, “NAMM is back!” was repeatedly directed at me via emails, press releases, blog posts, phone calls, and texts.

Take my own Show Report May, 2023, which, while devoid of much usage of the word, “back,” is awfully sunny in its assessment: “This year's Show marked renewed vibrancy and enthusiasm not seen since January 2020.” Last February's Show Report was somewhat reserved in its synopsis – let's not oversell or over-promise, after all – with a headline of, “We're on the Right Path.” In his review of this year's gathering, *MMR* publisher Mike Lawson states, “I am very confident that NAMM is back.”

The important latter-half of Lawson's statement, however, is, “and absolutely worth the time and money to attend.” And that's, to me, the big takeaway when evaluating not just the NAMM Show, but all such trade shows and conventions in the present-day.

Instead of folks – whether it's exhibiting companies, attendees, marketing professionals, NAMM itself, me, or anyone else – trying to assert that the NAMM Show is “back” (methinks thou doth protest too much), let's re-evaluate the benefits such gatherings represent in 2025. I don't believe there's much upside to comparing today's industry shows to those pre-Pandemic, or even pre-Internet. Frankly, I'd be surprised if we ever again see numbers equal to, or even truly approaching, the record-breaking 2020 NAMM Show (Over 2,000 exhibitors and 115,888 attendees, for those of you keeping count), but how and why does that matter?

The bigger an event is, the better?

Was the very best concert you've ever attended a sold-out one held at the largest football arena imaginable? Possibly – and I've attended quite a few concerts at venues large and small, and have had good experiences in both settings – but, to me, the “size” of any event is largely, if not entirely, incidental when it comes to the quality.

As Mike Lawson's 2025 NAMM Show musings concludes (quite nicely and, in my opinion, accurately), “The face-to-face value of being at the NAMM Show is undeniable. Those who choose not to attend or exhibit are, by and large, missing out

on the amazing opportunities and relationship-building that only this show can provide.”

Today's NAMM Show isn't “back”; today's NAMM Show *is* – and the MI industry continues to benefit.

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NAMM CEO Statement on the Impact of Global Tariffs

Music is a powerful unifying force across the world. Music brings us together, it heals, and it empowers. It is essential that music-making continues to unite us globally without any punitive measures or restrictions to the trade and manufacturing of musical products.

The National Association of Music Merchants, representing the global music products industry, strongly urges elected leaders and world governments to support the free trade of musical products, as well as the materials used in manufacturing musical products. We call for universal exemptions from punitive tariffs for all musical products and accessories that are used by musicians worldwide. Excess tariffs imposed on specific countries are a great concern for our music products industry for the following reasons: Many of the most iconic, highly sought-after and highest-quality musical products are proudly made in the United States. These brands also offer successful lines of affordable, entry-level and intermediate products that ensure new and emerging music makers have access to quality products from leading American companies. The success of the top-of-the-

line models made in the U.S. is dependent on the success of the full range of products made in factories around the world. This is true for many other industries, as well: The success of our strong American companies is dependent on global trade. We stand with Consumer Technology Association in recognizing that tariffs, “weaken the global trading system that has powered America’s economic growth for decades.”

Statement: Consumer Technology Association

Musicians rely on a strong retailer network to support and educate them along their musical journey. Retail is the backbone of our music products industry, with more than 4,000 retail locations in the United States serving musicians and students. The musical product retail network is essential to music-making, and we stand with the National Retail Federation in avoiding shifting costs “onto the backs of American families, workers and small businesses.”

Statement: National Retail Federation

Like many other industries, musical product trade is also highly interconnected in North America, with decades of

successful trade and partnerships between Mexico and Canada that have allowed us to compete globally. We stand with the National Association of Manufacturers that “protecting manufacturing gains that have come from our strong North American partnerships is vital.”

Statement: National Association of Manufacturers

We understand the need for strong trade agreements with favorable terms for the United States. But these global agreements should not impede the rights of musical and artistic expression. As our Vision Statement says: We envision a world in which the joy of making music is a precious element of daily living for everyone; a world in which every child has a deep desire to learn music and a recognized right to be taught; and in which every adult is a passionate champion and defender of that right. We encourage all NAMM members to join us in urging our global leaders to support the free trade of music products to provide a more musical world.

John Mlynczak
President and CEO, NAMM

Pearl River’s Mike Lawson Signature Series Guitars Shine at NAMM 2025

Pearl River Guitars struck a powerful chord at this year’s NAMM Show with the debut of the Mike Lawson Signature Series Handmade Guitars: the ML8000-GCB Grand Auditorium Cutaway and the ML800-D Dreadnought Acoustic/Electric. These models showcase exceptional craftsmanship, premium materials, and the insights of a veteran musician with over four decades of experience.

For Mike Lawson, this unveiling marked an emotional milestone in his lifelong musical journey. “My first guitar was a no-name sunburst acoustic from Kmart in 1977,” Lawson reminisced. “It was hideously ugly, uncomfortable to play, and yet I loved it. That guitar taught me persistence and devotion from the very first chord I strummed.” Fast forward to 2025, Lawson now sees his name proudly etched on professional-grade instruments celebrated at one of the world’s largest music trade shows.

Over the course of NAMM, musicians and industry professionals flocked to Pearl River’s booth to test the ML8000-GCB and ML800-D. According to Lawson, feedback exceeded all expectations: “Everyone who sat down to jam – from friends to competitors – praised their sound, feel, and craftsmanship. These guitars are ‘Gig Ready From Go,’ offering

premium features that rival guitars costing two or three times more.”

One standout moment was Indianapolis musician Tim Brickley’s performance with the ML8000-GCB during the prestigious Parnelli Awards at NAMM. “Hearing my guitar’s Fishman pickup system on a large stage through a world-class PA system was surreal,” Lawson said. “Knowing it sounded that incredible in the audience solidified my confidence in these instruments.”

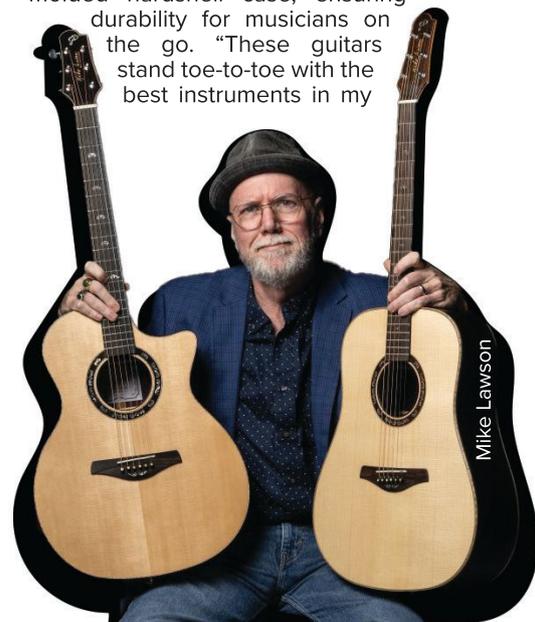
The Mike Lawson Signature Series combines Pearl River’s renowned handcrafted excellence with Lawson’s professional insights. Key features include:

- Satin nitrocellulose hand-rubbed lacquer finishes to enhance tonal quality and age beautifully.
- Solid spruce tops paired with kiln-dried rosewood back and sides.
- One-piece mahogany neck with volute
- Ebony fretboard and bridge with ebony sound hole inlay featuring mother of pearl to match fretboard and bridge inlays (ML8000-GCD)
- Rosewood fretboard and bridge with rosewood sound hole inlay featuring

mother of pearl to match fretboard and bridge inlays (ML800-D)

- Grover Locking Tuners for quick string changes and tuning stability.
- Fishman Sonitone GT-2 pickup systems for natural, amplified sound.
- Hand-cut bone nuts and saddles for superior resonance.

Both models come with Stringjoy Foxwoods strings and a fiberglass-molded hardshell case, ensuring durability for musicians on the go. “These guitars stand toe-to-toe with the best instruments in my



collection,” Lawson stated. “Pearl River has cut no corners. It’s a working musician’s pro-level everything – they even gave me Grover locking tuners that are rarely found on an acoustic.”

When asked about future designs, Lawson expressed his desire to create a slot-head, OO-style 12-fret acoustic tailored for fingerstyle players. “I want to keep pushing boundaries while honoring the traditions that make guitars so special,” he said.

Leng Tshua, Pearl River’s global director of sales & marketing, takes pride in

the journey that began with a simple handshake with Mike Lawson on the final day of NAMM 2024. In just nine months, the first prototypes of the ML Signature Series were test-marketed to an enthusiastic audience at Music China in Shanghai on October 10.

Reflecting on Pearl River’s expanding footprint in fine string instruments – including violins, ukuleles, and guitars – Tshua expressed his excitement for the brand’s continued evolution. “With a legacy of excellence in piano craftsmanship, Pearl River is earning

worldwide recognition for creating high-quality instruments for musicians. Partnering with Mike Lawson underscores our commitment to innovation and sets the stage for even greater achievements in the world of fine string instruments,” he said.

Pearl River’s Mike Lawson Signature Series Handmade Guitars are now shipping and available through authorized dealers. Visit PearlRiverUSA.com/Guitars/ for more information about these instruments and Pearl River’s full lineup of musical innovations

Play Drums Honors Industry Leaders at the 2025 NAMM Show and Introduces Online Drum Lesson Locator

Play Drums held its annual Open House at the Anaheim Hilton on January 24 to celebrate its 30th Anniversary with percussion industry leaders and introduce the newly redesigned PlayDrums.com website, which aims to inspire and educate a wider audience of drummers.

“The highlight of our year is to host the Play Drums Open House gathering at the NAMM Show in Anaheim,” said Play Drums Board chair Dave Jewell, Yamaha (Retired). This year’s event honored industry veteran John Wittmann and drummer and educator Rick Latham. Their talent, dedication, and vision have inspired countless music students.

John Wittmann is associate vice president of the Yamaha Artist Relations Group, leading the team supporting Yamaha Performing Artists nationally and internationally. He began his career as a high school band director, has toured extensively as a drummer, and has given hundreds of drum set clinics. Wittmann is a frequent presenter at NAMM, PASIC, and other major music conferences and is a national advocate for music and music education.

Rick Latham is known as a percussionist with the unique ability to move within many musical styles and performing situations. For 40 years, he has been active in the Los Angeles music scene,

touring and recording with a diverse collective of artists with B.B. King, the Edgar Winter Band, and Rick Derringer, among many others. Rick earned a bachelor’s degree in percussion from East Carolina University and a master’s in percussion at the University of North Texas. In addition to touring, Latham

In addition to maintaining an ever-evolving destination for all things drumming, the website will expand its educational video library, making it an essential hub for drummers seeking to begin developing or expanding their skills.

“Our members, who are the leading brands of the percussion industry, attend this event to help us celebrate the accomplishments of peer leaders in the segment, meet up-and-coming industry colleagues, and learn more about Play Drums and its programs and how to support them. This market development nonprofit organization has been creating more drummers by putting sticks in hands for nearly 30 years,” explained PlayDrums executive director Antoinette Follett.



Stacey Montgomery-Clark (SABIAN), Jennifer Paisley (Alfred Music), honorees Rick Latham and John Wittmann, Play Drums Executive Director Antoinette Follett, David Jewell (Yamaha, retired), David Cywinski (RBI Music), Tim Shahady (Paiste), and Andy Zildjian (SABIAN)

provides masterclasses, drum clinics, and workshops worldwide, writes and records for various artists, and teaches privately. He is the author of several books on drum technique.

A new Drum Lesson Locator has been added to the recently redesigned PlayDrums.com website to help parents and students find local drum lesson instructors. Drum instructors and music stores offering lessons can register at: <https://playdrums.com/drum-teacher-listing-submission/>

PlayDrums.com Experience Drumming! Initiatives include bucket drumming teacher training opportunities, grants for Experience Drumming community events, and the Drum Lesson with a Pro giveaway during International Drum Month that offers drummers a free lesson and connection to their local music retailers. Generous annual grants from the NAMM Foundation have supported these programs.

Open House refreshments were sponsored by Play Drums members Yamaha and Tamburo Drums.

People on the Move



Avante Audio announces the appointment of Ray Varela as national sales manager for the USA. With a wealth of experience, both as an audio engineer and equipment retail

manager, Varela is ideally suited to lead a new season of growth for AVANTE Audio in the US market.

Part of the ADJ Group of Companies, AVANTE Audio is a professional audio brand born from a passion for audio excellence. Having initially found success with the Achromic Series of active point-

source speakers, popular with performers, event companies and integrators alike, the brand expanded into larger audio systems through the innovative Imperio ‘mini’ line array system. The next phase of expansion for the AVANTE Audio range is the Akro Series, which is a full-size line array system designed for large stages and touring applications.

Jim Kirlin of Taylor Guitars

Iconic Brand Celebrated a Half-Century in 2024

by Christian Wissmuller

With Taylor Guitars' 50th Anniversary year only recently in the rearview mirror, *MMR* connected with the company's editorial director, Jim Kirlin, to review a little of Taylor's history, how they celebrated the recent milestone, and what's on the immediate horizon for this beloved brand.

Can you talk about the formation of Taylor back in '74? What was the catalyst behind Kurt and Bob deciding to go on this journey? How did both wind up at the American Dream and how did that set the stage for what became Taylor Guitars?

Tim Kirlin:

In high school, Bob loved music and wanted a guitar but couldn't afford to buy one, so he figured out how to build an acoustic 12-string in eleventh grade and then built two more acoustics his senior year. It sparked a passion to pursue it as a career. That continued when he started working at the American Dream at age 18 after he graduated. That's where he met Kurt, who also loved music and wanted to learn how to make guitars. The following year, the owner, Sam Radding, decided to sell the business. Bob had already shown that he was talented and focused, and Kurt borrowed money from his father to

put toward the purchase of the shop – on the condition that he partner with the best builder there... Bob.

What was behind the decision to brand the business "Westland Music Company?"

They chose the name, as Kurt says, "because it sounded big, like a conglomerate." The original vision was that they would not only build guitars but also sell guitar parts and do repairs, the gaps, reducing the instrument's overall efficiency.

Given that the brand/company was founded by both Bob Taylor and Kurt Listug, how did the two settle on going with solely "Taylor" when the business was renamed as "Taylor Guitars" in 1976?

The rights to the "American Dream" name hadn't been included in the sale of the business to Bob and Kurt, so they weren't able to use that. Bob was the more accomplished guitar maker, and they agreed that "Taylor" was a strong name for an American-built guitar and should go on the headstock. By 1976, Bob and Kurt agreed that it would be best for them to drop the guitar parts and repair side of the business and focus on building guitars and selling them to stores. That



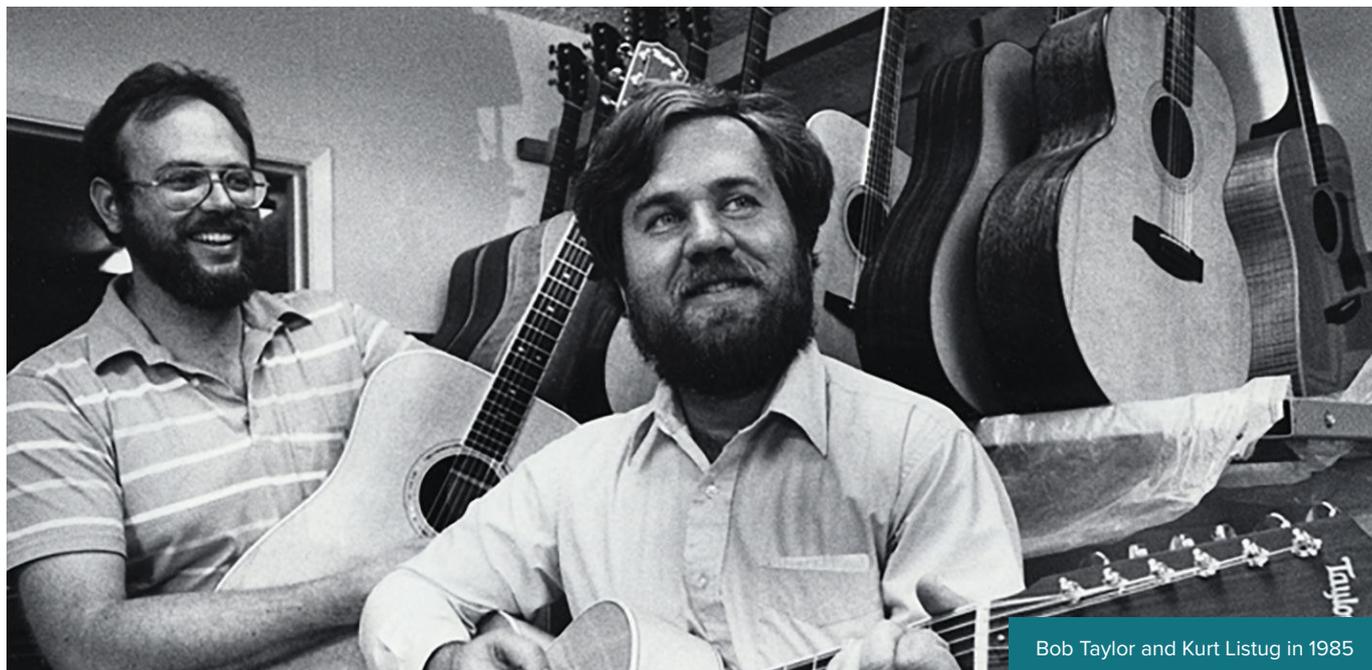
led them to change the name to Taylor Guitars.

Sticking with 1976, at that point how many full-time Taylor Guitars employees were there? How large were the HQ/facilities and where were they?

In 1976, it was still just the original three: Bob, Kurt, and their original third partner, Steve Schemmer. They worked out of the American Dream shop they had bought, about 1,500 square feet, located in Lemon Grove, California, in San Diego's East County region.

Flipping the previous question on its head: How many employees are there today? How large are the facilities and where are they?

We currently have about 1,000 employees. Our headquarters are in El Cajon, California, with a campus that features eight buildings totaling nearly 180,000 square feet. This encompasses one of our manufacturing complexes, along with our other business operations. We also operate a second, sister factory in Tecate, Baja California, Mexico, located about 50 miles from our El Cajon location. That facility is roughly 119,000 square feet. Our two manufacturing operations are very closely integrated.



Bob Taylor and Kurt Listug in 1985

Taylor has been embraced by a number of high profile artists. How important were those associations and endorsements in establishing the brand on the national and international stage and consciousness?

Early on, when Taylor was first trying to get a foothold in the guitar world, we were fortunate to have our guitars embraced by certain dealers who provided helpful feedback on the quality of the guitars and put our guitars in the hands of some established artists. As a San Diego-based company, our proximity to Los Angeles was key. Thanks to dealers like Westwood Music and McCabe's Guitar Shop, who were the musical influencers of their day, they exposed our guitars to artists like David Crosby, JD Souther and many others associated with the Laurel Canyon scene. Seeing Neil Young playing a Taylor 12-string in the concert film "Rust Never Sleeps" certainly helped us gain credibility as a young company. We'll always be grateful to some of our early dealers, who gave us good feedback on what was appealing about our guitars – for example, our slim, easy-playing guitar necks and low action because acoustic guitars were often hard to play. In the '80s, Glen Wetterland from Podium Music in Minneapolis encouraged us to make a purple 12-string guitar for Prince, which ended up being featured in a

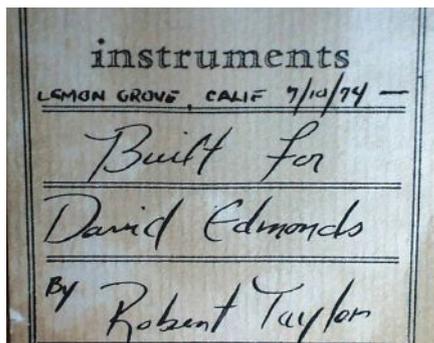
music video. Our color-stained acoustic guitars attracted interest from other marquee artists, which was huge during a challenging time in the market for acoustic guitar makers. But while having a high-profile artist play a Taylor guitar was great, we didn't really chase that. By focusing on improving the playability, reliability and all-around utility of acoustic guitars as musical tools, we were embraced organically by other types of pro guitarists, including session and side players, along with songwriters. That led to grassroots, word-of-mouth promotion in music-centric cities like Nashville.

Along the same lines, what moments in the past 50 years stick out as "milestone moments" that really define the Taylor brand: product introductions, artist endorsements, events, moves, hires, awards, business partnerships?

To this day, easy-playing necks remain a definitive Taylor trait that players at every level love. Our Grand Auditorium body style, introduced in 1994, was another important development for us, marrying playability with a distinctive type of Taylor acoustic voice: clear, balanced, musically useful acoustic sound that recording pros loved because our guitars got the job done. Bob's pioneering embrace of modern technology and his innovative development of proprietary tooling created the perfect platform for Taylor to evolve – it brought more precision and



Even as early as the late '70s, some iconic riffs from earlier in the decade had become too overplayed for the Taylor staff



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upfront Q&A

consistency to guitar-making and fueled the company's growth from a small shop to a sophisticated manufacturer, all the while improving the playing experience with acoustic guitars. Since you mention business partnerships, Bob and Kurt have both emphasized that the biggest key to Taylor's success was their own partnership, with Bob overseeing the guitar-making side of the operation and Kurt focusing on the business operation. It's been a remarkably complementary relationship with mutual trust between both. While Bob often rightly is credited for his guitar innovations, Kurt's role in creating a brand identity that resonated with people is often underappreciated now that Taylor is established. As for hires, Bob and Kurt agree that one of our most important hires was Andy Powers, who is our chief guitar designer, president, and CEO.

Andy Powers has been a hugely important figure at Taylor beginning 15ish years ago, through to the present-day and his current position at the helm of the company. How did Powers first come to Taylor Guitars and can you describe the evolution of his position at the company?

Technically, we should thank Jason Mraz. Bob had met Andy many years earlier, but they became reacquainted in early 2010 when Andy performed with Jason on the Taylor stage at NAMM. It was around the time when Bob had begun thinking about finding a guitar design successor. In addition to being a pro player, Andy was an immensely talented, locally based guitar maker with his own successful business crafting custom guitars; he had an incredible knowledge of the history of instrument making; and he had considerable experience repairing all types of vintage guitars. Bob and Andy got to talking, Andy realized that Taylor would provide a robust platform for him to execute his design ideas and

impact players on a much greater scale than he would as a solo builder, and the rest is history. For Bob, it was important to find the right person to carry forward Taylor's culture of guitar innovation, which had been key to the company's success, and both he and Kurt felt it would be vital to the continued success of the company beyond their tenure. Bob considers Andy not only a better guitar maker than he was, but one of the very best he's ever met. After several years of working alongside Bob and Taylor's Larry Breedlove, Andy redesigned Taylor's flagship 800 Series for the company's 40th anniversary in 2014 and became Taylor's chief guitar designer. He became an ownership partner with Bob and Kurt in 2019, and in the wake of Taylor's transition to employee ownership, Andy was also named President and CEO in 2022, with Bob and Kurt staying on as senior advisors.

Can you talk about any 50th anniversary events, initiatives, guitar models, et cetera that celebrate this significant milestone?

The course of 2024, we rolled out a series of commemorative 50th anniversary limited edition models (nearly 20 altogether) that spanned the entire Taylor line, from the GS Mini to our Presentation Series and Builder's Edition Collection. They've been well received by dealers and players. On Taylor's actual anniversary date (October 15), we capped off the milestone year with the debut of another special series of guitars called the Legacy Collection. These are reimagined versions of some classic guitar models from Bob Taylor, including a trio of rosewood/spruce Dreadnought and Jumbo guitars that harken back to Bob's early 800 Series, plus a pair of classic Grand Auditorium models (mahogany/cedar 514ce and rosewood/cedar 714ce). They're not pure reissues but are reinterpretations with design

specifications personally curated by Bob. These will remain in the Taylor line as a dedicated collection in 2025, with the potential for other models to be added. We also created some great historical content: a timeline of Taylor history and important milestones that lives on our website, along with a multi-part oral history podcast series ("American Dreamers: 50 Years of Taylor Guitars") that features Bob and Kurt recounting stories that shaped the evolution of the company. That was a lot of fun and great to capture for posterity.

Looking back on the past half-century, do you feel Taylor Guitars has accomplished all you set out to achieve? What's next for the brand?

It's fair to say that Taylor's success far exceeded any aspirations Bob and Kurt originally had when they began their journey in 1974. At the time, they hoped to create a viable business out of making guitars. Bob is proud of the innovations he brought to the guitar-making process, and Kurt is proud that Taylor was able to create a successful brand and business. They take great pride not only in producing guitars that have served and inspired many people around the world, but in creating a company that could turn guitar-making into a respectable and fulfilling career for others. As for what's next, Andy Powers is leading the charge by continuing to move our instrument-making forward. He recently designed some new guitars that we're excited to unveil for 2025. Our purpose as a company remains the same: to make instruments that inspire more people to make music because we feel the world is a better place with music. We're also continuing to work on our environmental stewardship projects, which include successful planting initiatives with ebony in Cameroon and koa in Hawaii.



Excitement was palpable after acquiring the former American Dream music store, where Bob Taylor and Kurt Listug first met, and renaming the business, "Westland Music Co."



The first workshop, in Lemon Grove, CA, was a whopping 1,500 square feet.



Current chief guitar designer, president, and CEO Andy Powers inspects a Taylor V-Class top.



NAMM Show 2025: 'The New Model'

by ChristianWissmuller

“This year’s Show is now the new model of where we go from here,” says NAMM president and CEO John Mlynczak. “We absolutely got the right mix of people there. We track success based on customer satisfaction – not size. What we saw in 2025 is the future of NAMM. We will grow upon this and build upon this success, but after this year, we don’t compare ourselves to 2020 or 2018 or whenever. This is now the gold standard because everyone is overwhelmingly happy with their investment.”

Indeed, with 1,850 exhibitors representing over 4,400 brands and more than 250 educational sessions for NAMM member communities, The NAMM Show highlighted innovative music technologies, product introductions, and impending trends that shape the future of the music industry while creating a five-day long platform for network connections and meetings that are critical for uniting and growing music makers globally.

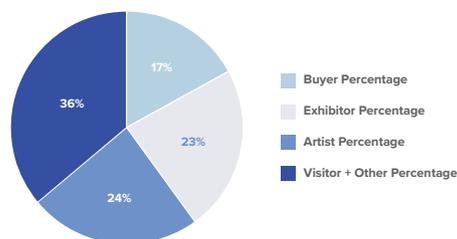
“The 2025 NAMM Show united and energized our NAMM members from the entire ecosystem of the music industry,” continues Mlynczak. “NAMM is the global stage for our industry to announce groundbreaking products, establish transformative partnerships, and gain valuable education that will lead to a successful year ahead.”

NAMM Show 2025 by the Numbers

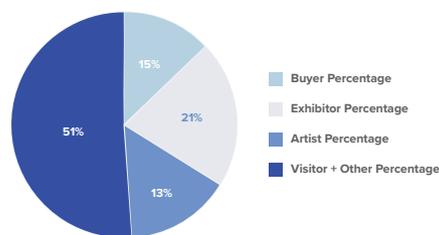
- 63,000+ show attendees, including 10,700+ international attendees from 125 countries, regions and territories
- 1,850+ exhibitors representing 4,400+ brands
- Nearly 8,700 artists demonstrating and endorsing products
- 250+ education sessions with 650+ speakers
- 1,600+ media, influencers and content creators reaching over 200 million followers

“The 2025 NAMM Show delivered in every possible capacity, from headline artist performances on multiple stages every single day and night to emerging music industry leaders delivering powerful messages inside the convention center, as well as hundreds of new products and partnerships,” said Tom Sumner, NAMM chairman and president of Yamaha Corporation of America. “We’re thrilled to unite our global industry every January, and the 2025 Show brought that energy and excitement that will be remembered for a long time.”

2025



2020



The breakdown of attendee types at the 2020 NAMM Show vs. the 2025 NAMM Show (figures courtesy of NAMM)

NAMM Show 2025 Set List Highlights

Global Media Day

In its second year, NAMM Global Media Day, where iconic brands spanning music, sound and entertainment technology categories announce breaking news to an exclusive media-only audience, took place in front of a standing room only ballroom of 500+ guests. Brands announcing new products for the first time included Fender, Gibson, PRS, Marshall, In Music and Roland.

NAMM’s Music for Life Honor Awarded to Critically Acclaimed artist Jon Batiste

NAMM presented iconic performer and globally acclaimed artist Jon Batiste with its highest honor, the Music for Life Award, in recognition of his lifelong contributions to music and commitment to inspiring music makers. In an exclusive Friday morning Q&A with NAMM president and CEO John Mlynczak, Batiste discussed his early musical influences, the products that have helped define his career, and views on family values, music education and artist collaboration that was another NAMM special moment prior to his two-hour live performance later that evening on the Yamaha Grand Plaza Stage at NAMM 2025.

NAMM's Grand Rally for Music Education

NAMM rallied the industry around its mission Saturday morning, highlighted by one of the most magical moments in NAMM history with an emotional conversation and performance from the incredibly talented Jacob Collier who incorporated the entire audience into his performance. His inspirational question and answer session with John Mlynczak brought the audience to its feet and his inspirational performance will continue to unite us all year long through the music and education industries.

Special Recognition by NAMM Foundation

The NAMM Foundation made its first disbursement from its LA Wildfires Relief Fund during NAMM 2025, bestowing \$10,000 to Lana Negrete and Outreach Through the Arts. Lana, who is also Mayor of Santa Monica, has served on the NAMM Board of Directors and is owner of Santa Monica Music Center. Mayor Negrete has been on the forefront of the neighboring Palisades fire and will utilize this donation to support music students with

continued lessons, instruments replacements and the ability for her community to support music programs lost to the Palisades fire.

In addition, NAMM awarded Dinah Gretsch the Music For Life award for her steadfast commitment to philanthropy and creating more music makers worldwide.

NAMM NeXT Nashville

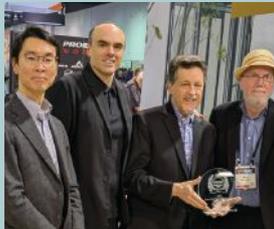
Coming off the success of last year's inaugural event, NAMM NeXT will return to Nashville from June 30–July 1. This immersive leadership summit gives business and industry leaders deep insight into growth and leadership in a one-of-a-kind curated program. Registration is now officially open and has limited capacity: <https://next.namm.org/>

To learn more about the 2026 NAMM Show and its full calendar of association activities throughout the year please visit www.namm.org.



The **Alfred Music** team is all smiles about their well-deserved DCA win for Education Print Publisher of the Year

Buffet Crampon's Jereme Perrod, Francois Kloc, Laurence Guiramand, Gereard Danjou, and Al Maniscalco with the Dealers' Choice Award for B&O Line of the Year



Casio's Takahiro Sasaki, Brian Piccolo, and Stephen Schmidt receive the Dealers' Choice Award trophy from MMR's Mike Lawson



Zev Birnbaum of Lighting Line of the Year winner, **Chauvet DJ**



Allen & Heath's Nic Beretta and Jeff Hawley with the brand's two(!) Dealers' Choice Award trophies (Product of the Year and Sound Reinforcement Line of the Year)



The **D'Addario** team accepts the DCA trophy for Accessory Line of the Year



Fender EVP of Sales Tammy Van Donk with the DCA trophy for Amplifier Line of the Year



Mike Lawson with Hanna Bliss of Recording Equipment Line of the Year winner, **Focusrite**



Hal Leonard's Tom Gierke, Mo Chahdi, and Larry Morton receive the DCA trophy for Popular Music Print Publisher of the Year from MMR's Mike Lawson (second from right)



Mike Upton and Dave Cafiero with **Kala's** DCA trophy for Ukulele of the Year



Kentaro **Kawai** receives the Dealers' Choice Award for Pro Digital Keyboard Line of the Year from MMR Publisher Mike Lawson



Ludwig's Ernie Benton and David Nelson with the Dealers' Choice Award trophy for Percussion Line of the Year



MMR publisher and owner Mike Lawson (right) presents Thomas Ripsam, CEO/president, **C.F. Martin & Co.** with the 2024 Dealers' Choice Award for Acoustic Guitar of the Year



Paul Reed Smith and Jack Higginbotham of **PRS Guitars** with the trophy for Electric Guitar of the Year



Yamaha's Dan Rodowicz, Nate Tschetter, and Gary Klugman with the Dealers' Choice Award for Acoustic Piano Line of the Year



Reed Larrimore (L) and Yoh Watanabe (R) of **Yamaha** with MMR's Mike Lawson and the DCA trophy for Electric Bass of the Year

Privia

PX-S7000



Recognition has never looked this good.

The Privia PX-S7000 captivates musicians around the world with its breathtaking style, sound, and touch. Its striking design beautifies any space, and combined with its spruce-construction keys and incredible Tones, it inspires players in a way no other instrument can.

Casio would like to thank you, our valued retailers, for honoring the PX-S7000 with MMR's 2024 Dealer's Choice award for Home Digital Keyboard of the Year. This is the fourth year in a row that a Privia instrument has received the award, and our ninth year in total. We are truly grateful for every vote cast, and for helping us create the PX-S7000's place in the history of musical instruments.



CASIO

Publisher's Take

Longtime NAMM Show Veteran and MMR Publisher Mike Lawson Shares His Take

NAMM 2025 felt like NAMM should feel. It was busy – dealers, educator buyers, exhibitors, and people who love our industry were clearly enjoying themselves in what felt like a “normal” NAMM show. Hall E was open again, and there were a lot of great companies down there. The overall exhibit space wasn’t as jammed up as it was in 2020 – the peak of my 33 years of NAMM memories – but the halls were well populated, and the bigger companies made a return this year, including D’Addario, Fender, Gibson, PRS, and so many others.

The “pro audio hall” was never not bustling, and the overall mood was great. One service that has really come into its own at NAMM is the use of meeting rooms on the show floor. Several manufacturers had only a small booth, if any at all, but they had a meeting room on the floor. The ones I spoke with loved it because it allowed them to focus on what they come to NAMM for – selling products to buyers.

The show closed on Saturday night this year, which took some getting used to, but it was also nice to head home a day early. That turned my usual six-day trip into a five-day trip, which was most welcome this time of year – my busiest travel months. The Hilton was under renovation (a welcome change!), but it was still rocking

and loud as ever, with the Marriott just as packed at night. There were great concerts, valuable sessions for retailers and educators – something for everyone. The only down side to closing Saturday night, as I quickly learned after packing up the booth, was that the FedEx Store in the Hilton did not open until 10AM Sunday morning, and that apparently caught a lot of us off guard who had morning flights out of LAX, as evidenced by the line of exhibitors asking the guest services team at the hotel for their assistance in getting boxes out the next morning while they rushed to the airport.

I feel very confident that NAMM is back and absolutely worth the time and money to attend. As I walked the halls – now the “old guy” at NAMM – I reflected on my three-plus decades of attending, still reuniting with people I’ve known most or all of those years. At the same time, I’m at a point where many have passed on, and another generation is coming up right behind them. The music products industry is strong, filled with passionate people who love music, and it shows.

The face-to-face value of being at the NAMM Show is undeniable. Those who choose not to attend or exhibit are, by and large, missing out on the amazing opportunities and relationship-building that only this show can provide.

Reflections on the NAMM Show 2025

By Tom Palmatier

Last year was my first NAMM Show and despite my four decades of experience in the music industry, my mind was blown. This year, however, I heard many attendees say, “The NAMM Show is back!!” and it was an even more amazing experience.

Several things were particularly memorable. First, the palpable sense of passion for music among every attendee who stopped by our booth. Some were members of the MI industry who seemed to sense that the COVID slump was finally in the rear-view mirror. There were many music educators who were thrilled at the quantity and quality of events just for them.

I was part of the many presentations of *MMR*’s “Dealers’ Choice Awards” and the delight of the winners was infectious. The gang at Alfred assembled their entire team for the photo and were high fiving each other at their shared victory.

Lastly, as Editor-in-Chief of *MMR*’s sister publication, *School Band and Orchestra Plus*, or *SBO+*, I got to speak with many of our writers and countless readers who were big fans of our magazine.

The huge success of the “Dealers’ Choice Awards” has inspired us to implement the “Teachers’ Choice Awards” for *SBO+* magazine. Nominations and voting will begin next month!



Brett Marcus , Paul Huber, Mark Blasko, Ben Myron, and Bill Peterson of OMG Music



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NAMMshowreport



Karen Schwartz, Jake Schwartz and Mike Schwartz of **A&S Crafted Products**



Autumn Lambert and Amanda Brock of **Amati's Fine Instruments**



Gary Spears, Valerie Giacomoni, and Ron Van Ostenbridge of **Bari**



Mary Faith Rhoads-Lewis of **Breezy Ridge Instruments**



Jerry Chang of **Château Wind**



Kristen Rencher of **Conn-Selmer**



Daniel Cooper and Melanie Dyer of **Cooperstand**



Michael Fenoglio of **DANSR**



Jeff Klopmeier and Rob Rizzuto of **ESP Guitar Co**



Simon Campling of **G7th - The Capo Company**



Allen Gatchell and Jon Doyle of **Gatchell Violin Company**



Dave Dunwoodie and Alex Banarer of **Graph Tech Guitar Labs**



Dan Boatman of **IK Multimedia**



Greg Balut, Danielle Walker, Tyler Harris and Colin Schofield of **JodyJazz**



Mark Good and Rob Hanson of **John Packer Musical Instruments**



Morgan Walker and Brianna Totino of **KORG USA**



Mark Kortschot, Gregory Agid and Chris Kortschot of **Légère Reeds**



Massimo Dolce and Giovany Revelle of **Lyon & Healy**



Simona Ioffe of **Mi-Si Electronics** and friend



Amarissa Bothwell of **My Music Staff**



Riley Memmott, Taylor Harnois, Clinton Brady and Eric Thornton of **Music Shop 360**



Keith Ng, Brittany Bauman, Max Clissold of **Nuvo Instrumental**



Anthony Perri of **Perri's Corporation**



Bob Potsic of **Peterson Strobe Tuners**



Thomas Dolan of **QRS**



Lynn & George Reeder of **Rovner MC**



Tim Pfouts, Eddie Speedy, Kade Speedy and Brock Speedy of **S.I.T. Strings**



Jim Gallagher of **Tama Drums**



Rob Troke and Greg Dollmont of **Veritas Instrument Rental**



Steve Hendee and James Greenspan of **Yorkville Sound**

Tonal Quality, Resonance, and Durability'

Advancements in Concert Toms & Symphonic Concert Bass Drums

By Christian Wissmuller

Concert percussion instruments have benefitted from a number of innovative design and material improvements in recent years. Educators, student musicians, and professional performers are now able to find the equipment that suits their needs easier than ever. These large instruments don't display easily, however, and the market is highly specific, requiring a more nuanced and targeted approach from both suppliers and retailers.

We recently spoke with reps from three of the biggest names in this segment of MI to learn specifically about trends impacting some of more "boomy" and "low end" instruments in concert percussion: symphonic concert bass drums and concert toms.

Have there been any significant, recent developments in the design and manufacturing of Concert Toms & Symphonic Concert Bass Drums?

Nic Milliner: In recent years, the design and manufacturing of concert toms and symphonic concert bass drums have seen notable advancements aimed at enhancing tonal quality, resonance, and durability. Focusing on innovative shell compositions, bearing edge designs, and mounting systems to meet the evolving demands of performers.

At Majestic, with the Prophonic Series Concert Toms, for example, the integration of hybrid shell materials such as combining maple and walnut leverages the bright, articulate characteristics of maple with the warm, rich tones of walnut, resulting in a more balanced and versatile sound suitable for a wider range of performance settings. Refined bearing edges over the years have also enhanced the drumhead's contact with the shell, promoting better sustain and tonal clarity as well as a much more stable and wide tuning range.

Modern suspension mounting systems have been developed to maximize a drum's resonance by minimizing contact between the hardware and shell, allowing the drum to vibrate more freely

and produce a fuller, more resonant tone. While tom suspension systems have been a focus in drum kit design for years, their impact on concert drums is often overlooked. For concert bass drums specifically, achieving the perfect balance of low end, projection, tone, and sustain is crucial. A large, somewhat thin shell designed to resonate freely won't perform optimally on a basic metal X-stand with nylon straps. The development of advanced suspension systems has greatly enhanced the sound quality, unlocking the drum's full potential.

Joel Tetzlaff: The most recent changes to the market include high-end mounting systems and hardware upgrades. Including dual-headed toms instead of single-headed concert toms is more of a trend. Yamaha is focused more on creating larger sounds with 36-inch bass drums that have a little bit more impact or punch while using fewer resources than larger drums. We've also created a line of floor bass drums or impact drums sizes 18/20/22/ 24 inches that bridge the gap between concert tom and full-size concert bass drums, used in many percussion ensembles. They provide a consistent sound and look for the ensemble.

Jeff Huffman: Concert toms in the past were typically only single-headed drums, but double-headed concert toms have become much more popular over the past decade. While deeper and larger diameter concert bass drums gained in popularity for a while, the trend now seems to be leaning back more toward the traditional 36"x22" size.

What are some features that today's players of these types of drums are looking for?

JT: We focus on the sound of the drums and the hardware experience, as positioning concert toms and bass drums is extremely important, especially with unique percussion



Nic Milliner, Percussion Brand Manager, KHS America

“ Today's concert percussionists seek instruments that offer a balance of tonal richness, projection, and versatility. ”

“ Concert toms in the past were typically only single-headed drums, but double-headed concert toms have become much more popular over the past decade. ”



ensemble literature. It's common to see various sizes of toms split into smaller groupings, splitting parts among several players. Ensuring the drums are easily adaptable to any configuration or setup is essential for the player and the performance. While creating unique sounds like the impact bass drums that can punctuate a low-end fundamental and reach mid-low fundamentals. For concert bass drums, we feel it's important that the hardware allows the position of the drum to stay in place without interfering with the performer. Our goal with the current concert drums is the simplicity of movement and positioning.

JH: Depending on the concert setting and sound desired for a specific piece of music, players will either choose single headed drums for the quick cut and articulation, or double-sided toms for a more full, resonant sound. Concert tom mounting specs can also play into the resonance of the shell. The Tama Flexi-Mount allows the shell to resonate more freely, providing full sustain and a smooth decay.

NM: Today's concert percussionists seek instruments that offer a balance of tonal richness, projection, and versatility. In concert toms, players often prefer shells that deliver both warmth and articulation, along with mounting systems that maximize sustain while remaining practical for various setups. The choice between single- and double-headed designs is driven by performance context, with single-headed toms favored for clarity and attack, while double-headed versions provide more depth and resonance.

For symphonic bass drums, players look for deep, resonant tones, making shell composition and bearing edge design critical. Suspension systems that allow the drum to vibrate freely are highly valued, as are frame options that accommodate a wide range of setups, allowing for both traditional and more experimental multi-percussion configurations. Ease of transport and durability remain key considerations, particularly in educational and touring environments as well.

For your brand, what are the hottest selling of these toms and bass drums?

JH: For concert toms, the CCLT4M Mid-Range set of Double-Head Maple concert toms has been our best-selling. For concert bass drums, schools typically use the same drum for marching band and concert band, so the BSBD04T 36"x22" Maple Concert Bass on Field Frame tends to be our most popular. This drum is available on a suspended concert frame as well.

NM: Majestic's Concert Black Series and Prophonic Series remain strong performers in their respective markets. The Concert Black Series Concert Toms are particularly popular with schools and institutions due to their durability, projection, and practical single-headed design. Likewise, the Concert Black Series Bass Drums – available in both concert and field configurations – are widely chosen for their rugged build and versatility in both indoor and outdoor settings.

On the professional side, the Prophonic Concert Toms continue to gain traction among percussionists who require a richer, more nuanced sound. The availability of both single- and double-headed options allows them to adapt to diverse performance settings, from orchestral and wind ensembles to chamber and solo multi-percussion works. The Prophonic Bass Drums, with their proprietary suspended frame system, remain a favorite for ensembles seeking maximum resonance and tonal depth.

This balance of rugged reliability for educational use and refined craftsmanship for professional applications keeps Majestic's concert toms and bass drums in high demand across a broad range of players.

JT: The best sellers for our percussion line are still the single-headed 8000 concert toms and 7000 concert bass drums, perfect for High School and Collegiate levels; the products offer tremendous value with exceptional hardware. Make sure that the drums are easy to position and stable for the lifetime of use.



■ roundtable

What are some effective strategies when it comes to displaying and promoting these drums on the MI retailer side of the equation?

JT: They are typically bid products for schools and institutions. There are only a few educators shows that Yamahas may display. Our schools service music dealers, and road representatives are always looking for opportunities to help educators find the right product; this has been the most effective way to get this in front of educators who are looking to replace older gear or augment their current gear.

NM: The reality is that many retailers don't have the space to fully set up and display large concert percussion instruments, so it's on us as the manufacturer to find creative ways to showcase them to the right audiences. The last several months, we've made a point to feature our Prophonic Series drums in our physical displays at some of the most well-attended trade shows, including PASIC, Midwest, and TMEA. These events provide key opportunities for educators and performers to see and hear the instruments in a real-world setting.

Beyond trade shows, we're continuing to invest in beautiful photography, high-quality video content, and artist-driven social media activity to highlight the sound, construction, and performance applications of these instruments. We're also looking for more opportunities to get them in front of players through performances, clinics, and other events that allow audiences to experience them firsthand.

By combining these efforts, we're making sure that even if a retailer can't display these drums in-store, they still have the tools to effectively promote them to their customers.

Does your brand have any recent or upcoming models of either Concert Toms or Symphonic Concert Bass Drums you'd like to spotlight?

NM: We have been highlighting two models recently: The 28" Prophonic Concert Bass Drum and the Prophonic Single Headed Concert Toms. The 28" Prophonic Concert Bass Drum (MPB2818) is incredibly versatile, thanks to its thin walnut shell, which allows it to achieve a deep low note while maintaining excellent projection. Chris Lamb used one in his presentation at The Midwest in 2023, and we received such a great response from that drum's sound and the uniqueness of the mounting system that we have continued to showcase it since at our main trade events.

The Prophonic Single Headed Toms have such a rich tone that players find they can really make them speak in a variety of ways just based on how they slightly adjust their touch or the

implement they use. We also find that there are so many drum set players these days that are interested in adding this color to their setup but are not familiar with these drums. When they see and hear them, they are blown away by the sound and feel. So, for that reason, we are continuing to feature them as much as possible.

JT: The most recent addition to our concert percussion lineup is the floor bass or impact bass drums, which are essential to helping percussion ensemble literature and even front ensembles for the marching arts. At the same time, this product allows ensembles to have a professional sound and look with their existing concert toms and concert bass drums.

JH: Our most recent addition was our CCLT Single-Headed Maple Concert Toms. The drums feature our Direct Flexi-Mount, along with our Roadpro tom stands which feature our Stilt system and individual tom height extension, to give endless setup options for the multi-percussion setting.

Thoughts on this market segment and B&O percussion, overall, in the coming months?

JT: The educational percussion market is stable, and while we feel there is growth potential for Yamaha products, the overall demand is consistent with last year.

NM: The B&O segment is typically one where we see consistent demand, driven largely by institutional bids. However, in light of recent economic uncertainty, we're noticing some shifts in the market. There seems to be less demand for specific products that appeal more to professionals or hobbyists, especially those with crossover appeal. On the other hand, for the most part institutional purchases remain steady, as schools, universities, and orchestras continue to invest in high-quality concert percussion instruments.



“ Ensuring the drums are easily adaptable to any configuration or setup is essential for the player and the performance. ”



Joel Tetzlaff, Product Marketing Manager, Percussion, Yamaha Corporation of America

Grow Your Woodwind Sales Through Quality Woodwind Repair & Specialty Selling Skills

By Lisa Canning, Lisa's Clarinet Shop



“*Today, high-quality wind instruments can command prices comparable to used and new vehicles, underscoring the necessity of expertly trained professionals to drive sales. Without them, it's easy to see why we face the devastating decline in sales we do.*”

My name is Lisa Canning and I have been a pro wind instrument retailer for 43 years now operating both a brick-and-mortar location and an ecommerce business.

I have developed a passion and excellent reputation for providing musician with instruments that perfectly meet their needs on the first try usually- be they students, professionals, or enthusiasts. I have built an online repair training program for clarinet, flute and saxophone (WindRepairTrainingAcademy.com) to ensure more quality technicians are available to support more retailers. Over several decades of sales, I have developed a selling system for all wind instruments, which we call The Color-Ring™ System, making it easier to stock fewer pro instrument to ensure you can sell what you have, reducing churn and lowering inventory costs. (www.lisasclarinetshop.com/color-ring-system).

But before I get ahead of myself, let me tell you a little bit about me so you can better understand where my desire to help you succeed comes from.

Discovering the Magic of Quality Setup

Having graduated from Northwestern University in 1981 as a clarinet performance major, rising from the bottom to the top of my class between my freshman and sophomore years, I quickly came to learn that to not only play my best, but to compete effectively, excellent instrument set up was critical to my desire to continue to pursue music and to my performing success.

During this period, it was the failure of my own instrument and the purchase of a new instrument that helped make this clear. During my freshman year at Northwestern, I was still playing on a Buffet

R13 Bb that my parents had purchased for me in high school. Having attended Interlocken Arts Academy, I practiced and played that clarinet upwards of 8 hours a day. Purchased second hand to begin with, and already 10 years old when it was new to me, it was then approaching mechanical failure- unbeknownst to me. All I understood was that it seemed the harder I worked the worse I played which made me think I had reached the limit of my ability. Feeling the pressure of being a music major, and worrying about not being able to support myself, I was the closest I ever was to quitting.

It was the legendary woodwind repair technician, Bill Brannen who told me that I needed a new instrument. He showed me how the pads would not stay seated because keys bent too easily making it unreliable. He helped me understand why my fingers could not recover from keys that had no bounce. Not acting in a sales capacity, but as a technical advisor, he was able to show me how my instrument was failing me. If my instrument had been sent out instead, for some unnamed technician to look at it, without this level of personal interaction with a qualified technician to advise me on my next steps, I am quite certain I would have quit.

As a result of his advice, I purchased another boxed Buffet R13 B from a large mail-order retailer, in an effort to save a few dollars for my parents. When I received the instrument, I discovered it had a big deep sound but felt stuffy on some notes and had some pitch problems, so I took it to Bill Brannen, who had earned my trust, to adjust. Bill told me it needed a complete overhaul to play at the level I hoped. Trusting his judgement, I made the investment and yet when the

instrument was returned to me, while it played significantly better, it did not have the same characteristics of sound or tonal color of the original instrument that I arrived in the mail un-serviced. I had to even look at the serial number to make sure it was not a different clarinet they had returned to me in error- which they had not.

After servicing, the instrument went from full and deep sounding, but not playing well, to quite bright and small. I went back to Bill and asked why this happened and he explained to me that instruments when properly set up can play very differently, despite the fact they are quality maker and it was a professional instrument. It was right then I realized how big of a difference proper set up made to the selection of the right instrument for me and actually this experience was the catalyst for starting from my dorm room my own clarinet shop at the age of 17.

Early on, I would pick out clarinets and Bill would overhaul them before I let my prospective clients try them for purchase.

It was this experience that became the foundation of how I built a business that taught me how to remarkably serve clarinet, flute, sax and oboe customers over the years and to steadily grow my business year over year. My business made Music Trades Top 200 retailers list for about a decade as a result of my commitment to quality repair and the sales system I developed. Today, I run Lisa's Clarinet Shop which was just recognized in 2024 as a top 100 small business in America by The U.S. Chamber of Commerce. We were chosen out of 15,000 applications despite our sector having nowhere close to the volume of other small successful businesses because of our innovative business

Congratulations to Ritmüller for 230 years of achievement!



From Johannes Brahms to David Syme, Ritmüller pianos have shaped music history for over two centuries. It was on a Ritmüller piano in Göttingen where Brahms composed his groundbreaking *Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15*, blending perfectionism with innovation. Today, his legacy continues to inspire pianists around the world.

The new Limited Special Edition Ritmüller RZ9, our 230th Anniversary upright model, brings concert-level performance to an upright design. Featuring the revolutionary



Esmonde-White Action, that offers the touch of a grand

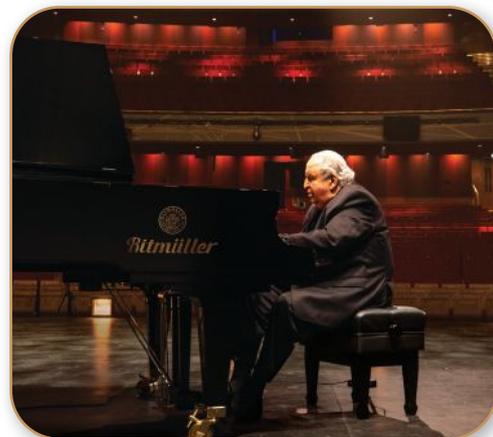


piano, PR2.0 hammers for pure sound, and German Rös lau wire with copper-wound bass strings for tonal richness — all crafted to European standards.



As Ritmüller's Worldwide Brand Ambassador, American virtuoso David Syme carries this tradition of excellence forward. This year, David will commemorate the 230th anniversary of Ritmüller with his "Living Room Concerts" series at his estate in West Cork, Ireland.

From Carnegie Hall to collaborating with leading orchestras, Syme embodies the artistry and innovation that will continue to define Ritmüller for decades to come.



David Syme, Ritmüller Worldwide Brand Ambassador



Ritmüller

Since 1795

practices, agility, grit and resourcefulness.

My purpose in taking the time to tell you my story, is because while I use to see what I just shared as our 'strategic selling advantage', I know see that access to quality woodwind repair, and a selling system that has been proven across over 1000+ pro sales from clarinets to trombones- is something that can help those of you in retailing who seriously wants to grow your step up and pro wind sales in a declining market, as we have.

Revitalizing the Wind Instrument Market

According to most reported metrics, the school service and wind instrument segment of our industry faced a decline across all four quarters in 2024. This could potentially make it the worst year in our industry's history, following 2023, which already set a record for the lowest sales in 50 years. Now is the ideal time to reverse your store's trajectory.

In a world that on so many levels is failing, we are part of an industry that offers so much to encourage human expression, shared language, collaboration. We should be at a 50-year high, in my opinion, honestly. Society wants what we can offer if we can create more connection and spark for those who are curious about participating or trying to decide if they are serious. Either way, we need more of those who start to play, to play for life, and in the end, we play an important role to get them to do so.

Essential Elements For Growth

The essential elements for growth include an increase in qualified specialty wind repair technicians and an increase of knowledgeable specialty sales personnel that can work on even a fractional basis for a retail store just like yours. Drawing parallels with the automobile industry, where the presence of skilled technicians and salespeople is indispensable, it is evident that our sector will also benefit significantly from this investment. Today, high-quality wind instruments can command prices comparable to used and new vehicles, underscoring the necessity of expertly trained professionals to drive sales. Without them, it's easy to see why we face the devastating decline in sales we do.

So what are the benefits for this investment?

The Impact of Proper Instrument Adjustment

When properly adjusted, wind instruments are not only significantly more pleasurable to play but also speak volumes regarding the retailers' commitment to customer satisfaction. Over our 1000+ pro sales, we can attest to the novice or the expert noticing the difference and being able to properly choose what feels best to them despite the difference in their sophistication as musicians. Our research has shown that having a limited stock of well-adjusted step-up wind instruments available for trial can streamline the buying process. When customers have the opportunity to play an instrument that is already at optimal performance levels, they are less likely to request multiple options, thus simplifying their decision-making process. This is especially true, when combined with the use of a sales system that helps to identify the color and shape of sound they need most in their new instrument to become more successful immediately. This tailored approach also positions your retail shop as a quality provider in the eyes of potential buyers and makes it far easier to charge a higher price to cover all of the additional education and service provided.

Differentiating in a Competitive Landscape

As the saying goes, "If you always do what you have always done, you will always get what you have always gotten." It's time to try new things in what is the most challenging periods for wind instrument sales in over half a century, worsened by declining birth rates and a flood of imported brands. To succeed in this saturated market, we must focus on differentiating our products. Enhancing the playing experience through proper instrument adjustments becomes a pivotal factor. Step-up instruments that are meticulously pre-adjusted beyond creating more enjoyment for the musician, at the end of the day, see higher purchase rates with much lower churn. Successful pro shops and high-end specialty retailers have long understood that presenting pre-serviced instruments during trials leads to more favorable purchasing decisions and instead of losing all of that business to them, you can play a key role in your community to drive it to you.

Achieving Cost Efficiency

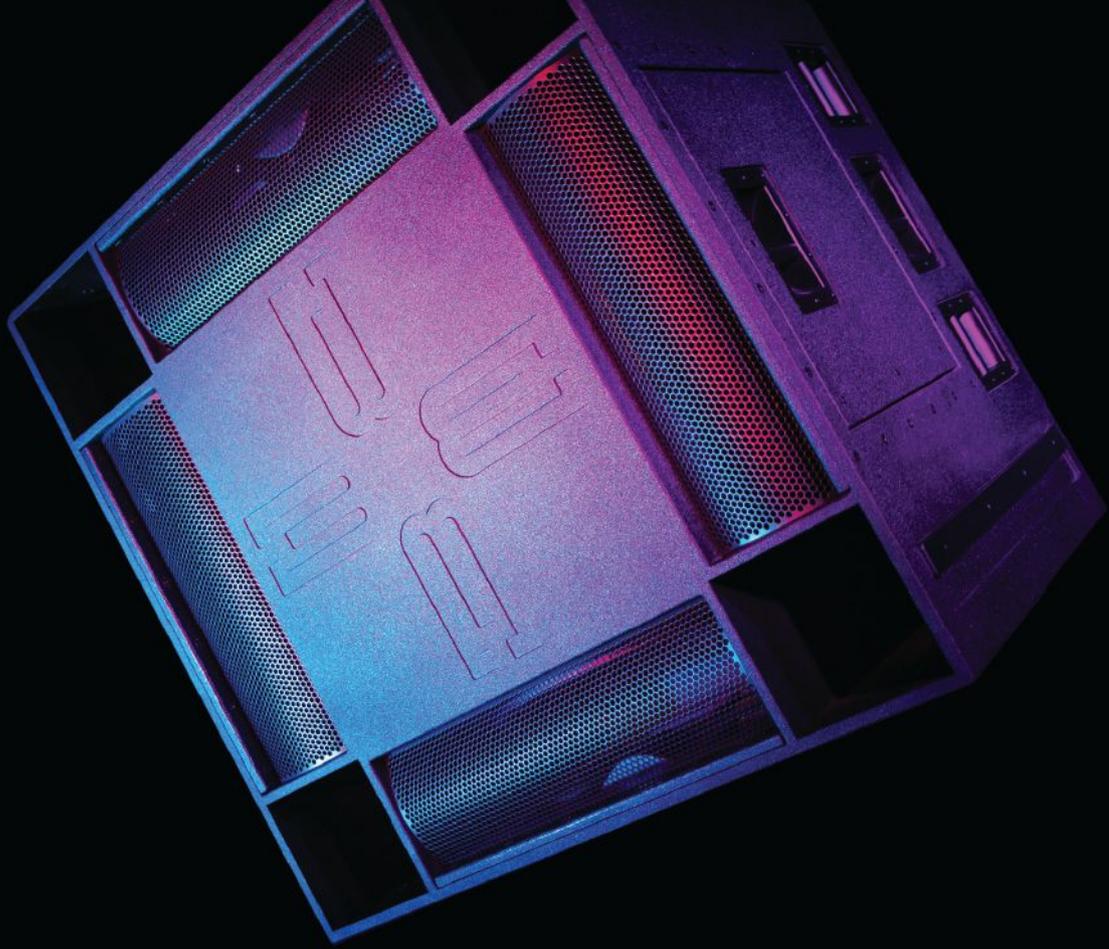
The best part of both an investment in specialty repair and sales, is that we have developed a low-cost system for attracting both. Having spent the better part of 10 years developing education that affords the transfer of skills and knowledge, our methodology offers a low investment, low risk solution for retailers at a time when our industry needs investment, benevolence, support and collaboration. I would be most happy to help you understand in your particular situation how to achieve this if specialty repair and sales would provide increased value to your business.

Conclusion: A Call to Action for Wind Music Retailers

As music retailers, we have the power to make a significant impact on the woodwind market by investing in sales and repair training. This dual focus not only enhances our customer offerings but also positions our businesses for success in a competitive marketplace. By prioritizing quality repair and a knowledgeable sales force, we can revitalize woodwind sales and create a loyal customer base that appreciates the value of well-prepared instruments. Together, let's forge a path toward a more prosperous future for the wind instrument industry.

Emphasizing both sales training and repair excellence is not merely an option; it is a necessary strategic initiative that will help elevate our industry, ensuring that every musician can find and play their perfect instrument.





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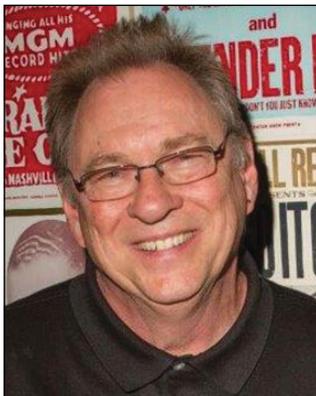
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BASSBOSS

Timothée Chalamet as Bob Dylan: The Times They are a Changin’



By Menzie Pittman

I can hear Timothée Chalamet’s rendition of “The Times They Are A-Changin’” in my ear as I write, starting as a near whisper and building with a slow crescendo. Chalamet (29) portrayed Bob Dylan in the recent biopic “A Complete Unknown,” directed by James Mangold. The movie, released in late 2024, is Chalamet’s second film production credit.

Five years prior to the release of the film, Chalamet

began preparing to play the daunting part of Bob Dylan, and Dylan himself – who was involved in the making of the movie and approved the script – has responded positively to the casting decision. In a post on X, Dylan referred to Chalamet as a “brilliant actor,” even saying, “I’m sure he’s going to be completely believable as me. Or a younger me. Or some other me,” in typical poetic, Bob fashion. Rumor has it that, to stay immersed in the demanding role, Chalamet remained aloof on set and was referred to as “Bob” on the call sheet. He also learned around 40 songs, both vocally and on guitar, which would be played live while making the film.

Chalamet’s widely heralded and critically acclaimed performance of Bob Dylan reinforces an industry trend that I believe has been bubbling up for a while: the rebirth of strong songwriting and the embrace of a “‘60s/’70s Vibe.” In my work, I am fortunate to be able to engage with young artists, many of whom are former students who now reside in Nashville, NYC, and LA. They keep me relevant and tuned in to the trends that are currently in vogue with rising artists of today. My gift to them in return is sharing my knowledge of music history, and any business practices that will help them sustain a career in the industry.

As Chalamet’s Dylan reminds us in “A Complete Unknown,” listening to the youth is your best opportunity to learn about current trends. That’s where you will find the most relevant opinions on what’s accepted as “cool” in today’s music world, and thanks to Chalamet, Bob Dylan is trending again. The rearview mirror has once again become the guide.

The most important role for any arts educator is that of a great listener, because students are teaching us as well. It makes no difference whether we understand the things that inspire our students to “go for it,” it only matters that they do. Once they see that we are listening to them, trust is established, and they, in turn, listen to us. Right now, they are telling us (with the guidance of one of their favorite A-list actors) that Bob Dylan is relevant once again. In truth, of course, we know he always was.

Celebrating uniqueness, despite that uniqueness sometimes causing struggles for independent artists, is the whole point of “A Complete Unknown.” Dylan was an agent of change. He saw and felt things differently than the majority, and most importantly, he was true to these feelings and his vision, despite whatever resistance he met. One of the trends that I am witnessing among rising artists is a return to classic formats, while many turn away from production overkill. That’s not to suggest that overproduction is waning in any way, shape, or form. It’s here to stay, because technology is way too intoxicating. That being said, that’s also exactly why the popularity of “A Complete Unknown” among young people is so intriguing.

Trends come and go, but uniqueness is not a trend. So unless I’m crazy, songwriting and authenticity are back in vogue. We owe Timothée Chalamet a debt of thanks for reminding us that creativity will always remain relevant, and legends never go out of style.

And, it might be time to stock up on acoustic guitars.

*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, the writer of MMR’s “Small Business Matters” column, and author of the recently released book, *The New Musician*.*

“
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”

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ACCESSORIES



Graph Tech Guitar Labs Launches Barrel Knobs for Ratio Machine Heads

"When Thomas Nordegg speaks, we listen." That's how Graph Tech Guitar Labs proudly introduces its latest addition to the Ratio Machine Heads family: Barrel Knobs. At Thomas's request, these barrel-style tuning

buttons bring a fresh look and feel to the Ratio system, offering players a new way to personalize their instruments. Known for his work with rock legends like Frank Zappa and Steve Vai, Thomas, a long-time fan of Ratio Machine Heads, saw an opportunity to enhance the system's ergonomic design, and the company was happy to make it a reality.

Nordegg, a long-time fan of Ratio Machine Heads, approached Graph Tech with the idea of creating barrel-style tuning buttons to provide an alternative option for players seeking a fresh look and feel. Designed to integrate seamlessly with the Ratio system, these knobs combine ergonomic comfort with understated style, giving players another way to personalize their instruments.

Now Available as a Standalone Option

For the first time, players can order tuning knobs separately from the Ratio Machine Heads. If you already own Ratio Machine Heads, simply order the Barrel Knobs and swap them out for a fresh new look and feel – no need to replace the entire set.

Why Ratio Machine Heads?

Ratio Machine Heads are designed with gear ratios uniquely calibrated for each string, making tuning consistent and predictable across the fretboard. This innovative system simplifies fine-tuning and alternate tunings, saving time and improving accuracy.

What Barrel Knobs Bring to the Table:

Refined Functionality: Barrel-shaped design for a natural grip and precise adjustments.

Timeless Aesthetic: A sleek, modern look that complements any guitar style.

Perfect Fit: Designed specifically for Ratio Machine Heads, ensuring flawless compatibility.

Available in chrome and black to suit a variety of instruments and player preferences.

Finish: Chrome & Black

Price: USD \$3.00 (per one)

<https://graphtech.com>



JodyJazz Introduces New DV JC JODY CUSTOM Saxophone Mouthpieces

JodyJazz has announced the introduction of the new DV JC which stands for "Jody Custom". An exciting new addition to the DV Series saxophone mouthpieces, the new DV JC features design modifications based upon JodyJazz founder & president, Jody Espina's customized personal mouthpiece. Available initially in the Alto model it will soon be followed by the Tenor later in 2025.

Originally introduced in 2005, the DV series rapidly rose to become one of the most popular saxophone mouthpieces in the world, defying everyone's expectations about the sound capabilities of a metal mouthpiece. The unique design of the DV offered free blowing power and projection without sacrificing a big fat mid-range and bottom end so commonly missing from most metal mouthpieces. Over the years since the introduction of the DV, Espina has made a series of tweaks and modifications to the design of his personal DV mouthpiece. As a working musician,

Jody would find himself being called upon to play a diverse array of musical genres from week to week and his goal was to make his mouthpiece more perfectly suit the variety of musical environments in which he would most commonly find himself. Now that special design is being made generally available to everyone for the first time.

"As we occasionally made changes to my personal DV, over time it was getting better and better," says Espina. "In the summer of 2024 we started to think about possibly making a 25th Anniversary limited edition mouthpiece and we started tweaking my personal DV even more. We came upon a version of the mouthpiece that I just freaked out over. I loved it so much that I decided it was too good and would be too universally embraced to make it a limited edition only. So, we are launching it now to be a regularly offered model in our DV line up."

"In terms of sound, the new DV JC is in between the DV and the DV NY," Espina continued. "But there is a characteristic about this mouthpiece that makes it feel even less like a metal piece than the others. Big, fat and warm with enough power to do all the variety of

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jobs I do, but sweet and dark enough to play beautiful ballads. Everyone is always impressed when they play the regular DV Series mouthpiece, but now I think if they try the new DV JC they won't be able to put it down."

The new DV JC JODY CUSTOM Alto is constructed from 14kt gold-plated virgin bell brass and is available in 6, 7 & 8 tip openings. Its MSRP will be the same as the other standard DV and DV NY Alto models.

www.jodyjazz.com

DRUMS & PERCUSSION



On-Stage Rolls Out New KS1355 Single Tier Z Keyboard Stand

SABIAN is proud to announce the release of no less than eight new products in conjunction with Mike Portnoy that coincides with Mike's touring duties with Dream Theater.

The new products are made up of:

- AA Bell Chimes in 6", 6.5", and 7" sizes, along with a set of all three
- AA MAXX Splashes – these are the updated versions of the original MAX Splashes, originally released in 2000, in 7", 9", & 11" sizes
- 22" HHX MAX Ride

The new AAX MAXX Splashes have a

larger, raw bell and new shape, producing more volume and projection compared to the original versions.

The AA Bell Chimes are thinner than a cup chime or ice bell but thicker than a splash, with a number of ways of mounting them either singularly or upside down on top of other cymbals. Crisp, clear, and well defined while also fitting in with any melody, these bell chimes are yet another sound innovation from SABIAN.

Finally, the 22" HHX MAX Ride was Mike's vision of combining elements of the 22" HH Rock Ride that he played for many years, along with his more recent favorite, the 40th Anniversary Artisan Raw Bell Dry Ride. It is lathed on the bow to the edge on both the top and bottom and finished with an un-lathed HHX hammered bell, making this medium-heavy ride a true powerhouse cymbal.

Said Mike, himself, "I wanted to talk about how much I love SABIAN: I've been with them for over 30 years. They believed in me in the early days when I was just coming up. And their love and support to me has always meant so much. Obviously the cymbals speak for themselves, they're so beautiful... The MAX Chimes, I love them, they just sing, they're absolutely gorgeous... The 22" Max ride – which is a work of art, absolutely beautiful, is clean and crisp, it sings, and the bell just cuts like a knife."

All eight SKUs are shipping now.

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