

# M M R

## MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

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### HOW TARIFFS ARE ALREADY IMPACTING — AND WILL CONTINUE TO THREATEN — THE MI INDUSTRY



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Sarah Yule

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In 2025, thousands of local, independent musical instrument retailers across the United States are staring down an existential crisis. Heretofore unheard of tariffs levied upon innumerable goods from some of the American MI industry's most vital partners has thrown the supply chain into chaos. With an unclear timeline and constantly shifting metrics, the uncertainties don't allow inventory management, sales and marketing plans, cash flow allocation planning for restocking.

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#### How Tariffs are Already Impacting – and Will Continue to Threaten – the MI Industry 16

The current – and ever-changing – tariffs are putting many industries in immediate peril, but for a realm such as MI, in which profit margins are already generally fairly slim and in which so many products and components are sourced – by necessity – abroad, it's alarming and represents a very real threat.

We decided to reach out to folks in the industry to get some true, “boots on the ground” feedback regarding these trade restrictions.

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Response to this month's MI Dealer Survey was, unsurprisingly, very robust – so much so, in fact, that a handful of suppliers and distributors also participated (we welcome their input!).

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By Christian Wissmuller

## Tariffs, Turbulence, and Tuning Forks: The Trade War's Growing Impact on the MI Industry

*"The MI industry isn't flooding the market with unfairly subsidized goods. It's building the instruments that power education, entertainment, and artistic expression. Yet here we are—collateral damage in a much larger war."*

There's no sugarcoating it: the administration's trade war with China and most of the rest of the world has created a new layer of stress for the already delicate supply-and-demand balance of the MI industry. While the headlines focus on steel, soybeans, and smartphones, musical instruments—along with parts, cases, accessories, and the countless components that go into them—are feeling the pressure just as strongly, even if the media isn't paying attention.

Yes, just as we were finalizing this issue, there was a temporary agreement with China that paused some of the extremely high tariffs that had been in place. It's also worth noting that, while some key restrictions were lifted (for now), others remain. Also worth noting two other points: this "trade war" is not *just* between the U.S. and China. The new tariff policies have strained relationships with trading partners such as Canada and the European Union, as well, and rattled global markets. Additionally, tariffs have been announced and then paused and, later still, ultimately enacted before—just within the past couple of months.

The notion that "everything will be fine now" is... unrealistic. For a lot of reasons.

For MI dealers, distributors, and manufacturers, this isn't some abstract economic concept. It's an everyday reality. Prices are rising. Margins are shrinking. Inventory planning has become a guessing game. And the long-term consequences could ripple through every segment of our industry—from boutique builders to big-box retailers, from school programs to symphony stages.

Let's start with the basics. In 2018, the Trump administration levied tariffs on billions of dollars' worth of Chinese imports, many of which fall squarely within the musical instrument category. The initial 10% tariffs were challenging enough. But when those jumped to 25%, the MI industry was forced to make difficult decisions almost overnight. Whether it was a \$500 student clarinet or a \$2.99 guitar cable, costs went up—and someone had to absorb them.

For many U.S. retailers, that "someone" has often been them. As manufacturers and importers passed on higher costs, dealers faced a choice: raise prices and risk alienating budget-conscious customers, or eat the increase and hope to make it up in volume. It's not a great set of options in a marketplace already disrupted by online competition and ever-thinner profit margins.

Independent retailers, in particular, are getting squeezed. Their customers are price-sensitive—especially parents shopping for school band instruments or beginners just starting their musical journey. Telling a mom that her child's flute is now \$100 more than it was last year because of geopolitical maneuvering isn't exactly a compelling sales pitch. At the same time, simply absorbing the cost isn't sustainable.

The importers and manufacturers aren't faring much better. Even companies that assemble in the U.S. often source components—brass, electronics, hardware, strings, plastics—from Asia, particularly China. The global supply chain that once allowed MI businesses to balance quality with affordability is now tangled in red tape and rising costs. Lead times have stretched. Shipments have slowed. And product development cycles are under strain.

Ironically, many of the companies now struggling were never the intended targets of the tariffs. These policies aim to rebalance trade, protect American jobs, and punish intellectual property theft—noble goals, perhaps, but blunt tools. The MI industry isn't flooding the market with unfairly subsidized goods. It's building the instruments that power education, entertainment, and artistic expression. Yet here we are—collateral damage in a much larger war.

Even companies that manufacture outside of China are seeing ripple effects. Supply chains are interlinked. When parts made in China are delayed or cost more, it affects assembly plants in Indonesia, Korea, and even the U.S. What's more, shifting production to other countries isn't as easy as it sounds. It takes years to build quality control, train workers, and establish reliable infrastructure. And for smaller companies—many of which make up the heart of our industry—those options are simply out of reach.

The education market is particularly vulnerable. School band programs depend on affordable, durable instruments for beginners. When prices rise, fewer kids have access. That's a long-term loss for everyone. Fewer young musicians today means fewer lifelong customers tomorrow. For retailers who've built their business around back-to-school rental programs and service contracts, the threat is real and growing.

And let's not forget accessories. Strings, reeds, tuners, stands, sticks, bags—many of these are either imported from China or made with Chinese materials. Dealers are already reporting price hikes, longer delivery times, and in some cases, inventory shortages. These are not luxury items. They're essentials. And if your store doesn't have them, your customer may not come back.

So what's the path forward?

Unfortunately, for now, much of it is wait-and-see. The trade war shows no clear signs of resolution. Companies must continue adapting—reassessing suppliers, adjusting pricing models, communicating openly with customers, and advocating as a unified industry wherever possible.

On the bright side, the MI industry has always been resilient. We've weathered economic recessions, technological upheavals, and cultural shifts. We've found creative ways to survive—and thrive—in challenging times. But this moment calls for more than survival. It calls for vigilance, collaboration, and a renewed focus on value: not just the price of a product, but the experience and expertise that independent dealers provide.

At *MMR*, we talk a lot about the "musical ecosystem." Retailers, manufacturers, educators, and artists all play their part. When tariffs threaten one link in that chain, we all feel it. Let's keep the conversation going, share what's working, and speak up where it counts.

Because ultimately, music doesn't care about tariffs. But the people who make it—and those who make it possible—certainly do.

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## NAMM FOUNDATION AWARDS OVER 1,000 SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS AS BEST COMMUNITIES FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

NAMM and The NAMM Foundation have announced the recipients of the 2025 Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) Awards. One of The NAMM Foundation's signature programs, BCME is now in its 26th year of recognizing and celebrating school districts and individual schools for their support and commitment to music education and their efforts to ensure access to music for all students as part of a well-rounded education.

Two awards are given each year: Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) for school districts and the SupportMusic Merit Award (SMMA) for individual school sites. Both reach K-12 schools and districts throughout the U.S. and offer opportunities to increase access and support for music programs. Over 1,000 districts and individual school sites (public, private, charter, parochial) are recognized for having the highest commitment to producing exceptional music programs.

Over 46 states are honored in 2025 including 103 first-time winners and two districts (Fulton County and Henrico County) being selected for the 26th consecutive year.

Additionally, winners of the award for 25-consecutive years include Berea City School District and Torrington Public Schools.

"Music education has numerous positive effects on communities," said John Mlynczak, NAMM president and CEO and former educator. "The Best Communities for Music Education award winners serve as models for the power of music education to foster a lifelong appreciation for the arts, and NAMM is honored to recognize the 2025 recipients."

"We are thrilled to recognize this year's awardees for their outstanding commitment to music education access," said Julia Rubio, Executive Director of The NAMM Foundation. "These districts and schools demonstrate that access to music learning helps students thrive, in school and in life, and we celebrate their dedication to creating inclusive learning environments."

For a full listing of award recipients and information about the BCME program, please visit: [www.nammfoundation.org/bcme](http://www.nammfoundation.org/bcme)

## JOHN PACKER MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS RECEIVES KING'S AWARD FOR ENTERPRISE FOR SECOND TIME

John Packer Musical Instruments, the UK-based musical instrument manufacturer, distributor and retailer, has won the prestigious King's Award for Enterprise in the International Trade category, recognizing the outstanding international growth of the flourishing business.

The company was announced as a recipient of the major honor on Tuesday, May 6.

It is the second time JP Musical Instruments has won the award, having received the Queen's Award for Enterprise in the International Trade category in 2018.

The King's Awards for Enterprise, previously known as The Queen's Awards for Enterprise, were renamed in 2023 to reflect His Majesty The King's desire to continue the legacy of HM Queen Elizabeth II by recognizing outstanding UK businesses.

The Award program, now in its 59th year, is the most prestigious business award in the country, with successful businesses able to use the esteemed King's Awards Emblem for the next five years.

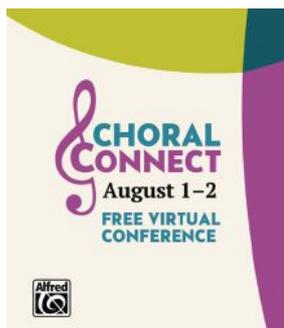
Rob Hanson, managing director of John Packer Musical Instruments, will now be invited to attend a royal reception at Windsor Castle. He commented: "To win the King's Award for Enterprise in International Trade for a second time is a huge honor for JP Musical Instruments.

News of the King's Award comes after JP Musical Instruments celebrated its 50th anniversary year in 2024 with a series of major milestones.

In January 2024, the company won a prestigious Best in Show award at the NAMM Show in Anaheim, California.



Rob Hanson, managing director of John Packer Musical Instruments



## CHORAL CONNECT 2025: CONNECT, LEARN, AND GROW—FREE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR CHORAL EDUCATORS

Alfred Music proudly announces the return of Choral Connect, a premier online professional development event tailored for elementary through high school choral directors and general music teachers. This two-day event, held entirely online, offers participants a unique opportunity to network, learn, and be inspired by a diverse lineup of renowned clinicians—at no cost.

Scheduled for August 1–2, 2025, Choral Connect features a distinguished roster of presenters, including Dr. Janet Galván, Andy Beck, Stacey V. Gibbs, Tom Anderson, Krista Hart, Victor C. Johnson, Dr. Raul Dominguez, Matthew Hanne, Robert T. Gibson, Jack Zaino, Danielle Bayert, and more. The event opens with an inspiring session

by educator, conductor, and consultant Colton Blake, and concludes with a motivational message from the 2025 GRAMMY® Music Educator of the Year, Adrian L. Maclin.

participants will have access to a broad spectrum of topics, including working with TB voices, show choir basics, non-singing activities for elementary classrooms, and the psychology of choirs. Highlights include choral reading sessions showcasing new and best-selling repertoire across all voicings, specialized interest sessions offering practical teaching strategies and creative resources, and a session focused on the connection between musicians and athletes.

Choral Connect is a unique opportunity to connect with peers, gain fresh insights, and prepare for your best year of teaching yet!

For more information and to register, visit [alfred.com/choralconnect](http://alfred.com/choralconnect).

## YORKVILLE SOUND TO DISTRIBUTE ORANGE AMPS IN CANADA

Yorkville Sound has announced that it is now the exclusive Canadian distributor of Orange Amps.

Orange has been a pioneering force in guitar and bass amplification since its founding in 1968. Known for powerful tones that are as distinctive as their signature aesthetics, Orange amplifiers have been trusted for decades by a genre-spanning roster of world-class artists, including Geddy Lee, Jimmy Page, Stevie Wonder, Oasis, and many more.

"When it comes to iconic amps, Yorkville's roots run deep," said Jeff Cowling, Yorkville Sound's vice president of Sales & Marketing. "Our heritage also extends back to the 1960s, and we have over six decades of experience in bringing the best amplifiers in the world to discerning dealers and customers across Canada."

The distribution partnership between Yorkville Sound & Orange Amps is effective immediately. Canadian retailers are encouraged to contact their Yorkville Sound sales representative for more information.



**REVERB TO BECOME PRIVATELY HELD AGAIN**

On April 22, music gear marketplace Reverb announced that two new investors—Creator Partners and Servco—have entered an agreement to purchase Reverb from Etsy. Once the deal closes, Reverb will be a privately-held, independently operated company backed by two investors that share Reverb's experience in the music industry and focus on supporting musicians.

"Creator Partners and Servco share our passion for the musical instruments industry and a community-first approach, plus a deep desire to strengthen creative industries," said David Mandelbrot, CEO at Reverb. "The musicians, shops, and brands who use Reverb have always been at the center

of all that we do, and these two partners will help us support our music-making community in new and better ways."

Known for their focus on the digital transformation of creative industries, Creator Partners is an investment company currently investing in music companies including BMI, SoundCloud, Color Studios and Mogul.

"Reverb is the #1 global marketplace for musicians, and a one-of-a-kind platform that has transformed access to quality used gear for creators of all levels" said Kerry Trainor, Creator Partners Founder and former CEO of SoundCloud and Vimeo, "We are thrilled to join the Reverb mission to make the world more musical, and grow the entire

industry through seamless secondhand commerce."

Servco has been involved in the musical instrument industry since 1937, including a long history with Fender—first as a dealer of Fender music gear in the 1950s, then as part of the group that bought the company from CBS in 1985 and now as the majority owner of the company, as well as an active investor in other musical instruments businesses.

"We've got a lot of exciting changes in the works. We're expanding access to music-making software on Reverb and we're getting ready to pilot a new option for selling that allows musicians to get paid faster, while skipping the listing and shipping process. Our teams are working



on improving our search functionality, making it easier to ship, and shortening the time it takes to resolve support issues," said Mandelbrot. "All and all, there's a lot for our community to look forward to and I'm very excited about what's coming as we move forward as an independent company again."

**PEOPLE**

Conn Selmer has announced the appointment of **John Fulton** as president and CEO, effective May 12, 2025. Fulton succeeds Stephen Zapf, who has served in this position since 2019.

Fulton brings over 28 years of experience in the music industry, with a career spanning retail, sales, and executive leadership, and has dedicated his professional life to advancing the industry. He has been with Conn Selmer since 2017, most recently serving as SVP, overseeing Sales and Customer Service for the Americas and Asia Pacific, Marketing, and the Division of Education (DOE). Since joining Conn Selmer eight years ago, Fulton has

played a pivotal role in driving strategic initiatives, implementing new processes that have significantly improved operational efficiency, and contributing to several successful program and product launches.

Under Zapf's leadership, Conn Selmer celebrated its 150th anniversary of American domestic production, and the launch of a new student lineup in 2024. As Conn Selmer continues to expand its global market presence, Fulton will be invaluable in guiding the company's path forward.

"I'm honored to step into the role of CEO," said John Fulton. "As Conn Selmer continues to expand globally,

we remain firmly rooted in our U.S.-based manufacturing and committed to delivering instruments that reflect our 750 years of combined brand heritage while setting new standards for quality and performance.

"At the heart of our success is our dealer network. Supporting our dealers and deepening those relationships will be a top priority as we move forward. I look forward to working alongside our exceptional leadership team to champion what makes Conn Selmer exceptional: our dedicated employees, world-class artists and clinicians, trusted dealers, and the partners who share our mission to inspire the next generation of musicians."



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# PEDAGOGICS PROJECT

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**Eastern Acoustic Works** announces the appointment of industry veteran **David Budge** and Blue5 Technology as an independent sales rep for Europe. In this role, Budge and Blue5 will work with EAW's sales team to support existing partners in Europe as well as identify and bring on new partners in countries that do not currently have local EAW representation.

Budge serves as managing director at Blue5 Technology where he has been since 2020. Headquartered just outside of London, England, Blue5 Technology offers manufacturers services of an EMEA office without physically establishing one. The company offers sales, marketing and go-to-market planning with regular reporting.



**Guitar Center**, the world's largest musical instrument retailer, announces the promotion of **Anne Buchanan** to EVP, chief human resources officer for the Guitar Center Company. Previously, Buchanan served as SVP of Human Resources, chief human resources officer. The announcement was made by Gabe Dalporto, Guitar Center CEO.

Buchanan has been a key force in shaping Guitar Center's identity since joining the organization seven years ago. She has overseen Human Resources across five divisions — Guitar Center, Music & Arts, Musician's Friend, AVDG and GC Pro — through a period of rapid change and evolution. From streamlining operations and navigating COVID to periods of fast growth, Buchanan has built an HR function that not only attracts and retains top talent, but also strengthens leadership, drives cultural progress and sets up teams for long term success.



**Yorkville Sound** is pleased to welcome **Tim Bond** as the newest member of its sales and marketing team. In his Product Specialist role, Tim will represent Yorkville's catalogue of brands for the band and orchestra markets. Distributed lines for Canada

include Jupiter Band Instruments, Altus Flutes, Azumi Flutes, and XO Professional Brass, as well as Manhasset Stands.

Tim has over 20 years of experience working in Educational Services at Cosmo Music, most recently as the department Manager. As an active trumpet player, Tim has recently joined The Regimental Band of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada.

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**d&b audiotechnik** is pleased to announce the appointment of **Ryan Penny** as vice president Global Business Development. In this newly established role, he will be responsible for leading and implementing global business development strategies and expanding the company's footprint across key markets and verticals.

With over a decade of experience in the professional audio sector, Ryan's broad skill set spans sales leadership, production management, consultancy, and strategic business development.

At d&b, Ryan Penny will lead the implementation of the company's global and key account strategies, establish robust frameworks for international consultant relations, and support the commercialization of business models such as CPO (Certified Intelligence teams to support strategic alignment across territories and represent d&b audiotechnik in relevant industry associations.



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# ORANGE AMPLIFICATION MANAGING DIRECTOR SARAH YULE

By Christian Wissmuller



“ The rich and respected heritage of a brand like Orange is absolutely something I not only want to preserve, but to really honour and champion. ”

In January, Orange Amplification announced that MI veteran Sarah Yule was assuming the role of managing director at the company. With more than two decades spent in the industry, working with the likes of ROLI and Audio-Technica, Yule is well positioned to guide the storied brand and expand market reach.

We recently connected with Sarah and discussed her background, her new role at Orange Amps, what it's like to work alongside legendary CEO Cliff Cooper, and what future she envisions for the company.

**Q.** You're a known figure in MI — I first became aware of you during your time at Roli — but for any of our readers unfamiliar with your background, could you briefly summarize your history in the industry?

**A.** I've always been fascinated by all things sound. My career began in my teens as an audio engineer, earning a degree in Sound Technology from Paul McCartney's LIPA. I spent the next 11 years post-graduation in senior sales roles at TL Audio and InMusic before joining ROLI in 2014 as head of Sales (then promoted to VP of Sales), where I helped launch pioneering music-creation products worldwide and was honoured as one of the Top 25 Women in Tech. In February 2019, post finishing my Exec MBA with Warwick Business School, I embraced a new challenge as sales director EMEA at Audio-Technica Europe, overseeing regional growth across pro-audio and consumer channels, before then forming and running the Retail Audio category across both Sales and Marketing. I realised that I really enjoyed bringing the worlds of creation and consumption closer together. I also saw importance in helping the consumer fall in love with listening again, to preserve and protect the broader panoptic music eco-system. So, in July 2021 when the opportunity arose, I moved to British luxury HiFi manufacturer KEF as commercial director, before transitioning to lead European Marketing and General Management for the KEF Music Gallery London, their global brand experience centre. Most recently, in January this year, I stepped into the role of managing director at Orange Amplifiers — an honour that allows me to work alongside founder Cliff Cooper and the incredible Orange team to drive our "Voice of the World" forward on the global stage.

**Q.** How did you come to be on board at Orange Amps? Did you have a professional relationship with Cliff or anyone else at the company?

**A.** Cliff Cooper is someone I've known of and admired throughout my professional career, although I have only known him personally for the last couple of years, after we were introduced via mutual industry friends. The UK MI business is small enough that you do tend to know most people within it and cross paths at some point. As Orange are active members of the Music Industries Association, for which I am also a board member, we also attended many of the same events. Cliff approached me directly about coming on board at Orange after my name was recommended to him by some other MI industry leaders whom we both trust and admire.



Sarah Yule and Orange Amplification founder and CEO Cliff Cooper

**Q.** Once you get to that "C-level" level of upper management, the distinction between certain roles can seem a little vague to anyone not "on the inside." What, specifically, are you responsible for as Managing Director and how does that differ from, say, CEO Cliff Cooper?

**A.** As managing director, I'm responsible for the day-to-day running of the business and looking after the health of the company, the balance sheet, and ensuring good P&L (profit and loss) management. I also help with setting company objectives, business strategy, and optimisation and efficiency in achieving our KPI's (Key performance indicators). Cliff is an entrepreneur at heart, so he can focus more on wider opportunities, explore new ideas and areas for investment. He created the brand and is the living embodiment of Orange, so his presence gives us constant learning opportunities and keeps us grounded on what is important. He can also act as a guide and voice of experience for me, which I highly appreciate.

**Q.** For such a storied brand with a lineup of valued, respected, and still quite popular products, some might assume that the “mission statement” of someone in your position would be to simply stay the course and not shake things up too much. Would that describe your own plans for the coming months and years for Orange, or do you have more ambitious plans — and, if so, can you share some of your ideas?

**A.** The rich and respected heritage of a brand like Orange is absolutely something I not only want to preserve, but to really honour and champion. We have such a strong reputation that’s been earned over decades of consistently producing great quality, great sounding products. Going forwards, I plan to build on this foundation by both honouring the past and continuing to innovate to ensure we are future focused. At the end of the day, Orange has always been a brand that has not been scared to be different and has embraced creativity and expression. I see us continuing to do that by delivering products that delight and inspire music lovers during practice, performance, and playback.

**Q.** I just mentioned how Orange is a very respected, iconic brand. Aside from the quality of the amplifiers, themselves, to what degree do you feel artist association benefits Orange? It certainly doesn’t hurt to count the likes of Geddy Lee, Jimmy Page, The Hellcopters, and Nancy Wilson on board as fans.

**A.** As a guitar amp brand that was first founded nearly sixty years ago, you benefit from being a key part of the sound across multiple generations and genres. I think it’s a huge part of who we are that we have been able to translate to audiences throughout the decades. We are really genre-agnostic as our amps are versatile, musical, and powerful. Artists are central to who we are and what we do, from the icons of the industry to the next generation of rising stars, they are all part of our Orange family and we always love to see that splash of colour on the stage or in the studio! I am personally keen to further expand our artist activities and our role in supporting the health of, and collaboration within, the broader artist and music industry.

**Q.** Some new/recent Orange introductions include the O Tone 40, the Oraianthi Signature amp, and the Baby Range — can you talk about early response to these models and maybe provide a preview of upcoming projects for Orange Amps in 2025?

**A.** We’ve been really pleased with the response to all the recent new products. The Baby Range in particular uses some really clever design aspects to give players the feel and playability of a big tube amp in a really compact, easily portable, solid-state unit. We have a bunch of artists using them for shows and tours already, and everyone who tries them is really blown away. The rest of 2025 could hold some further exciting product news as we are very busy in the lab working on some cool new additions, so watch this space! This year, we are also investing in a complete website update, and further initiatives to help keep our community updated and informed.

**Q.** Any other thoughts on your recent appointment you’d like to share with MMR readers?

**A.** I am delighted to be leading such an iconic and authentic brand. We are a fully independent, family brand, with our original 82 yr-old founder proudly still at the helm. That’s such a rarity these days, and we know we are very lucky to be in this position. We are so proud of the industry we work in, and the customers we build for. We have lived through many changeable and turbulent times, but we continue to stand on a solid foundation with exciting plans for our future. We look forward to embracing the constant evolutions time will force upon us and doing all we can to maintain the health of our broader music and audio industry, that we so dearly love.

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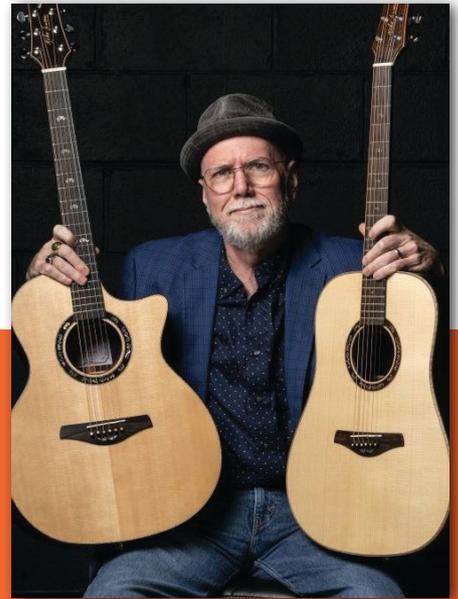
# RETAILERS AT RISK — THE MI FRONT LINES OF THE TARIFF TURMOIL

By Mike Lawson

*"While the tariffs made headlines, the hidden threat facing retailers may be even more disruptive: nothing is moving. Cargo lanes from Asia — particularly China, Vietnam, and Indonesia — have slowed to a crawl"*

*"Repairs, too, are no silver bullet. Most shops are overwhelmed. In rural communities, school districts wait weeks for service calls. And many common parts — felts, pads, springs, keys — are imported. If they're delayed, the repair stalls."*

*"We don't need slogans. We need solutions. Quickly. Because if we don't speak for this industry, no one else will."*



In 2025, thousands of local, independent musical instrument retailers across the United States are staring down an existential crisis. The combination of, at the first time of writing this, a 145% tariff (on top of previous 7.5%, for a total of 152.5%) on Chinese-made instruments and components, expanded levies on goods from Vietnam and Indonesia, and more, plus the massive shipping slowdowns has thrown the entire supply chain into chaos. Then a 90-day reprieve again was announced but knocking it down to "30%" plus the original 7.5%, so it still is a significant tax increase on consumers, and worse, puts businesses in the tough spot of eating them or passing them on, and I don't know many companies that will eat 40%. And who knows when and where this actually lands? That is a huge part of the issue, the uncertainty. These uncertainties don't allow inventory management, sales and marketing plans, cash flow allocation planning for restocking.

These are not just faceless importers. They're the products sold by the neighborhood mom-and-pop

### U.S. Brands Caught in the Crossfire

While tariffs are often pitched to protect domestic manufacturing, the reality inside the music products industry is more complicated — and more damaging. For decades, many of the most respected U.S. instrument brands have operated on a hybrid model: premium instruments made in American facilities, and entry-level or intermediate products designed in the U.S. but built overseas. These lower-cost lines are often manufactured in Asia in South Korea, Japan, China, Vietnam, or Indonesia and sold under house brands or sub-labels. For retailers and customers alike, they've become essential — providing accessible, vetted quality for students and beginners while allowing U.S. companies to stay competitive.

### Supply Chain Chaos — Even Zero Tariffs Can't Fix This

While the tariffs made headlines, the hidden threat facing retailers may be even more disruptive: nothing is moving. Cargo lanes from Asia — particularly China, Vietnam, and Indonesia — have slowed to a crawl. By the end of May, it will be worse. Some ports are already at/or nearly empty.

In April 2025, shipping data revealed steep declines in the number of container ships leaving major Chinese ports bound for the U.S. Export processing zones in Guangdong and Zhejiang have reported slowdowns, with stacked containers sitting idle due to customs delays and overcapacity at U.S. West Coast ports. Some freight forwarders estimate delivery times

shops that anchor our industry — family-run businesses that have served communities for decades, helping generations of musicians discover their first guitar, first saxophone, or first drum set. From repair techs in the back room to retail clerks on the floor, these businesses employ tens of thousands of Americans and support countless local economies.

Now, those stores are struggling to stock inventory at sustainable prices — or in some cases, at all. These are stores that played by the rules, with companies that for decades played by the rules with importing products primarily designed here in the USA, that the government incentivized manufacturers to do decades ago as it created what it called the new "service economy."

"We had shelves that were empty for months during COVID, this may be worse," said one East Coast dealer who asked not to be named out of concern for vendor relationships. "We can't get budget guitars or student woodwinds without paying double or triple. Some

Now, those same brands are being hit with the full weight of the tariffs.

"These aren't just imports — they're our products," said one executive from a U.S.-based band instrument company that produces professional lines in the USA and student models in China. "They're designed here, tested here, shipped here, and backed by our staff here. But because they're assembled overseas, we're being penalized like we're some drop-shipper. We're not."

The consequences are severe. This forces U.S. companies to raise prices, reduce their catalog offerings, or abandon the entry-level market entirely — leaving an opening for bargain-bin instruments from

have doubled or tripled since late 2024 — and that's for containers already in transit. New orders? Many vendors aren't even quoting ship dates.

"Even if tariffs were repealed tomorrow, we're still six months away from anything resembling normal inventory," said a logistics coordinator from a major MI distributor in Tennessee. "The pipeline is drying. What's worse — no one's confident about when it fills back up."

The situation is worsened by capacity limits at U.S. ports. These delays aren't just annoying — they're catastrophic to businesses that rely on predictable seasonal sales cycles, like back-to-school and holiday.

SKUs may just vanish from our store."

This isn't just a cost increase. It's a complete disruption of availability, reliability, and margin. With freight from Asia coming to a standstill, some retailers say even if tariffs were lifted today, inventory won't be back to normal for months. And with demand high, backorders deep, and suppliers scrambling, many retailers are being told they're last in line.

And the timeline matters. Holiday season — the single most important quarter for many MI retailers — is already at risk. Orders for Q4 are normally locked by spring, but with factory delays, ports empty, and tariff confusion, many retailers are holding off or scaling back. That means thinner shelves, fewer options, and lost sales when it matters most. Even if goods are ordered now, there's no guarantee they'll arrive in time — and if they do, they'll cost more. The 2025 holiday season could be one of the bleakest ever for independent music stores. It did not have to be. But, this is the reality at this moment in our timeline.

online sellers with no support network.

And it's not just about price. U.S.-based support teams, educators, and field reps often work closely with retailers to ensure those imported instruments meet school standards and offer consistent service. If those lines disappear, the entire chain suffers: manufacturers lose revenue, retailers lose accessible inventory, and customers lose affordable options.

At MMR, we are hearing from manufacturers with imported lines asking to change their advertising plans now, because they are not sure they will have inventory to advertise to dealers.

DHL even announced a temporary suspension of U.S.-bound shipments valued over \$800 for certain business-to-consumer categories, citing tariff enforcement and customs strain. This creates a nightmare for MI repair people, and retailers trying to get smaller restock orders or replacement parts through air freight or hybrid logistics.

With no timeline for relief, some U.S. stores have been wrestling with how to deal with showroom floors of pre-tariff inventory, knowing they may not be able to restock again soon — or afford to. Sell as priced? Sell for closer to what restocking will cost?

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## From SABIAN

*“The current tariff situation isn’t merely a challenge—it’s a serious threat to many in our industry. If there had been a clear, well-communicated strategy with sufficient lead time, perhaps our industry could have adapted, but as it stands, this sudden upheaval has severely compromised everyone’s cashflow and margins. Margins aren’t just numbers—they directly fund the people our industry employs, the instruments stocked, and the promotional activities that educate customers and fuel enthusiasm for making music.*

*The suggestion that tariffs will lead to job creation in the U.S. misses key realities:*

1. *Establishing meaningful domestic manufacturing capacity doesn’t happen overnight; it requires substantial investment and time.*
2. *The skilled labor required for manufacturing musical instruments is already scarce, and increasing tariffs won’t suddenly create a qualified workforce.*
3. *Ongoing uncertainty due to these tariffs and economic instability makes it nearly impossible for manufacturers to confidently invest in expanding or developing domestic production.*

*Independent retailers, the heart of the music products industry, are disproportionately impacted. These local stores excel in creating community relationships and personalized service but typically don’t have the expertise and resources to navigate international supply chain complexities effectively. Without strategic planning and clear, consistent communication from policymakers, what remains is, well, chaos—damaging independent businesses, stifling innovation, and undermining customer confidence.*

*The stakes are clear, and the consequences are already evident. We need thoughtful, well*

*communicated solutions, not reactive measures, to be able to safeguard the future of our industry.”*

Andy Zildjian  
SABIAN

## The Human Cost — Local Jobs, Local Stores, Local Loss

This isn’t just an industry problem — it’s a human one.

Across the country, thousands of *MMR* readers run family-owned music stores that have served their communities for generations who are now looking at laying off staff, or shortening hours, and in some cases, considering the possibility of shuttering entirely, deciding retirement time is now. These shops aren’t hedge-funded big boxes — they’re the places where local kids got their first guitar lesson, where school band directors pick up reeds on a Friday afternoon, and where working musicians drop off gear for repairs between gigs. These are

places people meet their first band mates, formed their identities as musicians.

“We’ve cut three full-time positions and still don’t know how we’ll stay open past the summer,” said a retailer in Texas who’s operated since the late 1980s. “We can’t compete on price anymore, and we can’t order half the SKUs we used to carry. Customers walk out frustrated. And we feel helpless.”

The ripple effect spreads quickly. Fewer sales mean fewer commissions, fewer hours, fewer paychecks. Local instrument repair techs are losing work because customers are holding onto

instruments longer — or turning to online replacements when parts can’t be sourced. Retail floor staff, already working thin shifts, are burning out trying to explain delays to customers who can also just go online.

These stores are more than businesses — they’re cultural touchstones in their communities. They sponsor school events. They host clinics. They provide jobs to people who love music and keep that love alive in the places that need it most. Without action, we’re not just losing product lines. We’re losing people. We’re losing trust. We’re losing institutions. We are losing small businesses.

## Why the Used Market and Repairs Won’t Save Us

With new imports stalling or doubling in price, some have pointed to the used instrument market and repair services as lifelines for retailers. On the surface, they seem like practical stopgaps. But neither is sustainable — and both are already under pressure.

Store owners report that trade-ins and consignment gear are way down from previous years, as customers hold onto instruments longer or sell them privately. What’s coming in is often mismatched, incomplete, or not serviceable without costly bench time in the “B&O” world.

“We used to have a healthy mix of

student horns, beginner guitars, rental returns,” said one Midwest shop owner with a solid repair business. “Now it’s a few dusty clarinets and some Craigslist junk people are asking us to fix. Most of it’s not worth repairing.”

Used prices, meanwhile, are climbing — which can temporarily help retailers who manage to source gear. Margins are higher, but the flow is unpredictable. One week you might find a few usable trumpets. The next? Nothing. Some stores are competing with parents and collectors on marketplace apps just to get inventory.

Repairs, too, are no silver bullet. Most shops are overwhelmed. In rural communities, school districts wait weeks for service calls. And many common parts — felts, pads, springs, keys — are imported. If they’re delayed, the repair stalls. No mass shortage of parts are reported at this time, but one by one some items are getting harder to find. That is even evident on Amazon, where some items are out of stock, no data set for availability. Consumers are eating the fees there, too, though Amazon backed down, for some reason, in itemizing the tariff add-on as a line item showing why the price went up.

## Who would fix it?

There’s a deeper issue: not enough techs. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, fewer than 6,000 musical instrument repairers and tuners are employed nationwide. Under 200 new techs graduate each year, mostly from a shrinking number of NAPBIRT-affiliated schools. Many experienced repair pros are nearing

retirement. Few apprentices are replacing them. Some states have no formal training program at all. Some towns have no repair tech within a hundred miles.

And the biggest problem? Not every instrument is meant to be repaired. Many entry-level imports were built to be replaced every

few years, not rebuilt. That worked when replacements were cheap and available. Now? That option is diminished. So yes, the used market and repair bench can provide relief — but they’re no match for a systematic supply disruption. Retailers need stable, scalable inventory. And as of today, that system is broken.

## What Retailers Are Saying — From NAMM to the Showroom Floor

You don’t have to look far to find concern — or outright panic — from inside the industry. From the trade show floor to the shop floor, the story is the same: these tariffs are unsustainable.

NAMM President and CEO John Mlynczak didn’t mince words:

“NAMM is continuously monitoring all music education and tariff policy developments, taking actions on behalf of the music products industry, and activating NAMM members. Our work now is crucial for the future of our industry. Learn more at [www.namm.org/policy](http://www.namm.org/policy).”

Industry veterans agree. One major national MI retailer told us, off the record, “It’s not a matter of ‘can we

raise prices?’ We already have. It’s whether the customer still shows up after that. Right now, they aren’t on some items. We’re moving less volume, and we can’t make that up with margin alone.”

Another independent dealer from the Southwest was more blunt, “We have student trumpet orders from five school districts we can’t fulfill. Our vendor can’t ship. We can’t quote new schools. We’re losing trust and revenue, and this came out of nowhere. There’s no Plan B.”

A regional Midwest distributor who supplies dozens of smaller retailers shared this, “We’ve canceled container orders for three product lines. It’s too expensive to bring them

in and too risky to stockpile. We’re just waiting. If this keeps up another quarter, I don’t know what happens next.”

And even longtime wholesalers are nervous about survival.

“I’ve been doing this since the ‘80s,” said one East Coast independent rep. “This is the first time I’ve seriously questioned whether our entire supply model can hold. We built this industry on access and affordability. Now we’re just trying to hang on.”

The message is clear: this isn’t a minor market adjustment — it’s an existential threat. And without immediate relief, the long-term damage could be irreversible.



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## Debunking the “Buy American” Fallacy

The popular refrain — “This is good for American manufacturers” — doesn’t hold up when you look at how the music products industry works. In theory, tariffs are supposed to give domestic instrument makers a leg up. In practice, they’re kicking the legs out from under them.

Most U.S. instrument brands do not manufacture their full product range in the United States. They can’t. Demand, labor costs, raw material sourcing, environmental compliance, and the sheer lack of domestic infrastructure make it impossible to produce high-volume entry-level instruments here at a competitive price. That’s why for decades, even the most iconic American brands have offered budget lines manufactured in Asia and designed, marketed, distributed, sold in the USA by employees of the US manufacturers.

These imports aren’t knockoffs — they’re officially designed, rigorously tested, and strategically positioned by American companies to serve students, school districts, and entry-level musicians. They’re entry to mid-level priced sister brands. Think Squire to

Fender, Epiphone to Gibson. They’re a major part of the business model — a profitable one that funds the R&D, sales teams, customer service departments, and distribution centers that keep the U.S.-made side of the company alive.

Now those same American companies are being punished. Their budget-line clarinets, trumpets, guitars, and ukuleles — often made in China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, or Vietnam — are being hit with tariffs with China being the most severe, and the largest supplier. That wipes out margin, jacks up prices, and forces impossible choices: pass costs to customers, eliminate product lines, layoff people, cut budgets, cancel travel to tradeshows, advertising, marketing, donations, or cede a market entirely.

It gets worse.

The idea that domestic production will just fill the gap ignores reality. You can’t rebuild 40 years of offshoring overnight. Reopening U.S. instrument factories at scale would take hundreds of millions of dollars, years of construction and hiring, and

a workforce that — according to Deloitte’s 2024 report — we don’t currently have. The U.S. is already short of nearly 2 million manufacturing workers, and few of them are trained to build trumpets, violins, or trombones.

And the ones who are? They’re already working in the handful of specialty factories we *do* have — places like Eastlake, Elkhart, Fullerton, and Nashville. Those manufacturers are world-class, but they don’t have the bandwidth to flood the market with tens of thousands of student horns, budget guitars, and school band essentials.

So, what’s actually happening? These companies are losing the very product lines that subsidize their U.S.-made premium models. Their distributors are scrambling. Their dealers are worried. Their customers are ghosting them — or buying nothing at all.

Patriotism doesn’t pay invoices. Tariffs don’t build factories. And slogans don’t restock shelves.

## Even Zero Tariffs Can’t Undo the Damage

There is a reason NAMM is in January. Dealers meet manufacturers and suppliers to place orders. The orders dictate production schedules, shipping times, in-stock dates, marketing plans, sales, so much more. The trade war started right after NAMM.

Here’s the hard truth: even if the tariffs disappeared tomorrow, the damage wouldn’t. Not quickly. Not easily. Retailers have already canceled at worst or at best had to delay orders. Distributors have already shifted logistics. Manufacturers have already pulled back on SKUs. Customers have already walked away from purchases, frustrated by wait times and sticker shock. Trust has been broken across the supply chain — and rebuilding it takes longer than breaking it.

Ports are increasingly empty. Production and shipping timelines are months behind. You can’t just flip a switch and expect everything to pick up where it left off.

In the meantime, stores are beginning to start bleeding cash. Others are hanging “closing soon” signs in their windows. When local stores close, communities lose more than a place to buy strings — they lose jobs, culture, and connection.

What’s left behind is an increasingly consolidated marketplace. The big box chains may survive by spreading risk across other departments. The online megasites will keep drop-shipping. But it’s the indie dealers — the lifeblood of our industry — who are fading fast.

And here’s the kicker: U.S. manufacturers are collateral damage. Not beneficiaries. They’re caught between losing market share and being unable to scale domestic production fast enough to fill the gap. Instead of protection, they’ve gotten paralysis.

This isn’t about policy theory anymore. It’s about

real-world fallout for dealers, reps, store employees, manufacturers, importers, down to the local businesses they are all patronizing on a daily basis from their local lunch hangout to all the little ancillary things that go into supporting them.

On a personal level, after a lifetime of playing guitar professionally, in 2024 I was asked to design signature model acoustic guitars for a company in China, Pearl River, who made eight variations of two very high-end models with me, and at the moment, I won’t be seeing them sold in my own country. They are being offered for sale around the world, but not in my own country. I am just the designer/endorser, not the importer or distributor, but it is just my luck to finally get an honor a guitarist dreams of their whole life only to have this erupt a year later. And for what? Who is this actually helping?

## A Call to Action — Before It’s Too Late

If there’s one thing we’ve learned putting this story together, it’s this: people are afraid to talk.

Throughout this reporting process, numerous store owners, distributors, manufacturers, and reps asked

not to be named. Not because they didn’t have something to say — but because they were afraid of retaliation. Afraid of getting dragged on social media. Afraid of losing vendor relationships. Afraid of being labeled disloyal, unpatriotic, or political. Some

feared vandalism or violence. Many of those we reached out to who responded to our survey asked to be anonymous, and we are honoring that, *and understand why*.

## That’s the most chilling part of all

We are in a moment where policy is impacting livelihoods across an entire American industry — and yet the people most affected feel like they can’t speak up. Companies are afraid of social media attacks, having their names sullied, for speaking their truth about the massive problem this is causing them, and what is likely to come. That silence is a warning.

Because when those most qualified to weigh in are too scared to go on the record, the policies get made without them. And we all pay the price. Americans: manufacturers, retailers, reps, importers, afraid to go on the record to comment in the USA about a trade policy that is harming their business and could kill it, is unprecedented.

*MMR* readers know this business. They know what it takes to keep a showroom stocked, a student outfitted, a shop running on thin margins. They know what it means when “out of stock” turns into “not available at all.” They know what this industry means to your town, your crew, your customers.

## So now is the time for them to speak.

Talk to your lawmakers. Talk to your trade associations. Talk to your customers. Tell them what you’re dealing with. Show them the price changes, the backorder that became a refund, the school PO you had to decline.

Don’t wait for someone else to fix this.

Policy created this crisis. Policy can help fix it — but only if we make ourselves impossible to ignore. Tariffs that were meant to punish foreign governments are hurting American jobs, American businesses, and American families. And every day this goes unaddressed, another music store inches closer to going dark.

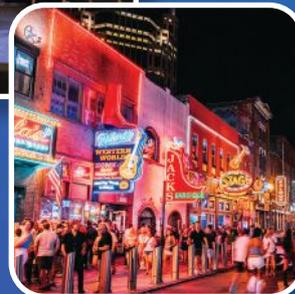
We don’t need slogans. We need solutions. Quickly. Because if we don’t speak for this industry, no one else will. *MMR* will continue to aggressively report on this problem for our readers, advertisers, colleagues, friends, throughout the MI trade.

*Mike Lawson is a lifelong professional musician, publisher of hundreds of book/video titles on audio production, owner/publisher of SBO+ Magazine/MMR Magazine, executive director of TI:ME, former Grammy Trustee/officer of the TEC Foundation. He still performs over 30 shows a year, buys and uses the gear seen in MMR, and is a passionate supporter of MI and music education. He first read MMR Magazine as a kid hanging out at Leitz Music in Panama City, FL, the local store in his hometown.*

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## HOW TARIFFS ARE ALREADY IMPACTING – AND WILL CONTINUE TO THREATEN – THE MI INDUSTRY

by Christian Wissmuller

“With many China-based manufacturers on pause, we will see many of the same logistical challenges we endured during the COVID congestion once shipping opens back up. For every week of disruption, it equates to 4 weeks of recovery. So above whatever the tariff settles in on, we will see inflated logistical cost due to capacity, availability and congestion. Unfortunately many will struggle to withstand the most recent tariff related challenges.” – **Jerry Goldenson, President/CEO, KHS America, Inc.**

“Our business in the USA remains very stable, but what was once a very profitable and flourishing export business to China has of course now been stopped in its tracks by the prohibitively high retaliatory tariffs. But even beyond China, the general uncertainty in the entire global economy caused by the tariffs is a great concern.” – **Colin Schofield, Vice President of Sales & Marketing, JodyJazz/Chedeville/Rousseau**

“The end-user/consumer will be the first to suffer as price points inevitably rise to accommodate the increased import duties/tariffs, which will have the biggest impact upon entry level instruments. This could have a devastating effect in the longer term on musical instrument sales, whereby families will not have the spare finances to spend on musical instruments curtailing any chance of starting their musical journey.” – **Paul Smith, Managing Director, John Hornby Skewes & Co. Ltd.**

“If tariffs remain at the current rates, we can expect to see increased prices at every level from manufacturer to retailer to consumer. This will be unavoidable and necessary to maintain a sustainable margin and will certainly affect the ability for some consumers to buy or rent musical instruments.” – **Francois Kloc, President and CEO, Buffet Crampon USA.**

“If this situation continues, it will limit our ability to secure the quantity and variety of instruments needed to serve the thousands of public-school students relying on us. These students deserve the chance to explore their creativity, build confidence, and experience the joy of making music, but ongoing delays and rising costs resulting from tariffs are putting that opportunity at risk.” – **Tricia Williams, President & CEO, Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation**

“We are starting to see a divergence between the price of new and used gear. Since the beginning of March, there has been an uptick in sellers increasing the list price for their new gear.” – **Cyril Nigg, Senior Director of Analytics, Reverb**



**STEVE LONG**

President  
Yorkville Sound and  
Long & McQuade

“The back-and-forth raising of tariffs between the U.S. and Chinese governments that we have witnessed this past week will have serious business implications and create consumer turmoil for the music products industry,” read a press release issued by NAMM on April 15. “The effects of these sudden and unpredictable tariff actions will have a long-term effect on musicians worldwide.”

If anything, the above is an understatement. The current – and ever-changing – tariffs are putting many industries in immediate peril, but for a realm such as MI, in which profit margins are already generally fairly slim and in which so many products and components are sourced – by necessity – abroad, it’s alarming and represents a very real threat.

We decided to reach out to folks in the industry to get some true, “boots on the ground” feedback regarding these trade restrictions. Not surprisingly, very few of them were at all approving of the measures.

Also not surprisingly, percentage-wise, most declined to go on-record for fear of alienating clients, colleagues, and customers. As one such individual remarked, “This is the single most lame-brained, idiotic approach to international trade and global relations I’ve seen in my lifetime. Unfortunately, some of our partners voted for the person who’s making it all happen and I can’t put those relationships at risk by publicly denouncing his actions. It’s unreasonable, because observing that these tariffs are a very bad idea – in general and for a host of reasons, but especially for the music products industry – isn’t political, it’s just a fact.”

Fortunately, there were many who did agree to speak with us.

Colin Schofield, vice president of Sales & Marketing for JodyJazz/Chedeville/Rousseau notes that the tariffs have already “been extremely detrimental. Our business in the USA remains very stable, but what was once a very profitable and flourishing export business to China has of course now been stopped in its tracks by the prohibitively high retaliatory tariffs. But even beyond China, the general uncertainty in the entire global economy caused by the tariffs is a great concern.”

“As reflected in the general turn in the economy, our dealers report reduced retail sales as consumers have become more cautious about spending,” adds Francois Kloc, president and CEO of Buffet Crampon USA. “This, of course, reduces their need to purchase more inventory from suppliers like us.”

Jerry Goldenson, president and CEO of KHS America, adds, “The global economy has always been difficult to navigate and some changes were or are needed. Unfortunately, the drastic approach that has caused concern and strife for so many has only increased the level of economic uncertainty. It is uncertainty that paralyzes our growth and desire to invest and/or spend money on things like musical instruments.”

And it’s not just American companies that are feeling the pinch. As Steve Long, president Yorkville Sound and Long & McQuade says, “For the offshore production and ART products, these have basically been put on hold at the new pricing, as there is no way anything would sell at post-tariff pricing.”

“The end-user/consumer will be the first to suffer as price points inevitably rise to accommodate the increased import duties/tariffs, which will have the biggest impact upon entry level instruments,” observes Paul Smith of John Hornby Skewes & Co. Ltd. “This could have a devastating effect in the longer term on musical instrument sales, whereby families will not have the spare finances to spend on musical instruments curtailing any chance of starting their musical journey.”





**COLIN SCHOFIELD**

Vice-President of Sales & Marketing Worldwide  
JodyJazz/Chedeville/  
Rousseau

## Suffer Now, Thrive in the Future?

Of course, the end-goal of the administration's tariffs is to return manufacturing to the United States, manufacture more jobs, create a more level playing field in terms of global trade – in short, to “Make America Great Again.” So how’s that working out so far – and how will it work out? Are these tariffs and related moves ultimately going to help domestic businesses, workers, and consumers?

“I do not believe these tariffs are protecting U.S. manufacturers in any way at all,” asserts Schofield. “They are doing far more harm than good. As a USA manufacturer who relies upon exports for over 60% of our business, all the retaliatory tariffs are extremely detrimental. The biggest problem is that too many people don’t understand how tariffs work. They don’t understand that it is the importer who has to pay the tariff, not the exporter. So, when they hear the administration boasting of the ‘millions’ of dollars in revenue they are generating from the tariffs, they don’t understand that money is actually coming from the U.S. companies who are importing the goods! So, it is US companies who are

penalized and being harmed by the tariffs! And ultimately those U.S. companies are going to put up their prices to U.S. consumers to offset the cost increases of the tariffs.”

“No they are not [helping the U.S.],” says Long. “For a U.S. manufacturer, input costs are going up, and they will also lose access to foreign markets due to counter tariffs.

It might be beneficial in some industries, I don’t know, but I don’t see any situations in our industry where anyone producing domestically will be helped.”

“Currently there are no U.S. manufacturers able to deliver products at the price points we can achieve via manufacturing in China,” adds Smith.

Kloc agrees, saying: “Generally speaking, we believe the increased tariffs will cause more harm by leading to increased prices for consumers and reduced margins for manufacturers and retailers.”

## FROM THE TRENCHES

“We generally keep deep supplies of materials on hand, so we have not yet experienced any cost increases yet. We have always chosen to keep several months’ worth of supplies available and so we should be good for a while yet.

“For our export business it is our overseas dealers and distributors who have to pay the retaliatory tariffs that their own countries impose upon American made goods. If these tariffs stick, then they will have no choice other than to raise the price of our products to the end-users in their market potentially making them less competitive against non-USA-made alternatives. Because of the on again/off again nature of the tariffs, most of them are waiting to see what happens before raising prices. But if the tariff situation is not resolved, then they’ll have no choice but to raise

prices on our products.

“Because we have not yet had to absorb higher costs for materials, we have not yet had to consider raising prices in the USA. But that would always be the absolute last resort. China is its own unique situation because of the tariff war. In the rest of the world, we have not yet had to consider pricing changes because of the on again/ off again nature of the tariffs. If the tariffs return, we might be compelled to actually lower our prices for international dealers and distributors, absorbing the margin loss, to help offset the import tariffs they face. This would be the only way to ensure our products remain competitive in their markets. Hopefully if such a scenario does unfold it will only be temporary, but who can tell at the moment!  
“As stated above we have not yet experienced

any disruptions because of the deep supplies we keep on hand. But we are looking at alternate sources for materials so that we have the flexibility to efficiently switch suppliers should the need arise.

“Our manufacturing is already 100% in the USA. We’re trying to stay flexible and ready for whatever changes we might need to make. We are keeping a close eye on what’s happening with tariffs so we can be prepared. By working with both local and international suppliers, we’re aiming to keep things running smoothly and avoid big disruptions later on. The only certainty is uncertainty. The administration could decide to end these practices tomorrow, or they could continue to play out over the next 4 years. No one really knows.”

COLIN SCHOFIELD | Vice-President of Sales & Marketing Worldwide | JodyJazz/Chedeville/Rousseau



“From Yorkville Sound’s point of view, on the products we make in Canada, there has been little affect, because they qualify for the North American Free Trade Agreement, and therefore are not subject to any tariffs. [USMCA replaced NAFTA in November 2018 - Ed.]

“We don’t buy any components in the U.S. but there are some problems with products that we buy from the U.S. to put in our Canadian Production as they are subject to the Canadian counter-tariffs. We had to put prices up, [and] sales have, of course, slowed down on the affected categories

“We are not sourcing right now as we have to wait to see how this plays out... We have no idea where this is going.”

Steve Long  
President

Yorkville Sound and Long & McQuade

# Special Report



“We see [cost] increases on all our products, and most significantly on those produced in China. While we have not had to adjust any pricing yet, we have started to calculate the adjustments that will be necessary to offset costs at the current tariff level. Fortunately, the inventory we have on hand is ‘tariff-free’ and we have emphasized this to our dealers and encouraged them to take advantage of the opportunity to purchase now. “We have currently suspended deliveries from all our factories for anything that is not absolutely necessary. There is no change to our current sourcing strategy. Because we are a manufacturer who produces over 95% of the products we sell in our own factories, we have better control of our production and deliveries than those who rely on 3rd party sources for their products. “There are some products that simply cannot be replicated domestically. As a company comprised primarily of ‘legacy’ brands, most of which are literally hundreds of years old, the identity of these brands is tied to the countries and regions they originated from and the generations of instrument makers there who produce them. “If tariffs remain at the current rates, we can expect to see increased prices at every level from manufacturer to retailer to consumer. This will be unavoidable and necessary to maintain a sustainable margin and will certainly affect the ability for some consumers to buy or rent musical instruments.”

– FRANCOIS KLOC | President and CEO | Buffet Crampon USA.

“[The tariffs have] had an immediate negative impact on JHS as a UK based brand owner selling into the USA. Our USA distributor customers are holding back from importing any goods which have had an increased tariff levied upon them. We are based in the UK and already have a small scale UK production facility for our Vintage ProShop series – producing custom built electric guitars & bass to the customers’ specifications. We plan to upscale the production capacity to offer Made in the UK instruments to the USA market.”

– PAUL SMITH | Managing Director | John Hornby Skewes & Co. Ltd.

“The global economy has always been difficult to navigate and some changes were or are needed. Unfortunately, the drastic approach that has caused concern and strife for so many has only increased the level of economic uncertainty. It is uncertainty that paralyzes our growth and desire to invest and/or spend money on things like musical instruments. Although we believe music is an essential part of life, consumer, educator and dealer spend is focused on the needs of daily life. Gas, food, rent/mortgages, utilities, Insurance, et cetera are the essentials most are focused on. “We have been preparing for the current worst-case scenario for over a year now. We have shifted production, when possible, to front-loaded inventories throughout 2024 and continued to look for ways to support our partners when and if needed. We have found out... It is needed! No one could have seen global tariffs at the rates presented and certainly not at the rates imposed on Chinese imports. We must remember that although we, as a company, absorbed the 7.5% original tariffs previously, we cannot nor can anyone absorb the 145%+7.5%= 152.5%! Music is never going away, but it will be a challenge to navigate the current chaos until a “New Norm” is established. We are committed to holding our prices as long as we are able, but inventory levels and availability will be critical for everyone. “With many China-based manufacturers on pause, we will see many of the same logistical challenges we endured during the COVID congestion once shipping opens back up. For every week of disruption, it equates to 4 weeks of recovery. So above whatever the tariff settles in on, we will see inflated logistical cost due to capacity, availability and congestion. Unfortunately many will struggle to withstand the most recent tariff related challenges, but we are all in this together and music will prove to be an enduring fact of life.”

– JERRY GOLDENSON | President/CEO | KHS America, Inc.

“At Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation, we support music education by donating musical instruments to underfunded K-12 public school music programs, ensuring that underrepresented students have the opportunity to learn and thrive through music. Recent tariff-related disruptions are creating new challenges. Many of the instruments we’ve already purchased are stuck in indefinite backorder, and we’re bracing for rising costs on future purchases. If this situation continues, it will limit our ability to secure the quantity and variety of instruments needed to serve the thousands of public-school students relying on us. These students deserve the chance to explore their creativity, build confidence, and experience the joy of making music, but ongoing delays and rising costs resulting from tariffs are putting that opportunity at risk.”

– TRICIA WILLIAMS | President & CEO | Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation

“So far, Reverb hasn’t seen any major shifts in consumer sentiment, with overall demand for music gear on our platform remaining steady. In fact, the average item selling price for used gear in the US is down nearly 1% year-over-year. Coupled with an increase in offer acceptance rates, meaning buyers and sellers are working together to find price points that work for both parties, the already tariff-free used market has become even more attractive. Further typifying this is the treasure-trove of data found in our newly-released Reverb Price Index. We believe this is the largest, most transparent database of data ever released to the MI community – and it shows that pedal prices, particularly on the used side, are continuing to come down to price points that buyers find attractive. Given that used gear makes up the vast majority of listings on our marketplace, and with most sales on Reverb taking place between buyers and sellers living in the same country – both in the U.S., where 85% of music makers on our platform reside, and abroad – we’re less prone to the impacts from tariffs. That said, we are starting to see a divergence between the price of new and used gear. Since the beginning of March, there has been an uptick in sellers increasing the list price for their new gear. On the other hand, we’ve seen more price drops on used gear – making used even more affordable.

– CYRIL NIGG | Senior Director of Analytics | Reverb





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# MI RETAILERS & THE NEW TARIFFS

By Christian Wissmuller

“These tariffs are so widely focused and ridiculously high that it affects every part of our industry, regardless of where the products are manufactured, whether start to finish with USA materials or final assembly in USA. They force USA makers and dealers to waste time looking for alternatives when what they originally chose was the best decision for their business.”

– WES DILORIO, Menchey Music Service, Inc.

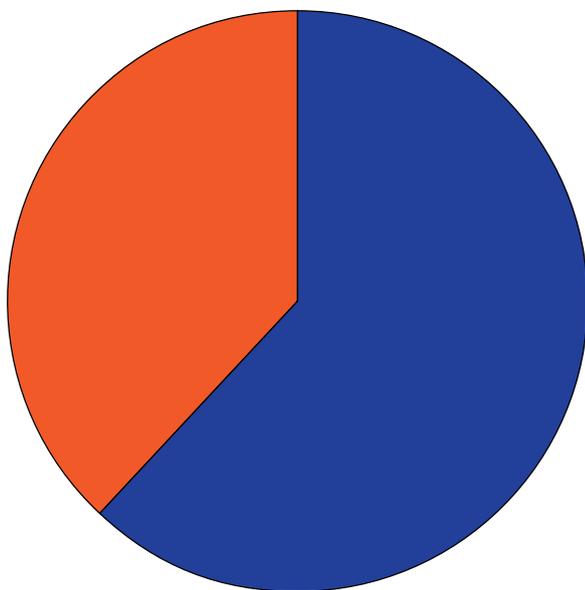
Response to this month’s MI Dealer Survey was, unsurprisingly, very robust – so much so, in fact, that a handful of suppliers and distributors also participated (we welcome their input!).

The results of this poll of the MI retail industry on the current (and constantly in-flux) tariffs and trade restrictions were remarkable in a couple of ways:

First off, while no wide-ranging survey is ever going to yield 100-percent unanimous results, this one came awfully close. When asked “Do you think these tariffs have helped or hurt American musical instrument and related gear makers and dealers?” over the vast majority (77.4%) expressed the belief that the barriers against international trade have hurt MI.

Secondly, knowing the sensitive nature of this topic, *MMR* extended the offer to keep individual survey participant’s responses anonymous, if that person preferred to do so. Even given the widely acknowledged fractured and divisive state of social discourse these days, it’s more than a little chilling that so many opted for that route.

## Have the recent tariffs impacted your MI retail business so far?



NO 37.8%

YES 62.2%

## If you responded “Yes” to the above question, please describe the impact(s).

“Besides a few price increases so far that may have directly affected our sales, the uncertainty caused by the tariffs has without a doubt negatively impacted consumer spending and confidence.”

- Name and business affiliation withheld by request

“Instrument cases from the Philippines went from being immediately available to a 60-90 day backorder overnight, and the cost of bow hair has increased dramatically.”

**ANNA HUTHMAKER**

*Huthmaker Violins*

Atlanta, Georgia

“Since there is no stability and tariffs have no strategy, no planning, no pre-notification, it is impossible to set prices in the future on current backorders without a manufacturer losing potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars. Companies that have the majority of their products made in China are blind. Additionally, some products will be unsellable moving forward unless tariffs become reasonable again. Manufacturers are also holding shipments from China which will also cause product shortages.”

- Name and business affiliation withheld by request

“We are just seeing the early stages. Mostly customers asking if we are seeing price increases (yes) and at least one church bid called to see if the quote we gave them a month ago would still be good. We [were] down 18% overall in April and down over 50% with online sales. I anticipate lower demand for the immediate future so my stock orders may fall off accordingly. Luckily inventory levels are strong so we can hold tight for a few months.”

- Name and business affiliation withheld by request

"Tariffs, or the threat of tariffs, are making it very difficult to quote prices for school bids or customer special orders. Suppliers are having difficulty holding prices on bids beyond the tariff implementation dates."

**KEVIN WALTERS**  
*Central Penn Music*  
 Palmyra, PA

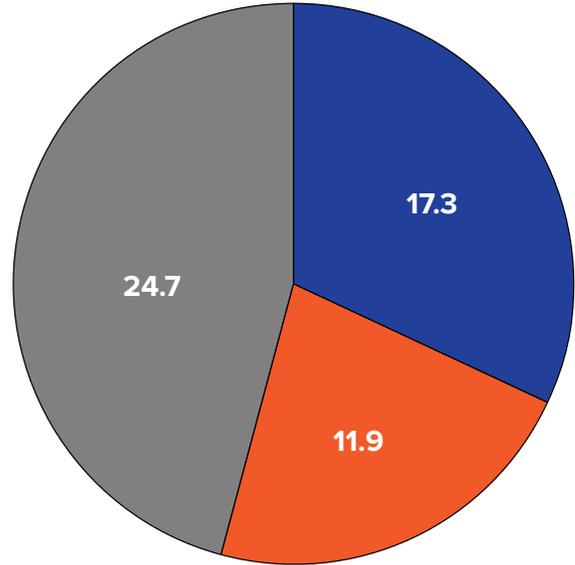
"Before the tariffs hit, I've stocked up on merchandise and supplies to last us at least 6 months. Chump is ruining small business in America."

**PETE VAN ALSTYNE**  
*Pete's Music Center*  
 Yuba City, CA

"We are now unable to obtain certain products (double basses). Other products are now thought to be doubtful now or very soon (MI hardware such as mic stands, keyboard stands, etc.). The tariffs are causing shorting of margin and/or raising of prices on short-margin direct-import items such as custom instrument cases. The tariffs are causing major time (= money) expenditure updating price lists that were updated only a few months ago. The tariffs are causing loss of margin and/or "underwatering" of items ordered on previously agreed school bid contracts. The tariffs are causing anxiety about prospects of receiving previously agreed-upon items at same price when order was placed in the fall (i.e. music stands for rental season). In some cases, switching to a US-made product is not possible, because (a) there is no U.S. supplier and hasn't been since the Ulysses S. Grant administration, (b) the US supplier will/has raised prices owing to increased demand/decreased competition, or (c) the US supplier is raising prices because they (the supplier) are also affected tariffs on raw materials, components and/or semi-finished products. None of this is good. In fact, all of it is bad. It is all very stupid and the act of a person who is clueless about what they are doing. By following this so-called 'external revenue' model, all this does is harm the consumer in the name of further enriching the already filthy rich."

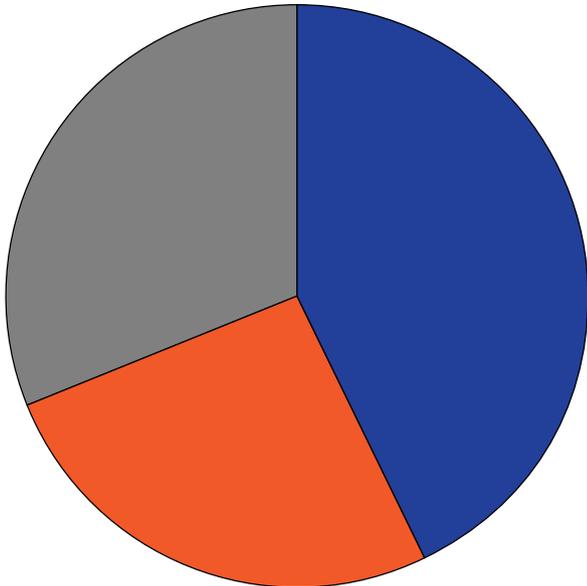
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**If you answered "Yes" or "Maybe" to the above question, which of the following do you expect to potentially happen? (feel free to select more than one)**



- Drop entire lines (brands), at least temporarily
- Increase your focus on domestically-made instruments, gear, or parts
- Change suppliers or seek alternate suppliers

**If you replied "no" to the first question, do you anticipate the tariffs eventually affecting your business?**



MAYBE 44.6%     NO 37.8%     YES 62.2%

**Have you noticed a shift in customer demand because of price changes?**

"Our customers still have no idea that [tariffs are] going to affect them somehow. They will and, because they are not paying attention, they will be upset with us when they do. So I expect it will threaten our business."

**DREW PARKER**  
*Separk Music Company*  
 Lewisville, NC

"No, because we stocked up on the items ahead of time that we felt would be most affected. We feel that the inventory we stocked up on will carry us through the summer months and we believe these tariff issues will resolve themselves in time."

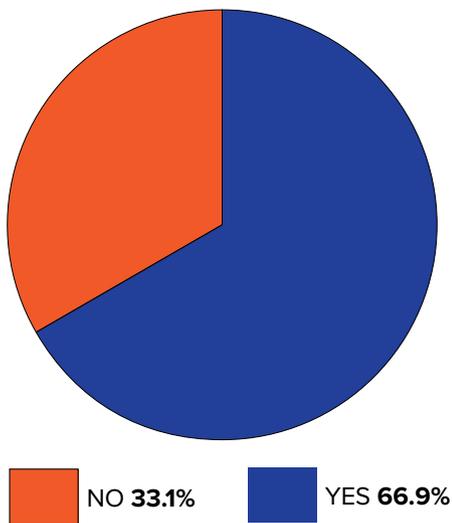
**JEFF MCNICOL**  
*Mom's Music*  
 Louisville, KY

## Dealer Survey

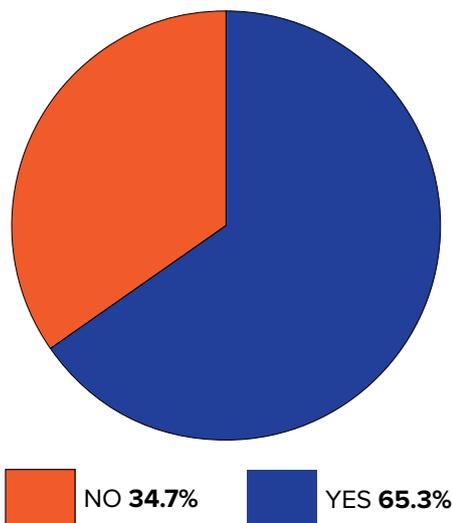
“ *These tariffs are not going to stay on the books very long. By the end of the year we are probably not going to even be worried about it. The countries will all negotiate.* ”

– ANTHONY MANTOVA, Mantova’s Two Street Music

Have you noticed a shift in customer demand because of price changes?



Are you seeing any changes in your competitors’ strategies due to the tariffs?



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## Do you think these tariffs have helped or hurt American musical instrument and related gear makers and dealers?

"My hope is that companies building products in the USA, even if they're made with some internationally sourced components, will at some point increase production and drive prices downward. I would love to see U.S. manufactures consolidate and focus production to create high quality American made products that are at lower prices than they currently are."

"I also believe that the tariff percentages we see today will be less in the coming months. I am hopeful that trade negotiations will become more balanced for the U.S. and their trade partners to continue to provide internationally decent quality internationally produced products."

**JOHN KIBILDIS** | JAMS Music | Dublin, CA

"It's early days. The current administration claims the tariffs will get nations to the negotiating table. The effectiveness of this use seems mixed, at best. All I can comment on is the current situation. In the near term, this tariff policy will be problematic for manufacturers, suppliers, retailers and the musicians we serve. In my view the early effects on our industry will be higher prices and lower sales. More broadly, I feel the pursuit of higher tariffs is resulting in a lower dollar, and potentially, lower interest rates. This may actually be the true motive of the policy."

**ROBERT CHRISTIE** | A&G Central Music/Central Music Distribution | Troy, MI

"We have already seen other countries step up and take the reins away from China when it comes to a lot of music products. That is a very good thing and honestly was trending before the tariffs. Of course we need more manufacturing in the USA. I hope the tariffs create the desired effect and put more Americans to work. Again, these tariffs are not going to stay on the books very long. By the end of the year we are probably not going to even be worried about it. The countries will all negotiate."

**ANTHONY MANTOVA** | Mantova's Two Street Music | Eureka, CA

"The majority of products in our industry are manufactured in China with no option to move production to the U.S.. If there is no change in the short term, several brands will disappear from the U.S. market and many smaller to mid-sized importers / distributors will go out of business. The consumers will buy less new products and use / by more second hand products."

**CLAUS RIETHMUELLER** | ESI Audiotechnik GmbH | Leonberg, Germany

"We work with bowed stringed instruments. There simply aren't American-made instruments out there for beginning student budgets. We have changed our pricing strategies and bought as much as was fiscally responsible in 2024, but we have had to raise prices. MAP pricing makes price increases essentially mandatory on many products. Aside from tariffs and laid-off/fired local workers, we are also VERY worried about the incoming cuts to education. Music is almost always first on the chopping block, and we are very concerned about what the future school years will bring."

- Name and business affiliation withheld by request

"Even U.S. manufacturers use components from around the world. This is how we build product that deliver the best value to our customers. When these components are artificially expensive, it hurts us and it hurts our customers. I also think the anti-American sentiment around the world is hurting the sales to our export customers."

**JEREMY BRIESKE** | Low Boy | Santa Barbara, CA

"While too early to see any big changes, I think the tariff strategy will eventually help all Americans. I make the analogy of remodeling a bathroom or kitchen-at first everything is in chaos and a wreck, but when the job is done, you are glad you did it."

- Name and business affiliation withheld by request

"These tariffs are so widely focused and ridiculously high that it affects every part of our industry, regardless of where the products are manufactured, whether start to finish with USA materials or final assembly in USA. They force USA makers and dealers to waste time looking for alternatives when what they originally chose was the best decision for their business. It's not just about the cost of the product or raw materials – it is time, energy, uncertainty in the market (MI and in general). Furthermore, the shipping bottleneck that will happen later this spring/early summer will raise shipping costs and extend ETAs for everyone, regardless of country of origin. The USA makers and dealers that have international customers will be affected when trying to sell and ship internationally."

**WES DILORIO** | Menchey Music Service, Inc. | Mid-Atlantic

"Most of the items we sell are produced off shore. Tariffs will affect 80-90% of everything we purchase. Domestic products (Like D'Addario) just announced large price increases."

**SPIDEY MULROONEY** | The Music Shop | Southington, CT

"With any understanding of how today's global economy works, it's obvious these tariffs will not help. U.S. manufacturers are not getting 100% of their materials from within the U.S. nor selling their products only within the U.S. Therefore, their costs/prices will increase and their global demand will decrease."

- Name and business affiliation withheld by request

"We need to stop being so dependent of oversea products. The quality sucks and in [the] USA we produce way better quality, plus we create more jobs."

- Name and business affiliation withheld by request

"In the piano industry, 'American' makers are a tiny fraction of the pianos sold, and there are no American suppliers for digital pianos, so it only erodes demand through inflation. Steinway as the lone influential piano maker may feel a minor boost due to patriotism, but in my estimation, the overall negative impact of tariffs on the economy will cause buyers to delay or seek less expensive alternatives. Steinway holds a unique position as both influential concert piano and luxury brand known to the general public. Other premium piano brands do not benefit from that level of recognition, so tariffs are directly harmful to their ability to compete on price or 'value.' Admittedly, the effect of tariffs on other instruments may have a polarizing affect, but entry level instruments typically made overseas serve a vital role in music education. To my knowledge, there are not any American manufacturers that currently attempt to compete with entry level options, and any investment in scaling up to capture that market can only happen in under stable financial policies. The financial sector's response to tariffs have been clear... investments are down."

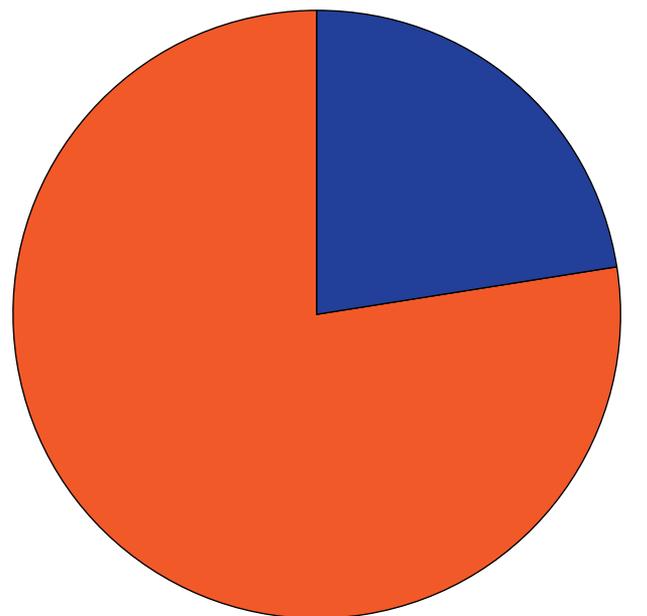
- Name and business affiliation withheld by request

"There will be no short-term benefits to tariffs. Plus, with the on-again-off again approach to tariffs, the consumers are on edge. Some of our elected officials in Washington need to get their heads out of their asses."

- Name and business affiliation withheld by request

"The thought that the band and orchestra business will return to American soil is a total fantasy."

**RAY NOGUERA** | KG Gemeinhardt | Elkhart, Indiana

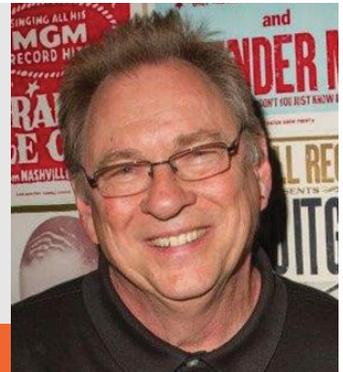


**HURT 77.4%**

**HELPED 22.6%**

# INTERRUPTING THE MALAISE

by Menzie Pittman, Author of *The New Musician*



I never thought I would find myself saying this, but I want my jealousy back. It's true – I want to go back to the good ol' days when fellow music store owners would call me to boast about some really cool achievement they had pulled off, just to watch me turn green with envy. I know that might sound silly, but sit tight. I'll explain.

Some people think that the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is long behind us, and I can see how they might believe that, but if you peel back the onion and talk with small business owners behind the scenes, most will vehemently disagree with that way of thinking.

As we all know, phase one of the pandemic was the shutdown. Phase two was restarting the economy's engine, and thankfully some business grants were given to help small businesses do so. Phase three was, and still is, the recovery. But now we face new concerns in our industry: tariffs and layoffs. Music businesses are now squeezed from both the consumer end and the manufacturing end.

One of the things I love most about independent music retailers is that we are a small community made up of owners who will always make themselves available if another owner is hitting resistance. This is necessary right now, because the majority of small business owners are hitting resistance. When things are not fluid, owners will often check in with one another to see if it's an industry issue, or if there might be something they could be doing differently to create a positive change. Pre-COVID, my phone would ring off the hook with good news from industry friends, excited to share their recent successes. Now when my phone rings, the mood is different.

I found it important to focus on this topic because I realize the music industry is not alone in the difficulties it is facing. I stumbled upon an article from the LA times that hits the bullseye in terms of the reality all retailers are currently experiencing.

## From "The Los Angeles Times," article by Ryan Faughnder

“The film industry is grappling with a brutal first quarter at the box office.

So far, box office revenue is down 11% compared with the same period last year, which was already down significantly from pre-pandemic levels, according to Comscore. March was especially weak, down 50% from the same month in 2024, according to Eric Handler, media and entertainment analyst at Roth Capital Partners.

The overall decline in attendance is a long-term trend that accelerated during the pandemic and hasn't recovered since. Theaters are also still grappling with the loss of casual moviegoers, an audience that got used to watching films from their couch and shortened theatrical windows.”

So what can smaller independent retailers do to reinvigorate their customer bases? Well, this much I can say for sure: Elvis has definitely left the building, so originality and true excellence are the only solutions left. You can think like The Acoustic Shoppe in Springfield, Missouri; they are one of the best and fastest growing independent music stores that I know of, because they are simply trying to do it better than the rest. Or, you could think like Drum & Strum in Warrenton, VA. Owner, Tim Dingsus, is one of the best repairmen I know. His customers not only trust him, they are loyal. If you want to think like Carter Vintage Guitars in Nashville, TN, you can commit to uniqueness and authenticity.

No matter what approach you choose to commit to, as small businesses there will always be some things we can control, and some things we can't. We have no control over the lingering effects of the pandemic, or of the current state of the economy. Customers remain fickle, and you can't really blame them. They don't know what they don't know, so we have to be consistently strong communicators. That's what separates us from the pack. The best chance we have at disrupting and dismantling this economic malaise is to be unique, efficient, and unrelenting. You can always sleep next year.

***One of the things I love most about independent music retailers is that we are a small community made up of owners who will always make themselves available if another owner is hitting resistance.***

## Fretted

## Fender Releases Limited Edition Brad Paisley ‘Lost’ Telecaster

Fender Musical Instruments Corporation (FMIC) and the Fender Custom Shop announce the release of the Limited Edition Brad Paisley 1967 “Lost Paisley” Telecaster, an instrument made in collaboration with global country music superstar Brad Paisley. The striking, vintage-inspired guitar revitalizes one of Fender’s most enigmatic and beloved designs, the Paisley Red finish that was originally introduced in 1968. The Fender Custom Shop in Corona, California will produce 67 guitars, while Brad Paisley in collaboration with the Fender Nashville R&D team, will personally build 19 guitars as a tribute to the year of the original creation. The 67 from the Custom Shop will be sold through Fender’s dealer network while Paisley’s 19 guitars will be available exclusively through his channels.

“From the very beginning there has always been a pattern following me, from the moment they wrote my last name on my birth certificate. It’s unreal that my own name is one of the coolest finishes I think Fender has ever done. This is an attempt to show what this lost color could have been. It’s the best guitar I’ve ever had,” said Brad Paisley.

The tale of the Blue Paisley Telecaster began when Brad Paisley was gifted a nearly forgotten treasure—lightly used sheets of original Blue Paisley Cling-Foil from the 1960s. What started as a stroke of luck soon turned into a mission. Together with close collaborators Zac Childs and Joe Glaser, Brad set out to restore one of his well-worn 1967 Telecaster guitars and revive the long-lost art of the Paisley finish. Through painstaking research and craftsmanship, they not only perfected the restoration but also recreated the original Paisley Cling-Foil paper.

First introduced in 1968, the short-lived Paisley Red and Blue Flower finishes were Fender’s answer to the counterculture moment of the “Summer of Love,” featuring decorative Cling-Foil paper adorned with vibrant colors and a matching metallic burst, these guitars stood out with a bold psychedelic flair. However, the finish’s combination of thick paper, weak adhesives, and polyester clear coats made them vulnerable. Many Paisley guitars were refinished or repainted as chipping and flaking became unavoidable. By late 1969, Fender had discontinued the line, and these instruments began to fade into obscurity.

In the decades that followed, the Paisley Telecaster guitars gained a cult-like following. Often spotted in vintage shops, the instruments became prized by collectors and guitarists

drawn to their eccentric aesthetic and rare backstory. Brad Paisley, who shares his name with the iconic design, naturally gravitated toward these standout classics. Now, in a full-circle moment through his collaboration with the Fender Custom Shop, Brad’s vision for the Lost Telecaster has come to life—an instrument that honors its vintage roots while embracing modern craftsmanship and precision.

The Limited Edition Brad Paisley 1967 “Lost Paisley” Telecaster offers a one-of-a-kind blend of nostalgia and precise craftsmanship, making it a versatile instrument for today’s players. Its lightweight body, crafted from a unique combination of alder, paulownia, and spruce, delivers exceptional resonance and comfort. Dressed in a striking Blue Paisley Relic® finish with a colorful, metallic burst, this guitar pays homage to its psychedelic roots while embracing subtle modern touches, featuring a custom ‘60s Oval “C” maple neck with a round-laminated maple fingerboard for smooth, familiar playability. Under the hood, Seymour Duncan Custom Shop Hand-Wound Lost Paisley pickups provide warmth, clarity, and tonal balance, while the Glaser “G” Bender system allows for fluid, pedal-steel-like bends that elevate expressive performance. Finished with late-’60s appointments bundled with custom accessories—including a vintage-style case, period-correct Fender strap, and certificate of authenticity—this Telecaster is both a collector’s dream and a stage-ready workhorse.



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



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## Fretted

### Spector Unveils Euro CST Spalted Maple – Boutique Craftsmanship Meets Legendary Tone

Spector is proud to announce the release of the limited-edition Euro CST Spalted Maple series. Inspired by the master builds of our Woodstock, NY Custom Shop, the Euro CST Spalted Maple series brings together the unmistakable Spector tone with stunning, highly-figured tonewoods and precision craftsmanship. Each bass features a striking spalted maple top set against a resonant European ash body, a 3-piece maple neck, and a sleek ebony fingerboard adorned with Mother of Pearl crown inlays.

The Euro CST Spalted Maple isn't just about looks—it's built to inspire. Each detail of these ultra-limited instruments reflects the fit and finish of our USA Custom Shop builds: seamless neck joints, smooth fretwork, and a feel that disappears in your hands. This is an instrument made for players who expect inspiration in every note.

The electronics are equally refined, with the addition of the Spector Legacy preamp, developed in collaboration with Darkglass

Electronics. This circuit captures the iconic 'Spector growl' that defined a generation of recordings—now with expanded tonal versatility to meet the demands of modern players.

Available in both 4-string (P/J configuration) and 5-string (J/J configuration) models, priced at \$3,499.99 and \$3,599.99 respectively, each Euro CST Spalted Maple bass is a testament to Spector's commitment to craftsmanship, innovation, and sonic character.



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

## Accessories

### New Spring King Junior Reverb Pedal from Danelectro



Building on a 25-year legacy, Danelectro has launched the brand new Spring King Junior reverb pedal.

The Spring King Junior follows in the sizable footsteps of the original Spring King reverb, a bestseller that became an instant classic upon its release in 1999. However, the Spring King's large footprint was notorious for taking up a lot of real estate on pedalboards.

Danelectro's new Spring King Junior offers

authentic reverb from a real built-in spring tank, but in a more compact pedalboard-friendly size. And the Spring King Junior passes the ultimate spring reverb test with flying colors: bump it and you'll get thunderous reverb sound, just like vintage spring reverbs.

#### Spring King Junior Features:

- Analogue
- Built-in spring reverb tank
- True bypass soft switching

- Reverb and tone controls
  - Kick pad ~ for thunderous verb sounds!
  - Die cast case
  - Fits on a pedalboard
  - Standard 9-volt DC input; no battery compartment
  - Power supply 9W DC (not included)
  - Rugged die-cast case measuring 2-1/2" wide x 6" long x 2-1/8" high
- MSRP: \$199

<https://danelectro.com>

### ACT Entertainment Launches Sterling Vermin Pedal

ACT Entertainment's iconic RAT brand has unveiled the Sterling Vermin, a boutique distortion guitar pedal that blends heritage tone with modern refinement. With a new take on RAT's unmistakable sound, Sterling Vermin delivers a new level of precision and versatility.

The Sterling Vermin features the LM741 Op-Amp and a pair of selectable clipping diodes. Players can toggle between the traditional RAT silicon diode configuration for a punchy, mid-range bite, or the BAT41 option for a smoother, more balanced response. The result is a pedal that's equally at home delivering snarling distortion or articulate, low-gain overdrive, with a wide, usable tonal range throughout the entire gain spectrum.



<https://actentertainment.com>

### Chedeville Expands Collaboration with Jim Kanter with new Kanter 'Opera' Clarinet Model

Chedeville has announced the introduction of the new Chedeville Kanter 'Opera' Bb Clarinet mouthpiece designed in collaboration with Jim Kanter. This is their second mouthpiece collaboration with the legendary Hollywood studio musician and famed mouthpiece maker. Building on the tremendous success of the Chedeville Kanter 'Cinema' model, the new Kanter 'Opera' model features a larger tip opening and is designed for players seeking greater warmth and tonal breadth.

"Jim Kanter always challenges us to be the best that we can be," said Jody Espina owner of JodyJazz/Chedeville/Rousseau. "In order to meet Jim's exacting standards, we needed to engineer a new and proprietary tool to replicate his unique filing process. This was the sole method by which we could guarantee that each Kanter Opera mouthpiece would conform to his stringent specifications.

"Clarinetists who will love this mouthpiece run the full gamut," said Jim Kanter. "It's perfect for orchestra players worldwide looking for the depth and warmth without sacrificing the ability to project in large acoustic settings. That said, mouthpieces with these qualities are also very popular with chamber players and soloists playing in more intimate acoustic and musical environments. In other words, it will be very highly sought-after in today's clarinet world."

The Chedeville Kanter 'Opera' model is the most open facing of the two Chedeville Kanter models, delivering a rich sound with added depth and flexibility across all registers. It provides a responsive feel with a natural sense of resistance, allowing for expressive nuance and dynamic

control. This mouthpiece rewards focused air support and musical intention, making it an exceptional choice for players across a variety of musical genres.

Asked to describe the new Kanter 'Opera' model, Jim said, "Buttery warmth, point and flexibility. It has everything."

The new Chedeville Kanter Series Clarinet mouthpieces are individually crafted at the JodyJazz factory in Savannah, Georgia. The company starts with its proprietary CHR hard rubber and then precision manufactures the mouthpieces

using state of the art CNC machines. Finally, the crucial and indispensable hand work is performed by expert mouthpiece craftsmen and craftswomen.

In order to achieve Jim Kanter's vision of a more subtle and understated look, the engravings on the mouthpieces have been left unpainted. The new Chedeville Kanter Opera Clarinet mouthpiece has an MSRP of \$350.00 and is available now.



<https://actentertainment.com>

## Drums & Percussion

### Roland Announces DrumLink Wireless System

Roland announces the official release of the DrumLink wireless system and related products. Developed in partnership between Roland and Drum Workshop (DW), DrumLink is a new wireless triggering technology for electronic pads, cymbals, and drum triggers. From Roland V-Drums kits to hybrid acoustic-electronic configurations, the modular DrumLink system streamlines connectivity for faster setup and a cleaner look.

Designed specifically for drumming applications, the proprietary DrumLink system delivers lightning-fast response and rock-solid performance that feels identical to analog triggering. Up to 30 active instruments are supported simultaneously (depending on the sound source), unlocking a growing range of hybrid, electronic, and software-based drumming setups.

The DrumLink system features two core components: the WT-10 Wireless Trigger Adapter and DH-10 DrumLink Hub. Supported sound sources include the Roland V71, TD-50X, and TD-27 sound modules, SPD-SX PRO Sampling Pad, and the DW Soundworks software instrument. The WT-10 also makes it easy for owners of Drum Workshop's DWe acoustic-electronic wireless convertible drums to integrate Roland pads within their sets.

#### WT-10 Wireless Trigger Adapter

The WT-10 converts the analog trigger outputs on compatible Roland drum/cymbal pads and acoustic drum triggers to wireless signals. Two inputs support single- and dual-trigger pads, allowing users to connect two pads to one unit. A single cymbal with two outputs can be connected for bow/bell/edge triggering, and hi-hat pads with two trigger/control outputs are also supported. The integrated mount is highly adjustable, enabling secure and flexible attachment to drum/pad rims, bass drum hoops, and cymbal/hi-hat stands.

#### DH-10 DrumLink Hub

The compact DH-10 DrumLink Hub captures trigger signals from up to 15 WT-10 units, which are sent to the sound module or a computer via a simple USB-C connection. The DH-10 also has a TRS MIDI output for sending trigger signals to any sound source that receives MIDI note messages and CC data.

#### Roland V-Cymbals for DWe Convertible Drum Sets

The Roland 4CY-4WT-01 DrumLink Cymbal Pack provides a ready-made solution for outfitting a DWe acoustic-electronic wireless convertible drum set with Roland's leading electronic cymbals. These expressive pads deliver authentic feel, response, and movement, and have very low in-room noise levels when played. This bundle includes three CY-16R-T crash/ride pads, one VH-10 V-Hi-Hat pad, and four WT-10 Wireless Trigger Adapters that communicate with the kit's DWe DrumLink Wireless Hub. Drum Workshop also offers complete four- and five-piece DWe kit bundles with Roland V-Cymbals and WT-10 units included.



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