

MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

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PLUGGED-IN PERCUSSION

Manufacturers weigh in on how electronic kits are reshaping the rhythm of the MI market



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INSIDE



Maxwell's House of Music – "We Create Musicians"



Dealer Survey: Drum Head Sales in 2025



Small Business Matters: Expect the Unexpected!

C O N T E N T S



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Once seen as a compromise for quiet practice or electronic-heavy genres, electronic drums have rapidly evolved into sophisticated, expressive instruments at the forefront of modern music-making. To take the pulse of this fast-moving segment, we gathered key voices from four industry powerhouses — Roland, Alesis, DW, and Yamaha — to discuss where electronic drums are heading.

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Mark Maxwell purchased his family's decades-long family-operated music store in Jeffersonville, Indiana, from his parents in 2011. Renamed Maxwell's House of Music, the NAMM Top Dealer Award-winning business is not only a local mecca for the area's musicians it's also a driving force for good in the community.

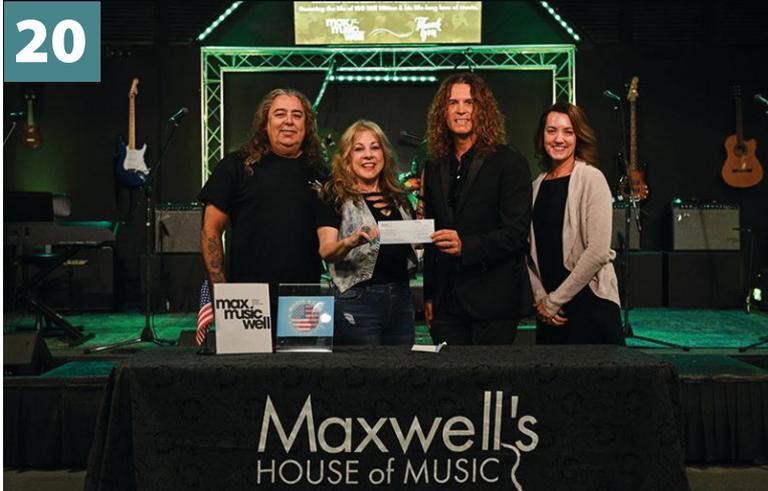
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MI retailer, educator, and author Menzie Pittman describes the many ways in which independent retailers benefit from being nimble and unique.

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MMR Musical Merchandise Review® (ISSN 0027-4615), Volume 188, Number 10, October 2025, founded in 1879, is published monthly by artistpro, LLC, 7012 City Center Way, Suite 207, Fairview, TN 37062, (800) 682-8114, publisher of School Band and Orchestra Plus and Musical Merchandise Review. Periodicals Postage Paid at Fairview, TN and additional mailing offices. MMR is distributed free to qualified individuals and is directed to music dealers and retailers, wholesalers and distributors, importers and exporters and manufacturers of all types of musical instruments and their accessories, related electronic sound equipment, general musical accessories, musical publications and teaching aides. **POSTMASTER:** Send all UAA to CFS. **NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES:** send address corrections to artistpro, LLC, 7012 City Center Way, Suite 207, Fairview, TN 37062. The publishers of this magazine do not accept responsibility for statements made by their advertisers in business competition. No portion of this issue December be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Copyright ©2025 by artistpro LLC, all rights reserved. Printed in USA.



By Christian Wissmuller

The People's Choice (and the Pulse of the Market)

It's that time of year again. The air's getting crisper, the NAMM emails are rolling in, and the 2025 MMR Dealers' Choice Awards ballot is officially open.

For over two decades now, the Dealers' Choice Awards have served as the industry's annual litmus test — not of what's flashy, hyped, or just riding a wave — but of what actually moves in the stores, what works on the sales floor, and what our network of independent MI retailers *trusts*.

And that trust is something you can't buy, algorithm your way into, or retro-fit with a trendy finish. It's earned — year over year, order after order, with consistent quality, support, and innovation.

The voting, as always, is open to **current MMR subscribers only** (one ballot per person). Whether you're running a single-store operation in Ohio or managing a multi-location enterprise in California, this is your time to weigh in. The ballot is your platform. Your voice matters. Your vote will help recognize the brands and products that aren't just filling shelves, but fulfilling promises.

The categories are as familiar as they are essential: "Product of the Year," "Accessory Line of the Year," "Electric Guitar of the Year," "Band & Orchestra Line of the Year," and more. The winners will be announced in our December issue, just in time to close the books on another action-packed year in the MI world.

If you haven't cast your vote yet, what are you waiting for? Head over to mmrmagazine.com and make it count. It's fast, it's easy, and most importantly — it's impactful. These awards are built on the collective experience of our readers, and they remain a uniquely transparent and democratic snapshot of what's truly resonating with the people who know the business inside and out.

Meanwhile... Let's Talk E-Drums

While we're on the subject of what's moving — let's shift focus for a moment to a segment that's seen steady, sometimes quiet, but always notable growth: electronic drums.

Now, electronic kits aren't new — far from it. The Simmons hex pads of the '80s paved the way, Roland pushed boundaries in the '90s and 2000s, and today we've got an increasingly crowded field with players like Alesis, DW, Roland, Yamaha, and even smaller boutique brands jumping in.

But what's striking about 2025 is how *normalized* electronic kits have become across all levels of play — from beginners to pros. Once viewed as practice tools or niche studio gear, today's e-drum sets are showing up in *worship groups, educational programs, small-stage gigs, hybrid acoustic/electronic setups*, and yes, more and more in family living rooms where the words "volume control" are music to a parent's ears.

Retailers we've spoken with note that price-point variety has helped — entry-level kits with mesh heads and Bluetooth connectivity under \$500 make for easy upsells — but what's really shifted the tide is the improvement in *feel*. Mesh heads, multi-zone cymbals, adjustable rack configurations, and drum brain software that actually sounds (and responds) like real kits? That's what keeps customers smiling — and returning.

Of course, the market isn't without its challenges. Margins can be thinner than we'd like, and keeping up with firmware updates, software patches, and app compatibility is an ongoing task for both retailers and end-users. Still, the demand is real, the technology keeps improving, and the future looks promising.

Here's to another year of recognizing the best in the biz — and to keeping our collective finger on the pulse of what's next.



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MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

Published Since 1879

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GAMA ELECTS NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Aaron Dablow

The Guitar and Accessories Marketing Association (GAMA) board members have elected one new Board of Director member during their most recent meeting. This would make a total of five new members, in addition to the four that were added at the beginning of the year, spanning across an array of companies in the industry; they are:

Aaron Dablow – Taylor Guitars

Amy Kreider – C. F. Martin

Brian Vance – D'Addario

Jennifer Paisley – Alfred Music

Lindsay Love – PRS Guitars

Aaron Dablow

With over 20 years of experience in the musical instrument industry, Aaron has

become a key leader at Taylor Guitars, where he currently serves as sales manager, Americas. Based in San Diego, California, he oversees a high-performing team of sales managers across the United States, Canada, and Latin America – driving growth, strengthening dealer relationships, and shaping sales strategy across a diverse and evolving market.

Since joining Taylor Guitars in 2005, Aaron has held multiple leadership roles with increasing responsibility. As sales manager, North America, he led revenue initiatives through a network of more than 200 independent dealers, guiding his team to consistently exceed targets and deepen market penetration. Prior to that, his work as a district sales manager of the Southeast set a foundation for long-term brand success across the region. He is also actively involved in product development, including custom guitar design, and serves as the product manager for Powers Electric Guitars – the electric guitar division of Taylor Guitars. In this role, he leads the expansion of the global dealer network, hosts events and in-depth training sessions, and contributes to ongoing product innovation.

Before his tenure at Taylor Guitars, Aaron built a strong foundation in retail leadership at Guitar Center in the high-performing Dallas and Hollywood locations, where he consistently ranked among the top sales performers in the Southern California and Texas/Oklahoma regions. His innovative approach to team sales structures and merchandising significantly boosted departmental performance.

Throughout his career, Aaron has been recognized for his expertise in sales management, business development, territory planning, product design, and team leadership. His ability to align strategy

with execution continues to play a pivotal role in expanding Taylor Guitars' presence throughout the Americas.

Amy Kreider

Amy Kreider has been passionate about music from a young age. She played piano, viola, and flute and later studied music business and marketing in college. These passions came together when she joined C.F. Martin & Company, where she focused on refining their marketing strategies. Her previous experiences in the repair department at Zeswitz and as a store manager at Menchey Music have given her invaluable insight into the retail side of the industry, helping her approach the marketing of Martin guitars with a deeper understanding of customer needs.

Brian Vance

Brian Vance is the vice president of D'Addario's Guitar Products Division, where he leads business strategy and product innovation for D'Addario's core business. A dedicated guitarist and music enthusiast, Brian brings 35 years of experience in the Musical Instrument Industry. He has been a driving force behind D'Addario's emergence as an iconic global music brand. Prior to joining D'Addario in 2001, Brian was product manager at Gibson USA and a director at Marsmusic.com.

Brian holds a BA in Music Business from Belmont University in Nashville, TN, and is certified in Product Management by The Pragmatic Institute. Residing on Long Island, NY, he remains deeply connected to the local music community, actively performing with his own groups.

Jennifer Paisley-Schuch

Jennifer Paisley-Schuch is a seasoned leader in the music products industry with over 22 years of experience. She has devoted her

career to building impactful partnerships and programs that expand and strengthen music education, while advocating for equitable access for all students.

As director of Educational Programs at Alfred Music and MakeMusic, Jennifer collaborates with music educators, school districts, and industry partners to advance high-quality teaching and learning. She leads the development of curriculum resources and adoptions, professional development opportunities, and strategic initiatives that empower educators and inspire the next generation of musicians.

Jennifer also developed and manages a rapidly growing clinician team that works directly with music educators, delivering hands-on support, training, and inspiration in classrooms and at events worldwide.

A proud alumna of the Crane School of Music and SUNY Potsdam's Business of Music program, Jennifer continues to champion music education as an essential part of every child's development.

Lindsay Love-Bivens

Lindsay Love-Bivens is the artist relations manager at PRS Guitars, bringing more than 20 years of experience in performance, production, and leadership. A seasoned guitarist across multiple genres, she also has hands-on expertise in guitar production and repair. Before joining PRS, Lindsay spent several years as Artist Relations and Partnerships Manager at Taylor Guitars, collaborating with world-class musicians and global brands. Earlier in her career, she held senior leadership roles at large churches, building strong ties within the CCM and Gospel music community. She has also served as a diversity and culture consultant, offering a unique perspective to her work with artists and partners.

MARTIN GUITAR HOSTS FIRST-EVER SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT, SETTING THE TONE FOR A GREENER MUSIC INDUSTRY

C.F. Martin & Co. hosted its first-ever Sustainability Summit on October 9, 2025, at the company's solar-powered Commerce Lane facility in Tatamy, Pennsylvania.

The summit featured keynote presentations, panel discussions, artist-led demonstrations, and live performances, highlighting the importance of sustainable practices across the music and manufacturing industries. Representatives from REVERB, the Forest Stewardship Council®, Sustain Music & Nature, Columbia University's Climate School, Hearne Hardwoods, Unified Wood Economy, and more shared case studies and actionable strategies for creating lasting environmental impact.

"Martin's been such a clear leader in sustainability, and that's what my nonprofit is all about," said Adam Gardner, co-founder of REVERB and member of the band Double. "Our approach has always been to meet people where they're at — whether they're a fan, manufacturer, artist, or venue — and help them move down the path toward sustainability. It's a process, not a destination."

Dylan Siegler, SVP and Head of Sustainability for Universal Music Group, added, "Being here has really opened my eyes to how musical instruments themselves are a mechanism for change. We all form the supply chain of the artist — record labels, manufacturers like Martin, and everyone in between — creating the possibilities that help artists be more sustainable in all of their practices."

Artists Leading the Way

Throughout the day, attendees experienced firsthand how creativity and sustainability intersect. Gardner and Jacob Tilley of Young the Giant performed live, reinforcing the



summit's mission to inspire sustainable change through music.

Tilley reflected on the urgency of action after years of touring: "As a band, we felt it was our duty to look under the microscope at what we can do better to keep live music available for the next generation. The summit brought together like-minded people to forge relationships and create a path forward for a more sustainable future."

Kate Micucci, musician, comedian, and actress, led a reclaimed-art and sustainable

ukulele demonstration, transforming discarded materials into new creative expression. "I started painting on discarded guitar tops that would've been thrown away otherwise," Micucci shared. "Today reminded me that sustainability is about what we can do daily — and also about making something bigger and more impactful together. The ukulele I played today [a Martin T1 Tenor Uke] was totally sustainable."

The day also included a special video message from Wilco frontman and Martin

signature artist Jeff Tweedy, whose new FSC®-certified signature guitars launched the same day. "Keep making sustainable guitars," Tweedy said. "It's great for everybody, and it's great for business — because what's better than sustainable? I'm proud to see more of these guitars being made and proud to be part of it."

Key Insights and Next Steps

Sessions throughout the day explored topics such as responsible tonewood sourcing, carbon-neutral touring, circular economies, and the use of reclaimed and alternative materials. From wood composites made of biodegradable matter to reimaged supply chain partnerships, attendees left inspired by what collaboration can achieve.

"The big takeaway for me," said Siegler, "is that any network trying to achieve real change needs a strong root system — just like the trees that inspire us. And that's exactly what we're building here today."

Looking Ahead

The Martin Sustainability Summit marks the beginning of a broader, long-term initiative to connect and empower leaders across music, manufacturing, and environmental sectors. "I think today was a reminder that we all know what needs to be done — it's just about putting it into practice," Micucci said. "Martin has been doing this for years, and it's pretty cool to see that commitment inspiring others."

Martin Guitar extends its sincere thanks to all speakers, artists, and attendees who made the inaugural Sustainability Summit possible—and to the partners and organizations working every day to set the tone for a greener future. For more information on Martin's sustainability efforts, visit martinguitar.com/sustainability.

Martin & Co.
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BLACK DIAMOND STRINGS RELOCATES HQ



Black Diamond Strings LLC, a leading name in the string manufacturing industry, is proud to announce the relocation of its corporate headquarters to the Fountaingrove Roundbarn Office Complex in Santa Rosa, California.

The Fountaingrove area, known for its rolling hills, scenic vineyards, and strong sense of community, provides a vibrant setting for innovation and growth. With its blend of natural beauty and modern amenities, the Fountaingrove community reflects the company's values of tradition, quality, and creativity.

"This move represents a fresh chapter for Black Diamond Strings LLC," said Greg Szabo CEO. "The Fountaingrove Roundbarn Office Complex not only offers us an inspiring environment but also places us in the heart of a thriving community that we're excited to be a part of."

Black Diamond Strings LLC remains committed to its mission of crafting world-class strings for musicians across the globe while strengthening its ties with the Northern California region.

SWEETWATER ROCKS OUT WITH GUITARFEST EVENT



In late September, Sweetwater had the pleasure of welcoming guitar enthusiasts to its Fort Wayne, Indiana, campus for GuitarFest. The event featured over 70 manufacturer booths, more than 20 world-class guitarists, and numerous industry leaders, all coming together for a celebration dedicated to the guitar.

"It was an incredible event," shared Samantha Hunter, director of Artist Relations and Campus Productions at Sweetwater. "Music enthusiasts and guitar players had the unique opportunity to see up close the very latest gear and engage directly with the manufacturers. Additionally, fans had a chance to meet some guitar legends and collect autographs, creating lasting memories for all that attended."

Held on Saturday, September 27, GuitarFest was a one-day event that drew several thousand music fans from all over the Midwest. The event underscored Sweetwater's commitment to creating a community for music lovers and providing opportunities to share the passion of music.

PEARL RIVER GUITARS POWERS CHARITY WEEKEND IN SOUTHERN INDIANA; ARTISTS PRAISE A800N-D GUITAR



Pearl River Guitars took the spotlight at the 12th Annual Bread of Life Ministry Celebrity Benefit Weekend, a three-day fundraiser held September 12–14, blending music, community, and hands-on instrument demonstrations to support food and clothing assistance with individuals and agencies in the Tri-State areas and beyond.

The event drew an estimated 300–500 attendees across performances and activities, with guitars from Pearl River — including the acclaimed A800-D dreadnought and a Pearl River bass BPJ60-N and A800N-D — available for artists and guests to play. Founded in 1973, Bread of Life Ministry now serves approximately 55,000 individuals, families, and agencies per month while also supporting outreach nationwide — underscoring the importance of the weekend's charitable focus.

The all-star slate featured Diamond Farnsworth (Pearl River artist, NCIS stuntman/actor/musician), Nashville singer-songwriter J Edwards, and Grammy-nominated, platinum-selling country artist David Ball, who singled out Pearl River's A800-D guitar for praise. The

Sunday lineup also included legendary gospel greats The Chuck Wagon Gang. Festivities spanned a mixer, Friday performances, a Celebrity Benefit Golf Scramble on Saturday, and a full Sunday at the Museum of the Coal Industry with Cowboy Church, a classic car show, museum tours, and a country concert.

"When artists like David Ball, Diamond Farnsworth, and J Edwards connect with our instruments — and with this community — the magic is real," said Sherry Carlisle Smith of The SCE Group, who organized the weekend's entertainment and led on-site guitar demos. "Pearl River builds for working players, and you could hear and feel that all weekend."

For Pearl River, the event showcases what music can accomplish when it serves a meaningful purpose. The show follows the company's recent support of the 12th Annual "Faces of HNC" Music & Awareness Event in Tennessee, where players and fans sampled models from Pearl River's acoustic and bass lines, reinforcing Pearl River's commitment to causes that help people heal, connect, and thrive through music.

WASHBURN GEARS UP FOR NEXT ERA AS NUNO BETTENCOURT LAUNCHES NUNO GUITARS

After many years of collaboration and creative partnership, famed guitarist Nuno Bettencourt has decided to part ways with Washburn to pursue the development of his own brand, Nuno Guitars.

Since 1883, Washburn has been a key player in the fretted instrument space and continues to innovate with its guitar, banjo, and mandolin product lines. Nuno's departure is amicable and reflects his desire to explore new creative opportunities by building his own brand.

"After 35 years with Washburn, I'm truly grateful for the partnership and all that we achieved together," said Nuno Bettencourt. "Launching my own guitar brand has long been a dream, and the time is now."

"Washburn has greatly benefited from working with Nuno and his team throughout the years," said Nick Ellingsworth, product manager, Washburn Guitars/KMC Music. "We will be



announcing the next generation of Washburn guitars soon."

Washburn is also proud to announce several strategic developments. Along with

an expanded sales and marketing team, enhanced web and promotional content, and advanced analytics capabilities, the company is building a revitalized artist relations program

and reimagining its product development process. With these initiatives, Washburn is poised to continue expanding upon its 140-year legacy of innovation.

"The work that Nick and the in-house design team has done to position the next phase of Washburn Guitars at the front of the pack is amazing. Nuno has been such an integral part of the Washburn electric guitar story for decades. We now have an opportunity to stretch out a bit and aim for the next big thing in Washburn," said James Tsaptsinos, vice president Global Sales/GM, JAM US MI/Pro.

With strong new teams in place and an exciting design roadmap ahead, the next chapter of Washburn's 140-year journey looks bright.

The entire Washburn and extended JAM family wish Nuno Bettencourt every success in his future endeavors.

HK AUDIO NAMES NEW INDIAN DISTRIBUTOR

HK Audio has appointed Hi-Tech Audio Video Systems Pvt as its new exclusive distributor for India. With the agreement in place, the new distribution partner already has stock of HK Audio equipment to cater to the country's bustling live events and fixed installation markets.

Based in the city of Noida in northern India's Uttar Pradesh state, Hi-Tech Audio Video Systems Pvt has more than 25 years of experience in the professional AV market serving customers across the country. As a first stage in the new partnership, the distributor has already visited HK Audio's St Wendel HQ to receive COSMO training and to visit the production facilities.

"We are extremely excited to partner with and represent an audio giant — HK Audio — offering a huge range of products from the economical Portable Sound range to Concert level products," says Manikk Gupta, managing partner at Hi-Tech Audio Video Systems Pvt. "India is a very demanding market, and clients believe in value for money."

The Hi-Tech Audio Video Systems Pvt team understand the common challenges faced in the Indian market, but they are confident that the extensive product portfolio and quality of HK Audio can help to overcome them. "Product stability and natural sound has been a big challenge with many reputed brands in India," explains Gupta. "With our 25 years of experience in the Pro Audio market, we are confident that rental companies, musicians and big artists will just love the sound of HK Audio. Be ready for German precision and Indian Performance!"

"We are delighted to partner with Hi-Tech Audio Video Systems Pvt as our new exclusive distributor for India," adds David Leonhard, HK Audio ISM Middle East and India. "We see India as a very important market with vibrant events and installation sectors. We are excited to see how our new partners will grow our market share and look forward to seeing users across the country benefit from HK Audio products."



David Leonhard, HK Audio ISM Middle East and India, Manikk Gupta, Managing Partner at Hi-Tech Audio Video Systems Pvt and Christian Jordan

A photograph of Ed Bazel, an older man with grey hair, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers, standing next to a black Kayserburg grand piano. The piano is open, showing the internal mechanism. The background is a wood-paneled room with bookshelves. The lighting is warm and focused on the piano and the man.

Kayserburg

“ When I sit down and lay my hands on the keys, I can feel the care and craftsmanship the Kayserburg artisans have put into this instrument. It truly is an instrument made by artists for artists.

The touch, the feel, and the tone are all spot on. ”

Ed Bazel

Internationally acclaimed, award-winning pianist, composer



Kayserburg

Kayserburg

EDDIE MONTALVO SIGNS WITH TOCA PERCUSSION



proud to announce that legendary conguero Eddie Montalvo has joined the Toca artist roster.

Widely respected as one of the most influential percussionists in Latin music, Eddie's addition marks an exciting new chapter for Toca and for the global percussion community.

For more than 40 years, Eddie has been at the forefront of salsa and Latin jazz, performing and recording with icons including the Fania All-Stars, Rubén Blades, Willie Colón, and Héctor Lavoe. His signature sound, Grammy-winning work, and dedication to his craft have made him a household name for percussionists and music lovers alike.

"Joining the Toca family feels like the perfect match," said Eddie Montalvo. "Toca's instruments capture the soul of the music I love, and I'm excited to be part of a brand that shares my passion for connecting people through rhythm."

"We're honored to welcome Eddie to Toca Percussion," added Mark Petrocelli, Artist Relations Manager at Toca. "His history and artistry speak for themselves and having him on our roster is truly special for us and the percussion community."

REVERB UK RELAUNCHES WITH A LOWER SELLER FEE AND ONE-OF-A-KIND MUSIC GEAR

On September 10, Reverb, the largest online marketplace dedicated to musical instruments, announced the relaunch of Reverb UK, complete with lower selling fees and new tools for sellers. Now, sellers on Reverb UK will pay a bundled 5% fee once their music gear has sold, 3% less than before, getting more money for their music gear.

With Reverb UK's all-in 5% fee, hundreds of UK-based music shops, as well as the hundreds of thousands of musicians on Reverb UK, will make more money on each sale. The addition of discounted postage labels via DPD, Yodel, and Evri, as well as UK-specific market trend data that sellers can use to price their gear, further empowers sellers to get their gear into the hands of musicians throughout the UK and beyond using the music gear marketplace created by musicians for musicians.

Said Reverb user and BRIT Award-winner Mark Ronson, "We were working on the score for Barbie, and we realized that director Greta



Gerwig was in love with the sound of '70s and '80s analogue synthesizers. I looked on Reverb for a Yamaha CS-80, and I saw that there was one about an hour and a half away, so we drove out to get it and its sound

became a key part of the movie's soundtrack."

For nearly a decade, Reverb UK has provided a platform for musicians looking to sell and buy music gear. Featuring a wide range of instruments, from the console used by the Beatles to record Abbey Road to over 150,000 second-hand and new instruments, the leading music gear marketplace has proved popular with enthusiasts, local bands, and world-renowned musicians alike, from Muse and Duran Duran to Placebo and many more.

"Since 2016, Reverb has played a key role in the UK's music-making community by connecting musicians with music gear they love," said Reverb's COO, Tiffany Miller. "Whether you're parting with a vintage Telecaster or looking for unique pedals that can reshape your sound, our straightforward fees and key product improvements make selling music gear more rewarding than ever before, giving musicians more time to focus on what really matters: making music."

ROCK & ROLL HALL OF FAMER CHAD SMITH LAUNCHES FOUNDATION TO CHAMPION MUSIC EDUCATION, ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ASPIRING ARTISTS

Chad Smith, the iconic Rock & Roll Hall of Fame drummer for the Red Hot Chili Peppers, today announced the official launch of the Chad Smith Foundation (CSF). Dedicated to amplifying young talent, the foundation aims to inspire, empower, and nurture the next generation of musicians by bridging the gap in music access and opportunity. Built on the pillars of Inspiration, Access, and Support, the foundation works to ensure aspiring music professionals, regardless of background, have the tools, resources, and opportunities to pursue their passion.

"Music has been my life, and it's given me so much," said Chad Smith, co-founder and chairman. "I believe every kid, no matter where they come from, deserves the chance to explore their musical potential and find their voice. The Chad Smith Foundation is about opening doors, removing barriers, and helping young talent flourish. We want to make sure they have a shot at making noise that can change their world, and ours."

The Chad Smith Foundation will roll out several key initiatives designed to create meaningful impact:

The Curtis & Joan Smith Scholarship: Named in honor of Chad Smith's parents, this program supports students pursuing diverse careers in music, from performance and education to therapy, production, and more. Scholarships help remove financial burdens so recipients



can focus on honing their talents, just as Chad's parents supported his own musical journey.

Equipment Donation: The foundation will donate quality instruments and audio gear to underfunded music programs and community venues. By providing high-quality equipment, the foundation removes barriers that can stall progress and sparks passion the moment a student picks up an instrument.

Education and Program Support: This initiative will connect skilled instructors to youth programs and ensure they have the tools to teach effectively. The foundation aims to grow the network of music educators, creating more opportunities for both teachers and students while expanding the reach of music education in underserved communities.

The Chad Smith Foundation will serve aspiring musicians of all ages, with a focus on K-12 students, college students, and community members involved in the performing arts.

It will address critical needs such as lack of financial resources, limited access to quality music programs, and insufficient support for performing arts venues.

Co-Founder and Executive Director Lewis Smith added, "We are incredibly excited to launch the Chad Smith Foundation and begin the vital work of supporting young musicians. Our programs are designed to create tangible impact, from providing individual scholarships to strengthening community music infrastructures. We look forward to collaborating with schools, universities, and other like-minded organizations to expand our reach and deepen our impact."

To learn more about the Chad Smith Foundation, explore ways to get involved, or make a donation, visit www.ChadSmithFoundation.org. Your support helps create opportunities, remove barriers, and inspire the next generation of music professionals.

FOCUSRITE GROUP HOSTS INAUGURAL EDUCATIONAL SUMMIT AT CREATE-IT STUDIOS IN FRANKLIN, TN

The Focusrite Group proudly hosted its inaugural Educational Summit on August 14-15 at the cutting-edge Create-it Studios in Franklin, TN. Organized by Dr. Lee Whitmore, vice president for Education, Focusrite Group Americas, the summit brought together leading voices in music, audio, and education for two days of thought leadership, collaboration, and exploration of best practices in preparing the next generation of creators.

The event followed closely on the heels of the July 26th Focusrite Group Create-it Takeover, held at Create-it Studios, a groundbreaking creative innovation space developed in collaboration with Walmart and sponsored by Full Sail University. Located inside Walmart in Franklin, TN, Create-it Studios is a one-stop destination for podcasting, music production, video creation and live events, open to everyone, regardless of experience or background.

At the Education Summit, attendees participated in panels, workshops, and discussions that spanned topics such as immersive audio, curriculum design, music technology innovations, and cross-industry collaboration. A highlight of the program

was a Dolby Atmos® panel moderated by GRAMMY®-nominated engineer and audio educator John Merchant, with guest experts GRAMMY-winning engineer Jon Blass and noted electronic music producer/DJ Greg "Stryke" Chin sharing insights on the future of spatial audio.

Special thanks were extended to the Create-it team, along with Full Sail University's Andrew Duncan and Michael Orlowski, for their contributions to the event.

Attendees included representatives from:

- Belmont University
- Calhoun Community College
- Columbia State Community College
- Dark Horse Institute
- Dolby Laboratories
- Eastman School of Music
- Florida State University
- Full Sail University
- Greenwich High School, Greenwich, CT
- Lipscomb University

- Loyola University New Orleans
- Metro Nashville Public Schools
- Miami Dade College
- Middle Tennessee State University
- North Carolina State University
- University of Alabama at Birmingham
- University of North Alabama
- Virginia State University

"Focusrite has always been deeply committed to supporting education and empowering the next generation of music creators," said Dr. Lee Whitmore. "This summit gave us the opportunity to bring together a remarkable group of educators, industry leaders, and innovators to share knowledge, inspire one another, and advance the role of music technology in education."

The Focusrite Group Educational Summit marks the beginning of an ongoing initiative to foster dialogue and collaboration between academic institutions, industry leaders, and creators, ensuring that the tools, resources, and inspiration needed for tomorrow's music innovators remain accessible and impactful.



Attendees of the Focusrite Group's inaugural Educational Summit, held August 14-15 at the cutting-edge Create-it Studios in Franklin, TN

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Pearl Corporation is excited to announce the addition of legendary marching percussion educator, **Thom Hannum**, as director of Education. As one of the most respected voices in the world of marching percussion, Thom brings decades of experience, innovation, and leadership to this new role. Known for his work with The Crossmen, The Cadets, Star of Indiana, Blast!, Carolina Crown, and UMass, Hannum is a DCI and World Drum Corps Hall of Fame inductee and PAS Hall of Fame Inductee. As director of Education, Hannum will spearhead initiatives that foster musical growth, community engagement, and brand alignment through educational outreach and programming. Since Pearl's inception in 1946, music education has been at the forefront of

the company, when founder Katsumi Yanagisawa began producing music stands for the local Japanese market. Today, Pearl marching and concert products are staples in schools and universities around the world. As a leading manufacturer of musical instruments, Pearl values the development of musicians at all levels — from students and educators to professionals — and the director of Education is central to this mission.

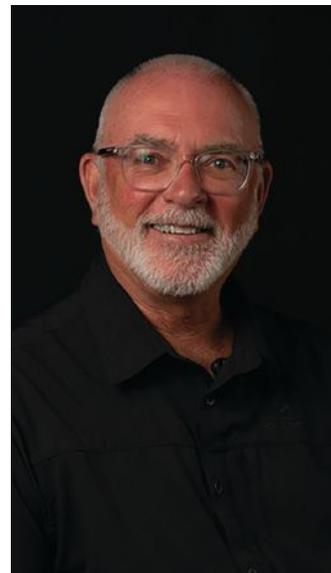
“To be named Director of Education at Pearl is a major milestone in my professional career — reflective of a 43-year association with Pearl as an artist and clinician. It is both flattering and humbling. Let’s get started!”

“With over four decades of partnership, Thom’s transition into

the role of director of Education marks not only a continuation — but an evolution — of our long-standing relationship. His legendary knowledge and experience in school music education have shaped the industry, and his guidance will be instrumental in steering Pearl’s Band & Orchestra initiatives into the future,” said Glen Caruba, director of Sales & Marketing at Pearl Corporation.

“Without music education, there’s simply no music industry,” said Adam Jones, director of

Marketing at Pearl Corporation. “This role is about more than our products — it’s about people, progress, and providing educators with the tools they need to inspire the next generation of performers.”



Allen & Heath USA and American Music and Sound are pleased to announce the appointment of **Daniel Reed** as the company’s new Western regional sales manager. In his new role, Reed will oversee sales activities and manage the sales representative network across the Western United States.

Reed brings more than a decade of professional audio experience spanning live sound, touring, and technical sales. He began his career mixing live bands and managing production in Phoenix, AZ, while attending Arizona State University. His work soon took him on the road, where he spent 10 years touring worldwide as a front-of-house and monitor engineer with indie rock groups, major touring acts, and pop artists.

Following his time on the road,



Reed transitioned into technical sales and applications support at Harman Professional Solutions, where he specialized in Tour and Performance Audio products from JBL Professional and

Crown Amplifiers. In this role, he worked closely with sales teams and customers on system design, demos, training, and business development within the professional audio community.

“I am truly humbled and excited to join the team at Allen & Heath USA,” said Reed. “Their products have redefined what is possible in the console industry, combining power, capability, and accessibility across every size and budget. I look forward to contributing to a brand that not only innovates but also fosters a passionate community through their commitment to educating and supporting their users.”

Neil Potter, director of National Sales for Allen & Heath USA, added: “Daniel’s unique blend of hands-on touring expertise and deep technical sales experience makes him an outstanding addition to our team. His proven ability to connect with both end-users and sales partners will be invaluable as we continue expanding Allen & Heath’s presence across the Western U.S.”

Allen & Heath USA and American Music and Sound are pleased to announce the appointment of **Chad Plageman** as regional sales manager for the Central United States. In this new role, Plageman will oversee sales, support, and training initiatives across the region, further strengthening the company’s presence and customer engagement in the pro audio market.

Plageman brings over two decades of leadership experience in sales and business development, with a proven track record of driving revenue growth, building high-performing teams, and executing strategic initiatives. Most recently, he served as Vice President of Sales at Full Compass Systems, where he led a team of

over 50 employees.

Prior to that, Plageman held senior roles at Poblocki Sign Company, Adams Outdoor Advertising, and Fairway Outdoor Advertising, where he consistently delivered strong results in revenue growth, team development, and operational efficiency. His extensive experience in managing national and regional sales teams, combined with his deep understanding of the professional audio and signage industries, positions him well to lead Allen & Heath’s efforts in the Central territory.

“I’m thrilled to be joining an incredible organization and working alongside some of the best industry professionals in the business,” said Chad Plageman,

central regional sales manager, Allen & Heath USA. “Allen and Heath’s products are the best in the market, and it’s an honor to represent them. I’m excited to get out in my territory to meet the great representatives and businesses that proudly sell our products.”

“Chad’s deep industry knowledge and strong relationships make him a valuable addition to our team,” said Neil Potter, director of National Sales for Allen & Heath USA. “We are confident that Chad will deliver immediate impact, strengthening sales performance and enhancing service support for our partners and end users across the Central region.”



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Casio America, Inc. has announced that **Stephen Schmidt**, vice president of the company's Electronic Musical Instruments (EMI) Division, retired on September 30, after 19 years of dedicated service to Casio.

During his nearly two-decade tenure, Stephen Schmidt played a key role in advancing Casio's corporate creed of "Creativity and Contribution," offering people new ways to experience and enrich their lives. He began his career at Casio America as vice president of Sales, supporting all major divisions including watches, calculators, digital cameras, business projectors, digital pianos, and portable keyboards. In this role, he managed independent and regional accounts nationwide, providing strategic guidance and driving growth across a diverse network of retail partners.

In 2009, Schmidt assumed the more focused role of vice president of the EMI Division, where he made a lasting impact by overseeing the development and marketing of Casio's award-winning musical instrument lines. These include the Privia and Celviano digital pianos, as well as the Casiotone portable keyboards — recognized globally for their innovation, quality, and accessibility, making them a trusted choice for everyone from beginners to educators and professional performers.

Throughout his time with Casio, Schmidt also contributed to several key initiatives across other divisions, including the U.S. launch



of the Oceanus watch line, the development of Casio's jewelry channel, and the introduction of new business ventures such as the Tryx digital camera and slim projectors. In the musical instruments space, he led three standout product launches, including two high-profile "Beyond Sound" events for the XW synth series — featuring The Crystal Method and Karmen — and the 2015 launch of the Grand Hybrid piano at Lincoln Center. Most recently, he supported the 2022 release of the Privia PX-S7000, a flagship product that redefined digital piano design for the modern lifestyle.

Before joining Casio, Schmidt

built a successful career in the consumer electronics industry, holding leadership roles that spanned direct-to-consumer marketing, brand development, and long-term business strategy. He earned a strong reputation for consistently managing sales and profitability growth while helping brands expand their footprint in competitive market segments.

"Stephen has been a vital part of Casio America's success in the music industry," said Yusuke Suzuki, president and CEO of Casio America, Inc. "His leadership and vision have helped shape our Electronic Musical Instruments division, driving innovation, expanding our market reach, and

strengthening our reputation for delivering outstanding products. We are deeply grateful for his contributions and wish him all the best in his retirement."

Reflecting on his career, Schmidt said: "It has been an honor and a privilege to lead a company with such a well-known name and rich history. Casio's mission to bring music to more people, initiated over five decades ago, has resulted in several award-winning, groundbreaking products. We continue to bring musical instruments to market for everyone, wherever they may be in their musical journey, from beginners to professionals. It is incredible to see how the music created through these instruments has changed lives, and it has been a joy to be part of that process."

These milestones reflect Schmidt's deep commitment to innovation, cross-functional leadership, and expanding Casio's presence across both new and established markets.

Following Schmidt's retirement, Brian Piccolo, currently General Manager of Sales for Casio America's EMI Division, will assume Schmidt's responsibilities, ensuring continuity for the company's dealers, partners, and customers.

With deep appreciation for his years of service, Casio America congratulates Stephen on his retirement and celebrates the legacy he leaves behind.

The Audio Engineering Society's Board of Governors (BoG) has elected **Agnieszka Roginska** to assume the role of AES director beginning January 1, 2026. Roginska will replace outgoing Director Bill Schulenburg as one of two BoG-elected Directors on the AES Board of Directors (BoD). She will serve on the Board of Directors through 2027.

An AES Fellow and Past President, Roginska has served the Society in a plethora of leadership roles, including previous terms on the BoD. She currently serves as the co-chair of the AES Event Coordination Committee.

Roginska earned a Ph.D. in Music Technology from Northwestern University. She is now a Professor of Music Technology at New York University, where she conducts research in the simulation and applications of immersive and 3D audio including the capture, analysis and synthesis of auditory environments.

"I am delighted that Agnieszka will be returning to the Board of Directors," AES president Gary Gottlieb stated. "We welcome her wisdom and experience as AES continues to evolve to better serve our members."

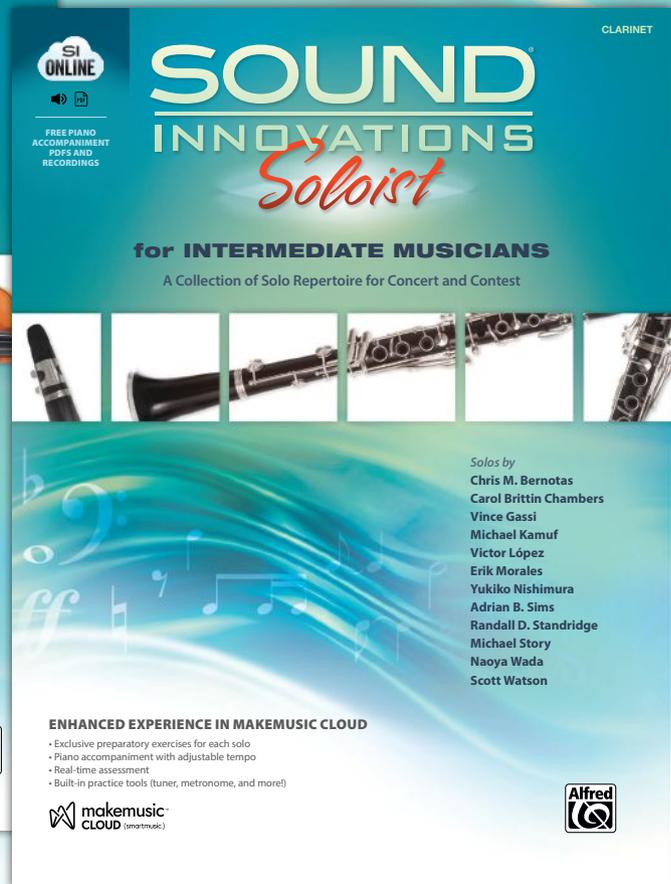
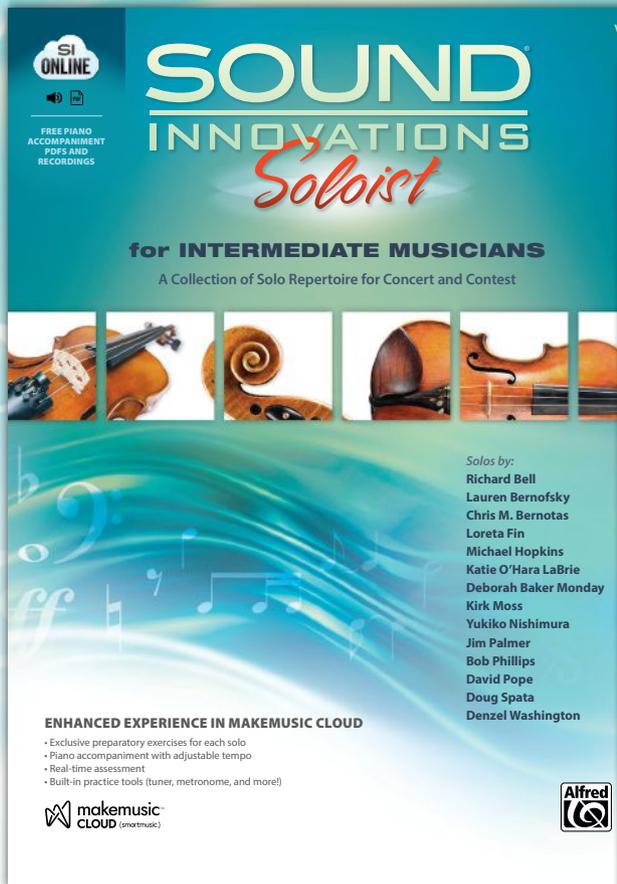
"We are also grateful for Bill Schulenburg's devoted service," added Gottlieb. "He has been a steadfast champion for our membership."

"I am deeply honored to have been elected to the AES Board of Directors" Roginska said. "I look forward to working with my fellow Board members to support our community and to contribute to the AES mission of advancing audio innovation and fostering collaboration across our global community."

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the AES with

responsibility for the overall function and direction of the Society. Each Director is also a member of the larger Board of Governors, alongside regional Vice Presidents and Governors at large. Save for two Directors elected to the BoD by the BoG from within the BoG's recent and current membership, each of these volunteer Board members are elected by the voting membership of the Society. The AES Boards manage AES business, membership, events, publications and online resources with the assistance of the Society's volunteer-led topical committees.

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Solid State Logic announces that it has appointed **CJ Lewis** to the position of national sales manager, Western U.S., where he is responsible for SSL, Harrison Audio and Slate Digital ACP (Audio Creation Product) solutions. In his new role, Lewis joins SSL's US-based distributor, Group One Ltd. as part of expanding its business development and customer relationships, reporting to Rick Naqvi, senior VP of USA Sales.

Lewis, who is based in Denver, CO, brings more than two decades of sales management and product expertise to his role. Prior to starting with SSL, he has worked as a regional sales manager for Mackie, as a partner for pro audio rep firm the Marshank Group, as a studio and live musician, and as a worship mentor. In the retail domain, Lewis also served as

a sales manager for GC Pro for several years.

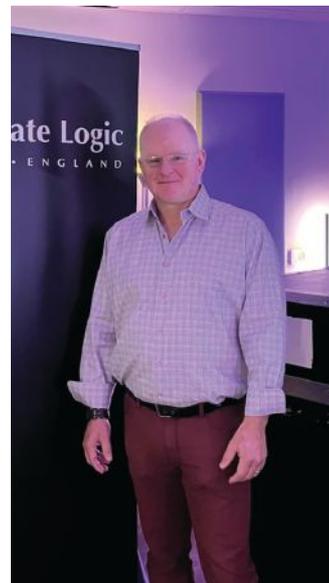
In his new role at SSL, Lewis will be focused on expanding the SSL, Harrison and Slate Digital partner and customer network in the western United States by interfacing with partners and dealers, hosting a myriad of events and trainings, and supporting existing facilities with SSL products.

"Throughout my audio career, I've approached studio problem-solving through strong relationships with others, always building meaningful human connections and fostering a team culture that thrives on collaboration," says Lewis. "Now, I am thrilled to have an opportunity to leverage SSL's exceptional audio solutions with the goal of

expanding its customer base even further."

From a product perspective, Lewis will focus on SSL's entire ACP line, which includes interfaces, controllers, rack equipment and 500 Series units – as well as the company's recording consoles, including ORIGIN. In addition, he will support Harrison and Slate Digital solutions, including Slate's digital modeling microphones.

Lewis says he was drawn to the opportunity at SSL because of the brand's legacy, innovation and market strengths, as well as Rick Naqvi, who he worked alongside during the early 2000's in another role. "The team here is absolutely top-notch, and I look forward to learning and contributing in my new role as National Sales Manager, Western U.S."



Gibson, Inc. announces the appointment of **Anne Rohosy** as chief commercial officer (CCO). In this expanded role, Anne will lead Gibson's global commercial strategy, overseeing wholesale, direct-to-consumer, and retail channels as the company accelerates its growth and brand presence worldwide.

"I am excited to step into the role of chief commercial officer," says Anne Rohosy. "Gibson has a legacy unlike any other, and we have incredible opportunities ahead to expand our reach, strengthen our brands, and deliver for our fans and partners worldwide."

"Anne's leadership has been instrumental in shaping Gibson's transformation over the past

several years," continues Cesar Gueikian, president and CEO of Gibson. "Her deep experience in building global brands, leading complex commercial organizations, and driving innovation makes her the right leader to take Gibson's commercial strategy to the next level."

Anne has been a key member of Gibson's leadership team since 2021, serving as chief human resources and impact officer, as well as managing director of the Gibson Amplifiers business. During this time, she has led organizational transformation, championed culture and people strategy, and guided the revitalization of Gibson's iconic Amplifier division.

With over 30 years of leadership experience across top-tier global brands, including Levi Strauss & Co. and Nike, Inc., Anne brings proven expertise in brand building, P&L management, sales and marketing operations, and organizational transformation. She has held president and executive vice president roles overseeing multi-billion-dollar businesses, led global market expansions, and driven strategic growth across the Americas and Europe.

In addition to her executive leadership, Anne has contributed her expertise to global board and advisory roles in consumer products and technology-driven businesses, adding further depth to her perspective on innovation, market expansion, and consumer engagement.

Trade Regrets

Dennis Van Vactor, who served **Yamaha Corporation of America** with distinction for 27 years, passed away on Saturday, August 16, at the age of 79.

Van Vactor joined Yamaha in 1980 as a district manager for the company's DMI Division, bringing years of experience as a performer, retailer, and advocate for music education. Over nearly three decades with Yamaha, he also served as district manager in the company's Keyboard Division. He retired in 2007.

"I have so many fond memories of Dennis," said Dan Rodowicz, senior director, Piano Sales, Yamaha Corporation of America. "I first met him when I was a Product Specialist for the former Yamaha piano division, later serving as a District Manager. Over the years,

we logged countless miles and shared plenty of laughs together. Dennis was the consummate Yamaha district manager — dedicated, professional, and deeply respected. But to me, he was much more than a colleague; he was also a trusted friend and mentor."

Born in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and raised in Wyoming and Spearfish, South Dakota, Van Vactor was a talented pianist from a young age, performing professionally by age 12 and touring across the U.S. and Canada before starting his business career. In 1970, he co-founded Stephenson's Music in Rapid City, South Dakota, with Glenn DePue before beginning his long career at Yamaha.

Following his retirement, Van

Vactor returned to his roots as a pianist and arranger, performing with ensembles in Tucson, Arizona, while continuing to champion music education, particularly jazz and musical theatre at the middle school through college levels. He shared this lifelong passion with his daughter, Melissa, with whom he also worked during his Yamaha years.

Van Vactor is survived by his wife of 55 years, Martha; daughter Melissa; cousin Norva Kay; brother-in-law Lionel; and sister Connie. In accordance with his wishes, there will be no formal service. His ashes will be spread at Maroon Bells in Aspen, Colorado, a place of special significance to him and home to the Aspen Music Festival he cherished.



PLUGGED-IN PERCUSSION

MANUFACTURERS WEIGH IN ON HOW ELECTRONIC KITS ARE RESHAPING THE RHYTHM OF THE MI MARKET

By Christian Wissmuller

“Quiet practice, straightforward recording, easy integration with music software, and the ability to expand sounds over time have become key expectations. As electronic kits continue to blur the line with acoustic drums in both feel and sound, customers are responding to instruments that deliver realism and versatility with equal weight.” - James Petercsak, Senior Product Manager

Drums and Percussion, Roland Corporation U.S.

Once seen as a compromise for quiet practice or electronic-heavy genres, electronic drums have rapidly evolved into sophisticated, expressive instruments at the forefront of modern music-making. With innovations in mesh heads, trigger technology, sound engines, and hybrid drumming, e-kits are no longer playing catch-up — they’re setting the pace. As players demand more versatility, connectivity, and realism, the market for electronic drums is expanding across studio, stage, and education spaces alike.

To take the pulse of this fast-moving segment, we gathered key voices from four industry powerhouses — Roland, Alesis, DW, and Yamaha — to discuss where electronic drums are heading. From hardware innovation to retail strategy, consumer trends to cross-platform integration, this roundtable digs into how these brands are responding to shifting demands and shaping the future of drumming.

For your brand, what’s currently the top-selling model of electronic drums?

John Boudreau: Alesis Nitro Max is our top-selling electronic drum kit — and quite possibly the best-selling e-drum kit worldwide. Its combination of playability, durability, and accessible price point has made it the go-to choice for drummers at every level.



is due in large part to the larger mesh pads on Yamaha’s durable and reliable hardware, along with what is one of the most powerful and feature-packed modules on the market.



What features in electronic drum kits are customers most drawn to in 2025?



John Boudreau, Alesis

Mike Sutton: For DWe, the most popular configurations are the 5-piece kits in a range of Finish Ply and Lacquer Custom finishes. Many drummers love that they can start with a 5-piece and easily expand to 6- or 7-piece setups, closely matching the feel and layout of their acoustic DW kits. This scalability has been a key driver of DWe’s success with drummers.

James Petercsak: For Roland, the TD-27 and TD-17 V-Drums Series kits have consistently been our most popular, often competing for the top spot. They strike a great balance between professional-level performance and accessibility, making them a go-to for a wide range of drummers.

With the introduction of the new 3 and 5 Series V-Drums, which succeed the TD-17 and TD-27 kits, we’re building upon that momentum by adding expanded features and unifying the sound engine with our flagship V71 module. This brings flagship-level sound, expandability, and editing capabilities to every kit in the 3 and 5 Series.

Matt Rudin: The past few months, our DTX6K5-M has been outpacing the rest. This



Mike Sutton, DW Drums

MS: Drummers are increasingly drawn to DWe's wireless technology, which makes setup and teardown dramatically easier while giving both stage and studio setups a clean, professional look. The biggest differentiator is that DWe feels like a DW acoustic kit — because it is one. Not only does it provide the flexibility of electronics, but it also has the unique ability to be converted into a high-end DW acoustic drum set. This means drummers never have to choose between the authentic acoustic experience they know and the cutting-edge flexibility of electronics — with DWe, they can truly have both.

MR: That really depends on the price point and experience level. Entry-level e-drum buyers still seem to be focused on price point and having training tools and other features that encourage learning and help drummers progress on their musical journey will be attractive to this segment. With an intermediate to advanced player, ability to connect with multiple devices, additional outputs, and features that make it easy to record or aid in live performances are strong draws for this audience. Our DTX-PROX module, which is available on the DTX8K-PROX series and the DTX10K Series, has been getting a lot of attention from gigging drummers due to its robust MIDI, USB and audio I/O with the ability to route to any of its eight individual outputs, along with the Live Set features, making it an incredible tool for performing drummers.

JP: We believe drummers in 2025 are most drawn to kits that feel natural to play, and sound authentic in any environment. Quiet practice, straightforward recording, easy integration with music software, and the ability to expand sounds over time have become key expectations. As electronic kits continue to blur the line with acoustic drums in both feel and sound, customers are responding to instruments that deliver realism and versatility with equal weight.

JB: Most drummers use electronic kits for practice and learning, with some live performance use. Quiet mesh heads — versus the volume of acoustic drums — are one of the main draws, along with compact, space-saving designs ideal for home or apartment setups.

For learning, Alesis kits feature onboard songs and coaching tools, while Bluetooth audio streaming in the Nitro line allows drummers to play along with their favorite tracks. We also partner with Drumeo to include leading educational software.

Of course, high-quality sounds and responsive triggering are non-negotiable. Alesis delivers both by combining excellent pad sensitivity with world-class BFD drum sounds.

Are tariffs impacting your ability to source materials for electronic drums



James Ptercsak, Roland

JP: Tariffs and supply chain shifts always create some ripple effects in our industry, but they haven't stopped us from getting instruments into drummers' hands. Roland's global production and sourcing give us some flexibility, so while there are always adjustments, we've been able to keep product flowing and maintain the quality players expect.

MR: No. Fortunately, our ability to source materials has not been impacted by tariffs. We have had to increase prices recently for a variety of factors, including tariffs and increased labor and shipping costs, but it remains to be seen if there will be a longer-term impact.

JB: Like all electronic drum manufacturers, Alesis is subject to U.S. import tariffs. While these affect sourcing, we continue to focus on delivering the best possible value to customers worldwide.

MS: While tariffs have created some ripple effects in material costs, DWe has been remarkably stable because many of its components are designed and manufactured in-house at the DW factory in Oxnard, CA. This vertical integration not only reduces exposure to supply chain volatility but also ensures the premium build quality drummers expect from DW.

What are some key strategies that MI retailers ought to consider adopting when it comes to displaying and marketing electronic drum kits?



Matt Rudin, Yamaha Corporation of America

MR: I would love to see more done with the floor demo kits. Obviously, having a way for customers to experience the sound and feel of the e-drums is very helpful, and I completely understand the challenges of having drums that are constantly getting worn down and potentially damaged on the floor. However, when drums are on the floor, having clear instructions or tips in the way of POP or signage is helpful. We take for granted that every module is different and different drums have different capabilities, so working together with manufacturers to create and display signage is a great way for retailers to improve the experience.

MS: Retailers have a tremendous opportunity to showcase DWe by creating engaging, hands-on experiences that let drummers feel the difference immediately. Unlike traditional e-kits, DWe offers the authentic look, feel, and response of a DW acoustic kit — enhanced by wireless freedom and powerful sound flexibility.

The most successful retailers will invest in well-presented displays, regular upkeep, and knowledgeable staff training, so every customer interaction highlights just how seamless and inspiring DWe is to play. When presented this way, DWe stands out not just as another electronic kit, but as the future of electronic drumming — a solution that excites and inspires drummers.



The most successful retailers will invest in well-presented displays, regular upkeep, and knowledgeable staff training, so every customer interaction highlights just how seamless and inspiring DWe is to play.

Mike Sutton, Drum Workshop, DWe Brand Manager

JB: Nothing beats having properly set-up e-kits on the retail floor, with sticks and headphones ready to go. The experience of sitting down and playing is what truly convinces customers. Playing is believing!

JP: The most effective strategy is still giving drummers the chance to sit down and play. Nothing sells an electronic kit like experiencing the feel and sound firsthand through quality headphones or monitors. Creating reasons for drummers to visit the store is key. For instance, setting up a content station where players can record and share short clips, running gamified challenges with leaderboards and prizes, or offering in-store only bundle incentives that pair kits with accessories and/or lessons can be a great way to drive traffic.

For retailers who sell primarily online, high-quality video demos, clear product comparisons, and educational content on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and other social channels are essential. Customers want to see and hear the kits in action, understand how they're built, and know they're supported after purchase, so investing in content and customer service goes a long way.

Nothing beats having properly set-up e-kits on the retail floor, with sticks and headphones ready to go. The experience of sitting down and playing is what truly convinces customers. Playing is believing!

John Boudreau, Director of Product Development, Alesis Drums

Do you have any recently introduced or upcoming electronic drum kits that you'd like to highlight?

JB: In recent years, we've updated our #1 selling Nitro Mesh kit to the Nitro Max, and followed up with the Nitro Pro, which offers larger drums and cymbals for next-level playability, plus expanded kits and sounds across more musical genres.

This fall, we're excited to launch the Nitro Ultimate — delivering all the benefits of Nitro Pro plus a moving hi-hat for the first time ever under \$1,000.

At the flagship level, we also introduced the Strata Series, which features a high-resolution BFD engine and expansive kit library within a

touchscreen module, along with all-new pro-level hardware, including Strata drums, ARC 360° cymbals, and a moving hi-hat.

JP: Yes! Today marks one of the biggest V-Drums launches in recent memory with the introduction of the new 3 and 5 Series kits. The 3 Series includes the TD313, TD316, and VAD316, which deliver premium sound in compact setups, with the VAD316 offering an acoustic design option.

The 5 Series includes the TD513, TD516, and VAD516, offering larger footprints, more digital pad integration, and in the case of the VAD516, the most immersive acoustic-like look and feel. All of these kits are powered by the same flagship sound engine found in the V71 module that powers the 7 Series.



MS: Yes, this year we introduced a new cymbal option for DWe — the ability to use Roland V-Cymbals with the Roland DrumLink WT-10 wireless adapters. This makes DWe an ideal choice for situations that require quieter ambient noise, such as silent stage environments or home practice. This innovation reflects DW and Roland's shared ability to anticipate and respond to customer needs with practical, player-focused solutions.

Another standout feature of DWe is its open sound source flexibility. Drummers can pair their kits with DW Soundworks, an expansive virtual instrument for music production, or with hardware modules like Roland's V71 for reliable live performance. This "best of both worlds" approach ensures that DWe adapts seamlessly to every player's workflow — whether in the studio or on stage.

Additionally, we've been continually expanding the DW Soundworks sound library with new expansion packs, giving music creators and musicians an even greater color palette of sounds to inspire creativity and bring their music to life.

MR: The DTX8K-PROX Series just launched. Powered by the flagship DTX-PROX module with Bluetooth, these kits are available in either Mesh or Textured Cellular Silicone (TCS) pads and with a choice of Real Wood or Black Forest finishes. Featuring the KIT MODIFIER and LED Rotary Faders, which allow unparalleled sound adjustments with the simple twist of a knob,

they give drummers engineer-level control, while delivering the highest quality sounds and intuitive live performance. The DTX8K-PROX Series offers the features and versatility necessary for the next evolution in creative expression, both on and off the stage.

Expectations for the electronic drum kit market in the coming months?

MS: We expect to see continued growth in hybrid and professional-level electronic kits, with drummers demanding an authentic feel, easy setup, and pro-level sounds. DWe is perfectly positioned for this trend — bridging the gap between acoustic tradition and electronic innovation. As more drummers seek gear that integrates seamlessly into both their studio and live setups, DWe stands out as the premium choice.

JP: We're very optimistic about the months ahead for electronic drums. More students are starting on e-kits, more working drummers are taking them on stage, and more creators are using them for content production; clear signs that electronic drums are no longer a niche but a core part of drumming. As realism, sound quality, and connectivity continue to improve, we expect steady growth across education, gigging, and home use alike.

MR: Keep an eye out for news about new releases at NAMM this year. We will have some exciting electronic drum-related announcements to make in 2026.

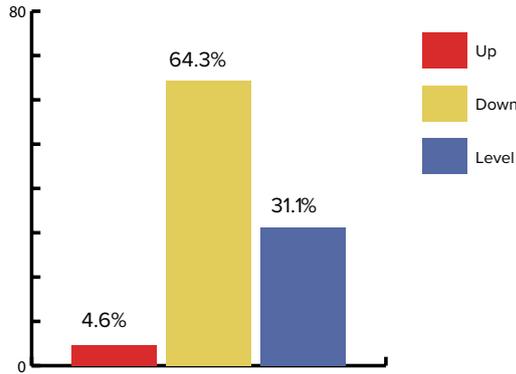
JB: At the high end of the market, there is a lot of interesting technology from wireless triggering systems, module expansion capabilities for more versatile sound libraries, wood shell electronic drums, and more. Alesis will continue to look at these trends and customer acceptance to feed into our product strategy to ensure Alesis continues to offer what customers want.

With an intermediate to advanced player, ability to connect with multiple devices, additional outputs, and features that make it easy to record or aid in live performances are strong draws for this audience.

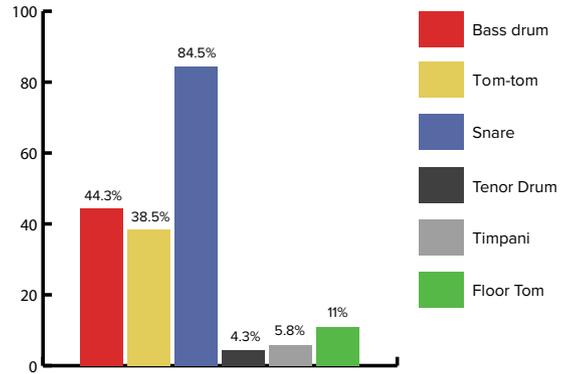
Product Marketing Manager, Drums, Yamaha Corporation of America

HEAD-ON DRUM HEAD SALES IN 2025

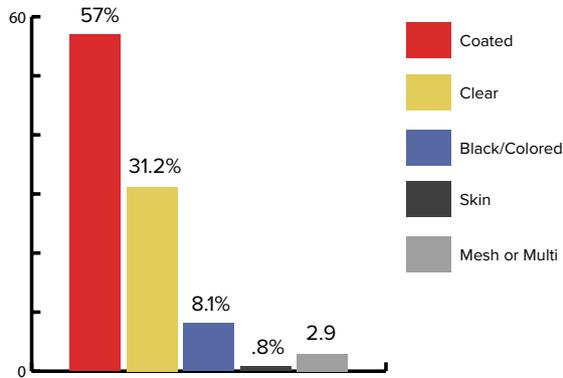
Sales of drum heads, when compared to this time in 2024, are...



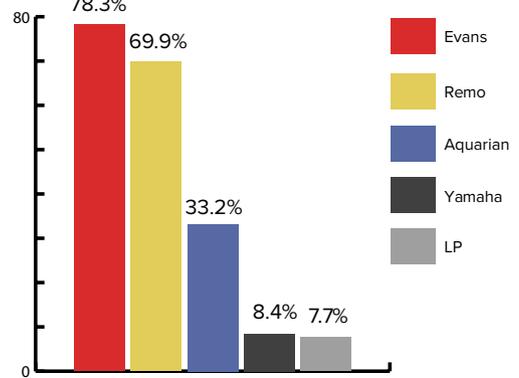
What types of drum heads sell the most at your store?



What specific head types are the hottest sellers for your business?



What brand are generating the most profit for your operation?



What trends have you been noticing with respect to drum head sales? Have you been observing any issues relating to supply chain challenges or tariffs?

“ Tariffs appear to be effecting drumstick and string prices, more than drum head prices, from what I see at this point anyway. Both of which are manufactured in the U.S. So I can't say I completely understand, other than everything is just going to go up 10% or more across the board. Just like everything went up during covid because of supply chain problems, which the chain sorted itself out over time, prices remained at the inflated levels overall. So now everything goes up again from there. It will be interesting to see what the tipping point for customers will be on all of this. It's already there in some categories. ”

— Rusty Olson | Rockhaus | Milwaukee, Wisconsin

“ Our snare drum display features multiple types of heads so our customers can try them out and choose which one may be best for them. Our department manager is eager to explain the differences as well. ”

— Jerry Vesely | Vesely Music | Parowan, Utah

“ People are waiting longer to replace heads. ”

— Mike Bradshaw | GarageBand Music | Utica, Michigan

“ Drummers are starting to gravitate back toward a classic sound, Heads that produce a “vintage” tone are picking up. ”

— Dan Patterson | Patterson's Music | Fort Payne, Alabama

“ Sales are up. We're seeing increasing interest in Pre-packaged tom sets, and Evans is leading the charge with their snare tune-up packs. ”

— Shane Kinney | Drum Center of Portsmouth | North Hampton, New Hampshire



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MAXWELL'S HOUSE OF MUSIC

- 'WE CREATE MUSICIANS!'

By Christian Wissmuller

Mark Maxwell purchased his family's decades-long family-operated music store in Jeffersonville, Indiana, from his parents in 2011, who had established the store about 45 years ago with locations in Louisville, Kentucky. After acquiring the Indiana business, Mark rebranded it under the new name, Maxwell's House of Music.

In 2019, Maxwell welcomed Whitney McNicol as a business partner. He attributes Whitney's business and finance expertise to the continued success of Maxwell's, adding, "She helps figure out ways for us to pay for our crazy ideas!"

Maxwell's House of Music is a recent recipient of the NAMM Top Dealer Award. The 12,500-square-foot facility features a NAMM award-winning retail showroom, along with Maxwell's Music Lab, also a NAMM award-winning innovative music education program. The team consists of about 23 music teachers, and 12 people whose titles include Sales, Social Media Coordinator, Community Liaison, Education Coordinator, and Dream Weaver.

Among the offerings at Maxwell's are a wide variety of music instruments and gear, repairs, lessons, installations, and their affiliated 501(c)(3) called The Max Music Well. This foundation works to make quality music education available to the community, especially to those who may not otherwise have access to this type of music programming at a reduced rate, or even free, depending on circumstances (a \$350 value per 10-week session).



CC Cardenas, Kat Witten, Mark Maxwell, Whitney McNicol

In March 2024, the brand launched a social media campaign called "If You're In A Band," which successfully attracted thousands of new followers and expanded the brand's online community. From there, came a new relationship with an organization based in Texas called Music 4 Life Blues 4 the Soul that is making a huge impact in the lives of 10 music students at Maxwell's House of Music.

Mark recently spoke with *MMR* to share some insight on the store's many community-based, altruistic initiatives.

Can you talk about launching the "If You're In A Band" series last year? What was the catalyst and the goal?

Mark Maxwell: Early last year, I decided that I just wanted to talk straight to musicians with social media posts called "If You're In A Band". I felt that overall, musicians have to find their own way in this business, and it's really hard. I have had a life full of experiences in the music retail and performance industry that many don't have. I literally grew up in my parents' music store, but also, I have been a gigging musician since I was a kid.

I just walked into the store one day and had one of the staff members video me. I said, "If you're in a band..." and I started giving advice about how to make sure you're paid what you're worth for making music. That first post ruffled a lot of feathers because I was exaggerating a bit when I talked about how we should all be paid like surgeons because we have spent an equal amount of time in learning our craft.

That created so much engagement right from the word go. It was clear to me that musicians wanted to talk, to share their own experiences, and to ask questions. I continued with multiple posts per week for the entire year.

Our phone was blowing up. People started sending me their CDs, and band t-shirts...it's been great. I really love it when they visit the store. Some stop by as they are traveling through the area, but others make Maxwell's House of Music their destination. Those visits are an incredible compliment! We have had hundreds of visitors, from all over the world, all prompted by "If You're In A Band."

The series ultimately connected you with the founder of Music 4 Life, Blues 4 The Soul and Kat Witten. Who initially contacted who and what were those early exchanges about?

One of the calls I got was from an interesting guy named Chris ("CC") Cardenas, who is the vocalist/guitarist of the band "CC Blues Factory" out of California. In his deep, gravelly voice, he said, "Hey Mark, it's CC. Kat Witten and I want to visit your place. We want to help." They flew in the day after Thanksgiving, and we literally talked for hours about music, community, and how music can make a positive difference in people's lives. Kat explained her goal with Music 4 Life, Blues 4 the Soul and the Will Witten Scholarship honoring her late husband's life and love of music. It was obvious that our shared connection to music, and through music, was about to create an amazing relationship. Since then, we have had multiple meetings about how Music 4 Life Blues 4 the Soul and our foundation, The Max Music Well, can work together. Trust me when I say there's something really big coming soon that could positively impact music education nationwide!



Kat Witten

This all, of course, ultimately culminated with the donation to the Max Music Well Foundation and resultant scholarship — Please share a little about Will, the goals of the scholarship, and what the winners receive.

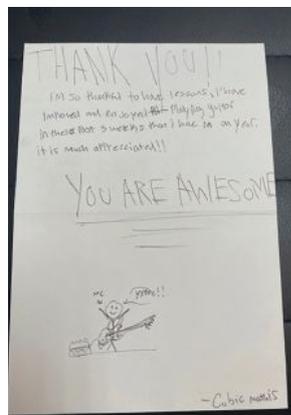
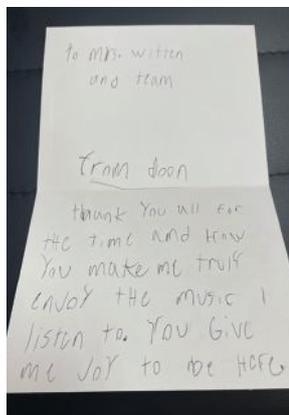
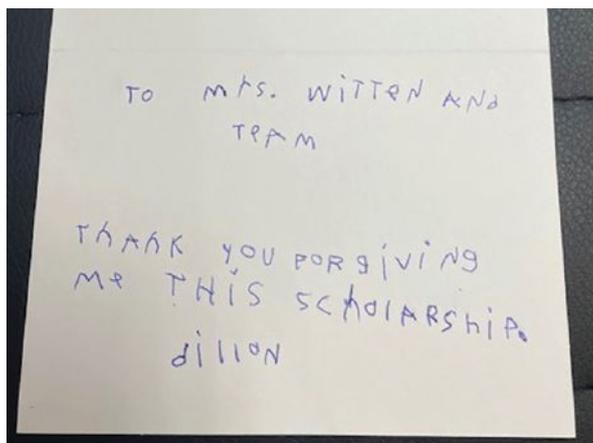


1SG Will Witten was a highly decorated Army veteran who was also an avid guitarist; he understood the many benefits of music. I never knew Will, but when I talk to Kat about him, it's obvious what an amazing guy he was. It's because of Will's love of music that I'm even talking to you about how music knows no limits...from Texas and California to Jeffersonville, Indiana!

The 10 scholarship winners receive one year of free music education, in the form of weekly lessons. For the first 8 months, these lessons are private lessons. During the last 4 months, the 10 kids are going to be put into bands. If the 10 kids didn't have instruments, they were also given an instrument – either a guitar, bass, keyboard, or drums. If the student already has an instrument, they will receive extra music lessons to keep it balanced.

When were the 2025-26 winners announced?

All 10 of the scholarship winners were notified earlier this summer and began their lessons in July.



Thank-you notes from the Will Witten Scholarship recipients

When the winners were announced, did you have any special events or gatherings to celebrate?

We thought a lot about the best way to celebrate their scholarship and decided that it would be best to save the big community event for the end of their year of lessons. We want to feature the students and their new skills. We will host a big concert that will be headlined by CC Blues Factory!

Earlier this summer, it was announced that applications for the 2026-27 iteration of the scholarship will be open on Maxwell's site next summer, "funding permitting" — are you currently looking for partners to help ensure sufficient funding? Individual donors? If so, how would interested parties get in touch?

Our foundation, The Max Music Well, needs as much financial assistance as we can get, as we are building several new community-based music education programs as we speak. Funding is needed to sustain these programs. People can

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go to our website to make a donation or call me to talk about some of the things we are working on. The site is: Max Music Well Foundation – Maxwell’s House of Music (<https://www.maxwellshouseofmusic.com/pages/charitable-foundation>).

Music 4 Life Blues 4 the Soul is in charge of the Will Witten Scholarship, and there’s more information about them at musicblues4life.com.

You can also learn more about the band CC Blues Factory at www.cdbluesfactory.com/.

Any further thoughts you’d like to share either about the scholarship or Maxwell’s House of Music, in general?



Maxwell’s Music Lab

Here at Maxwell’s, we have so many new things happening. Our affiliated foundation, The Max Music Well, is actively seeking funding and partners to support two major programs.

The first is our no-charge music education program called Maxwell’s Music Lab. This community program is for people of all ages who are beginners on guitar, bass, drums, or keyboards. They learn the basics of their instrument and then learn to play a song for a concert. It has been magical watching both kids and older adults participate in this program. Many times, the participants have convinced themselves they didn’t have the ability to make music. This program proves differently. There is pure joy filling the room during the final concert!

The other big focus of ours right now is our new program called “The Well.” A well symbolizes the endless cycle of giving and receiving. That’s exactly what our plan is. The Well is a community and collaborative workspace tailored for musicians, artists, and creatives of all levels. Slated to be up and running by October 4, 2025, The Well is a specially outfitted community space that includes writing space, an intimate performance stage, rehearsal space, and a podcast room. The interesting thing is that use of this space is based on a tiered membership plan. The net proceeds from all membership dues will go directly back into the foundation to fund free music education in our community. Plus, a member’s dues unlock exclusive benefits designed to enhance their creative journey.

Our tagline here at Maxwell’s House of Music is “We Create Musicians”... starting this program that directly supports our community’s musical goals is what makes sense to live up to that tagline!

If anyone would like to learn more about how to help support and sponsor this unique opportunity to support music programs, please reach me at Mark@MaxwellsHouseOfMusic.com!

Stay tuned for a HUGE announcement early January 2026!

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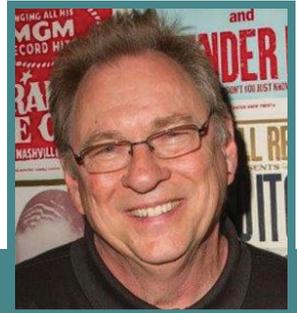
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EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

By Menzie Pittman ~ Author of *The New Musician*



“ As an independent retailer, you have 100% control over your artistic vision, and development of your creative undertakings. ”

What are the necessary mind-sets to succeed in today’s music business?

Rule Number 1: Expect the unexpected!

Whenever a curious retailer or a rising musician asks me this question, I always answer the same way. “Expect the unexpected!” The music business is a moving target, so the best mind-set for success in today’s music industry is to embrace that understanding.

It is also imperative to be clear on your personal definition of success. You must be a master of your craft. In the past it was enough for musicians to master a single instrument, and if you were lucky enough to be gifted with the ability to sing, you had more magnetism, and therefore, a greater chance of attracting recognition.

But in today’s music world, the standard expectation is that an artist can play multiple instruments and sing and even more. The industry now expects musicians to be proficient in numerous styles of music. i.e., the Jacob Collier or Michael League model.

The one exception might be for singer-songwriters; their burden is slightly different. They must have a “creative voice” as a writer, one that is unique, as well as the skill for writing songs that cut straight to the heart. It is also imperative that they have a unique persona. Interestingly, this rule applies to independent music businesses as well. We are the singer-songwriters of retail!

We could all probably agree that success means different things to different people. For some, sales and money are the metrics for success; for others it is influence. For the more creative types, the metric is the quality of their artistic expression. Lastly, for others the metric is peace of mind, knowing their intent is to leave the music business positively impacted by their efforts.

No matter what your definition of success is, as an independent retailer, you have 100% control over your artistic vision, and development of your creative undertakings. However, you don’t have any control over outside circumstances, and this is true in every aspect of our industry.

As much as we try to be prepared, we cannot predict the unpredictable; and this is the moment when you truly meet yourself. It is easy to be confident when things break your way, but true sailors are born when the winds and waters become threatening. Though there are many axioms that have earned the badge of trust through the years, my favorite one is one credited to Albert Einstein.

“Adversity introduces a man to himself.”

So, whether you are a business owner, a top-level employee, a busy performer, a starving artist, or a music teacher, you will collide with the unexpected, before the dance is over, like it or not.

Rule Number 2: Avoid distractions.

If you are like most in the music industry, you wear more than one hat. As a small business owner there is a good chance you will wear several hats. Although that’s a fun bragging right, the scenario creates both excitement and additional personal demands. Because all small business owners wear multiple hats, the chances of running into unexpected snares increase proportionately.

Common unexpected issues may include inconsistent cash flow, seasonal dips, equipment failures such as HVAC, inconsistent customer loyalty, shifting market trends, and on-line competition. Another biggie is the fact that more chain stores have entered the education space, which at one time was a dependable strong hold for small independent music stores.

Rule Number 3: Unique is the “Small Box” advantage.

Although the list of unexpected issues is long, at the same time there are genuine advantages to being a small independent music business. The most important advantage is that ownership has complete control of the vision, style, ambience, direction, and presentation of the business – all the things that make the business unique. And because competent musicians own most independent music stores, they can share a much deeper knowledge of music with customers; this expression may manifest through teaching, or in-depth knowledge about musical instruments.

Rule Number 4: Nothing beats unique!

Small music stores never have to ask permission to express their style. Therefore, they can interact with families and customers on a more personal level. One thing we will all agree on is the landscape of the music business is ever changing, so if you are in it, you already know there is no rest for the weary. And he who stands still, will be left behind.

It is my hope that we never lose the spirit of small dealers. In a way, we are like the songwriters who are the best kept secret in the recording business because they set the trends. What is better than being an independent trendsetter?

Drums & Percussion

Alesis Drums Introduces Nitro Ultimate Kit + Full Drum Ecosystem

Alesis® Drums, a leader in electronic drum kits, has announced the Nitro® Ultimate, a comprehensive nine-piece electronic drum kit engineered for ultimate playability and versatility, alongside the Nitro® Amp Pro, an 80-watt compact electronic drum speaker designed specifically for electronic drums. Designed to meet the needs of beginner to intermediate drummers, the Nitro Ultimate combines professional-grade features with intuitive functionality in a flexible, responsive setup suitable for any drumming style. Together, The Nitro® Ultimate and The Nitro® Amp Pro deliver a complete solution for practice, recording, and performance applications.

“The Nitro Ultimate and Nitro Amp Pro represent our commitment to providing drummers with professional-quality tools that inspire creativity and support musical growth,” said John Boudreau, director of Product Development, Alesis Drums. “We’re particularly excited about the new stand mounted hi-hat controller on this kit, which feels more realistic and comfortable capturing the more intricate nuances of hi-hat playing. It also allows you to use virtually any hi-hat stand you prefer. This new kit, coupled with the Nitro Pro Amp delivers a complete ecosystem that serves both aspiring drummers and experienced players looking for reliable practice, recording, and performance solutions.”

Nitro Ultimate: Professional Features in an Accessible Package

The Nitro Ultimate combines professional-grade features with intuitive functionality in a responsive setup suitable for any drumming style from beginner to intermediate. The nine-piece kit features an 8-inch mesh kick drum tower with kick pedal, a 10-inch dual-zone mesh deep snare with metal hoops, and three 8-inch dual-zone mesh toms with metal hoops. The kit’s standout feature is its 10-inch dual-zone hi-hat cymbal with stand-mounted controller, delivering authentic nuances on a traditional hi-hat stand (sold separately). Additionally, the kit includes one 10-inch dual-zone ride cymbal and two 10-inch dual-zone crash cymbals, all mounted on a rugged 4-post steel rack with locking clamps.

At the heart of the Nitro Ultimate is its advanced drum module, featuring 52 total kits (36 factory presets and 16 user-programmable options) and more than 640 professionally designed sounds encompassing drums, cymbals, percussion, and electronic elements. The included BFD Player software with Dark Mahogany Expansion Pack provides additional high-quality samples for enhanced sonic versatility. Modern connectivity options include Bluetooth® audio streaming for jamming along with songs or engaging with lessons, USB MIDI connection for virtual instruments and recording software, and comprehensive I/O including dual TRS main outputs, stereo headphone output, and auxiliary input.

Key Features of the Nitro Ultimate Include:

- 9-piece electronic drum kit with pro-grade components
- 8" mesh kick drum tower with kick pedal
- 10" dual-zone mesh snare with metal hoops
- Three 8" dual-zone mesh toms with metal hoops
- 10" dual-zone hi-hat cymbal with stand-mounted controller (works with traditional hi-hat stands)
- One 10" dual-zone ride cymbal and two 10" dual-zone crash cymbals
- Rugged 4-post steel rack with locking clamps
- Advanced drum module with 52 total kits (36 factory + 16 user programmable)
- Over 640 professionally designed sounds (drums, cymbals, percussion, electronic elements)
- Includes BFD Player software, plus the Dark Mahogany expansion pack for free
- Connectivity: Bluetooth® audio streaming, USB MIDI, dual TRS main outputs, stereo headphone output, auxiliary input
- Nine trigger inputs via DB25 + two additional 1/4" TRS inputs
- Dimensions: Width 50" x Height 48" x Depth 40" (assembled)
- Weight: 58lbs lbs., 26.3 kg
- Power: 9V DC, center-positive

Nitro Amp Pro: Powerful Amplification for Electronic Drums

Designed to solve the isolation problem of headphone-only practice, the Nitro Amp Pro complements the Nitro Ultimate by providing a clear, powerful monitoring solution that helps drummers move beyond headphones — delivering the volume and clarity needed for home practice, rehearsals, small performance venues, and even lesson environments. This compact electronic drum speaker delivers 80 watts of drum-amplifying power through an 8-inch woofer that provides accurate low-end response and a 2.5-inch tweeter for brilliant high-end clarity.

The Nitro Amp Pro features Bluetooth® audio streaming with separate volume control, allowing drummers to wirelessly play backing tracks while maintaining independent control over drum and music levels. Two “jam-ready” line inputs make it easy to connect your kit and an additional instrument—perfect for playing along with a teacher, rehearsing with a friend, or layering your own tracks—while the 2-band equalizer offers flexible tonal shaping. The compact floor monitor form factor makes it ideal for home practice spaces, rehearsal rooms, and small performance venues. With its combination of wattage, Bluetooth® streaming, balanced inputs, and wedge design at an accessible price point, Nitro Amp Pro stands apart from house-brand competitors and delivers unmatched value for drummers.

Key Features of the Nitro Amp Pro Include:

- 80 watts of drum-amplifying power
- 8" woofer + 2.5" tweeter
- Max SPL: 102 dB; Frequency Response: 45Hz – 18kHz
- Bluetooth® audio streaming with separate volume control (range up to 10m)
- Two 1/4" TRS balanced line inputs for drums + an additional instrument
- 2-band equalizer for easy bass and treble adjustment
- Compact, wedge-style floor monitor form factor
- Dimensions: 13.92" x 12.96" x 12.72"
- Weight: 19.07 pounds
- Power: 80 watts, 100-240 VAC (50/60Hz)

Integrated Learning Experience

The Nitro Ultimate includes a comprehensive software bundle featuring a 90-day subscription to Drumeo’s interactive lessons and the BFD Player software along with an additional, free Dark Mahogany Expansion Pack. This combination of hardware, amplification, and educational resources creates a complete learning and performance ecosystem for developing drummers.

From Practice to Performance: One Integrated Solution

Electronic drummers often face two challenges: kits that don’t feel authentic, and amplification that doesn’t deliver beyond headphones. The Nitro Ultimate and Nitro Amp Pro directly address these needs. Together, they offer an authentic playing experience, professional connectivity, and the ability to move from bedroom practice to rehearsals gigs and lessons—all in one integrated ecosystem.

Availability and Pricing

The Alesis Drums Nitro Ultimate electronic drum kit is available now for \$899 USD, €849.99 and £719.99 through authorized dealers and select music retailers worldwide.

The Alesis Drums Nitro Amp Pro is available now for €149.99 and £124.99 through authorized dealers and select music retailers in all regions outside the U.S. only.



Slingerland Launches Radio King and Studio King Outfits, Plus Spare Parts

The Slingerland Drum Company announces the launch of the Radio King™ Outfit and Studio King™ Line, plus a selection of spare parts and accessories.

The first outfit of Radio King in decades continues the rich tonal legacy of its predecessors and benefits from both modern precision craftsmanship and build. The U.S.A.-built 3-ply shells are constructed with a mahogany-poplar-mahogany formula for a punchy attack with a buttery feel, warm tonality, and lush resonance. They are finished with authentic 30° rounded bearing edges, reinforced with steam-bent solid maple re-rings, and the classic Radio King cloud badge. The nickel-plated hardware includes “Stick Saver” hoops, classic Beavertail lugs, isolation tom mounts, and internal mufflers, standard in both snares and mounted toms.

Based on the original iconic configurations, the new Radio King series of drums offers twelve shell pack choices, featuring bass drums in sizes 18" to 24" and toms from 10" to 18". The outfits are available in four finishes, two wraps: White Marine Pearl and Black Diamond Pearl, and two lacquers: Black & Gold and Blue & Silver.

Inspired by the popular 1970s 5-ply shell, which became a workhorse of the studio era, the Studio King Outfit has a 5-ply maple-poplar construction. This combination of woods produces a sonically focused attack, warm, versatile tone, and medium resonance: these drums thrive under a studio microphone. Crafted in Taiwan by a trusted, long-term partner, these heritage-influenced drums feature the company’s hallmark 30° rounded bearing edges, Nickel-plated hardware, incorporating “Stick Chopper” hoops, classic Beavertail lugs, road-ready folding bass drum spurs, isolation tom mounts, and a newly designed oval badge.

The new Studio King drums range offers eight shell pack configurations, 18" to 22" bass drums, and 10" to 16" toms. Del Norte Black, Lunar Blue, Ventura Sand,

and Royal Crimson are the four high-gloss lacquer finish options.

Both are perfect for touring, recording, or passionate enthusiasts with their timeless tone and modern playability.

In addition, especially for enthusiasts and collectors, Slingerland introduces a new range of spare parts and accessories for both vintage and modern Slingerland drums. Perfectly suited for restoring original drums to their former glory or handy spare parts for the new Oxnard-era Slingerland drums, the new parts catalog includes throw offs, beavertail lugs, spurs, tension rods, internal mufflers, snare wires, Nickel over steel “Stick Saver” and “Stick Chopper hoops”, drum keys, and logo drumheads.

New Slingerland artists have been talking about the drums, and these include John ‘JR’ Robinson, Grammy Award winner and one of the most recorded drummers, who said “From the legendary Radio King snare drums to the timeless three- and five-ply shells, Slingerland embodies a sound that doesn’t just speak — it sings. These drums carry stories, traditions, and an authenticity that resonates deeply with anyone who embraces this American icon. I’m thrilled to rejoin the Slingerland family and continue sharing its legacy with the world.”

Eric Hernandez (Bruno Mars) commented, “The Slingerland drum sound is classic and timeless. The iconic drum company is back like they never left, and I’m thrilled to be a part of it!” John Sparrow (The Violent Femmes) added, “The wait is over, not just for me but for the music world. Slingerland is synonymous with quality, sound, and rich in history. Slingerland was the sound of Gene Krupa, the first drum hero. Now Slingerland will be the sound for the next generation’s Gene Krupa. The legacy continues.” Sarah Jones (Harry Styles) said, “The new kits have a classic look and feel with modern road worthy durability. They sound great, I’m so happy to be joining the Slingerland team.”



Piano & Keyboard

Casio Expands Celviano Digital Piano Line with Elegant New Gray Beige Finish

Casio has announced that three of its acclaimed Celviano digital piano models — the AP-750, AP-S450, and AP-S200 — will each feature a stunning new Gray Beige finish.

Currently offered in Black, Rosewood, and White, Casio’s Celviano line now adds Gray Beige — a warm yet sophisticated neutral that complements any décor and brings timeless elegance to living rooms, music rooms, and multipurpose spaces.

Casio’s Celviano series has established a reputation for outstanding sound quality, dependable craftsmanship, and advanced technology. From the finely textured simulated ebony and ivory keys to the carefully sampled Hamburg, Berlin, Vienna, and New York Grand Piano Tones, Celviano pianos bring world-class music-making into the home with elegance and sophistication.

“For decades, Casio has brought music into people’s lives,” said Brian Piccolo, Senior GM of Sales for Casio’s Electronic Musical Instruments Division. “The new Gray Beige finish makes Celviano pianos both exceptional instruments and stylish additions to any home.”

Pricing and Availability

The Gray Beige finish became available October 7, 2025, for the following models at leading music retailers nationwide and at CasioMusicGear.com:

- AP-750 (Black, Rosewood, White, Gray Beige) — \$3,399 MSRP
- AP-S450 (Black, Rosewood, White, Gray Beige) — \$1,999 MSRP
- AP-S200 (Black, Rosewood, White, Gray Beige) — \$1,499 MSRP



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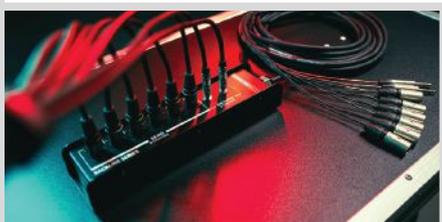
New Drop Snakes Slither into Gator Cableworks' Backline Series

Gator Cableworks has added drop snakes to its Backline Series, expanding the professional cable collection with rugged, flexible solutions for stage and studio applications. The new additions include five models, offering both two-way signal management with return channels and high-capacity input options without returns.

The Backline Series drop snakes include three models featuring six XLR input sends and two TRS return channels, available in 20-foot (GCWB-DS6X2-20), 30-foot (GCWB-DS6X2-30), and 50-foot (GCWB-DS6X2-50) lengths. Designed for live signal routing and studio recording applications, these configurations support microphone sends and return feeds, such as monitor mixes, click tracks, and other essential audio sources. Each model is built with 99.99% oxygen-free copper conductors and double shielding for clear, noise-free audio transmission.

Two additional models, the GCWB-DS8X0-25 and GCWB-DS8X0-50, feature eight XLR input sends with no return channels. These snakes provide localized connection points for microphones and instruments, helping organize cabling in drum setups, small stage areas, and studio applications focused solely on capturing audio signals.

All models feature a low-profile inline steel box that provides quick access to connections while minimizing stage clutter. Locking XLR connectors provide secure, noise-free operation, while numerically labeled connectors on both the box and fantail allow for fast setup and organization. Each drop snake is backed by a Limited Lifetime Guarantee, highlighting Gator Cableworks' commitment to lasting performance.



EHX Bender Royale Germanium Fuzz

Sitting between the original vintage vibes of a 2-transistor fuzz and the over-the-top wall of sonic mayhem that is that 4-transistor Big Muff is the humble 3-transistor Tone Bender-style of fuzz known for being punchy with a unique sonic texture. The EHX Bender Royale is Electro-Harmonix's new take on the Germanium MkIII version of the circuit with a ton of added flexibility to bend your tone even further. From thick and smooth to brash and spitty, the Bender Royale has a range of sounds all its own.

Housed in EHX's Nano-sized chassis, the Bender Royale builds on a standard control set of VOL, FUZZ and BASS (originally Treble <-> Bass) controls for an authentic, familiar feel. The FAT switch adds bass and low-mids for tonal thickness. Use the BIAS knob to dial in a sweet spot for the perfect amount of rip or leave the circuit starving for voltage. Switching the CLIP switch from Ge to LED re-biases the final germanium transistor to produce a rougher edge on the fuzz tone. The TREBLE control is an active treble shelving filter used to rein in high frequencies. The BLEND knob mixes between your wet and dry signals and can be especially useful for maintaining clarity when using bass or stacking other drive pedals.

The Bender Royale employs mechanical relay true-bypass switching on a soft footswitch with selectable latching/momentary functionality. Tap the footswitch for normal latch switching function or press and hold for momentary blasts of fuzzy goodness.

The EHX Bender Royale comes equipped with a standard EHX 9 Volt power supply. It is available now and features a U.S. Street Price of \$149.



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"It gives me the opportunity to play in tune in any situation. The tone is beautiful and its durable construction seems like it will last a lifetime." Sherman Iby, Jazz of Lincoln Center Orchestra

CAD Audio Launches the AS12 Acoustic Shield for Superior Sound Isolation

CAD Audio, a trusted leader in professional and consumer audio for over 90 years, announces the release of the AS12 Acoustic Shield, a versatile, foldable acoustic enclosure designed to provide superior sound isolation for vocalists, podcasters, voice-over artists, and content creators.

The AS12 delivers an affordable and effective way to control room reflections, reverberation, and unwanted noise in both professional studios and home setups. Its innovative five-panel folding design allows for mounting on either a desktop surface or a microphone stand, giving users maximum flexibility across recording environments.

"The AS12 is all about accessibility and performance," said Paul Jenkins, vice president

of CAD Audio. "Whether you're a professional engineer or a content creator working from home, this shield helps you achieve a cleaner, more controlled sound without breaking your workflow - or your budget."

The AS12 joins a lineup of recently launched CAD Audio products built for professional-grade performance and value:

MH500 Closed-Back Studio Headphones - High-fidelity performance with exceptional clarity and accuracy, ideal for recording, mixing, and everyday listening.

E150 Large Diaphragm Condenser Microphone - Captures vocals and instruments with remarkable detail and presence at an accessible price point.

PA28 Inline Preamp for Dynamic and Ribbon Microphones - Transparent, reliable gain for consistent sound quality.

WX1800GN UHF Wireless Gooseneck Microphone System - A versatile, high-value wireless solution for today's challenging RF environments.

WX1800HH True Diversity UHF Wireless Handheld Microphone System - Featuring auto-scan and IR sync for easy setup and reliable performance.



On-Stage Endpin Anchor Strap for Bass/Cello Delivers Essential Instrument Stability

On-Stage, a leading supplier of music instruments and accessories, and brand of The Music People, has released the CBS2000 Endpin Anchor Strap for Bass/Cello, a stabilizing accessory that helps players keep their cello or bass securely in position, providing confidence and peace of mind that allows them to focus on playing their best.

This accessory is used while playing seated and solves the problem of the instrument's endpin sliding away on hard floors. The metal ring at one end attaches to the leg of the player's chair or stool and the endpin is held in place by the anchor at the other end. The cylindrical endpin slot fully surrounds the endpin, keeping it firmly in place. Plus,

nonslip rubber padding on the slot's base increases traction and protects flooring from scratches.

A slide buckle allows musicians to adjust the length from 16.5" to 30" so they can dial in their optimal playing position.

With its heavy-duty nylon, metal, and impact-resistant-plastic construction, this anchor strap delivers long-lasting, safe, stable support for upright stringed instruments. And its classic black finish unobtrusively blends into any stage, recording-studio, or live-stream setup for a professional presentation.



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