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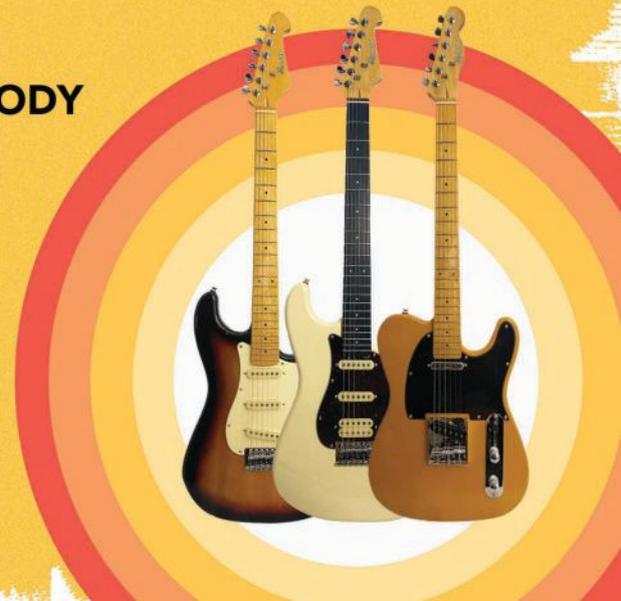
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MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

FEATURES

Vol. 182 SEPTEMBER 2023 No. 9

Spotlight

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MMR touches base with Riversong Guitars founder Mike Miltimore to discuss his lifetime in the MI industry, the evolution of the Riversong brand, the recent distribution partnership with Peavey, and plans for the future.

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Dealer Survey

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As the overall durability of gig bags improves, that lower-cost option remains a favorite with players, but not by much with nearly 45 percent (43.7%) of guitarists and bassists opting for the greater security and protection provided by hard-shell cases. MI retailers chime in on this and other present-day trends impacting this market segment.

2023 Holiday Buying Guide 22

This winter's holiday season will be here before you know it and now is the time to stock up on the hottest instruments and musical gear! MMR outlines new and notable product introductions across a wide array of price ranges in this year's Holiday Buying Guide.

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By
**Christian
Wissmuller**

The Undeniable Power of Live

Per a recently published report from The Brainy Insights (a somewhat silly name, I'll grant you, but a trusted resource), the global MI market is poised to expand from \$11.8 billion in 2022 to \$16.17 billion by 2032, at a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 3.2 percent during the next decade.

That modestly healthy growth rate is being driven, in large part, by a return to live performances, post-pandemic. While many are discussing and struggling with navigating what's commonly being termed "the new normal," this report suggests that we may actually be seeing a return to "the old normal," in that respect – a welcome boost and a decided shift in behaviors from the past few years:

"The growth and development within the music industry is anticipated to have a positive impact on the market growth. Live performances persist to be an essential aspect of the music industry. Live music experiences are cherished by audiences worldwide, whether it's a rock concert, a symphony orchestra or a solo recital. Amateur and professional musicians seek high-quality instruments to deliver mesmerizing performances that resonate with their listeners. This need for live-performance instruments encourages innovation in instrument design, amplification, and sound projection technology."

An eagerness to get out of the house, attend shows, and perform live music in the post-COVID world is fairly unsurprising given the confining realities of lockdowns and is certainly good news for the MI industry, venues, and all related business ventures.

One person who has long understood the unique appeal and vital importance of providing spaces for live music performance is "Small Business Matters" columnist Menzie Pittman. A decade ago, Pittman and his team at Contemporary Music Center in Virginia took on the ambitious task of launching an in-store club, @4410. In the subsequent years, the venue has hosted numerous open mic nights, song writing classes, master classes, and recitals. These opportunities for musicians of all ages to listen to and perform music together have been fundamental in fostering a sense of community and enhancing interest in the act of learning and making music. It was by no means a sure thing, however.

"By most standards, it was a very risky proposition because it meant committing to an idea that was different from the industry's norm," Pittman shares on page 21 of this issue. "Resources had to be redirected to an untried and un-proven proposition, but if our instincts proved right, we could have a huge impact on the local music industry. @4410 took a full year to build, and most folks thought we were crazy – and in some ways they were right."

The gamble has paid off, however, with @4410 now a thriving and essential part of CMC's business model. Beyond that, Pittman has seen this undertaking yield truly impressive results for the program's alumni. In addition to former staffers engineering records for the likes of Taylor Swift and past students going on to open their own music schools, some – such as Snarky Puppy founder Michael League – occasionally return to their old digs for impromptu performances. "We think it's fair to say that @4410 has proven to change lives in a very positive way allowing more students to experience the joys of participating in live performances, and the ability to hone their music skills in front of a live audience," offers Pittman. "You can't do that online!"

You certainly can't!

Here's to a robust return to live performances and to the inspired folks in MI retail, such as Menzie Pittman, who understand the great value of those musical events – in profound ways that go beyond simply what can be monetized (although that profitable byproduct surely doesn't hurt)!

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traderegrets

William (Bill) Bartolini, renowned electronics and bass pickups innovator, has passed away at the age of 84.



The sad news was first shared on the Bartolini Pickups Facebook page: "With heavy hearts and sadness, we must announce the passing of one of the legends in the musical instrument industry. An innovator and creator to whom many owe so much. Generous and a mentor, he launched many successful careers over a span of 50 years."

Bartolini launched the Hi-A brand of pickups in 1973, later evolving into the world-renowned "Bartolini" brand in 1978.

Betty Sue Meyer, vice president and co-founder of Meyer Music, passed away on August 23.



Betty and her husband – and fellow school educator – Ted, launched Meyer Music in March 1966, with the business' first storefront in Blue Springs, Missouri. In subsequent decades, additional locations were added in Overland Park, Kansas and Kansas City North, Missouri and many Meyer family members joined the Meyer Music team. Betty Meyer served as an NASMD board member for nearly 50 years and was a former NAMM board member.

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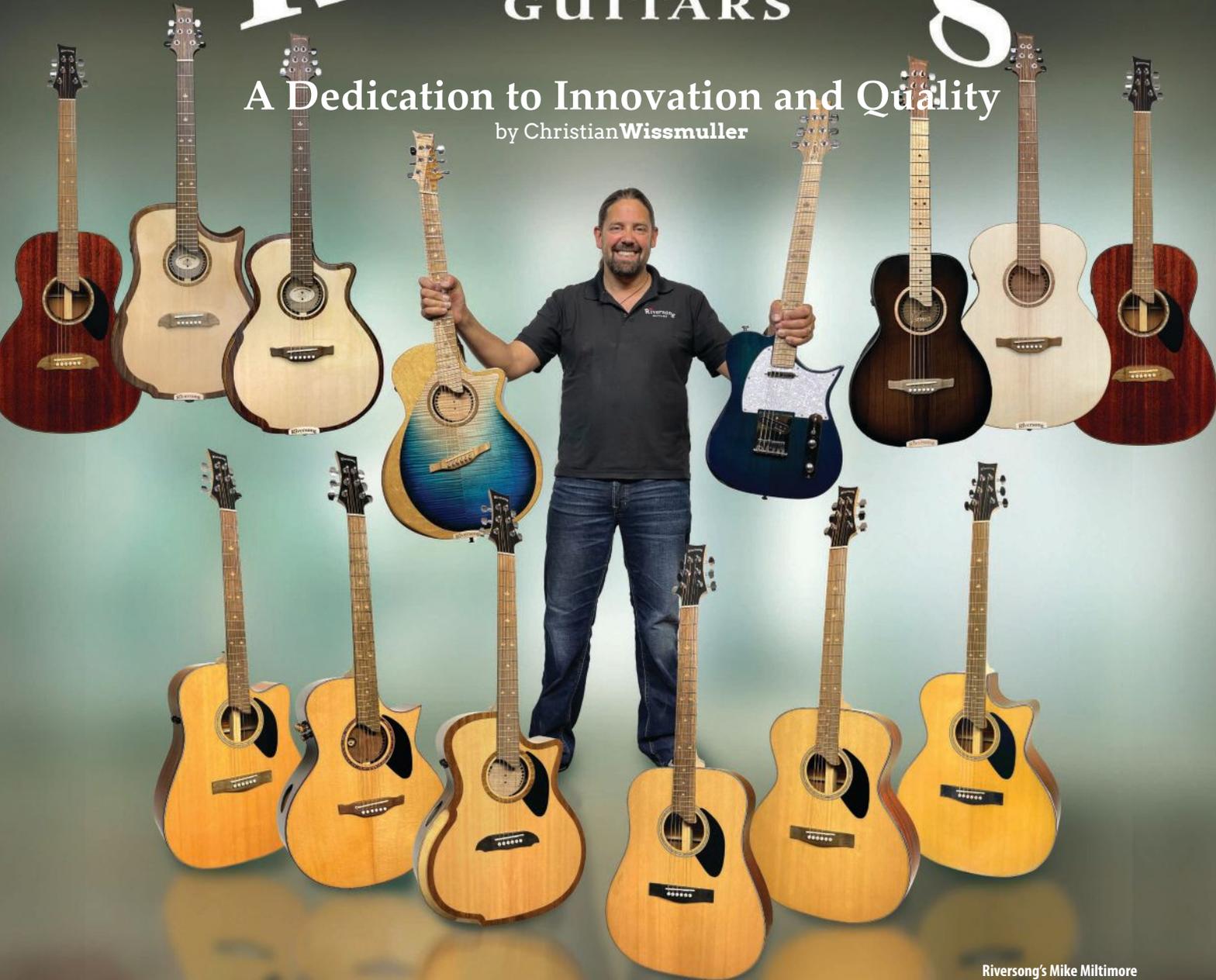


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Riversong GUITARS

A Dedication to Innovation and Quality

by Christian Wissmuller



Riversong's Mike Miltimore

Innovative Canadian guitar manufacturer Riversong Guitars has been hitting well above its weight since launching in the early 2000s, earning a number of awards and accolades (including the 2022 *MMR* Dealers' Choice Award for Acoustic Guitar of the Year for the River Pacific P2P) and being embraced by high-profile players and hobbyists alike.

We recently caught up with founder Mike Miltimore to discuss his lifetime in the MI industry, the evolution of the Riversong brand, the recent distribution partnership with Peavey, and plans for the future.

The Riversong Guitars website notes that you grew up, "in the music business with your dad, Lee." What specifically does

Lee do in the industry and how were you first brought into the fold?

Well, I've really done all of this on the shoulders of my dad. My dad, Lee, started in the music industry in the early '70s as an electronics tech repair person. He would travel all throughout the interior of British Columbia repairing sound systems and organs and customizing people's guitars. And in the early '80s, he opened up his first kind of real location, basically, that was a storefront that sold PA equipment here in Kamloops. It's in interior British Columbia, just outside of Vancouver.

I was manipulated from a very early age to work in the family's business [laughs]. I've actually never had a different job than what I'm doing right now, which is kind of weird.

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Not at all! That's awesome.

Yeah, I took full advantage of the opportunities that I had with my dad having a music store. From pre-teen years, I would start taking apart guitars and make, like, an auto parts place for guitars. You'd come in and we'd have all the different buttons and different tuning gears.

You were doing mostly repairs?

Yeah, a lot of repairs of guitars. It was the '80s, too, so we were also building guitars. We'd take a neck from here and a body from here... Floyd Rose and Kahler tremolos were getting popular then and we were installing those on a lot of guitars. We would retrofit hundreds of Strats with whammy bars, doing all sorts of things and new pickups, you know. At that time EMG pickups also started to become really popular. I don't know how many EMG pickup systems we installed on guitars – just that was what we did. And then we started to customize guitars and we'd get local artists to paint bodies that we'd buy from Warmoth or All-Parts or something like that. I cut my teeth in taking apart instruments for parts and doing repairs, setups, and under the tutelage of my dad.

Here we are talking about Floyd Rose locking systems and tremolos and EMG pickups. Now, that all sounds kind of like hard rock, metal. How did you go from those guitars to largely acoustic – in other words, what led to the founding of Riversong?

Well, there was a big period in between. I became basically a guitar tech. I also really started to get into sound engineering, doing sound for bands. So every prep rally that we'd have at our school, I was doing all the sound and setting up speakers – Even before I even had my driver's license, my dad would load up a bunch of speakers and that kind of stuff. He'd drop me off at a festival site for a weekend and I'd run the festival. And back then it was just the little kid running the speakers: "How cute!" But I really cut my teeth fast and hard in that world. So by the time I graduated, I went to college for Electronic Engineering Technology. And an opportunity came up actually to get the Peavey franchise for Kamloops.

Back then in the '90s, Peavey was a billion-dollar company and it was like Ford versus Chevy. You were either a Fender dealer or you were a Peavey dealer. And we've been a Peavey dealer since '83 and Hartley Peavey treated us super, super well. Basically, I grew up from the income that

"We're from the Pacific Northwest, all the fantastic woods that we have here... Guitars literally grow on trees around here!"



Premier of British Columbia David Eby with Mike Miltimore

we got from that franchise. I guess I was just about 19, just past 18, I moved to Kamloops and opened up my own location here under my dad's name, Lee's Music.

Was that the catalyst behind the launch of Riversong in the early-mid 2000s? What led up to that?

Yeah. So things got busy. I thought I was going to take over the world as a sound engineer and doing guitar tech work, that kind of a thing. We'd build our own PA systems, all that kind of stuff. And then in 2006, something happened. I hired a guy to help me do repair work because I was getting too busy with the audio-visual side of our business. And the other thing that happened was a movie came out called "The Pick of Destiny."

Oh, I remember!

We had, I don't know, 30 staff at the time. I invited everybody on staff to go see this movie, and I was gonna pay for their tickets. We went there, it was snowing, half of our staff couldn't get there because of the bus system went down. And we loved the movie. We thought, "This is the greatest movie ever!" And we were the only people in the theater. And because half our staff couldn't make it, I said, "We'll just go again tomorrow night."

And then coming out of the movie, I turned to the guy I had hired to help me with guitar repairs, who was a luthier that went to Summit Guitar Building School in Vancouver Island, and said, "We have to build guitars." It was like divine. So literally the next week I went out and we had just did a big sale with our audio-visual company. And I invested \$3,000 – that's all I had – in a band saw, a table saw, a jointer, and a planer, I think.

That's quite a lot for \$3,000. That's pretty damn good!

Oh, it was the cheapest tools you could buy. I still have a lot of them. We still use 'em to this day, actually.

Was it just you and this other tech, this luthier, operating out of part of Lee's Music?

Yeah. It was out of the back room of Lee's Music here. We were kind of building part-time. The other thing that happened, too, that was interesting was that Martin and Larrivee were being distributed by the same distributor in Canada and the sales rep wouldn't sell to us because there was a bigger music store in Kamloops and they had all the lines and we



Jeff Johnson (sales), Mike Miltimore, and Lee Miltimore

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had Peavey, Cort, Walden, and Yamaha back in the day. But nothing that was doing any kind of, like, “higher-end” guitars, right? So I decided that we would just start building our own because we’re from the Pacific Northwest, all the fantastic woods that we have here...

I was going to say: you’ve certainly got trees.

Yeah! [laughs] Guitars literally grow on trees around here! Then, I think I got onto a plane and somebody had a jacket on that said, “You’ll love our curly spruce.” And I was like, “Curly spruce?” I know spruce for being straight grain, right? So I phoned up Bow River Woods and I said, “Hey, tell me about this wood.” They go, “Well, it’s old-growth Sitka spruce from the northern tip of Vancouver Island. And we just lucked into a log. And we had some of this.” So I went down to the resaw mill that was in Chilliwack and just became friends with them immediately.

And they wanted to help us – and they did. And I wanted to help them. So we would do things like ask, “Tell me what your problems are.” And they’d say, “Well, you know, when you cut a block of wood for guitar tops, it’s, say, two inches thick. And as you slice it into pieces that you’re going to open up, and filet into a book match set, there’s always one little piece left over,” and they called it “orphan wood.” And it doesn’t matter if it’s maple, it doesn’t matter if it’s spruce – whatever it is that they’re cutting, it’s never exact. There’s always one little bit left over. So I said, “Well, show it to me.” So they showed me these pallets of orphan wood. I said, “Well, I’ll buy it all.”

So we started working on a new structure and a new way of building a guitar. One of those new ways was we put the kerfing onto the top instead of the sides back then. And that kerfing, we called it a kerfing unit. And it was basically orphan wood that we made two rings out of. And I also bought a CNC laser because I challenged the guy that I was building with. I said, “Let’s build two guitars exactly the same.” Because if you can’t do that right, then you can’t really manufacture, right? So we built two similar guitars. They were good, both nice guitars, but they weren’t exactly the same. So then I went out and I bought a CNC machine from a cabinet shop, basically. And underneath a pile of crap, there was this laser machine.

I said, “Well, what’s that?” “Well, it’s a laser.” And I thought, “I like tools...” It was broken. I convinced the seller to throw it in with the CNC machine I bought. So I dragged these two things home on a tow truck, flatbed tow truck. And I had to rebuild the laser and, as it turns out, the CNC machine because I didn’t have three-phase 380 volt. But I’ve got a mechanical mind and electronics background. So I figured all that out. And we started making these kerfing units, we called them, that would glue onto the underside of the guitar top.

So we were using waste wood from the sawmill. Another big problem that they had was at the time, Gibson was a big customer of theirs. And they would order only things that had so many

flames per inch and had to look a certain way. Well, it turns out that’s only 20% of the tree. The other 80% is really amazing touch of nature, beautiful wood. So I said, “Well, we’ll use that as long as it’s stable and structurally okay. Let’s go with it and we’ll call it Chilliwackian maple.” So if you Google that, you’ll see there’s all sorts of different spellings because I didn’t know how to spell it because I made the word up, and it comes from a town called Chilliwack.

So all of a sudden we had some really unique woods. And I’m going to the sawmills and I’d say things like, “Don’t show me anything that isn’t domestic. I know you’ve got some really nice Indian rosewood, I know you’ve got some pieces of Brazilian, I don’t care. All I want to see is domestic because that’s what I want to build my guitar company on.”

Canadian identity is such a big part of

your brand – there’s even a maple leaf in the Riversong logo. Can you talk about the importance of the Canadian heritage to the brand? And also, how did you come up with the name Riversong?

Me and a guy named Mike Trelenberg we were originally building the instruments and we needed to come up with a name. I didn’t want to use “Trelenberg,” but I also didn’t want to use “Miltimore Guitars” because I wanted people to rally behind and work with us on what we were doing. So we came up with a contest wherein you could win a free guitar if you came up with a name. A tattoo artist up in Clearwater came up with the name, and wrote a song called “Riversong.” When he came in to collect his prize, I said, “What did you have in your mind for the Riversong logo?” And he sketched it



Miltimore with custom shop “Double Eh” guitar



IBC Music’s Hap Kuffner, the late David Magagna of Riversong Guitars, Lee and Mike Miltimore of Riversong Guitars, and Iain Wilson of IBC Music

out. And that is pretty much exactly what the Riversong logo turned into.

That's amazing.

Yeah! We love the name Riversong. Kamloops actually is an Indian word that means meeting of two rivers. The North Thompson and the South Thompson flow into the Fraser River which goes out to the Pacific, so it just fit in so many ways.

Where is the current Riversong headquarters and how big is it?

Our corporate head office right now is in Kamloops and we've just expanded. We bought a houseboat manufacturing facility that adds another 10,000 square feet to what we're doing. And we're already sitting at about 10,000 square feet right here.

So you're doubling size basically?

Yeah. We've got about 10,000 square feet right now, and we've added an additional 10 in Sicamous. Is that a Canadian-sounding neighborhood or not?

That is about as Canadian as it gets. And how many folks do you have on staff?

Pre-COVID we had 30 staff. And then when COVID happened, we closed one of our manufacturing facilities because we knew we were trying to expand and it wasn't big enough to expand into. Throughout COVID we actually shrunk, but we also got really lean, which was so our store manager became a guitar builder. We reduced the hours of our store to 12 to 4 because in the mornings everybody goes downstairs and works on guitars. Between 12 and 4, a couple of us go upstairs and make sure that the music store is doing well. And then we're back downstairs building guitars. It's still Lee's Music and it's a fixture in Kamloops.

As the saying goes, "If you love what you do, you don't work a day in your life." It sounds like you have that in spades.

I absolutely do. I come home and say to my wife, who works there, too, "Well, we had a great day. Wasn't that fantastic?" And she's like, "What are you talking about? It was a horrible day, it was sheer pandemonium and craziness!" And I say, "I know, right?" [laughs]

Could you talk about the neck-thru design and active body system? What about those techniques and those approaches to building and design benefit Riversong guitars and make them unique?

When we started, we were building tra-



"Look Mom - we did it!" At the press conference marking Riversong's 2022 MMR Dealers' Choice Award win.

ditional guitars with dovetail neck joints and glued-on bridges, that kind of a thing. And over the course of 10 years, we kind of came up with 26 different reasons to buy and love Riversong guitars. And the reason why we did 26 was simply we wanted to do a six-month program of weekly press releases, basically. So we challenged our graphics department into making the 26 reasons, a nice poster for each one and individually that looks different. So when

you go onto our website, you can see all the differences.

Our biggest difference that we have is our neck-thru body system where the neck runs all the way through the inside of the guitar. That takes away the stress and allows us to actually have a body that floats around the neck system. So it can be really big with lots of sustain. By doing that, we realized a few things. One, it's a totally different neck joint from than anything else.

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And although in the early days we had the intonation technically in the right spot, it's actually got to be *out* about three, four millimeters on the bass side and almost perfectly in on the treble side. Otherwise, it doesn't compensate for you pushing down on the strings when you're playing or how hard you're playing. So I realized after that point, we need to make an adjustable system. So I started experimenting

with adjustable saddles. That didn't sound right. And then came up with the fact that we can actually have fine-tuning adjustments on the compensated saddle. We can also move the neck in and out of the pocket to do those precise adjustments for your playing style because if your string height is, you know, it's three or four millimeters high versus two millimeters, it's a totally different intonation scheme. We also realized that we're in an extreme environment here in Kamloops. It gets down to minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit and goes up to 122 degrees Fahrenheit.

So you get lots of compression and expansion.

Yes! It's insane what happens here and we get down to 5% relative humidity. So we're constantly humidifying throughout the winter months. You've got spruce, you've got usually mahogany going this way and mahogany going this way and it all expands and contracts at a different rate than what the neck does. It's different woods, it's open to the humidity and they're all different grain orientations. Of course, it's going to change. So it ended up giving you a 14-fret hump where your notes would die out up there. And we were constantly fixing that on all brands of guitars.

But we never had to fix that on electric guitars because it was all consistent, one piece underneath the fretboard. So when we designed our guitar, we made our neck to be basically one piece all the way through. It stops the expansion-contraction from being different and keeps that neck like an electric guitar, which meant we had to build custom truss rods that would go the entire length of the neck because most of the acoustic guitars had a truss rod that stopped at the 14th fret with a dummy head to the end, or the truss rod went from the 14th fret all the way up to the nut, but didn't go the full length of the neck.

We only use two-way adjustable truss rods on the guitars. Then we had another problem because I wanted to make an electric-style neck profile, something that was small and fast. Instead of doing what we were doing when we were hand-making guitars, which is literally whittle down the necks as close as we dare, we started to make 'em way too small and work our way up. We started to play with the curvature and the 3D aspect of the guitar while we were designing our neck.

And what we ended up with was basically a Martin string spacing – it's actually a Taylor nut. What we came up with was traditional string spacing of an acoustic guitar, but the depth is thinner, like an electric guitar. So it's really comfortable feeling and it's asymmetrical because a lot of builders, they'll use these spinning shaper bits and they'll put a popsicle stick underneath here to raise it up one or two millimeters and then run it through a shaper, which would be the same radius all the way through. But what we did because we designed it using our CNC machine, it's actually an asymmetrical shape that's put in to make a really, really fast, comfortable neck. And then we put a 16-inch radius on the fretboard, kind of like what Ibanez does with their flatter radius.

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So it's like a modern acoustic guitar neck. And then there's things like our skeletonized bracing.

Tell me more about that?

The idea with the bracing is to make it as light as you can and make it so that it's very responsive and very, very strong. As a builder, you try to imagine how these guitars are going to be used and where they're going to be played and what's going to happen to 'em. So these ones, I imagine somebody's gonna grab, love, go out and play, play in a studio, play at home, or play professionally on stage.

What's Riversong's "biggest" model?

The P2P River Pacific has been the staple of our line. We're lucky in the fact that we're kind of right at that sweet spot. \$1,399 U.S. is the price point of it and it's crazy how many we're selling, it's really exciting.

For an interested MI retailer who would want to partner with Riversong, what's the best way to go about doing that?

Our new factory is designed to really grow and expand very quickly. How we're doing our new guitars, we can really scale quickly which is fantastic. And something happened at the NAMM Show that's amazing: we partnered with Peavey Electronics. So Peavey is our new distribution partner. As I said before, I was brought up on the Peavey Kool-Aid of fewer, stronger dealers, innovation, price for everybody to be able to afford. All of those values that Peavey has been about for the last 40 years that we've known them, I've put into our guitar company. We're the first company that Peavey has ever distributed that they didn't own. So interested dealers can reach out to us, but really all they need to do is reach out to Peavey. Peavey's got the distribution model. We are shipping guitars to Meridian, Mississippi, as we speak. And they're also going to help us scale. You know, they've been there, they're doing it, they're a huge company worldwide. And what's really nice is, I don't know what I don't know, so being able to phone up and talk to Fred Poole [Peavey GM - Ed.] or Courtland [Gray, Peavey CEO - Ed.] and say, "Hey, this is what's going on, what do you think?" Or, "I'm having this problem. How can you help?" They could totally help.

It's great to have a partnership like that. Folks can expect to see you at the NAMM Show?

I'm so excited about the NAMM Show. I feel like my entire life has been going in parallel, all these different things, right up to the point where we did our first NAMM Show back in 2013. And I was all smiles, we were in the "Hall of Tears" downstairs back then [laughs], and we had our 10'x10' booth, and we had, I think, eight guitars. It was everything we could produce, we worked day and night. And the booth was just packed! The entire show, I had people in the aisles playing our guitars.

So, I love the NAMM Show, we'll be

there again this year. We're sorting out our booth space right now. We've got some really exciting things that are gonna be happening at NAMM, we'll be bringing out this guitar as well, the "stylist Dlx." I cheekily call it our Corvette Class Guitar, because it's actually a much smaller body than a Grand Auditorium. It's thin like a Grand Auditorium, it's got our new Riverside port on it. I call it a Corvette Class because it's small, and it's just really, really fast. And it's a great feeling guitar. We've got lots of exciting things coming up!

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A Steady Burn

Ukulele Sales in 2023

by Christian Wissmuller

Ukulele sales may not be quite as white-hot as a few years back, but it's not as if the diminutive instruments have fallen out of favor – far from it! We recently spoke with reps from four major brands in this arena to learn about trends in the market, popular models, and how effective MI retailers promote and display these fretted favorites.

The “uke craze” has been well covered in the pages of MMR before, but in 2023 – years after folks originally coined the term, describing what was sure to be a relatively short-lived fad — ukulele sales continue to be as robust as ever for many dealers and suppliers. What are your observations and explanations for the enduring enthusiasm for these instruments?

Rock Clouser: The popularity of the ukulele is not a phenomenon. In fact, the ukulele has experienced cyclical popularity since the 1920s, with very brief one-to-two year resurgences every 20 years or so. The ukulele has always had a relatively low entry price and offered easy playability for beginners. Of course, those factors remained steady for this latest surge. However, this latest popularity surge, (starting in the early 2000s), has been sustained due to the internet. This time the internet has allowed for a global online ukulele community to form, with social platforms sharing information and content created by everyday players. This electronic connection has helped the ukulele shed its “gimmicky” ste-

reotypes and become an accepted instrument of expression for people of all ages, from all countries, and any music genre.

Leanne McClellon: Ukulele continues to be popular and here to stay, though there has been a drop in sales because of the economy. Ukulele continues to be a popular choice for beginners because it is accessible and not intimidating. More schools incorporating ukulele into their programs have helped create more new players. Those who picked up the instrument years ago continue to play and expand their collections. The great thing about ukulele is it truly is the perfect instrument for all ages and a huge range in uses. It is extremely versatile.

Autumn Schear-Lembert: With popular bands and stars continuing to create hit after hit playing the ukulele, the ukulele has become as mainstream as guitar. At this point the facts have shown that the ukulele is not going anywhere. It is one of the easiest stringed instruments to learn to play and with its portable size and incredibly upbeat sound, it has stolen the hearts of musicians. Teachers delight when placing a ukulele into their students' arms. Little hands can make music and rhythms within minutes of trying. The ukulele is a serious instrument with a happy sound!

Billy Martinez: This enthusiasm can be attributed to many things. In the height of the pandemic, people were looking for ways to fill not only time but find new passions for their mental well-being, and many gravitated towards learning an instrument. With fewer strings and a smaller form factor, it can seem less daunting than picking up a guitar. Another explanation for this “craze” would be the ukulele's ability to cross genre barriers. The signature ukuleles we created in collaboration with Billie Eilish and Dhani Harrison is a testament to this. Billie's music is heavily pop leaning but she is still able to incorporate the ukulele on stage and in her recordings while Dhani's singer-songwriter roots are organically highlighted with the acoustics of the instrument. Overall we are happy to see this positive resurgence of interest in the ukulele category.

For your brand(s) what are currently the top-sellers?

LM: Consistently, our best sellers are excellent, high-quality entry level instruments. The mid to higher end also continue to be highly sought after. The ukulele market has continuous new-comers, however, we can't forget it is also very well established at this point – seasoned players want higher end instruments. At the top, we have some classics like our KA-15S and Learn to Play Soprano, some unique items such as the Mahogany Banjolele and the Solid



Rock Clouser, KHS String Instrument Brand Manager, Lanikai / Kohala ukuleles, H. Jimenez Latin Instruments, and Walden Guitars



Body Ukulele, as well as some in higher price points, such as the Solid Acacia and Solid Mahogany.

AS-L: We create custom designs in house. Our cheerful designs seem to steal the hearts of many and continue to be our top selling ukuleles. We put our hearts and souls into coming up with our own in house in designs. Two of our most popular models right now are the DDUK25 and DDUK19.

BM: Our top selling models for Fender are the Fullerton Series which incorporate our iconic body shapes in ukulele form. For Gretsch, the Roots collection does really well for us.

RC: Lanikai offers a wide range of instruments, but our top-selling models include our entry level series with upgraded features. In the mid-level we have strong support for our colorful quilted maple series in purple, blue, red, natural, and black. Seasoned players recognize the value of our upper levels too, such as our solid Cedar tops or all-solid Mahogany models with wood purfling and binding.

What features are players most looking for in today's market when considering a ukulele purchase?

AS-L: Players want to be wowed. They want to feel that they are getting something unique in the ukulele that they can't get from any other instrument out there on the market. However, they still seem to prefer the classic body of the original ukulele.

BM: In today's market, we believe players are looking for versatility. That is why we offer a variety of styles with a wide range of price points. For players that perform, a preamp feature that separates volume and tone controls are highly sought after. Built-in tuners are also featured on many of our ukulele products. Another feature that players appreciate are no-Tie bridges, which make string changes much more convenient. Whether it be with updated appointments or aesthetics, players want to be able to have options without compromising quality. We take feedback from our artists and the needs of the consumers seriously and ensure it's reflected in the new innovations we are introducing.

RC: Lanikai has seen an increase in players choosing our Fishman equipped electric instruments for the sound sculpting of an active pre-amp for live and recording purposes, as well as the convenient auto-muting built-in tuner. Also, our entry-level acoustic series have strong educational support due to their upgraded features such as open back tuners, wide neck profiles, NuBone nut/saddle, two strap buttons, and gig bags. Lanikai ukuleles have player-friendly features from entry to pro level models.

LM: Players are looking for quality instruments. They have been looking for unique items and those with incredible tone.

Have you been noticing any trends with respect to ukuleles – materials used, design/shape, price-point, et cetera?

BM: Fender's always been on point when it comes to meeting player needs by designing gear and instruments with players in mind while thinking ahead to create cool, innovative gear that can shake up the market. A great example of this would be the design of the new Fender Fullerton Ukulele Collection models. They are perfect for musicians looking to play a ukulele that embodies Fender's deep-rooted tradition and signature look while also providing an option that's a little different than the traditional ukuleles in the market.

LM: As the ukulele market matures, there have been more and more unique designs. There continues to be a sea of entry level product out there.

RC: Lanikai is celebrating its 20th year of producing all types of ukuleles. We closely monitor the market to deliver ukuleles that satisfy and anticipate the next trend. The market is diverse offering many ukulele types with widely varied prices, features and quality. A trend we notice is that players are beginning to avoid kitschy and trite designs. The ukulele market has done their research and knows what they want from their next ukulele. We see a strong trend towards well-made, feature and performance-driven instruments, even at the entry level. Players of all levels have learned that a ukulele brand stands for something, and Lanikai strives to deliver and exceed market expectations with every model at every level.

AS-L: Musicians want to stand out and their instrument of choice helps give them that visibility. Even from a far a beautiful binding with zebra wood catches the eye easily. Loving the way their instrument looks and sounds sets them up for musical paradise.

What are some "best practices" adopted by MI dealers who are particularly successful at marketing, displaying, and selling ukes?

AS-L: We've seen success from dealers that create a "community around the ukulele." Information on lessons, ukulele circles and festivals for ukulele enthusiasts. Also merchandising is such an important aspect to success. Our ukulele 3 tier tree display has been a consistent tool for dealers in their success with selling ukuleles. It saves space so great for the dealer and it shows off the ukuleles in an eye-catching fun way.

RC: The music market has changed due to production, demand, and supply chain issues. The ukulele market is in transition – but it is still there! Recently, there were over 200 ukulele brands in the U.S., but some less focused/established brands are quickly exiting the market. Dealers are becoming more selective and reducing the number of brands and models they offer. Players and dealers now have a better understanding of what they want and need in a ukulele. Successful dealers are providing a smaller, more focused ukulele selection of trusted ukulele brands that meet evolving market needs.

LM: Making sure that the ukuleles are in a place to be touched and played helps to create more sales. Stores with lesson programs tend to do well, because they get a built in audience, and new players into their store. Now that more stores are having events again, those who open their doors and host stay tapped into their communities. Stores with a modern website, as well as fun and interesting social media also connect better with customers.

Will you be attending and/or exhibiting at the 2024 NAMM Show? Are there other industry gatherings you plan to have a presence at in the coming months?

LM: Yes. NAMM continues to be important. While it is a chang-



Autumn Schear-Lembert,
Vice President, Amati's
Fine Instruments/Amahi
Ukuleles



Billy Martinez,
VP of Product for Squier
and Acoustic Division, FMIC

ing show, we have found it is beneficial to be present for our dealers, while also having a physical location to showcase new product as well as keep the buzz up around the brand. We are also tapped into festivals and will continue to be a force there.

AS-L: We are excited to continue exhibiting at the NAMM Show in 2024. We haven't missed a scheduled NAMM Show yet, and we continue to place a high value on meeting with dealers in person.

RC: We attend/sponsor some ukulele events, but have altered our strategy due to market changes. We have primarily chosen to motivate consumers to our brand through increased social media messaging across several platforms, enhanced content newsletters, consumer contests, artist, tutorial and product videos, etc. Exhibiting at NAMM 2024 is being considered, but not determined at this time.

BM: Out of necessity during COVID, Fender as well as the industry experimented with other ways to reach the dealer network and consumers and have found ways that are actually not only better for the brands but better for the industry. FMIC adopted a new virtual format back then that allows us to conduct more focused and in-depth networking and marketing efforts, which have also both reduced costs associated with NAMM and increased the time the company has with retailers. This format has been our primary driver, but we have begun incorporating more in-person showcases with dealers, as well as quarterly in-person events.

Do you have any recent or upcoming product introductions you'd like to share?

RC: We always have things going on at Lanikai! This year, we are putting a little fun in the mix and introducing a few "special run" models with limited quantities. These limited models will have special woods and/or features that are not offered in any standard series. Also, by market request, we are enhancing our popular quilted maple series and a new All-Solid baritone model will be announced soon.

LM: The Voyage Collection is one we are very proud of. We teamed up with an inspirational Māori cultural artist named Sam Mangakahia. He designed custom artwork, which we turned into a laser etch mahogany collection. Each one tells a special story, and has special details, such as abalone inlay. Also, though not an ukulele, I have to acknowledge our U-BASS. We are extremely excited to be bringing totally revamped import Solid Body options. These got tons of buzz at NAMM, and it's easy to see why — they look great, sound amazing, play beautifully, and they're affordable!

BM: As mentioned earlier, The Fullerton Collection is the latest release from our Fender ukulele offering. In this collection the Fullerton Precision Bass Ukulele was introduced, along with new color options for the Fullerton Telecaster, Stratocaster, and Jazzmaster. They are designed

to appeal to beginning and advanced players by incorporating laminated spruce tops, maple necks, laminated walnut fingerboards, and new Fender branded preamp systems, which feature tone controls which allow players to alter the voice of the ukulele. We're looking forward to continuing to expand our ukulele offerings.

AS-L: We are introducing a Glitter series this fall. There will be two models – one with a turquoise glitter finish and one with a gold glitter finish, as well as two unique body styles both available in tenor size, with internal pickup and sleek body. We also added a new design to our best-selling tropical series with the DDUK14 Sunset Mariposa, a colorful butterfly design

Expectations for the ukulele market in the upcoming holiday season and beyond?

AS-L: I predict a spike in ukulele sales for the holiday season. People need happiness, crave happiness and the ukulele delivers exactly that!

BM: An instrument is always a great gift, especially a ukulele as it's a great introduction for people interested in learning to play an instrument. It's compact size also makes it a great gift for younger players. Our Fender Play app provides affordable in-depth video lessons that are perfect for beginners looking to improve their technique.

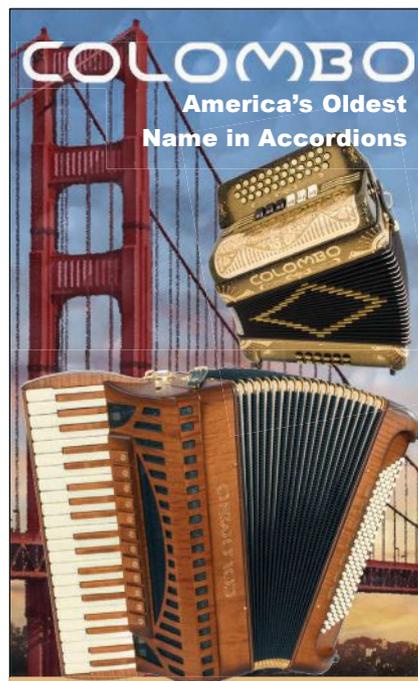
LM: Despite the economic climate, sales should be strong for the holiday season. Ukulele continues to be a great gift for people of all ages and playing ability. Beyond that, since the ukulele is so established now, we should see seasoned players continuing to expand collections or upgrade to the next thing, and more and more kids and adults will continue to pick it up for the first time.

RC: The ukulele market is changing, and some brands will not survive the market shift. Growth will not be at the same rate as before. Dealers are downsizing their ukulele wall to market preferred brands, and the upcoming holiday season may help reduce their "fringe" stock. I believe there will likely be more transitional phases positively affecting the ukulele market such as: 1) Step up: Advancing players will need to upgrade to nicer ukuleles. 2) Collector: Ukulele advocates will continue to collect additional and unique models such as 5,6 or 8 strings, a baritone, or a bass ukulele etc. 3) Guitarists/Utility players: Players will seek a ukulele for the specific tone and for the acoustic intimacy it brings to performances. 4) Education: Schools will continue to utilize the ukulele due to its low entry cost and ease of playability, producing more players who will seek step-up instruments, collect, become performers, and continue the cycle. 



Leanne McClellon,
Domestic Sales Director,
Kala Brand Music Co.

“Ukulele continues to be a popular choice for beginners because it is accessible and not intimidating.”
– Leanne McClellon,
Domestic Sales Director, Kala Brand Music Co.



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@4410 Ten Years Later



By
Menzie
Pittman

In order for an independent music store to compete in today's marketplace successfully, it must stand out from the crowd. It is no longer enough just to be gear-centric or conveniently located, because with a click every product made is readily available online. In today's local markets, it's more important than ever to be unique; that single quality can make the competitive difference.

Fortunately for local shops who thrive off vibe and human interaction, music is a craft with an important "performance aspect." It's no secret that for a young musician to succeed, having access to the right performance tools can make all the difference. Contemporary Music Center saw this trend coming a decade ago and changed our design model, incorporating a state of the art performance venue. @4410 was opened on Make Music Day in 2013.

By most standards, it was a very risky proposition because it meant committing to an idea that was different from the industry's norm. Resources had to be redirected to an untried and un-proven proposition, but if our instincts proved right, we could have a huge impact on the

local music industry. @4410 took a full year to build, and most folks thought we were crazy – and in some ways they were right.

The design of @4410 was influenced by a few iconic small venues: The Cavern Club in Liverpool, England; Blues Alley in Washington D.C.; and The Bluebird Café in Nashville, TN. The plan was simple: build a club for today's rising musicians – a club they could call their own! We wanted a performance venue that would inspire them to strive to be their best. Our aim was a "university model."

We had no idea when implementing this project that terms like COVID and shut-downs even existed, but even during that period, we were able to help school directors and community bands have a special space that enabled the band directors to rehearse.

What has transpired since 2013 when the undertaking of @4410 began? The month of July 2023 really put the story of @4410's impact into perspective. It was a Wednesday night when the first text hit. The Thistle Brothers, longtime CMC students who played numerous shows in @4410, sent CMC a picture of them meeting with Anderson Paak of Silk Sonic Fame in LA. Paak asked them to meet at his studio to discuss ways of partnering. But that jaw-dropping moment was only one of two events that happened that same day. The second event was a post by Alex Wil-

liams, also a longtime CMC student and Rock Camp coach, and now co-owner of Alegria Music Academy in Los Angeles. Alex texted a photo of his performance at the Hollywood Bowl with Charlie Willson. Those two, special events happening in tandem got me thinking... What has been the true impact of @4410? Did it work? Has @4410 and CMC really impacted the outcome of events?

Well, let's have a look. We recently received a communication from former CMC staffer Derek Garten. He wanted to let us know that Nashville has worked out well for him. He is now engineering records for Taylor Swift.

When Michale League, founder of Snarky Puppy, visited Virginia a while back, he dropped by CMC to visit his former teacher Dan Leonard. Together they decided it would be a fun idea to do a show together in @4410. It's fair to say that's a night we will surely remember.

The story goes on from there. Whether it's Nik Hughes who now drums for Bush, or Dave Previ who teaches drums at The Collective in New York, or Josh Kearney who plays guitar in Keith Urban's band, students who have cut their teeth in @4410, have gone on to study at Berklee College of Music, Belmont University, North Texas State University, and The Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts.

We think it's fair to say that @4410 has proven to change lives in a very positive way allowing more students to experience the joys of participating in live performances, and the ability to hone their music skills in front of a live audience. You can't do that online!

In a time when phone distractions are a normal everyday occurrence, what could be more productive than providing a state of the art performance venue to help musicians hone their creativity and craft? We think the risk was worth it! It's because of @4410 that more students are making music. We see that as a win for everybody.

Happy 10th anniversary @4410! 🎉

Menzie Pittman is the owner and director of education at Contemporary Music Center in Virginia (CMC). Following a performance and teaching career spanning more than 32 years, he founded CMC in 1989 and continues to perform, teach, and oversee daily operations. He has 50 years of musical experience as a drummer and drum instructor. Menzie is a frequent speaker at NAMM's Idea Center, and a freelance writer for MMR's "Small Business Matters."

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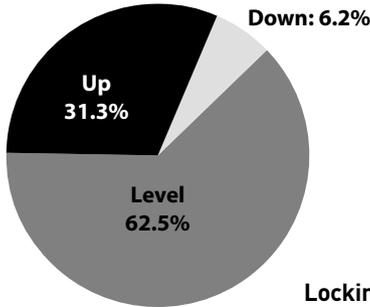
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Case (or Bag) in Point

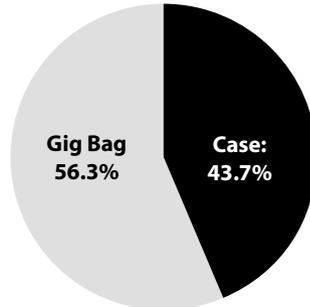
Guitar & Bass Cases and Gig Bags in 2023

By Christian **Wissmuller**

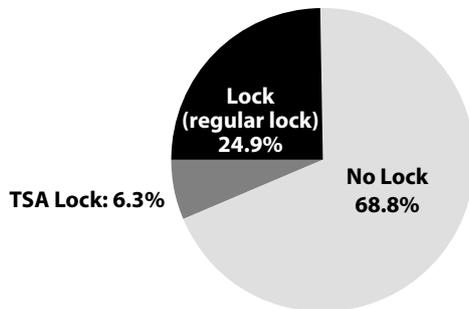
Sales of guitar & bass cases and gig bags in 2023 have been...



Of the two, cases and gig bags, what sells the most (volume) for your business?



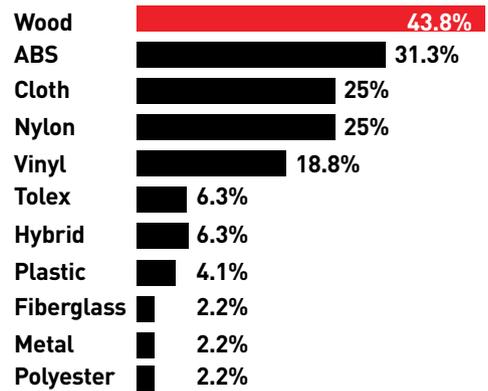
Locking or not?



As the overall durability of gig bags improves, that lower-cost (somewhat; prices are going up...) option remains a favorite with players, but not by much with nearly 45 percent (43.7%) of guitarists and bassists opting for the greater security and protection provided by hard shell cases. Additional features such as humidity and temperature controls, plus locking functionality also draws customers to more rigid cases, but gig bags are seeing increased usage by professionals.

Read on to learn more about trends impacting this market segment in 2023...

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



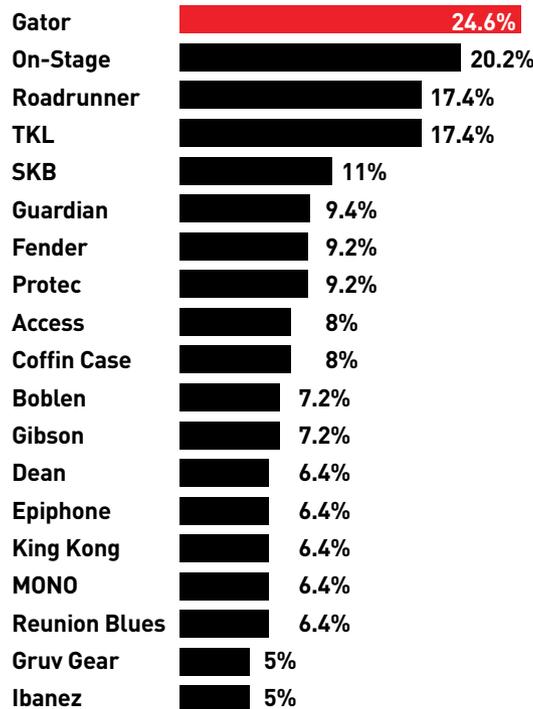
Have you been observing any significant trends regarding cases and gig bags for guitar & bass?

"We have always provided our customers with many options for their instruments protection at all price points. We do consistently well with our private label gig bags and SSC. We purposefully sell those at slightly lower margins than the major brands knowing that the message they carry is priceless."

Jerry Vesely
Vesely Music
Parowan, Utah

"Lightweight Options: While protection remained important, there was also a growing demand for lightweight cases that were easier to carry around. Hybrid cases that combined elements of hard cases and gig bags gained popularity. These cases often featured a hard shell frame for better protection, combined with padded panels and backpack-style straps for easier carrying. Aesthetic Appeal: Musicians were showing interest in cases that not only protected their instruments but also looked stylish and unique. Technological Integration: Some cases started incorporating technology, such as built-in humidity and temperature control systems."

Which brands are the top sellers for your store?



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2023 Holiday Buying Guide

New and Notable Gear to Stock Up in Preparation for the Upcoming Holiday Season

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The Harry Potter Piano Anthology from Alfred Music

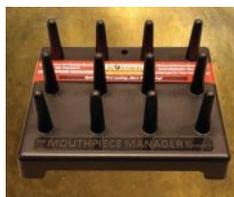
By John Williams / Patrick Doyle / Nicholas Hooper / Alexandre Desplat Coming in October! Transport yourself to the magical world of Harry Potter with this stunning collectors edition piano anthology featuring an exclusive, bespoke cover by MinaLima, the graphic design studio behind the Wizarding World, with special gold foiling and a treasure trove of magical illustrations. This ultimate collection of Harry Potter piano music makes the perfect gift for pianists and Potterheads alike! Contains 56 of the biggest and best musical themes from the *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beasts* films, arranged for intermediate-level piano. From the best-loved John Williams tunes “Hedwig’s Theme” and “Harry’s Wondrous World” to “The Crimes of Grindelwald” and “Dumbledore’s Theme” from the *Fantastic Beasts* films, this book has been created for pianists to enjoy and return to again and again. Paperback Piano Solo Collection (00-0571542964): \$49.99



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Pig Hog Unveils Glow-In-The-Dark Instrument Cables

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Available in 10 ft. and 20 ft. lengths, with either straight or right-angle connectors, each cable is hand tested before shipment, and backed by a no-questions-asked lifetime warranty. Like the Aurora, these cables are lit! MSRP: \$35.95 - \$49.95; MAP: \$24.95 - \$34.95

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Hosa Technology Launches KBT-502 Keyboard Stand

The KBT-502 Keyboard Stand offers incredible portability in a lightweight, 6.5-pound X-frame design that also features a unique trigger-style adjustment lever with seven height settings. This makes for convenient and easy setup with no assembly required. Despite its size, the KBT-502 packs a punch and can support up to 88 pounds of total weight, making it an ideal choice for a range of keyboards and players. Street price: \$44.95.



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Adaptable Ensembles Series for Christmas from Excelcia

Excelcia Music Publishing announces the completion of their *Adaptable Christmas Ensemble Series* with the addition of *Adaptable Duets for Christmas*.



“This is a very big milestone for us and this series”, explains Tyler Arcari, arranger and one of the authors of the book. “The *Adaptable Ensemble Series* has already established itself as one of the most popular flexible ensemble books in the industry, and this latest addition marks the final set of duets, trios and quartets in the Christmas series.” All books in the series, including the new *Adaptable Duets for Christmas*, are available for flute, oboe, B \flat clarinet/bass clarinet/B \flat trumpet/baritone T.C., alto saxophone/baritone saxophone, tenor saxophone, horn in F, trombone/baritone/bassoon, tuba, percussion, violin, viola, cello and bass instruments. The *Adaptable Ensemble Series* are available for \$14.99 each.

www.excelciamusic.com

Bear Claw Mega Picks by Rocky Mountain Slide Company

Rocky Mountain Slide Company’s “Bear Claw” series of picks offers three versions: Black, Grizzly, and Kodiak Bear Claw Mega Picks. Made from thick slab buffalo horn, these picks are considerably thicker than most other picks. The “body” of the pick (where you normally hold it) being thicker allows your hand to relax, relieving the hand and wrist stress while playing your instrument. And the tri-pick design allows a longer life and tonal variation to the player. Never drop your picks again! MSRP: \$36.95



<https://rockymountainslides.com>

Under \$150

Hal Leonard Celebrates Disney’s 100th Anniversary with New Collectible Songbook

Hal Leonard is celebrating Disney’s 100th anniversary by releasing a hardcover, colorful songbook that features 100 beloved songs from Disney’s storied history.



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- pedalboards or FRFR speakers
- Ideal for guitar and bass players of all levels
- For practice, finding tones, jamming, recording and streaming

Software and Apps In-the-box

iRig HD X opens the gateway to a universe of inspiring guitar and bass tones. Included are AmpliTube 5 SE for Mac/PC (a \$149.99 value) with 80 models covering all the “must-have” gear, AmpliTube CS for iPhone and iPad with the AmpliTube Essentials Bundle (a \$29.99 value), and TONEX SE for Mac/PC and iOS (a \$149.99 value) with 200 Premium Tone Models plus unlimited user Tone Model downloads from ToneNET. MSRP: \$/€129.99 (Includes iRig HD X, USB-C to USB-C cable and USB-C to Lightning cable.)

www.ikmultimedia.com

On-Stage KPK 6520 Keyboard Stand and Bench Pack with Keyboard Sustain Pedal

Perfect for this holiday season! The KPK6520 CB Keyboard Stand and Bench Pack with Keyboard Sustain Pedal bundles three of our most popular keyboard accessories for an exceptional value.

The KS7190 Single-X Keyboard Stand provides a wide, stable base and slip-free support for small-format keyboards. This adjustable stand suits various keyboard sizes and playing styles and features adjustable nonslip arm sleeves to accommodate a variety of keyboard widths and flat for convenient storage and transport.

The KT7800 Three-Position X-Style Keyboard/Piano Bench features a soft yet firm seat cushion that delivers outstanding ergonomic comfort and support. The exceptionally stable and adjustable base also folds flat for convenient storage and transportation.

The compact KSP20 Keyboard Sustain Pedal activates the sustain function on any electronic keyboard with a 1/4" sustain jack. This easy and convenient pedal features an integrated 6' cable, treaded top for foot traction, and nonslip rubber feet. MAP: \$107.95

on-stage.com



Lee Oskar 'Mick Jagger' Signature Harmonica

Sir Mick Jagger has embarked on an exciting collaboration with Lee Oskar Harmonicas, resulting in the creation of a limited edition harmonica bearing Jagger's name.

These Mick Jagger harmonicas meet the highest quality specs pio-



neered by Lee Oskar Harmonicas and Tombo Manufacturing. Each instrument is crafted with an unwavering commitment to precision, mirroring the exacting standards that have made Lee Oskar Harmonicas a renowned global name since its establishment in 1983. Contact KMC Music for more information.

Features:

- Authentic Lee Oskar harmonica collaboration
- Major Diatonic Key of C
- Silkscreen printed metal cover plates
- Custom Mick Jagger protective box
- Made in Japan

Retail: \$99.99; MAP: \$69.99

www.kmcmusic.com

Under \$500

JodyJazz DV HR Alto Saxophone Mouthpiece

The DV HR Alto mouthpiece is JodyJazz's first hard rubber mouthpiece to feature their patented DV design inspired by the golden mean proportions. The patented DV secondary window adds mid and low harmonics to the sound allowing players to cut through when they need it but is not too shrill and can still play a pretty ballad. The facing curve is also inspired by the golden mean proportions as are many of the design decisions of the mouthpiece. The result is a harmonious invention that provides ease of playing while allowing for beautiful musical expression. The DV HR Alto is very free blowing, with all the power you will ever need, along with that big bottom that the DV's are famous for. DV HR Alto also introduces JodyJazz's newest bite plate technology featuring a bite plate embedded into the beak of the mouthpiece. The plate features the iconic 'Phi' symbol logo in gold, a characteristic of the classic DV series, completing the stunning look of this new mouthpiece. Available in 5, 6, 7 & 8 tip openings. MSRP and MAP: \$450



www.jodyjazz.com

Amati's Goes Electric

After providing 30+ years of orchestral stringed instrument excellence, Amati's is furthering its stringed instrument offering with electric six string guitars. Three models. Three classic body shapes. One stringed instrument company. Model #70STSB has a three single-soil pickup configuration. Solid popular body. Maple neck. Sunburst finish. Model



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#40TCBS has a two single-coil pickup configuration, with a lip-stick-tube pickup in the neck position and an alnico pickup in the bridge position. Solid poplar body. Maple neck. Butterscotch finish. Model #60STVW has a two single-coil pickup configuration in the neck and middle positions, and a humbucker pickup configuration in the bridge position. Solid poplar body. Purple Heart neck. White finish. MAP for all three: \$249

www.amatisonline.com

ClariMate from Buffet Crampon

ClariMate from Buffet Crampon is an innovative and revolutionary new digital clarinet mute designed to allow clarinetists of all ages and abilities the opportunity to “play anytime, everywhere.”

The ability to practice your instrument without disturbing others is an option that has eluded woodwind players for many years, but with ClariMate, the technology has finally arrived to allow clarinetists the capability to practice and play silently, anywhere. This innovation is the first of its kind for the clarinet and opens a new door for clarinetists of all ages and skill levels.

The ClariMate system integrates into any B \flat or A clarinet via a module positioned between the mouthpiece and tuning barrel. This module will detect the note fingerings as well as the player’s breath and embouchure position when paired with an active reed (included in the box). Musicians can use ClariMate by itself in standalone mode with headphones or connect it to an app for more features. The app also displays the note being played, as well as the fingering on a clarinet chart. A linked computer or smart device can be used to customize the ClariMate playing experience and to connect to the digital world through Bluetooth play along features and MIDI. MSRP: \$349

www.clarimate.us



Aguilar Amplification Unveils the AG Preamp Pedal

Aguilar Amplification is thrilled to announce the release of the AG Preamp pedal. Combining the revered AG sound with compact convenience, the AG Preamp pedal offers bassists an exceptional tool for precise and clear tone shaping.

The AG Preamp pedal inherits the renowned AG preamp’s tight, fast response and extensive tonal flexibility, making it an essential component for discerning bassists. Aguilar Amplification brings this



iconic sound to bass players worldwide in a compact and portable format, without compromising on performance or versatility.

With its powerful 4-band EQ, the AG Preamp pedal empowers bassists to sculpt their tone with finesse, adapting to any musical genre or playing style. From warm and punchy to bright and articulate, the pedal delivers unrivaled control and responsiveness. Foot-switchable broadband “deep” and “bright” controls further enhance the bass sound, providing added depth and presence for a rich and natural sonic impact.

Operating at 18 volts, the AG Preamp pedal ensures generous headroom and pristine signal integrity. Bassists can confidently push their sound to the limits without sacrificing clarity or encountering unwanted distortion. The pedal maintains a clean, transparent tone that stays true to the player’s style.

The AG Preamp pedal also offers essential connectivity options. It features a built-in headphone output and auxiliary input, enabling silent practice and jamming along with favorite tracks. Additionally, the pedal includes a DI output with pre/post and ground lift controls, making it an ideal solution for live performances and studio or at-home recording sessions. MAP: \$299.99

www.aguilaramp.com



Rousseau Band Director Section Kits

The Rousseau Band Director Section Kit features mouthpieces from the Rousseau Classic R Series which offer a beautiful, warm sound with great response and control. The kit consists of 2 x Classic R Alto 4R, 2 x Classic R Tenor 4R, and 1 x Classic R Baritone 5R.



Ligature and Cap for the Baritone are also included. Each mouthpiece is individually hand-finished, and play-tested to the strictest quality standards and with the highest possible attention to detail. These specially selected mouthpieces will result in a more homogenous saxophone section that blends beautifully with the ensemble. The Rousseau kit also includes a QR code link to the new Rousseau Band Director Resources page where band directors can find a wide selection of educational resources. MSRP: \$1,383; MAP: \$969.75

www.rousseaumouthpieces.com

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Martin D-15E

If you've had your eye on a Martin 15 Series guitar, the D-15E is going to knock your socks off. This 14-fret Dreadnought is crafted with sapele back and sides and a mahogany top with non-scalloped bracing, so you're going to hear bright, airy trebles and a punchy midrange. The Dreadnought body provides plenty of volume so this baby can handle whatever music scenario you can dream up. To top it off, this model comes equipped with Martin E1 electronics and a soft-shell case to make it super easy to take with you on all your adventures. MSRP: \$1,299

www.martinguitar.com



al EXM Mobile Tower via Bluetooth. The EXM Mobile Tower offers a long-lasting battery, a modular system that can expand to your needs, and a dedicated high-frequency driver to ensure the best sound possible. Built for mobile DJ and live music applications, the EXM Mobile Tower is designed to be the all-in-one system for performers on the go. MSRP: \$1,599 (CDN)

www.yorkville.com

Jackson American Series Virtuoso

The American Series Virtuoso comes equipped with an alder body featuring a contoured "hand-shake" heel to ensure ergonomic comfort during long sets. The five-piece multi-laminated caramelized maple/maple neck is bolted-on with graphite-reinforcement rods that provide rock-solid stability all the way up to the 24th fret. The ultra-fast 12-16" compound radius streaked ebony fingerboard with rolled edges is built from the get-go for easy chording and riffing near the nut and speedy scale runs as you move up the neck. Luminlay side dots ensure you always land on the right fret even on the darkest stages, while a heel-mount truss rod adjustment wheel allows for quick neck relief tweaks on the fly. The HH pickup configuration features a Seymour Duncan JB TB-4 humbucking bridge pickup and a Seymour Duncan '59 SH-1N neck pickup. The intuitive control layout consists of a five-way blade switch, and dome-style knobs for volume and tone. Other premium features include a Floyd Rose 1500 Series double-locking tremolo bridge system, Gotoh MG-T locking tuners, and Dunlop dual-locking strap buttons. MSRP: \$1,949.99

www.jacksonguitars.com



Yorkville Sound Launches EXM Mobile Tower, Battery-Powered PA System

Yorkville Sound announces the EXM Mobile Tower portable, battery-powered PA. The EXM Mobile Tower is compact, easy to set up, and, sonically surpasses any tower-format PA on the market today. Exceeding 550 Watts, the EXM Mobile Tower is equipped with a 10-inch subwoofer base and four 3-inch mid-range drivers including a unique dedicated high-frequency driver. With its onboard 3-channel mixer and ready-to-go live & club performance modes, the EXM Mobile Tower is prepared to dial in the right sound for your event. Boasting 10 hours of battery performance at high levels, the EXM Mobile Tower delivers optimal sound for long-running gigs. For events that require more output, the EXM Mobile Tower pairs seamlessly with an addition-



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Spector Expands Its Popular NS Ethos & NS Dimension Lines with the HP Series

These cutting-edge instruments blend Spector's iconic NS neck-thru designs with new features, including EMG and Darkglass electronics, illuminating side dots, and timeless tonewoods. The HP basses also offer a stunning selection of solid finishes, paying homage to some of the brand's most legendary models.



The NS Ethos HP basses embody the essence of the NS Ethos models, featuring their neck-thru construction and elegant NS body contours. These HP basses combine a 3-piece maple thru-neck (ebony fingerboard) with resonant alder wings. Each instrument also showcases powerful EMG DC active pickups, flawlessly synergizing with Darkglass Tone Capsule preamp for a thoroughly modern Spector tone.

Leveraging the multi-scale, neck-thru construction from the esteemed NS Dimension Series, the HP models exhibit a confident simplicity that resonates with the no-nonsense bassist. With EMG DC pickups and Darkglass Tone Capsule preamps, the NS Dimension HP basses are the ultimate choice for rock, metal, and progressive bassists.

NS Ethos 4 strings: MSRP - \$2,349.99, MAP - \$1,799.99

NS Ethos 5 strings: MSRP - \$2,469.99, MAP - \$1,899.99

NS Dimension 4 strings: MSRP - \$2,599.99, MAP - \$1,999.99

NS Dimension 5 strings: MSRP - \$2,749.99, MAP - \$2,099.99

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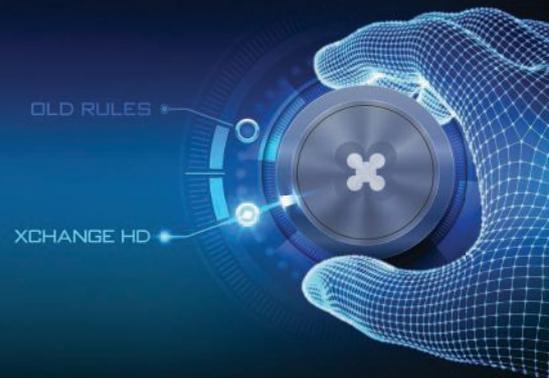
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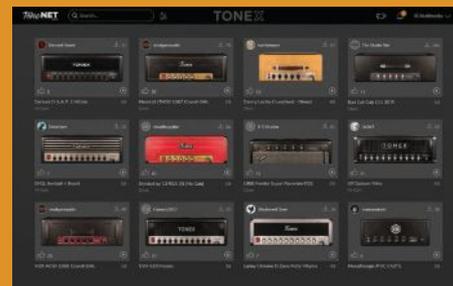
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