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INSIDE



JodyJazz Celebrates 25 Years:
Founder Jody Espina Reflects on a Quarter-Century



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Even More 'Fast as F*\$%!':
Jon Romanowski Discusses the Recent Launch of Jackson's American Series Soloist SL2 DX

C O N T E N T S



FEATURES

Vol.187 APRIL 2025 No. 4

UpFront Q&A

Even More 'Fast as F*\$%!' – Jon Romanowski Discusses the Recent Launch of Jackson's American Series Soloist SL2 DX 11

When Jackson Guitars unleashed the American Series Soloist guitars in early summer 2022, the instruments became an instant success with any and all fans and purveyors of over-the-top, velocity-driven, heavy music. As Jackson launches the new American Series Soloist SL2 DX, with even more fast-fretwork functionality, we figured it'd be an ideal time to check in with Jon Romanowski, VP of Product.

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As the audio production landscape continues to evolve, audio interfaces remain at the core of modern recording, mixing, and mastering workflows. In this roundtable discussion, executives and product specialists from Focusrite, Universal Audio, and PreSonus offer a behind-the-scenes look at how their companies are driving innovation in the Audio Interface space.

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2025 marks 25 years of crafting some of the world's finest saxophone mouthpieces for JodyJazz. MMR recently spoke with founder and president Jody Espina on what drove him to start JodyJazz in the first place, and how the values that guided him then continue to lead the company to ever-greater heights.

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Allen & Heath USA Brings SWSW 2025 to Life! 20

Allen & Heath is one of the go-to names in sound reinforcement for FOH engineers, touring bands, midsize venues, arenas, and theaters of all sizes. We recently touched base with director of marketing Jeff Hawley to talk about A&H's triumphant showing at the 2025 South by Southwest (SXSW) Music Festival

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By Christian
Wissmuller

Bridging the Sound – Audio Interfaces and the Modern Musician’s Toolkit

“When a customer buys an interface, they’re not just buying a product. They’re buying into a workflow. You’re not selling a box; you’re selling the potential for a whole new creative identity.”

Let’s talk about the unsung hero of modern music-making: the audio interface. It’s the kind of gear that rarely steals the spotlight but holds everything together behind the scenes—like a good stage manager or your favorite mixing engineer who somehow always knows exactly what you meant.

In 2025, the music production landscape has become so democratized that a high school bedroom studio can rival a boutique Nashville control room (well, close enough for YouTube). And right at the heart of it all? That humble little box that turns your analog brilliance into digital gold: the audio interface.

Now, for anyone selling musical merchandise in today’s climate—especially the indie retailers and online boutique shops—you’d be remiss not to pay close attention to what’s happening in this space. Interfaces are no longer a “techie” add-on or an upsell for the guitar-slinging customer who’s “thinking about recording someday.” They’re the new baseline. The new tuner pedal. The thing everyone needs and almost no one understands well enough when they’re buying their first one.

The Great Interface Awakening

We’re seeing a fascinating shift. No longer are customers just asking, “Can I plug my mic into this?” Now they want to know about converters, preamp headroom, onboard DSP, and driver stability. That’s partly due to the explosion of content creators who are as likely to record vocals as they are to stream, podcast, or build a TikTok beat in under 60 seconds.

It’s also due to manufacturers finally catching up with usability. Today’s top-tier interfaces—Focusrite, Universal Audio, and PreSonus, to name a few—are blending pro-level audio specs with plug-and-play simplicity and some drop-dead gorgeous industrial design. (Let’s be honest, aesthetics matter now. Especially when your studio lives on camera.)

What Retailers Should Be Pushing

Here’s the thing: if you’re in the musical merchandise game, the audio interface is no longer a niche category—it’s a point of entry. When a customer buys an interface, they’re not just buying a product. They’re buying into a workflow. You’re not selling a box; you’re selling the potential for a whole new creative identity.

That means your staff needs to know their stuff. Which models have loopback? Which ones are class-compliant with iOS? How many mic pres are really necessary for a bedroom producer? Can you explain latency without triggering an eye-glaze?

Even more: your displays need love. Give interfaces real estate in your store. Set them up with headphones, mics, and instruments. Let people feel the signal chain. Host workshops. Partner with local engineers or producers for demos. Interfaces might not move as fast as strings or picks, but when you invest in customer education, they become loyalty-building tools.

The Future Is Modular, and Mobile

One trend to watch? Compact and modular interfaces. Devices like the Apogee BOOM, iD14 MkII from Audient, or IK Multimedia’s iRig series are turning interfaces into portable production hubs. That portability appeals to the hybrid creator—someone recording guitar tracks in the morning and live-streaming beat sets by night.

And the software bundling is smarter than ever. Nearly every interface comes loaded with starter DAWs, plug-in suites, or virtual instruments that deepen the ecosystem. You’re not just moving hardware anymore—you’re onboarding musicians into a whole platform.

Final Thoughts: Mind the Interface Gap

We’re in a gear moment that’s equal parts thrilling and bewildering. There’s more choice than ever, but more noise too. The right audio interface doesn’t just sound better—it feels intuitive, inspires confidence, and scales with the user’s skill.

That’s a rare combo. But it’s exactly the kind of product that smart retailers should champion. Because when you sell someone the right audio interface, you’re not just equipping their studio.

You’re amplifying their voice.

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PRESIDENT AND CEO OF NAMM STATEMENT ON UNIVERSAL TARIFFS

April 15, 2025



We continue to urge the administration to exempt musical instruments and accessories, along with materials used to manufacture musical products, from the tariffs announced in President Trump's executive orders. The negative effects of these measures threaten the economic and cultural impact of U.S.-made musical instruments and accessories, as well as cause our U.S. music products industry to lose its global competitive advantage in producing high-quality products, especially at professional and entry levels.

The 90-day pause on reciprocal tariffs announced last week via executive order (until July 9) is a welcomed measure, but the continued unpredictability of these tariff actions makes it difficult for companies to react in a meaningful way. The back-and-forth raising of tariffs between the U.S. and Chinese governments that we have witnessed this past week will have serious business implications and create consumer turmoil for the music products industry. The effects of these sudden and unpredictable tariff actions will have a

long-term effect on musicians worldwide.

In addition, last week NAMM sent a letter in support of U.S.-based acoustic stringed instrument manufacturers urging the U.S. Secretary of Commerce not to recommend additional tariffs on imported tonewoods. These tonewoods are often impossible to grow in the U.S., and they are used to create many iconic music products for American brands.

NAMM will continue to monitor all tariff actions and advocate for our industry



Chris Martin Honored with Distinguished Citizen of The Commonwealth Award By The Pennsylvania Society

The Pennsylvania Society honored C.F. "Chris" Martin IV, Executive Chairman of C.F. Martin & Co., with its prestigious Distinguished Citizen of the Commonwealth award during the Society's Annual Meeting held April 3, 2025, at the Saucon Valley Country Club in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The award recognized Martin's outstanding leadership, commitment to innovation, and dedication to philanthropy throughout his storied career.

The Distinguished Citizen of the Commonwealth award is presented to Pennsylvanians whose achievements have profoundly benefited the Commonwealth. It is not awarded annually, but only when the Society's Council identifies a truly deserving honoree.

"We were proud to recognize Chris Martin, a

sixth-generation leader of the legendary Martin Guitar company, with this distinguished honor," said Patricia D. Wellenbach, president of The Pennsylvania Society. "Under his guidance, Martin Guitars continues to be the instrument of choice for iconic artists such as Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Neil Young, and John Mayer. Chris has ensured that this family business remains a vital part of Pennsylvania's heritage while having a global impact on music."

During his tenure at the helm of C.F. Martin & Co., Martin has advanced the company's nearly two-century legacy of craftsmanship, driving innovation in guitar design, environmental responsibility, and philanthropic leadership. He championed sustainable manufacturing

practices and forged meaningful collaborations with artists and organizations around the world. Outside of his work with the company, Martin has been a longtime advocate for music education, environmental action, democratic engagement, and charitable giving. Through the Martin Guitar Charitable Foundation, he has supported initiatives in music, the arts, education, human services, and environmental sustainability.

Martin joins a distinguished list of past recipients of the award, including Princess Grace of Monaco, Justice Samuel Roberts, Lewis J. Appell, Jr., Susan Hirt Hagen, Sister Mary Scullion, and others who have left a lasting impact on Pennsylvania and beyond.



mic preamps would typically cost hundreds or thousands of dollars, and made that classic sound affordable for project studios. As new formats started to emerge, it provided an affordable tube front-end for digital tape and hard disc recorders.

Today, as more music is mixed in the box with plugins, a Tube MP is a convenient character preamp that can complement any audio interface. Even as technology continues to advance, nothing quite compares to the warmth and saturation of a real tube.

With thousands upon thousands of units sold over the past thirty years, the Tube MP is ART's best-known product, and a serious contender for the title of World's Most Popular Tube Preamp. It also remains a testament to the spirit of innovation and of empowering musicians that drove a team of engineers in upstate New York to create a modern classic that remains relevant three decades later.

ART Celebrates the Tube MP 30th Anniversary

Since its founding in 1984, Applied Research and Technology (ART) has been committed to designing great-sounding products that are reliable, easy to use, and accessible for the average musician. In 1995, that mission produced the Tube MP: a compact, affordable tube microphone preamp.

Despite its small stature and modest price tag, the Tube MP was recognized at the prestigious TEC Awards in 1996, where it was nominated for Outstanding Technical Achievement in the Mic Preamplifier Technology category.

Today, the Tube MP remains in production and has fostered a full lineup with additional features like compressors, reamping, and presets.

"What's truly remarkable about the Tube MP is how it's stayed relevant through three decades of massive progress in recording technology," states Jeff Cowling, vice president of Sales & Marketing at Yorkville Sound – one of ART's original distributors, which ultimately acquired the brand in 1999.

The Tube MP launched at a time when tube



TMP-Pro Now Supplies Cutting-Edge Commercial A/V Solutions from PureLink

TMP-Pro, a leading distributor of premium pro-audio, video, lighting, and accessories brands, and division of The Music People, has announced it now offers PureLink products, including state-of-the-art matrix switchers, video-over-IP solutions and UHD/4K scalars. Since 2002, PureLink has been an innovative force in professional A/V, leveraging extensive research and development to bring integrators and designers cutting-edge features and functionality. From presentations and digital signage to media distribution and collaboration, PureLink delivers comprehensive A/V solutions for restaurants, museums, houses of worship, corporations, conference spaces, performance venues, and broadcast studios. "PureLink takes great pleasure in announcing

our US-distribution partnership with TMP-Pro," said Howard Schilling, Director of Sales at PureLink. "TMP-Pro's world-class customer service and technical sales support ideally complement PureLink's continued expansion of its control-automation and A/V-switching products and services across the commercial market."

"As a value-added distributor, we are excited to offer PureLink's award-winning technologies to empower seamless connections in today's ever-connected world," said Tom Tedesco, president and CEO of The Music People. "This collaboration strengthens our commitment to delivering advanced solutions that meet the evolving needs of our customers."



Make Music Day Returns in 2025 Uniting Thousands of Global Cities in Song

Launched in France in 1982 as the Fête de la Musique, Make Music Day has become a global phenomenon, celebrated by millions of people in more than 2,000 cities worldwide. Today, the Make Music Alliance announced that over 150 cities and counties across the United States will coordinate more than 5,000 live, free music-making events for this year's celebration on **Saturday, June 21**.

Held on the summer solstice (the longest day of the year), the world's largest annual music event celebrates the inquisitive spirit and natural music maker in everyone, regardless of age or skill level. In 2024, Make Music Day included 5,304 free public concerts in the U.S., at over 1,500 locations. This year, 31 new communities join the party, reimagining their cities and towns as stages where every kind of musician — young and old, amateur and professional, of every musical persuasion — fills streets, parks, plazas, porches, rooftops, gardens, and other public spaces to celebrate, create, and share their music.

Completely different from a traditional music festival, Make Music Day activities are free and open to anyone wanting to participate. Some activities provide "instrumentation" for the participants, ranging from flower pots and mallets, to harmonicas, kazoo, drumsticks, and buckets. Others encourage players to bring their own instruments or simply their willing voices. Make Music Day is presented by The NAMM Foundation. "We are delighted that our Make Music Day partnership continues to celebrate the joy of making music worldwide," said John Mlynczak, NAMM president and CEO. "Seeing the incredible collaborative efforts from our global NAMM member companies, as well as

local partnerships, reach hundreds of thousands of music makers and deliver a unified message... that creating music is a precious element of daily living, linking communities around the world." Demonstrating music's universal reach, a new Make Music Day initiative this year called **Taking Flight** will link singers across venues in Canada, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey, and the U.S. In each country, members of the public will gather to learn a local popular song in multi-part harmony on the spot, and then join a global streaming broadcast where each "choir" will perform their song live, taking turns so that every participating country can watch every other country's live performance on a large screen at the front of each room. Choral directors in each country will select their own popular song for the occasion, in their local language, on the theme of "Taking Flight." The event will close with a collective rendition of Bob Marley's "Three Little Birds," sung by every group in harmony around the world.

For singers in the U.S., Make Music Day is launching a new initiative for **Circle Singing**, an improvised vocal experience where everyone is welcome. Popularized by Grammy-winning artist Bobby McFerrin, Circle Singing invites people to create music together on the spot, layering harmonies, rhythms, and melodies without sheet music or preparation. Free Circle Singing events are taking place in Atlanta, Boston, Fullerton CA, Indianapolis, San Jose, and in New York City, where a 24-hour Circle Singing marathon will be led by the Gaia Music Collective. Leadership support for this program is provided by the Cheswaty Foundation.

School bands also have a special Make Music Day opportunity this year called **Critical Impact**,

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a powerful new piece by composer Brian Balmages. This Grade 2 piece is flexibly written for Concert Band, Full Orchestra, or a mix of band and strings, and is provided at no cost through a partnership between the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), The NAMM Foundation, and music technology company MakeMusic Inc. Bands are invited to play the piece on Make Music Day (or post videos that day of their performances) and submit video testimonials about the “critical impact” of music education, for a chance to win a share of \$15,000 in new sheet music from Alfred Music.

Other Make Music Day national programs returning in 2025 include:

Flowerpot Music — Back for a sixth year, participants around the country perform a composition by celebrated composer Elliot Cole and directed by percussionist Peter Ferry, using an unlikely percussion instrument: the flowerpot. Appropriate for musicians and non-musicians alike, participants can join a group and create outdoor soundscapes through easy-to-learn games.

Mass Appeal — People of all ages and skill levels will band together to make music in hundreds of large, single-instrument groups nationwide. This year, leading music brands including Makey Makey, Rhythm Band Instruments, and Vic Firth are donating thousands of free instruments so that any member of the public can stop by these events and join the band.

#MySongsYourSong — Coordinated this year by Make Music Nigeria, songwriters and composers of all kinds are invited to sign up to learn and perform a song by an artist from another part of the world, and hear one of their original songs covered in return.

Roomful of Pianos — In a new partnership

with the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), Roomful of Pianos brings spectacular multi-piano performances to piano stores across the country for Make Music Day, organized by local MTNA chapters. Participating locations include Appleton WI, Charleston, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Fresno CA, Greenville SC, Hartland WI, Honolulu, Lafayette IN, Medford OR, and more to be announced.

Sousapalooza — Large groups of brass and wind musicians will assemble in parks and plazas to play the music of “March King” John Philip Sousa. Anyone is invited to download the music, bring their horn, and join the band.

String Together — For Make Music Day, dozens of music retailers are hosting a free guitar string-changing session that comes with a free set of acoustic Elixir Strings (for the first 12 registrants at each store). All are welcome, from complete newbies who have never changed their strings, to more experienced players looking for a few tips from a pro guitar tech.

City-specific highlights from around the U.S. include:

Chattanooga, TN: Officially named the first National Park City in North America, 2025 marks the launch of Green Stages, a special initiative that activates parks across the city with live, acoustic performances. From Coolidge Park to Lookout Mountain, musicians will show up on Make Music Day and play—no electricity, no stage setup. Just instruments, voices, and the beauty of nature.

Hawaii: Held at Malama Kukui in Honolulu, the home of the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame, this state will be featuring legends in Hawaiian music, as well as some newer artists, from 12-3pm.

Fair Lawn, NJ: Think of it as mascots for music! Students from the Fair Lawn Art Association will

construct giant paper-maché masks of some of the world’s most beloved musical talent. The “Big Heads” will join Make Music Day festivities throughout Downtown Fair Lawn and the Broadway District, dancing and bringing joy to audiences.

Fullerton, CA: In partnership with The All the Arts for All the Kids Foundation, which provides arts education to Fullerton children, the city will host performances by student ensembles and teaching artists throughout the day. This new children’s programming complements the city’s diverse lineup of Make Music Day events happening across Fullerton venues.

Phoenix, AZ: Presenting a day filled with the vibrant sounds of Indigenous recording artists from Canyon Records, interactive performances, hands-on music-making activities at the Heard Museum and the Arizona Opera, Taiko drumming workshops with Fushicho Daiko Dojo, beat making sessions at the BE KIND Center, bands and beers at Greenwood Brewing, and many more free events all over town.

Germantown, TN: Offering a series of music production sessions, on the site of Music Box School – a fully equipped technology lab with 8 individual music production stations. Participants age 6 and up will learn how to make music on Logic Pro software with a MIDI controller and a Mac Mini Pro, getting their creation e-mailed to them at the end of the session.

All Make Music Day events are free and open to the public. Participants who wish to perform or host musical events may register at www.makemusicday.org. A full schedule of events will be posted on the website in early June.

Make Music Day is presented in the US by The NAMM Foundation and coordinated by the nonprofit Make Music Alliance. The event’s official hashtag is **#MakeMusicDay**.

TMP-Pro Now Supplies Cutting-Edge Commercial A/V Solutions from PureLink



Steinberg has announced that, following the gradual changeover to the new, software-based Steinberg Licensing license management system, the previous eLicensor system will be switched off on May 20, 2025.

Customers whose software require Steinberg

Licensing are already enjoying the benefits that this new system offers, such as a simplified license activation as well as allowing a single-user license to run on up to three computers without the physical USB-eLicensor dongle.

Giving customers this extra freedom and flexibility, the changeover to the new ID-based Steinberg Licensing system has been in progress since 2022, with various options and offers provided to transition seamlessly from eLicensor-based products to the new system. Following the close down, the company will continue to ensure that customers are able to update or upgrade eLicensor-based products as long as the eLicensor has been registered accordingly. Existing eLicensor-based products

can still be used without limitations, as long as the licenses are available on the USB-eLicensor or Soft-eLicensor.

Managing director Clyde Sendke commented: “Over several years we have kept our customers posted through the various avenues available to us on the development of a new licensing system. After successfully rolling out our new license system, the time is gradually drawing closer to call an end to the transitional phase from the old eLicensor to the new Steinberg Licensing system.”

For further information and FAQs regarding the end of the eLicensor system, visit: <https://www.steinberg.net/licensing/elicensor-end-of-service/>

UK Musical Instrument Manufacturer Michael Rath Trombones Honored for Work to Support Disabled Artists

Renowned UK musical instrument manufacturer Michael Rath Trombones has won a prestigious award for its work to support disabled performers.

The Yorkshire firm, which builds and exports its bespoke, custom-made trombones all over the world, recently received a One Hand Musical Instrument (OHMI) Trust Award for its pioneering work to support a longtime

customer, enabling him to play the trombone again after a severe stroke in 2017 had left him with left arm paralysis.

Northern Ireland-based brass educator and freelance trombonist, Willie McLean – who commissioned the Rath Custom R2 trombone in 2020, with funding support from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland – performed at the awards night in Birmingham City University and

received the award on Rath Trombones’ behalf from event host, pop star Toyah Willcox.

Willie says, “I was completely overjoyed when Mick Rath’s name was called, and I was proud to accept the award on his behalf.

“Rath Trombones are beautiful instruments, and I am so thankful that Mick’s ingenious design has enabled me to do what I love once again.”



Trombonist, educator, and Rath customer Willie McLean receives the OHMI Award from Toyah Wilcox

Rath Trombones was one of the award winners in the Enabling Equipment category, which celebrates apparatus that makes a traditional instrument playable for a specified disability. The Rath model prepared for Willie McLean features a stainless-steel bracket, which clamps easily to the main bell stay of the trombone using two hexagonal head screws. A clearance hole through the center of the main head of the bracket allows the trombone to slide comfortably over the stand spindle. This is attached to an adapted heavy-duty cymbal stand, and ensures the trombone is at the correct angle for the player. Height and angle are adjustable.

OHMI general manager Rachel Wolffsohn said: "So many disabled people look to OHMI for support. For musicians who have acquired an upper limb impairment or disability through illness or accident, this often comes at an incredibly upsetting and unsettling time. "We're deeply humbled that so many travelled so far to join us – including from the US, Japan and Australia – and some at significant personal expense. That illustrates how many people valued the opportunity to meet with others and to share experiences amongst what is a truly unique group." For more information on Michael Rath Trombones, go to: rathtrombones.com.

Gonher Group Takes on HK Audio Distribution for Mexico

Gonher Group has become the exclusive distributor for HK Audio products in Mexico with immediate effect. The new distributor has experienced sales professionals for pro audio applications along with extensive sales networks and an outstanding understanding of service within its Audyson and Gonher Pro divisions. This will help Gonher to fully represent HK Audio's wide ranging portfolio of professional loudspeaker systems in Mexico. "We are delighted to add HK Audio's impressive product range to our extensive portfolio," said Jorge Gonzalez, director general of Gonher. "HK Audio already has a good presence in Mexico and we plan to take the brand to an even higher level. We feel that Gonher is best-placed to help drive uptake of the brand in the Mexican market and we look forward to

introducing our clients to the sonic capabilities of this amazing brand." "Gonher's pro audio pedigree in Mexico is unequalled," added Sean Martin, ISM Americas at HK Audio. "HK Audio is excited to be partnering another North American giant, providing the market penetration and development the HK brand and its customers in Mexico demand. To underline our commitment to the Mexican market and minimize disruption, after 23 years great service in building the HK Audio brand, it is important to acknowledge the excellent role that HiTech has played. We are therefore pleased to announce that HiTech will continue to serve their HK Audio customers within the new HK/Gonher distribution set up."



People



The NAMM board of directors has elected the 2025 officers to represent the executive committee, effective immediately. The ExCom will serve through April 2026, representing NAMM's global membership and the music industry at large in fulfilling NAMM's vision and mission. The 2025 executive committee includes: chair **Chris White**, vice chair **Joseph Castronovo**, treasurer **Whitney Brown Grisaffi**, and secretary **Jake Connolly**. John Mlynczak, NAMM president and CEO, who additionally serves on the executive committee, commented, "NAMM is appreciative to have talented industry leaders reside on the executive committee, who will lead our organization forward into new areas of opportunity for our diverse global membership." This vote and seamless transition sees Chris White, who previously held NAMM's vice chair position, move into his new role as chair of NAMM's board of directors. White is president and CEO of White House of Music, Inc., a music retailer providing school band and orchestra, fretted, percussion, keyboards, print and digital media, lessons and repair services. White

House of Music operates several retail locations and is headquartered in Waukesha, Wisconsin. In addition to his professional responsibilities, Chris is a member of the National Association of School Music Dealers (NASMD) and the Alliance of Independent Music Merchants (AIMM). He received his B.A. in communication from the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater. "I am truly honored to continue my service to the music industry in my new role as NAMM chair, further helping NAMM and its members reach their goals, the most important of which is helping create more music makers," White said. "Through my involvement with NAMM, I have learned that networking builds beneficial and productive communities; that educational opportunities provide vital catalysts for new and ongoing musical ventures; and that in today's world, music advocacy is more important than ever. I am excited to be at the forefront of continuing diversification and broadening inclusivity in both our members and the products and services we represent." White also welcomed new vice chair Joseph Castronovo, who previously served as the NAMM's treasurer. Castronovo is president

and CEO of Korg USA, headquartered in Melville, N.Y. Joe has been an integral part of the company's growth since its inception in 1984. Korg USA is the distributor and owner of the world's most respected MI brands and has been a NAMM member since 1977. Joe served on the NAMM board from 2015–2017, has been a founding supporter of Women of NAMM and served on the board of advisors for the Don Johnson Music Industry Service Award and the Guitar and Accessories Marketing Association (GAMA). Castronovo holds a B.A. from Boston University and an MBA from Hofstra University. Whitney Brown Grisaffi was also welcomed into a new executive committee role as she transitions from secretary to treasurer. Brown Grisaffi is the president of Ted Brown Music Co. in Tacoma, Wash. The company has six locations, with its flagship store and corporate headquarters located in Tacoma. Ted Brown Music has earned numerous accolades, including 11 consecutive years as a NAMM Top 100 Dealer, 2022 Retailer of the Year by Music Inc. magazine and two-time AIMM Dealer of the Year. Whitney, who graduated with a B.A. in communication from the University of Washington, is involved in various music organizations, including NASMD (past president), while also actively contributing to her community via her philanthropic efforts, serving as president-elect of the Tacoma Rotary #8. The newest member of the executive committee is secretary, Jake Connolly. Connolly is the CEO and owner of Connolly Music Company in

East Northport, N.Y. Connolly Music Company is the U.S. source for an exclusive lineup of best-in-class music products and dedicated to connecting manufacturers, resellers and the devoted community of musicians they serve. Their brands include Thomastik-Infeld strings, König & Meyer stands, Revelle instruments and bows, Magic Rosin, The Realist transducers and instruments, Jargar strings, Boveda humidification and more. Jake holds a B.A. in

international relations from Bucknell University. "I am truly honored and excited by the opportunity to serve our industry in this capacity," Connolly said. "I look forward to working with the board of directors in executing NAMM's vision, mission and objectives — and serving as an ambassador representing all NAMM members globally." Outgoing chair Tom Sumner was honored during the NAMM board meeting and

applauded for his service on the executive committee over the past eight years. Reflecting, Sumner offered, "It has been an honor to represent our global NAMM membership as chair during the past two years. During that time, I have been privileged and proud of the positive impact NAMM has made globally as we continue to make more music makers every day."



JHS announced that from the 1st of April 2025, **Joel Gomera** is the company's new sales agent in Central and South America. Located in the Dominican Republic and with strong communicational skills, Joel is perfectly positioned to further build closer relationships and sales strategies with JHS distributors and customers in Central American countries which include Belize, Caribbean Islands, Costa

Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Puerto Rico, whilst territories in South America include Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Having been immersed in the music instrument and professional audio industry for 25 years, Joel has gained a wealth of experience within international sales and marketing, he's also a passionate music lover, accomplished composer and singer, and was editor of *Armonía Magazine*, a publication that, for over 14 uninterrupted years, promoted Dominican Christian art and music.

From the ever expanding JHS product catalogue, Joel will represent the company's proprietary brands within the music scene of Central and South America, themselves a vibrant tapestry of diverse musical genres, brands which include Vintage, Fret-King,

Encore, Rapier and Santos Martinez fretted instruments, best-selling audio products and accessories from Kinsman, KAM, Easy Karaoke, Performance Percussion and Odyssey Brasswind, along with The Beatles licensed acoustic guitar packages.

Joel Gomera says: "It is a privilege to join the JHS team as the representative for Latin America, bringing their esteemed brands and products to the region, including iconic names like Vintage Guitars. JHS has a long-standing reputation for excellence in the music industry, and I am excited to contribute to its legacy by expanding its presence in this market and connect musicians with the quality, craftsmanship, and innovation that define JHS." JHS managing director says, "On behalf of the entire team, I'd like to extend my warmest welcome to Joel in this new role, we're confident that he will be a valuable asset, representing our company with professionalism and excellence."

Allen & Heath USA is thrilled to announce the appointment of renowned mixing engineer and experienced touring professional **Jake Hartsfield** as their new Live Sound and Touring manager. Hartsfield, known for his work with artists such as Carly Rae Jepsen, Ben Rector, and Vulfpeck, brings a wealth of expertise and a passion for audio that will significantly strengthen Allen & Heath's commitment to live sound users.

Hartsfield's predecessor in the role, **Mike Bangs**, has been promoted to senior manager of Live Sound and Touring — a new position with focus on high level market development for touring customers and oversight of Allen & Heath training curricula.

In their new roles, Hartsfield and Bangs will both be instrumental in the expansion and delivery of Allen & Heath University, the company's comprehensive in-person and online training program. Drawing on his extensive experience as a Front of House engineer and Tour Manager, Hartsfield will lead sessions across the United States, providing users with in-depth knowledge and practical skills to effectively operate Allen & Heath's flagship dLive and versatile Avantis series

digital mixing consoles. "We are incredibly excited to welcome Jake to the Allen & Heath USA team," said Tom Der, director of Market Development at Allen & Heath USA. "His hands-on experience in both studio mixing and the demanding world of live touring makes him the perfect person to connect with our user base and provide the high-level support and training they expect from Allen & Heath."

"Everyone on this team is very proud of Mike Bangs and all he has contributed to the development of Allen & Heath in the touring world," said Rob Impala, VP of Pro Audio for American Music and Sound. "This is a very well deserved promotion, and we look forward to seeing how much more he can grow in this expanded role."

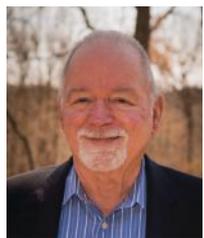
Furthermore, Hartsfield and Bangs will continue to offer dedicated support to users on major tours utilizing Allen & Heath consoles. Their commitments to providing the best possible sounding mix for their own live sound clients align perfectly with Allen & Heath's dedication to user success.

"I am happy to be joining this great team at Allen & Heath USA," said Hartsfield. "I've been



touring with dLive for years and absolutely love the system, so I'm excited to support engineers across the country and contribute to the continued growth and innovation of such an incredible company."

"It has been an honor and a thrill to be a part of a team that has fostered so much growth for an iconic brand," said Bangs. "I am eternally grateful for the faith and partnership from our team and extended family of dealers and engineers. The talent on both sides of the Ampersand is second to none, and I am so excited to watch us all grow while we continue to develop the world's most compelling mixers."



On April 18, we received the following sad news from NASMD:

Beloved NASMD past president **James "Jim" Eugene Kidder** passed away on Tuesday, April 15, 2025. He was 84 years old.

Jim was strongly influenced by his high school band teacher, who encouraged him to continue playing the trumpet. Jim attended Illinois Wesleyan University, where he received a BS in music education, and went on to earn

his MS in school administration from Bradley University. While teaching band in Lacon, Illinois, he met his future wife Floride "Ede" Barnes. They married in 1965. Jim began his career in music retail that same year when he joined Byerly Music as a roadman. Jim and Ede founded Kidder Music Service in 1974, which is now led by their daughter Beth Houlihan. Thanks to many wonderful employees and customers over the years, the business celebrated its 50th anniversary last year.

Jim was a lifelong advocate for music education. He served on the boards of NAMM and NASMD, and was president of NASMD

from 2004 to 2005. Locally, he was active on the boards of the Peoria Symphony and the Peoria Symphony Foundation, the Heartland Festival Orchestra, and the Wheels of Time Museum. He loved playing trumpet in the Peoria Area Senior Citizens band. He never said no to requests for help, and he never met a stranger.

Jim is survived by his wife Ede, daughter Beth Houlihan and her husband Jay, son Matthew Kidder, and grandchildren Maggie Ann Kidder, Jason Gaughan, Hannah DeBernardi and Robert Houlihan.

Even More 'Fast as F*\$%!'

Jon Romanowski Discusses the Recent Launch of Jackson's American Series Soloist SL2 DX

by Christian Wissmuller

“If you are a serious MI retailer, you should be carrying this model, and the other offerings in your assortment. In our opinion, Jackson (Charvel) is the last of the great American brands whose innovative products rival that of such revered peers such as Fender, Gretsch, Gibson, Martin etcetera.”



Joe Romanowski

When Jackson Guitars unleashed the American Series Soloist guitars in early summer 2022, the instruments became an instant success with any and all fans and purveyors of over-the-top, velocity-

driven, heavy music. Built for speed, the guitars were soon everywhere in the metal community and beyond.

As Jackson launches the new American

Series Soloist SL2 DX, with even more fast-fretwork functionality, we figured it'd be an ideal time to check in with Jon Romanowski, VP of Product.

Q. “Fast as F*\$%!” how does the newly introduced SL2 DX improve upon that already bold — and proven — claim?

A. Jon Romanowski: I am pleased to report that we're even faster, since these models are equipped with stainless steel frets. “The feel is unreal”, as they say, as the stainless steel allows your hand to effortlessly glide across the fingerboard. Of course, the SL2 has our svelte and super comfortable Speed Neck, a 12-16” compound radius ebony fingerboard and our handshake heel neck joint, so you can effortlessly reach the upper register.

Q. Can you outline the major differences between the SL2 DX HT and the SL2 DX?

A. Unlike the SL3 launch, we are offering not just double locking models, but hardtail variants as well. The SL2 DX HT is the hardtail version — that's the major difference. Our research has concluded that players also want a more basic variant, without the double locking features, and so we filled that need with SL2DX HT hardtail.

Q. For our many dealer-subscribers reading this, what's the MSRP and MAP of these new models?

A. The MAPs range from \$2399 (Satin / hardtail) to \$2499 for the Floyd Rose loaded, gloss finished variants. That's a killer deal for an American made metal machine!

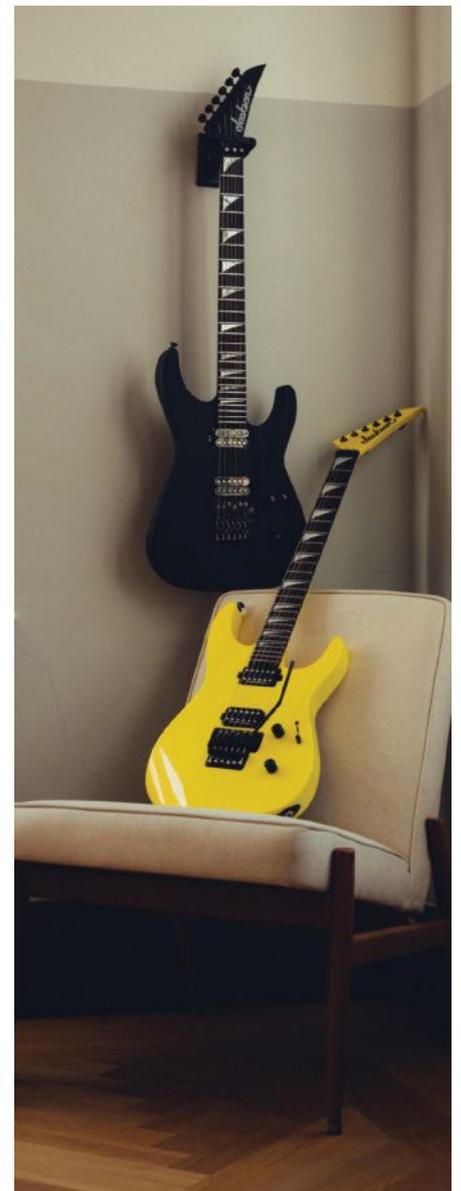
Q. Of the upgrades made to the new SL2 DX model, which specifically enhance velocity? What features will a player immediately notice in terms of

improving the ability to really race up and down the fretboard/neck?

A. In our opinion, it will be the addition of stainless steel frets. These frets enhance, not inhibit, velocity. When you combine that feature with our speed neck, and compound radius ebony fingerboard, it's REALLY hard to put the SL2 down, once you pick it up to play it!

Q. One thing that a lot of players and reviewers noted back in 2022 was that the American Series Soloist was a “stealth assassin” — the looks aren't ostentatious or over the top, but the guitar, itself, is an absolute monster. With the SL2 DX, Jackson is continuing that theme with understated — but beautiful — shapes and a limited and fairly conservative color palette in terms of finishes (I suppose with the exception of the Lemon Ice option). Can you talk about the decision to not go “wild” with aesthetics, like some other metal/shredder guitars on the market, and instead embrace that “stealth” approach, that “let the guitar and player do the talking” philosophy?

A. Our goal is to make a series of great playing and sounding guitars that exude a refined elegance — and that typically manifests itself in the form of a somewhat conservative color palette. We are laying the foundation for the series, so to speak. To balance that tactic out, there are the “outliers” — Lemon Ice and Lambo Orange, for example, to tacitly reassure customers that we are aware of the need for flashy finishes. This approach also allows us to create special runs of colors or hardware combinations that are variants of the core, and that's how we will scratch that proverbial “itch” to address the “wild” side.



■ UpFront Q&A

Q. Back in 2022 there were a number of big names attached to the launch of the American Series Soloist line — the aforementioned Brandon Ellis, Scott Ian from Anthrax, and others. This time around, Fender's enlisted the UK band Pest Control to celebrate the SL2 DX. Two questions: 1) How important have artist endorsements been to Jackson — not just the American Series Soloist, but the entire brand, overall;

A. The association with artists is very critical: Jackson was a guitar brand that was born from the culmination of artist input balanced with “business” pragmatism. That’s how Concorde and Randy’s second guitar were created. So, collaborating and associating with relevant artists is always one of our strategic core values.

Q. The band Pest Control has been heavily involved in early promo for the new line. How did the partnership with Pest Control come about?

A. Our marketing team in Europe, led by Helen Phillips, our European sales and marketing director and A&R manager Tim Hiller Brook, collaborating with our US marketing manager, Sydney Johnson, were the masterminds behind that collaboration. We make a concerted effort to really balance our roster with high profile, “A list” artists and hot, up and coming new artists. This collaboration is a great example of the latter.

Q. Any other plan in terms of promotion, roll-out, et cetera as it pertains to the new SL2 DX?

A. Well...The SL2DX campaign is rolling out now and many of the elements are already locked and loaded, so not many changes to that campaign. But, we are in the midst of plotting/planning the next phase of products that will roll-out in September and we may use that

opportunity to change up the promotional tactics!

Q. Final thoughts you'd like to share with MI retailers re: the new Jackson American Series Soloist SL2 DX?

A. If you are a serious MI retailer, you should be carrying this model, and the other offerings in your assortment. In our opinion, Jackson (Charvel) is the last of the great American brands whose innovative products rival that of such revered peers such as Fender, Gretsch, Gibson, Martin et cetera. There are lots of peer competitor brands from Japan that have taken those ideas and refined them — but they didn't invent them — Jackson did. And their offerings aren't American made. Discerning players can feel/hear the difference in those USA made items. The ingredients and craftsmanship are at a whole 'nother level! In addition, the brand helped forge a whole new category of guitars for a whole new breed of player and style of playing — a style traditional brands couldn't effectively service. That opportunity comes once in a millennium. So I would encourage MI retailers to think of the brand in that context. I mention that perspective because the initiative to expand our US made Jackson products was born from that perspective. Metal/hard rock may not be everyone's taste de jour, but those customers do exist, and our custom shop offerings may be out of reach financially with certain players' budget. The American Series offerings bridge that gap. No one makes a USA made, high quality, high performance/metal guitar like Jackson. These products should be part of your assortment as a complement to the more traditional USA — made offerings. These USA made Jackson products play great, sound great, look great... and as we roll out the other platforms over the next 36 months, we will have a wide offering for the discerning high velocity player! Nobody does it better than Jackson — don't get left behind!



“ Our goal is to make a series of great playing and sounding guitars that exude a refined elegance — and that typically manifests itself in the form of a somewhat conservative color palette. ”





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INSIDE THE 'AT-HOME' REVOLUTION: AUDIO INTERFACES HAVE RESHAPED MUSIC PRODUCTION by Christian Wissmuller

Sales of Audio Interfaces Exploded During the Pandemic and Now Remain a Cornerstone of MI Retail

As the audio production landscape continues to evolve, audio interfaces remain at the core of modern recording, mixing, and mastering workflows. In this roundtable discussion, executives and product specialists from Focusrite, Universal Audio, and PreSonus offer a behind-the-scenes look

at how their companies are driving innovation in the DAW space. From hardware integration to workflow optimization and user accessibility, these industry leaders provide valuable insights into the trends and technologies shaping the next generation of music production tools.

creation (music, podcasts, et cetera) during the Pandemic, but some feel that trend has cooled down of late. Do you feel sales of Audio interfaces in early 2025 are up, level, or down when compared to this time last year?

There was a giant boom in at-home audio



“What we’re seeing now is less about explosive growth and more about a sustained, maturing market. – VP of Product Lev Perrey, Universal Audio”



Lev Perrey: The pandemic certainly created a surge in home recording, and while that spike has naturally leveled, the overall baseline is still higher than pre-2020. What we’re seeing now is less about explosive growth and more about a sustained, maturing market. Users are becoming more discerning, upgrading their gear, refining their workflow, and looking for tools that integrate seamlessly into a broader creative ecosystem. So while the volume may feel different, the intent behind purchases is deeper and more considered than ever.



“Superior sound quality is the foundation of any audio interface. Beyond that, it must be effortless to use and crafted with a design that looks as professional as it sounds. – Adrian Haselhuber, Vice President of Product Management, PreSonus Hardware”



Adrian Haselhuber: The boom during the pandemic can partly be attributed to a broader range of customers seeking audio interfaces (home offices, non-music live streaming, et cetera). As those needs were met, the market normalized back to core interface customers. Optimism is growing in early 2025 as musicians realize the need to be content creators to stand out on social platforms. Many who once believed they didn’t need to have an audio interface for recording or live streaming are now considering one for the first time.



“The most successful dealers are those who provide customers with access to what they are looking for and do so very quickly. A well-stocked inventory allows for quick transactions, ensuring customers can get products without delay, either picking it up themselves or getting overnight delivery. – Laura Camacho, Senior Vice President, Americas - Focusrite Group”



Laura Camacho: At Focusrite, we are pleased to see consistent growth continue in our audio interfaces over the last year. While the pandemic-induced boom of at-home audio creation may have now evolved, the demand for high-quality audio equipment remains robust. Focusrite continues to innovate and expand its product offerings, ensuring that creators have the tools they need to produce professional content.

For your brand, what specific models of interfaces are selling particularly well at the moment?



AH: The Quantum USB family launched in 2024 to fantastic reviews from both media and customers. They remain top sellers as word spreads that they’re the next evolution of PreSonus and a direct result of collaboration between PreSonus and Fender.



LC: Demand remains high for our new Scarlett 4th Generation interfaces, which have earned awards and widespread acclaim. These interfaces are designed to meet the diverse needs of both creators and professionals. With its intuitive design, superior quality, robust build, and iconic color, Scarlett is a must-have in any studio setup. And with a variety of price points and features, we continue to attract a global audience to these interfaces.



LP: We’re seeing strong engagement across multiple tiers of our product line in our Apollo and Volt families of audio interfaces, which tells us there’s healthy demand, from first-time creators to experienced professionals and everyone in between. What’s especially encouraging is how many customers are returning to us to upgrade as their needs grow, which speaks to long-term trust in the brand. Rather than focusing on one or two “best sellers,” we’re

thinking in terms of customer journeys and how our portfolio supports evolving creative needs across hardware and software.

What features — functionality, size, price-point, et cetera — do you feel are appealing most to end-users in 2025?

LC: In 2025, end-users are looking for audio interfaces that strike the perfect balance between functionality, size, and price—while also enhancing their workflow. Clean mic pres and high-quality conversion are still key expectations, but creators are now asking, ‘What else can my interface do for me?’ This is where innovation comes into play. Focusrite Scarlett 4th Generation features like Auto Gain and Clip Safe are becoming increasingly valuable because they go beyond pure audio quality—they streamline the recording process, reduce technical frustrations, and ultimately make engineers’ lives easier. As workflows evolve, the demand for smart, intuitive tools will continue to shape the future of audio technology.



LP: Flexibility and ease of use continue to be major drivers. Creators want powerful tools that don’t require a manual the size of a novel to get started. Portability matters more than ever, especially for hybrid workflows, studio, stage, and on-the-go. Price sensitivity remains real, but users are also willing to invest if they see lasting value. Features like onboard DSP/plugins, low-latency performance, great converters, rock-solid drivers, and meaningful bundled software are all key.



AH: Superior sound quality is the foundation of any audio interface. Beyond that, it must be effortless to use and crafted with a design that looks as professional as it sounds. These features aren’t just trendy, they’ve stood the test of time.

Have you observed any “best practices” being adopted by MI retailers who are especially successful at moving Audio Interfaces?



AH: Successful retailers rely on well-trained, confident sales reps who can speak knowledgeably about products.

Anytime PreSonus can help train sales reps, it’s a win for the retailer and for PreSonus.

LP: The most effective retailers tend to be the ones who combine product knowledge with authentic storytelling. They understand their customers, whether it’s a new user producing beats or a seasoned pro who has been making music for decades. Providing education, not just specs; demonstrating real-world use cases; and offering post-sale support all go a long way. Online or in-store, customers gravitate to retailers who feel like trusted guides, not just order takers.



LC: The most successful dealers are those who provide customers with access to what they are looking for and do so very quickly. A well-stocked inventory allows for quick transactions, ensuring customers can get products without delay, either picking it up themselves or getting overnight delivery. Traditional brick-and-mortar stores continue to drive traffic, alongside online retailers who use modern tools to target their audience more effectively. However, comprehensive product content remains essential, and we observe a significant amount of engagement when dealers offer robust content, whether created by them or our team.

Do you have any recent or upcoming models of interfaces you’d like to shine the spotlight on?



LP: Just recently, we refreshed our entire Apollo X lineup, from Desktop models like the Apollo Twin X and Apollo x4 to Rackmount models like the Apollo x8p and Apollo x16. These

models feature a fresh look and feel, updated best-in-class mastering-grade conversion, Unison Auto-Gain, and Monitor Correction with Sonarworks® integration – to name a few highlights. We’re always iterating, and 2025 is no exception. Enhancing the audio interface experience for our customers through ongoing software development remains a top priority. We will continue to develop DSP and Native software for our interface lineups in accordance with what our customers ask us for, so there is a lot to look forward to this year and beyond!

LC: Focusrite Group brands have a robust roadmap for 2025 and beyond, but the Scarlett 4th Generation interfaces, particularly the high I/O models, are well-received and maintain significant momentum. The Scarlett 18i20 4th Generation has become even more powerful with a firmware update, unlocking 16 channels of ADAT I/O, which allows producers to expand up to 24 inputs and 28 outputs from a one box. Additionally, the Scarlett 16i16, 18i16, and 18i20 deliver a huge 122dB dynamic range, all-new

remote-controlled preamps with 69dB of gain, and innovative features like Auto Gain and Clip Safe, similar to their smaller siblings (Scarlett Solo, 2i2, and 4i4).

AH: The Quantum ES and HD USB audio interfaces feature best-in-class “MAX-HD” preamps with +75 dB of clean gain, powered by our high performance converters. Plus, latency is so low, it’s virtually imperceptible.



Expectations for sales of Audio Interfaces in the coming months?



LC: Looking ahead, we anticipate steady growth of Focusrite audio interfaces. Holding a significant market share, our strong reputation and continuous

innovation make us a leader in the market. Even though economic uncertainties persist, the combination of market growth and Focusrite’s strong product offerings and roadmap paints a promising picture for our audio interface sales in the coming months.

AH: The trend shows continued growth as recording and live streaming become more common among musicians and recording enthusiasts.



LP: We’re entering the year with cautious optimism. The market continues to evolve, and while macroeconomic factors always play a role, we believe the appetite for creative expression is still strong. We’re focusing less on chasing short-term volume and more on building long-term value – for users, the brand, and our retail partners. The tools may change, the platforms may shift, but the need to create is not going anywhere.



JODYJAZZ CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

Founder Jody Espina Reflects on a Quarter-Century

by Christian Wissmuller



Jody Espina playing a Runyon Baritone mpc in 1975. That model mpc would be customized in 2000 and became the JodyJazz Classic

Espina on what drove him to start JodyJazz in the first place, and how the values that guided him then continue to lead the company to ever-greater heights.

First off, JodyJazz is reaching a significant milestone this year. Congratulations on the 25th Anniversary!

Jody Espina: Thank you. It's gone by very fast! It doesn't seem that long ago that I was in New York City selling mouthpieces out of my loft downtown.

Let's do a little bit of "then & now" — back in 2000, how many JodyJazz employees were there total? Where were the JodyJazz HQ and production facilities 25 years ago and how large (square footage) were they? Bringing things to the present day, how many employees are there in 2025? Where are the JodyJazz facilities and what size are they?

Well, back in 2000 there was just me. In 1999 I met legendary saxophonist and mouthpiece maker Santy Runyon, playing at his 90th Birthday party. Santy customized a mouthpiece to my specifications which I immediately fell in love with, and it was actually Santy's idea to make it for me and call it the JodyJazz mouthpiece. Word got out about this special mouthpiece, and I soon became overrun with orders for it. Over the next six years I travelled to the Runyan factory in Opelousas, Louisiana, seven or eight times a year and developed the range into a full line of mouthpieces. But I was never completely satisfied and wanted to make my own mouthpieces. I moved the business to Savannah in 2008 and in 2011 we moved to our current location, which we have since expanded twice. Our multi-storied factory and offices now occupy 10,000 sq ft and we now have a staff of 23 employees.

Looking back at the past quarter-century, what are some significant milestone events and product introductions that really stand out to you?

On the product side, the development of DV mouthpieces was a game changer. Metal mouthpieces generally have more power and presence, but the downside is that they always sound too

“ I love music and I love playing the saxophone. We do what we do because music is one of the greatest things in life and by doing different outreach programs, we might get to touch young musicians that otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to play our products.”

“It's been an amazing 25 years, and I could not have reached this milestone without the support of all the amazing Artists, our hard-working dealers and my amazing staff and factory crew.”

2025 marks 25 years of crafting some of the world's finest saxophone mouthpieces for JodyJazz. It's also been two and a half decades of industry-leading innovation, partnerships with some of the highest-profile performers alive, significant corporate acquisitions, and community outreach.

MMR recently spoke with founder and president Jody

bright and shrill. So, I had always wanted to find a way to make a metal mouthpiece that didn't have that shrillness but still had that power and projection. Inspired by the book 'The Da Vinci Code' (hence the name 'DV') I applied the Golden Mean proportions found in nature to the design of a mouthpiece. This resulted in several special design features, the most important of which is the patented DV secondary window design. This resulted in a spectacular series of mouthpieces which are still among our best-selling mouthpieces to this day. The DV models have incredible presence and projection but still have a big fat mid-range and bottom end that has never been present before in metal mouthpieces.

Equally significant to me has been the evolution of the business to the type of company it has become today. I have been able to attract some incredible talent to the company. From manufacturing and operations to product design and programming, to sales and marketing, I'd put my team up against anybody's. Plus, every mouthpiece we make is painstakingly finished by hand, so we also have a rigorous apprenticeship program for hand-working. I consider our hand workers to be the very best in the world. As a company we offer full medical, competitive benefits and 401k plan etc. The team we have assembled is the absolute key to our success; I'm so proud of what everyone on our team does day in and day out. I'm not sure exactly how it happened but I know that everyone working with JodyJazz/Chedeville/Rousseau is doing their best to provide the best products and service of any company, not just in our sector.

JodyJazz has made some significant brand acquisitions over the years — Chedeville in 2017, E. Rousseau in 2020. How has the expansion of the product offerings impacted JodyJazz's reach with both the customer base and retailers? (If the response to the above question covers this subject, feel free to ignore)

It was always my plan to expand beyond just mouthpieces for Jazz. There are more clarinet players in the world than sax players and of course the concert band market, especially within school music programs, is significantly larger than jazz band. So, it was obvious to apply my design skills and our manufacturing capabilities to make these kinds of mouthpieces. But with the Brand name "JodyJazz" it was always going to be a challenge to do that. I'm not sure that many classical saxophonists and classical clarinet players would want to play a mouthpiece with "Jazz" written on it, however great the mouthpiece might be!! So, when the Chedeville company became available I jumped at the opportunity. The rich history and heritage of the brand name attracted the immediate interest of the players, and the quality and unique designs have g a i n e d fans all



over the world. We have many top clarinet players now playing Chedeville mouthpieces and more and more seem to be coming on board every day. An increasing number of retailers globally are now offering Chedeville clarinet mouthpieces alongside the traditionally dominant brands in this category.

The plan originally was to utilize the Chedeville brand name for our classical saxophone range also. But then in 2019 Dr. Rousseau contacted me to let me know that he was planning to sell his company, and he asked me if I would want to acquire it. As one of the most celebrated names in the classical saxophone world, of course I didn't think twice. It was truly humbling and very meaningful to me that of all the people that Dr. Rousseau could have sold to, he chose me first because he felt that his legacy and the legacy of his mouthpieces would be safest in my hands. I consider that in itself to be one of the greatest compliments I could ever receive. We completed the acquisition in January 2020 right before the pandemic which wasn't the greatest timing. But the worldwide demand for the mouthpieces has grown rapidly especially in Asia where they are incredibly popular in countries like Japan and Korea. In 2023 we appointed St Louis Music as the exclusive distributor for the Rousseau products in the USA and Canada. We felt that their extensive national reach would be beneficial in re-establishing the brand with school music dealers who work with schools whose band programs are predominantly for concert band. They are a great organization, and domestic sales have been growing steadily.

The brand has been embraced by so many high-profile artists including Kurt Whalum, George Garzone, Tom Scott, Don Braden, Andy Snitzer, Ed Calle and The Count Basie Orchestra Sax Section, among many others. How important have artist endorsements been for the evolution of the brand?

The role of the Artist Endorser has changed in recent times. Back in my day when I was studying at Berklee we'd sit around listening to records and we'd know everything there was to know about each of the players on the record and know exactly what gear they were using. Nowadays people are listening on Spotify etc and they don't even know who is playing on the record. Social media and YouTube are far more important. More and more customers are making their buying decisions based upon videos. But I've always considered our Endorsers to be my expanded R&D team. It's a privilege to have this incredible team of experts to whom I can send prototypes to gain their opinion and feedback. Their feedback is invaluable to me, and it's been like that since day one. Right from the very early days, players like George Garzone and Andy Snitzer were always incredibly generous with their time in offering feedback to me on various designs.

JodyJazz has always had a very active international outreach — I know that I'll see you at every Music China show I attend (unfortunately I was unable to this past year) and you've also travelled to Cuba, Southeast Asia, Brazil, etc. How important is the international market to the brand?

We do over 60% of our business outside of the USA so the international markets are incredibly important to us. I began attending the Frankfurt Musikmesse in Germany very early on and that was incredibly important in building our international business. It was expensive to exhibit there but I was able to forge long-lasting relationships with many overseas customers purely because of our presence there. That show is sorely missed. I do hope it, or some version of it, can come back in the future. We make a major investment in exhibiting at Music China not only because of the importance of the China market but because, now without Musikmesse, many of our larger overseas customers attend the show. The 2019 Music China show was huge! It was incredible, the busiest one ever and we were kept on our toes working with not only our domestic China customers but also so many of our EU and Asian distributors and dealers. Covid unfortunately very much took the wind out of the Music China Show's sails, and we were not able to attend again until last year. It's not like it was, but we'll be back exhibiting again this year. I myself am regularly invited to perform masterclasses and workshops around the world and continue to travel extensively. So far this year, I've already performed in Mexico and in Costa Rica. In



Jody gives a clinic to a classroom in Sarasota, FL in 2003



Jody loved the DVs so much, he liked to play two at a time! (circa: 2007)



Jody Espina with Tom Scott

July, I'll be performing at the Indonesia Saxophone festival and then will be traveling on to Nanjing, China for a Clarinet competition and then will attend the World Saxophone Congress in Harbin, China.

The company has also always been very active in altruistic efforts, both here at home-base and abroad, sponsoring festivals, hosting visits to the company facilities, supporting the Sound Support Foundation Scholarship, helping MI retailers during the Pandemic with the 'Music Store Stimulus' program, etc. Why are these types of initiatives so important to JodyJazz?

I love music and I love playing the saxophone. We do what we do because music is one of the greatest things in life and by doing different outreach programs, we might get to touch young musicians that otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to play our products. I've always felt that a love of music is one of the greatest gifts we can give our children. So, any opportunity to support music education events or organizations, and music scholarship programs is very important to me. JodyJazz is also a major sponsor of the Music Achievement Council which is doing incredibly important work here in the USA. No one is doing more to support the development, recruitment and retention of music educators. Plus, their music education advocacy programs offer essential tools for school music dealers to help ensure that school band programs in their districts continue to receive the support and funding they require. As for the Music stores, they play such a vital role in their communities. Most people don't realize how much the school Music dealers serve and support their entire community but especially the band directors and students. I've met so many people and companies in this industry who are great people and give back selflessly all of the time.

Leading up to both the anniversary year and the NAMM Show in Anaheim, JodyJazz had a couple of significant new releases — the DV HR Series Baritone and the DV JC Jody Custom sax mouthpieces. How has the reception been to these new mouthpieces so far?

We're only just now getting the DV JC JODY CUSTOM Alto mouthpieces out into the market. This whole idea came about because back in the summer of 2024, I was thinking of ideas for a special 25th Anniversary limited edition model. Since the launch of the original back in 2005, I had occasionally made various slight tweaks and changes to my personal DV. When I stopped to think about it, I realized that my personal mouthpiece at this point had really become a different model. After a little more tweaking of my personal DV we came upon a version of the mouthpiece that I just freaked out over. I loved it so much that I decided it was too good to be a limited edition, and I wanted to make it available to everyone. So far everyone who has played it loves it.

Anniversary

The DV HR Alto and Tenor models were the first hard rubber mouthpieces to feature the patented DV design. They have both been incredibly popular and are now some of our best-selling models. So, it was only natural for us to introduce the Baritone model, and we are now working on a Soprano. I feel that the application of the secondary window has an even more dramatic effect on the Baritone. Baritone sax players need a mouthpiece that lets them play a live gig with enough volume and power to be heard, but that doesn't lose richness in the tone. The DV HR Baritone really projects from the bandstand but can also play beautifully and sweetly. Above all it is extremely versatile.

We have had such great success with our new product releases for so many years and I believe that these latest two releases show that we are not slowing down at all.

Are there other recent or upcoming releases you'd like to draw MMR readers' attention to?

Our collaboration with the legendary Hollywood studio musician and famed clarinet mouthpiece maker Jim Kanter has done more to put Chedeville on the map than anything else we've ever done. The first mouthpiece design born from that collaboration; the "Chedeville Kanter Cinema" model has been popular beyond our wildest dreams. This is now one of our very most-popular mouthpieces worldwide, period, and I'm talking about all JodyJazz, Chedeville and Rousseau models. It has been incredibly successful. I am very excited to say that we have just followed that up with the second model in that collaboration named the "Chedeville Kanter Opera" model. Jim believes that this new model will be even more popular than the Cinema model!! So, we are very excited to get that out on the market.

We've also had a fantastic response to the new third generation Rousseau models, what we are calling "Rousseau 3.0". After acquiring Rousseau, it was always our plan to manufacture all the Rousseau mouthpieces ourselves at the JodyJazz factory, but it was not something we could accomplish overnight. So, we had to do it in stages. First, we had to work with the original manufacturer to correct several of the designs that had been allowed to go out of spec over time and to improve the quality overall. These were essentially the 2nd generation models. That then gave us time to transfer the entire Rousseau line to be fully manufactured from start

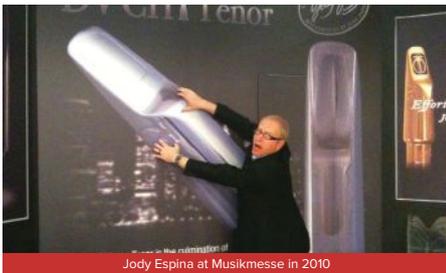
to finish at the JodyJazz factory. That migration was completed in the summer of 2024. Now with the Rousseau 3.0 models we have full control over the manufacturing process, and not only have we radically improved the consistency of the mouthpieces by enforcing stricter quality controls, but we have also improved several of the mouthpiece designs. The prices have stayed the same, but the quality is infinitely superior. For the Rousseau 3.0 models we like to say that we are offering "Boutique mouthpieces at mass-production prices".

Are there any upcoming 25th Anniversary events or promotions you'd like to preview?

We will be celebrating our 25th Anniversary with a very special concert featuring Kirk Whalum during the Savannah Jazz festival this coming September. We'll also be having lots of events at our factory around the time of the festival including some performances and a retrospective of the history of JodyJazz that I am personally putting together myself. For many years we have proudly supported the annual Savannah Jazz Festival which is organized every year by the Savannah Jazz Association which is a non-profit organization. The highlight of the festival is the two days of outdoor concerts in beautiful Forsyth Park in downtown Savannah. These outdoor concerts are completely free and open to the public and always feature some truly world-class talent. I served on the Board of Directors of Savannah Jazz for several years and in 2023 I was proud to be inducted into the Savannah Jazz Hall of Fame. Colin Schofield, our VP of Sales & Marketing Worldwide, is currently serving as President of the Board. So, we've always had a close association with the Savannah Jazz organization, and it only seemed fitting that we should partner with them to bring Kirk Whalum to Savannah and celebrate our 25th Anniversary in style!!

Closing thoughts?

It's been an amazing 25 years, and I could not have reached this milestone without the support of all the amazing Artists, our hard-working dealers and my amazing staff and factory crew. It has been beyond a dream come true and I can't wait to see what the next 25 years will bring!



Jody Espina at Musikmesse in 2010



Jody Espina with Jim Kanter



Group shot: The Jazz Jam



George Garzone and Jody Espina at the JodyJazz factory



The JodyJazz, Inc. showroom



Jody Espina performing live



Jody with Dr. Rousseau



Jody Espina performing live

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ALLEN & HEATH USA by Christian Wissmuller BRINGS SXSW 2025 TO LIFE!

“ Our Allen & Heath rep force has hosted several awesome events pulling together audio training and mingling and selling in interesting and effective ways... Ping your AM&S contact if you'd like to brainstorm more cool ideas on this front. We're all ears! ”

Allen & Heath is one of the go-to names in sound reinforcement for FOH engineers, touring bands, midsize venues, arenas, and theaters of all sizes – and for good reason! These guys aren't repeat (and I do mean “repeat”) *MMR* Dealers' Choice Award-winners for nothing.

We recently touched base with director of marketing Jeff Hawley to talk about A&H's triumphant showing at the 2025 South by Southwest (SXSW) Music Festival.

Anyone who reads *MMR* or gets our weekly e-newsletters is surely aware of how active AM&S brands are in the live event space and festivals. Allen & Heath is a key AM&S distributed brand in the US and they just had a huge presence at the recent SXSW in Austin as well as touring out with Neal McCoy, supporting the Milwaukee Irish Fest, and powering last summer's 2024 Guitar Fest. How important is it to AM&S for brands like Allen & Heath to be key components at these high-profile events and concerts?

Jeff Hawley: Yes, we've been busy! We continue to be present in a variety of settings with support on the ground with Allen & Heath USA in a big way. Telling these stories via PR in trade publications like *MMR* is one of the ways we see benefits from our efforts – making sure that key MI and PA dealers know we're always doing our best to get close to the market and build up demand. We're out there getting our hands dirty! That's one obvious “customer” we are targeting with our huge presence at festivals and live events – the readers of *MMR*.

When we are out in force at events like SXSW, another important focus is the rental and production companies and local partners in the pro audio space that we work with. We have contacts with many audio engineers from touring and local freelance and house engineers at local Austin venues as well. As Allen & Heath was the production audio console for dozens of SXSW venues, this direct interaction and opportunity for feedback and training

with those engineers is invaluable. I'd absolutely put these sorts of experiential events in the “highly important” category for us overall.

Do you have any metrics or even anecdotal stories that illustrate how brand awareness for Allen & Heath has been elevated via these events? Have you witnessed a direct “bump” in demand for specific models or lines after being associated with, say, a big festival or show?

Well, I do have lots of sales and market share data over the years to this point. If I told you, I'd have to kill you. [laughs] But I can confidently state that the number of A&H consoles at large festivals like SXSW has exponentially grown over the years. Oftentimes I think people say “exponentially” when they really mean “steadily” or “significantly,” but in the case of SXSW it is literally exponential from a couple small showcases and venues to now over 300 performances and stages across the city. The really cool finding here is that each year we see more and more venues switching over to A&H in the interim between the previous year and the current show run. So the amount of production consoles we've provided is increasing, but that is on top of the number of venues that already just have A&H in place “organically” now. Importantly, those sales are flowing through the local MI/PA sales channel.

We see a similar overall bump for A&H at festivals and shows and venues of all sizes – SXSW being just one subset of the full touring and production and installed audio market. Of course, as engineers see more and more of AM&S brand or product X as the backline or provided production gear, they are more likely to accept and request it on future shows.

This association with the big shows and festivals is great for us. But I'd argue that the same associative value can come along for dealers and musicians and connected music industry folks at all levels. I'm obviously a marketer and can talk up A&H all day long – but I think there is real value out there in supporting similar sorts of events from the dealer standpoint as well.



Allen & Heath was visible across Austin at stages of all sizes. Photo credit Tom Der.

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30 Vocal Duets for Recitals, Concerts, and Contests



Alfred Music

■ Sound

From a larger MI industry/“making music-makers” stance, why and how are these types of gatherings and events crucial to sparking interest in musical performance and driving potential customers to lessons and music retailers? How might music dealers capitalize more on the exposure provided by festivals and concerts in their area?

This “making music-makers” is a mission that I’ve been supporting for many years, even before my time at AM&S. I think every brand within the industry should be doing their part to devote some portion of their marketing mix to building this “top of the funnel” awareness of the coolness and overall societal value music performance and production brings about. As we’re all collectively vying for the same discretionary income collectively as a music industry, obviously it is important to brand “Music” as best as we can. Here is where I think the local dealers and independent music teachers and all of the various connected music folks can connect up with events like Milwaukee Irish Fest or SXSW or the Duluth National Hot Dog Day Concert in the Park. I just made that last one up, but the point is that you don’t have to wait for a huge concert or festival to come to your local area.

Just about every community out there has opportunities to get involved and come in as a sponsor – even if it is just a banner sign and providing a simple portable PA for the park stage. This ties to the “associative value” point I mentioned before. I remember how much of an impact it made back in my college days to see Anaheim Band Instruments with their little tabletop of trumpets and trombones at the Fullerton College Jazz Festival. I’m sure it influenced my decision to work there and ultimately end up on a path into branding and marketing. “Wow, if that store is cool enough to show up and support the things I love, I should support that store!” In a way, my career all started with a retailer’s decision to set out a display table and some horns at that event.

Are you aware of any specific MI retailers who’ve been especially savvy and taking advantage of the inherent promotional opportunities provided by live performances? Specific examples?

There are some great examples here, sure. Sweetwater GearFest was an awesome model I thought. Obviously a little thing called COVID threw a wrench in that live event plan, but that sort of merging of commerce and performance had a great vibe. There are a lot of smaller regional and more targeted events like the Christian Musician Summit up here in the Pacific Northwest that I also think are good examples. In that case there are a few really engaged dealers – both local and national – alongside performances and educational sessions on worship

mixing and playing guitar in a church setting, et cetera. Our Allen & Heath rep force has hosted several awesome events pulling together audio training and mingling and selling in interesting and effective ways. Also great keyboard and keyboard focused events co-sponsored with dealers on the AM&S Music Creation Division side of things. Ping your AM&S contact if you’d like to brainstorm more cool ideas on this front. We’re all ears!

To what degree do you feel industry organizations such as NAMM are helping both MI suppliers and dealers tap this avenue of driving demand via these sorts of events? Do you feel more could be done?

I personally am not sure that NAMM’s resources are best utilized in planning or directly staging these sorts of events at scale. Perhaps that is something that they’ve tried in the past, I’m not sure. But I do think that refining the “public” days at NAMM is a possible interesting way forward. I might get some heated letters to the editor on that take, but I’d argue that for a certain subset of the musical population NAMM is just as snazzy and as aspirational as SXSW. Certainly we are at the show to show off our wares to dealers – but I’m not sure that means to the exclusion of end-users and the general public. After all, who is going to buy these instruments en masse at the end of the day? Only people in the industry? I can only fit so many guitars on my own office wall.

All of that to say that I’m sure the NAMM folks are looking carefully at both the short-term and long-term goals of the NAMM Show and the advocacy function of NAMM. The goal is obviously to strike the balance between making the show work for manufacturers and dealers and creating the buzz and excitement necessary to increase overall demand. I’ll leave that call in the capable hands of the NAMM management team.

I will add that Zach [Phillips] and the NAMM team have done an amazing job at expanding the reach of NAMM to include more live sound and production. The A&H training we host each year is a great validation of the “build it and they will come” approach with record numbers of attendees each year and standing-room only sessions. We started small and created a reason for a new audience to feel connected and find value – and overall demand for training increased. More training is known to lead to more sales. Companies can post video training online (and I’ve designed a lot of that over the years as well), but nothing beats connecting and mingling in person. The short answer is that of course more can be done, but I think most of the lift can be smaller and more local vs. a “top down” push from organizations like NAMM. Just my two cents.



The Allen & Heath team continued their support of the British Music Embassy indoor and outdoor stages during SXSW. Photo credit Tom Der.

A full range of AM&S backline and PA gear was deployed at the Elysium showcase event during SXSW 2025. Photo credit Tom Der.



Can you share about some recent or upcoming initiatives that AM&S brands have embarked on, or will embark on, to further raise their profile by partnering with high-profile artists or shows?

We recently expanded the A&H USA Live Sound & Touring team to enable us to continue the highly successful Allen & Heath University training across the US while also providing in-person support to more festivals and high-profile engineers and artists. One new aspect of SXSW for 2025 was the production and sponsorship of a dedicated AM&S showcase. Allen & Heath was everywhere, but we also partnered with our sister JAM companies (KMC Music, The Music People / On-Stage Stands) to provide a full backline and PA as we highlighted up-and-coming musical acts. From sE and CAD mics on On-Stage stands to Randall amps and NORD keyboards and over to an A&H dLive at front of house with BASSBOSS in the PA mix, we provided it all.

Not only was this effective from a content gathering perspective for the included brands, but we once again were able to make those direct connections to musicians and engineers and promoters and production staff at all levels. We've done similar things with GuitarFest at the Honda Center in the past. We are banking on the "halo effect" of these efforts to increase traffic into retail and generally create more music makers in the world. I'd certainly think more of these types of activations are in the works for the future.



Caption: A full range of AM&S backline and PA gear was deployed at the Elysium showcase event during SXSW 2025. Photo credit Tom Der.

Any final thoughts on this larger topic you'd like to share with MMR readers?

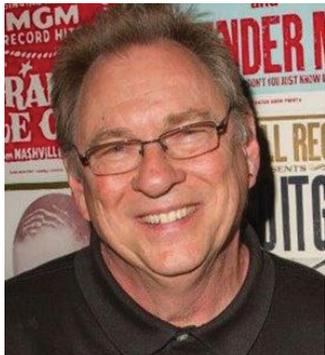
I'd just like to urge dealers to get creative and reach out to manufacturers with these ideas and opportunities. Not every advertiser in the pages of MMR has the product breadth in their lineup like JAM to cover a large production from top to bottom, but just about every company you work with is on the lookout for ways to connect more closely with their fanbase. Back to my fictional Duluth National Hot Dog Day Concert in the Park example, I think it is important to also not wait for the Super Bowl to swing into town. Start small, think of interesting ways you can connect with the community. Ping indie guitar strap companies and kazoo brands for support, don't just think JAM-level folks.

Music is inherently a community activity – we are most often performing with a group and (we hope!) performing for an audience. Let's make sure we are all doing our part to be visible to that community as cool people and as fellow musicians and music lovers. I doubt very seriously that you have anyone on your staff that hates music. Get your music-loving staff involved and more connected to their passion, position your business as the local go-to resource, and let's always remember to tell the story of why music is a key part of what makes a community a community. The good news is that the story is best told by kicking up the volume and letting the jam begin. What could be wrong with that?!

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CHASING VALIDATION

The Achilles Heel of Success



by Menzie Pittman,
Author of *The New Musician*

Whether you are a performing artist, a writer, a music retailer, or an educator, I think most of us would agree—it feels nice when we are recognized for work well done, or praised for our unique achievements.

Because this type of affirmation feels so good, it can be extremely addictive. Most successful retailers and creatives know that when the need for validation influences our sense of purpose, or the desire for praise intoxicates our guiding principles, it doesn't take long for chasing said validation to become

habit forming. Before you know it, you have fallen into the trap.

So, how do we interrupt this pattern? There is an old axiom we can follow: "You are allowed to give yourself a well-deserved pat on the back, just don't pull your arm out of joint in the process."

When working in a creative field, one of the first things we are told is that the competition will be fierce. And not only that, but success in the creative arena is judged by a different metric than typical corporate job positions. Success in this world is not solely based on sales. In creative fields, success is based on the quality of someone's artistic contributions, creative thinking, specialized knowledge, and the ability to communicate your original ideas effectively. And then, of course, sales.

All this in an industry famous for its shoestring budgets, high demands, and unrealistic expectations; sometimes the easiest payback for the sacrifice is to seek higher level recognition, AKA... validation. But the better play is to let validation find you.

Think about it—your day job is to be creative within retail endeavors, whether that be as an owner, a manager, or otherwise. If you are a reputable educator, you are expected to be able to answer any question asked by anyone at any time. Because you are a recognized specialist, this is all part of the job description. Seeking validation is a natural byproduct of all the

effort it takes to be successful. The problem with this is, the only validation you need comes from you!

If you are a strong original artist or a talented musician, you needn't have jealousy over the success of others in your field, and if you are a successful business person, it's best to find as much grace as possible in celebrating the successes of your peers.

Within the music business, anyone who intends to succeed is held to the highest of standards, and if you do your job well, you will naturally move up. There is no holding back anyone with a strong, successful formula, because this is a natural byproduct of excellence.

Owners must maintain focus through all resistance and storms, and in turn, managers have to understand that owners likely have heightened stress levels, simply because of these extra responsibilities they shoulder. But if you are lucky, and you can keep your creativity properly tuned, you will quickly and quietly realize that validation finds its way to all deserving receivers.

As I close, let me share with you a few of my favorite mojo hacks that invite validation to join you. They are really pretty simple.

The first is to find appreciation in whatever has you distracted.

If a competitor has a clever idea, appreciate what it is that they do well, and embrace the fact that they are making their idea work. Instead of harboring competitive resentment, it is better to salute the successes of others. I know firsthand that when you are competitive, this can be hard to do. Most successful people are, to some degree, competitive by nature, but it's best to give everybody a thumbs up. You can go outside and scream at the moon later.

The second hack: If someone copies your idea, which happens a lot in the music industry, channel your energy into finding ways to improve upon your original concept. There are always ways to turn a creative idea inside out and make new magic. Try not to spend too much time sawing sawdust, because it serves no purpose.

Lastly, do your best to leave judgement out of the discussion. People will do what they will do. If you deserve validation for something, validation will find you. That is a natural law.

“ If you are a strong original artist or a talented musician, you needn't have jealousy over the success of others in your field, and if you are a successful business person, it's best to find as much grace as possible in celebrating the successes of your peers. ”

Fretted

Taylor Guitars Unveils New Builder's Edition 500 Series, Special Edition 200 Series, and Limited Edition Academy Series Models

Taylor Guitars, a leading global builder of premium acoustic guitars, is proud to introduce an inspiring mix of new models across three categories of its guitar line. The Builder's Edition Collection adds two new models, the Builder's Edition 514ce and 524ce, featuring Shamel ash sourced from Taylor's Urban Wood initiative. Three new special edition 200 Series models with vibrant transparent finishes have also been added to the lineup: a 214ce Plus Special Edition in Trans Blue or Trans Grey, and a 224ce Plus in Trans Red. And the beginner-friendly Academy Series gets three new limited edition Koa models, a dreadnought Academy 10e LTD, Academy 12e LTD, and nylon-string Academy 12e-N LTD. This latest wave of guitars continues Taylor's commitment to delivering exceptional instruments for players of all levels. The new models are now available worldwide at authorized Taylor dealers.

"We're thrilled to expand our lineup with stunning new models that serve players across all levels and playing styles," says Andy Powers, Taylor's chief guitar designer, president and CEO. "Each of these new guitars reflects our commitment to tonal excellence and visual beauty while making the Taylor playing experience more accessible and inspiring to a wider range of musicians, whether they're just starting their journey or adding to their existing collection."

New Builder's Edition 500 Series Models Feature Urban Wood Initiative Shamel Ash

Taylor's Builder's Edition Collection, renowned for its blend of player-focused comfort, premium materials and sonic sophistication, welcomes three new models featuring solid Shamel ash back and sides. Responsibly sourced from Southern California as part of Taylor's Urban Wood initiative, Shamel ash yields a warm, woody tonal character with strong fundamentals and controlled overtones—comparable to high-grade mahogany. Paired with Taylor's innovative V-Class® bracing, these guitars deliver more volume, longer sustain, and immaculate intonation across the neck.

Models include:

Builder's Edition 514ce, featuring a Sitka spruce top, with Kona burst back, sides and neck and a choice of a Kona burst or natural-finish top.

A hardwood-top Builder's Edition 524ce, with a mahogany top, with a hand-sprayed Kona burst around the entire guitar. The mahogany top adds a slightly darker flavor and natural compression to the sound.

Each new Builder's Edition 500 Series guitar features comfort-enhancing features including a beveled armrest, cutaway, chamfered body edges, and a Curve Wing bridge. Premium appointments include elegant Compass inlays in Italian acrylic, Gotoh 510 antique chrome tuners, a distinctive firestripe pickguard, and black/ivoroid purfling. These particular Builder's Edition models feature a gloss finish, adding radiant visual appeal to their impeccable craftsmanship. All models come equipped with Taylor's ES2 electronics and ship with a Taylor deluxe hardshell case. Prices start at \$3,399 USD.

200 Series Special Editions Showcase Vibrant Transparent Finishes

The versatile and gig-ready 200 Series gets a bold visual update with three new Special Edition models showcasing striking transparent finishes that reveal their wood grain's natural beauty. Built with Taylor's popular Grand Auditorium body shape, these guitars are designed to meet the needs of working musicians, offering signature Taylor playability, rich sound, and tasteful aesthetics.

The 214ce Plus Special Edition comes in two color options—Trans Blue and Trans Grey—both featuring solid

Engelmann spruce tops, layered sapele back and sides, and black-finished necks, backs and sides for dramatic color contrast. The 224ce Plus Special Edition in Trans Red features a solid mahogany top, delivering a warm, punchy voice with a natural compression ideal for players with a stronger attack.

Additional appointments include Taylor's cantilevered V-Class® bracing for enhanced tonal clarity and sustain, Small Diamond fretboard inlays, black pickguards, satin black tuning machines, and Taylor's ES2 electronics. Each guitar ships with Taylor's lightweight, durable AeroCase. Starting at \$1,499 USD.

Academy Series Limited Editions Feature Premium Hawaiian Koa

Rounding out the release is a trio of limited-edition Academy Series models that offer premium visual appeal. Designed for developing players and seasoned musicians alike, these comfort-enhanced guitars feature a solid torrefied spruce top paired with stunning layered Hawaiian koa back and sides, showcasing dramatically figured AA-grade koa for a boutique look. The limited-edition lineup includes:

Academy 10e LTD — A Dreadnought model delivering bold, robust tone for strummers and flatpickers.

Academy 12e LTD — A Grand Concert steel-string ideal for fingerstyle players seeking intimacy and responsiveness.

Academy 12e-N LTD — A Grand Concert nylon-string model offering smooth playability and warm, rhythmic textures. Each model is designed with comfort in mind, featuring a carved armrest, slim Taylor neck profile, and an optimized setup for easy fretting. Additional details include Italian acrylic dot inlays, Taylor's ES-B pickup with a built-in digital tuner, and model-specific tuning machines. Prices start at \$799 USD.

From premium craftsmanship to player-friendly innovation, Taylor's newest guitars continue the brand's legacy of inspiring musicians across the globe. The entire collection is now available at authorized Taylor Guitars dealers worldwide.



taylorguitars.com

Jackson Guitars Release Dave Davidson Signature Warrior Model

Jackson unleashes the all-new Pro Series Signature Dave Davidson Warrior WR7. Combining elements of thrash and death metal, this guitar was meticulously crafted for rapid-fire playing. Continuing its legacy of partnering with renowned artists, Jackson is excited to introduce this fierce signature Warrior model, built for full-throttle metal. For metal enthusiasts looking for a modern guitar to elevate their playing, the Pro Series Signature Dave Davidson Warrior WR7 unlocks unparalleled power and performance.

"What made me want to do a Pro Series version of the WR7s here was, I mean, I just got such a response from fans. Once the custom shops came out, everyone was talking about them. I'm just really stoked that they finally arrived," said Dave Davidson on his new signature guitars. "Jackson really hit the sweet spot with these. How can you not want to play fast?"

Lead singer and guitarist of Revocation, Dave Davidson is known for exploring, pursuing, and blending genres like metal, fusion, rock, and jazz all into progressive metal. He helps push the boundaries as part of Revocation, a Boston-based progressive death metal band that was

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formed in 2006. In 2022, Revocation released their darkest and heaviest album yet, "Netherheaven." Last month, Revocation released the single, "Confines of Infinity." Revocation's death metal style is embodied in the Pro Series Signature Dave Davidson Warrior WR7, allowing fans to dig deeper and unleash their heaviest riffs and tones yet.

The Pro Series Signature Dave Davidson Warrior WR7 is a 7-string guitar with an iconic warrior shape and 26.5" scale length nyatoh body and slick through-body maple neck. Crafted with the rigors of the road and metal playing in mind, the graphite-reinforced scarf joint provides unwavering stability. Additionally, its oiled back of the neck provides smooth and effortless rifting. The 12"-16" compound radius maple fingerboard with 24 jumbo frets adapts with ease, from comfortable chording by the nut to warp speed soloing up top.

Crafted in collaboration with Davidson, this guitar features signature DiMarzio® Occult Classic™ pickups for rich chord textures, of which Davidson is known for voicing. These pickups produce a versatile tone that smoothly responds to harmonics, from pounding tight lows to crystalline cleans. The Pro Series Signature Dave Davidson Warrior WR7 also features a Floyd Rose® 1000 Series 7-string double-locking tremolo bridge which dives, flutters, and provides rock-solid stability with superior sustain and shimmering tremolo motions. Lastly, the guitar wields a single tone control, single volume, and three-way toggle switch.

The Pro Series Signature Dave Davidson is available in two models: the WR7 MPL and E. The MPL is made from a maple fingerboard and has a Black Piranha Tooth (Small Sharkfin) position inlay. The E is made from an Ebony fingerboard and has a Pearl Piranha Tooth (Small Sharkfin) position inlay. The MPL roars to life in Ferrari Yellow, while the E ignites fiery blaze in Ferrari Red.

"When Dave came to me with the idea for this guitar, he wanted something that matched the speed and precision of his playing — something that feels as fast and powerful like a hypercar!" said Peter Wichers, product development manager of Jackson Guitars. "From finishes, to scale lengths, to pickups and curves, every detail of Dave's new Signature Pro Series WR7s was designed to keep up with the breakneck pace of his playing. This isn't just a guitar; it's a high-performance machine built for speed, for those who live in the fast lane."



jacksonguitars.com

Gibson J-45 Standard and SJ-200 Standard

As it celebrates over 130 years of making the most iconic guitars in the world, Gibson has been shaping the sound of music since 1894, when its founder Orville Gibson designed and built his earliest-known musical instrument in his workshop. The innovative and forward-thinking carved top design that revolutionized the mandolin and guitar world delivering a louder, more durable, more playable instrument, remains the DNA of every Gibson. Handcrafted by the expert luthiers of the Gibson acoustic crafty in Bozeman, Montana, Gibson is proud to announce the new Gibson J-45 and SJ-200 Standard acoustic guitars, marking refreshed versions of Gibson's world-renowned acoustic guitar models in new colors. The Gibson J-45 and SJ-200 Standard acoustic guitars are available worldwide at authorized Gibson dealers, at the Gibson Garage flagship stores in Nashville, and London, and online at www.gibson.com.

The best-selling acoustic of all time from Gibson, the J-45 is nicknamed "The Workhorse" and first introduced in 1942, this iconic acoustic has become the cornerstone of its round-shoulder, dreadnought line. World-renowned

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for its full, balanced expression, warm bass, and excellent projection, the J-45 has been refined to carry this legacy to new heights. The Gibson J-45 Standard delivers a sound with incredible dynamic range, warm mids, and a tight punchy bass. The new Gibson J-45 Standard, is available in Vintage Sunburst, or the new Heritage Cherry Sunburst finish, equipped with L.R. Baggs™ VTC under-saddle pickup and preamp, and it is stage and studio-ready from the moment you take it out of the included hardshell guitar case.

The legacy of Gibson's "King of the Flat-Tops" lives on in the SJ-200 Standard. From its inaugural appearance in 1937, Gibson's SJ-200 set an unmatched standard. The SJ-200 continues a legacy of the world's most famous acoustic guitar, and certainly one of the most popular. The body features gorgeous flame maple and is finished in your choice of stunning Wine Red, or the new Triburst finish. It comes equipped with gold Grover® Rotomatic® tuners, a TUSQ® nut, saddle, and bridge pins, and it is stage and studio ready with an internal LR Baggs™ Anthem mic/pickup system. A Gibson hardshell case is included.



gibson.com

Breedlove Guitars Celebrates Sustainability with Oregon Concert CE Red Cedar-Myrtlewood – Earth Day Special Edition

Breedlove Guitars is proud to unveil the Oregon Concert CE Red Cedar-Myrtlewood – Earth Day Special Edition, a stunning tribute to sustainability, tonewood artistry, and the spirit of the Pacific Northwest. Limited to just five pieces, this exceptional instrument honors Earth Month with a design rooted in ecological responsibility and sonic excellence.

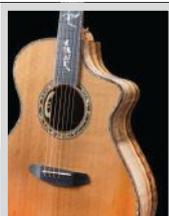
Crafted with a solid, one-piece red cedar top and hand-selected "Rain" myrtlewood back and sides, this guitar delivers warm, rich tonal character balanced with shimmering clarity. The fretboard features a striking green abalone salmon inlay, swimming upstream toward a detailed rosette and top purfling, paying homage to the region's rivers and native wildlife.

Each instrument is hand-voiced in the Breedlove Custom Shop using the brand's exclusive Sound Optimization® process, ensuring maximum resonance and tonal balance. Outfitted with LR Baggs Anthemelectronics, this model maintains its acoustic purity when amplified.

"The Oregon Concert CE Red Cedar-Myrtlewood Earth Day Special Edition exemplifies our belief that exceptional sound, craftsmanship, and sustainable design go hand in hand," said Angela Christensen, head of Product Development and Wood Management for Breedlove Guitars. "This guitar is a celebration of our planet and our commitment to creating instruments that inspire players while honoring the environment."

Like all Breedlove guitars, this model is built with no clear-cut wood. Each tonewood is individually harvested, reclaimed, or salvaged, and carefully tracked to ensure ethical sourcing and forest conservation.

Only five instruments are available, making this Earth Day Special Edition a rare and meaningful addition to the acclaimed Oregon Series.



breedlovemusic.com

Cases & Bags

Grooves Drum Hardware Cases from Gator

Following the successful launch of its newest drum case series, Gator Grooves, Gator Cases has introduced two new models designed specifically for drum hardware, providing a fresh update to its long-standing collection of hardware cases.

The 33" x 15" model is best suited for compact situations, such as car backseats or smaller transport spaces. A retractable handle and molded side grips offer multiple carrying options, making it ideal for players with smaller rigs or quick-turnaround gigs.

The 42" x 16" model offers additional capacity and length, allowing drum stands to remain extended during transport. It features a built-in pull handle and multiple spring-loaded, 90-degree stop handles for added lift support when loading heavier gear.

Both cases feature a weather-resistant, rotationally molded construction that is lightweight yet durable enough to handle intensive touring schedules. Each case includes interlocking channels that allow secure stacking with other Grooves drum cases or hardware cases of the same dimensions.

Heavy-duty, 2-inch adjustable straps with high-tension buckles keep the lids firmly closed during transport, while built-in handles and rubber inline wheels ensure a smooth load-in and load-out.



gatorco.com

Drums & Percussion

Legendary Mapex Armory Series, the Legacy Continues with Advanced Upgrades

Since hitting the market in 2014, the legendary Mapex Armory series has become well-established as a benchmark series of workhorse drums. While widely recognized as a visual mid-range masterpiece, its debut also marked the introduction of the famed Mapex SONIClear bearing edge profile, firmly establishing an important milestone in Mapex history. This innovation propelled the Armory Series beyond its obviously stunning good looks, offering exceptional sound quality well apart from the typical standard for mid-range drums. The SONIClear bearing edge allows the drumhead to sit flatter and make better contact with the shell resulting in a stronger and deeper fundamental pitch, effortless and consistent tuning, and a significantly expanded tuning range. This innovative edge design has gone on to be a crucial element of all Mapex drums from then forward along with signature hybrid shell materials and exotic veneered finishes.

"The Armory series drums are truly inspiring instruments" states Mapex Brand Manager Jeff Mulvihill,

"craftsman bearing edges, veneer with fade finishes, and hybrid shells are specifications usually reserved for much higher end products, but we are committed to the look and sound that the Armory Series Legacy represents all while offering today's drummers the highest value on the market."

The year 2025 marks another step forward for the Armory series upgraded with a highly curated selection of newly developed finishes, bass drum-mounted toms for increased player comfort, and upgraded drumheads for a highly inspiring sound right out of the box for both beginner and experienced players alike. The Legendary Armory Legacy continues to lead the midrange segment into the future by offering the highest value while ensuring a superior performance every time.



mapexdrums.com

Accessories

Black Fountain Stereo from OBNE

Building on the inimitable Black Fountain, a pedal that put Old Blood Noise Endeavors (OBNE) on the map and for many a favorite always-on device, Black Fountain Stereo is much more than just turning things from mono into stereo. It truly expands Old Blood Noise Endeavors' highly regarded 'oil-can delay' pedal right into a multi-tool.

With a wider control set that's complete with added sonic options, a lower noise floor, dual delay lines that play together in a multitude of ways, presets, MIDI and expression control over everything, Black Fountain Stereo combines a sonic powerhouse of creative delay tones and into a pedalboard friendly package.

Main Features:

- Characterful 'oil-can delay' pedal
- Stereo input and output, with the option for Mono or Mono-in-Stereo-out routing
- Dedicated knobs to control Rate and Depth of modulation plus Tone and Grit of delay voicing
- Time and Subdivision controls for each delay line
- Additional controls for feedback, Wet/Dry Volume and Stereo Space
- Analog dry through
- Expression and MIDI control over all parameters
- MIDI clock I/O for external temp syncing
- Onboard Presets, plus control via MIDI
- Selectable Buffered Trails or True Bypass modes
- Top-mounted jacks and Soft-Touch Switching
- Hand-made in Oklahoma, USA
- Available in 3 Colorways – Cream (standard), Terracotta and Slate

- Powered by (opt.) 9 V DC PSU

(center -, 2.1mm, ~ 350 mA current draw, not included) Black Fountain Stereo emulates the sound of a spinning oil-can delay. This is a warm, modulated and a little gritty type of tone that's perfect for chorusing, doubling, slap back and long rhythmic delays alike. You choose the amount and rate of modulation, the tone and grit of the core voice, the two delay times and their feedback. Plus, to top it off the mono/stereo voicing of it all can be set exactly as you like and everything can be saved into presets, for easy recall.

The Rate and Depth controls set the amount of

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modulation and speed, Tone shapes the warmth of the repeats, while Grit sets the amount of drive in the repeats. To help maintain the clarity of your tone or for more special effects, you can set the mix of volume of either the Dry and/or Wet levels. Space defines the mono delay mode or stereo width and adds diffusion past the noon position.

Separate controls are available for setting the Left and Right Delay Time as well as being able to choose between six subdivisions for each side when holding the Tap footswitch. That little Tap switch (surprise) helps you set the delay repeats in time with your tempo, while holding it down will give for infinite feedback. Optionally, it can also be used as a preset switcher.



oldbloodnoise.com

Cableworks Adds Fresh Twist to its Braided Cable Collection

Gator Cableworks has expanded its Backline Series braided instrument cables with the addition of a black and red design. This updated look is available in the series' existing 10- and 20-foot lengths, offering the same versatility with a fresh aesthetic.

The Backline Series braided instrument cables feature classic 1/4-inch straight to right-angle connectors for a secure connection and a durable 6.5-millimeter braided jacket that delivers a retro aesthetic. Aside from the new variant, players can choose between three additional color combinations – black and black, black and grey, or brown and yellow (tweed).

Each cable has a 23-gauge, 99.99% oxygen-free copper conductor and copper spiral shielding to provide a clear signal and eliminate interference. The low capacitance minimizes signal loss and supports wider audible frequencies, providing a richer, uncolored tone. Reusable ties ensure cables remain organized during transport.

Gator Cableworks offers a comprehensive selection of audio cables, including XLR, Instrument, and Speaker cables. Whether selecting from the Backline, Composer, or premium Headliner Series, players can trust Cableworks to deliver reliability, durability, and top-tier performance in any setting.



gatorco.com

Amps

PRS Amps Up Archon and MT 15 with New Versions

PRS Guitars has released the updated MT 15 and the new Archon Classic amplifiers, along with a larger Archon speaker cabinet. The 15-watt, two-channel Mark Tremonti signature amp MT 15 now features a lead channel overdrive control. An addition to the Archon series, not a replacement, the 50-watt Classic offers a fresh voice by producing retro rock "classic" tones reminiscent of sound permeating the radio four and five decades ago. Now twice the size of the first Archon cabinet, the Archon 4x12 boasts four Celestion V-Type speakers.

MT 15 Amplifier Head

Balancing aggression and articulation, this 15-watt amp supplies both heavy rhythms and clear lead tones. The MT 15 revision builds off the design of the MT 100, bringing the voice of the 100's overdrive channel into its smaller-format sibling. Updating the model, the lead channel also features a push/pull overdrive control that removes two gain stages to produce vintage, crunchier

"mid gain" tones. The clean channel still features a push/pull boost control that adds a touch of overdrive crunch. A half-power switch takes the MT to 7 watts.

"Seven years ago, we released my signature MT 15 amplifier, a compact powerhouse that quickly became a go-to for players seeking both pristine cleans and crushing high-gain tones. In 2023, we took things even further with the MT 100, delivering a full-scale amplifier that carried my signature sound to the next level. That inspired us to find a way to fit the 100's third channel into the 15's lunchbox size," said Mark Tremonti.

"Today, I'm beyond excited to introduce the next evolution of the MT15, now featuring a push/pull overdrive control on the Lead channel and a half-power switch, giving players even more tonal flexibility to shape their sound with a compact amp. Can't wait for you all to plug in and experience it!"

Archon Classic Amplifier Head

With a refined gain structure from the original Archon, the Archon Classic's lead channel offers a wider range of tones colored with gain, especially in the midrange. The clean channel goes from pristine all the way to the edge of breakup. This additional Archon version was developed to be a go-to tool for playing classic rock or pushing the envelope into modern territory. The Archon Classic still features the original's bright switch, presence and depth controls. PRS continues to stock the Archon in retailers worldwide.

"The Archon Classic is not a re-issue of the original Archon, but a newly voiced circuit with the lead channel excelling in '70s and '80s rock tones and a hotter clean channel able to go into breakup. This is the answer for those wanting an Archon with a hotrod vintage lead channel gain structure without changing preamp tube types, and a juiced-up clean channel without having to use a boost pedal, all wrapped up in a retro-inspired cabinet design," said PRS amp designer Doug Sewell.

Archon 4x12 Cabinet

As in the Archon 1x12 and 2x12, the mega-sized PRS Archon 4x12 speaker cabinet features Celestion V-Type speakers and a closed-back design, delivering power, punch, and tight low end. Also like its smaller brethren, the 4x12 is wrapped in durable black vinyl and adorned with a British-style black knitted-weave grill cloth. The Archon 4x12 is only the second four-speaker cabinet in the PRS lineup, next to the HDRX 4x12.



prsguitars.com

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