

MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

Survey: Cymbal Sales Struggle (for Many)



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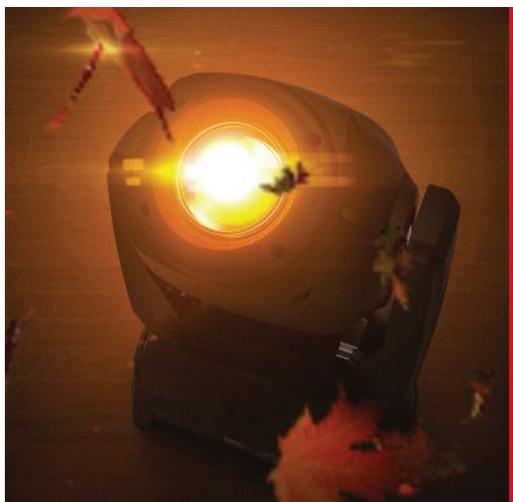
One-Way Street to Success: Mantova's Two Street Music



music

CHINA 32

18th Annual Music China Largest Yet



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Note From Zach

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Start Future-Proofing Your Business at The 2020 NAMM Show

In the last five years alone, we've seen nothing short of a retail reinvention. Look no further than the growth of subscription models, the sharing economy, even augmented reality as a way to supplement the in-store experience. (I think of Ikea's app, which lets you preview how furniture will look in your living space.) Point blank, consumer expectations have changed. And The NAMM Show is your resource to navigate this new normal—an immersion into trends, ideas and contacts to better position your business to thrive.

Four days at NAMM go by fast, though. Given that, here are a few insider tips to navigate the show and make the most of your 31 hours in Anaheim.

1. Develop direct relationships with your vendors. The NAMM Show is your once-a-year opportunity to connect with leadership at the brands you carry. But exhibitors are often booked solid by the time the show kicks off. Whenever possible, set up appointments with current and prospective vendors beforehand. I can't tell you what a difference this will make.

2. See No. 1. (I can't stress this enough—start booking those appointments now!)

3. Expand your professional network. The NAMM Show has no lack of opportunities to meet and exchange ideas with your peers. The NAMM YP Reception and Women@NAMM events are free, open to members and fertile ground to develop your network. Plus, new NAMM members can check out the New Member Reception on Wednesday evening before the show.

4. Get new ideas to solve pressing business issues. Start planning as early as mid-November when The NAMM Show education schedule goes live on namm.org. We've organized the education programs on the NAMM website and app by program and topic (music retail, audio production and so forth). This makes navigating hundreds of sessions intuitive, so you can easily curate an education schedule for your specific goals.

5. Think beyond your current objectives. The NAMM Show is a playground for discovering new ideas, and you never know where your next opportunity might come from. I've heard from retailers who said they picked up creative inspiration from a record producer speaking at TEC Tracks or a discussion on future-forward music-making technologies at A3E sessions. Likewise, the Pro Production and ESTA-curated educational sessions will unveil the world of stage lighting and entertainment tech—and new concepts to grow your enterprise.

6. Find your next best-seller. If you can't get an appointment with an exhibitor, you can still stop by to check out their products. And don't be shy about asking questions. That's why brands are there.

7. Connect with experts and your global business community. Here's a hack: Stick around if presenters are available after their education sessions. Even if you don't have a specific question for the presenter, you'll usually be surrounded by like-minded peers facing similar business issues as you—again, another networking opportunity. I've seen lifelong friendships, and profitable business ideas, form this way.

We can't wait to see you in Southern California!

Zach Phillips
NAMM DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The NAMM Show

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Nonprofit

Music Educators and Students

Entertainment Technology

Audio Production

Music Business

Policy



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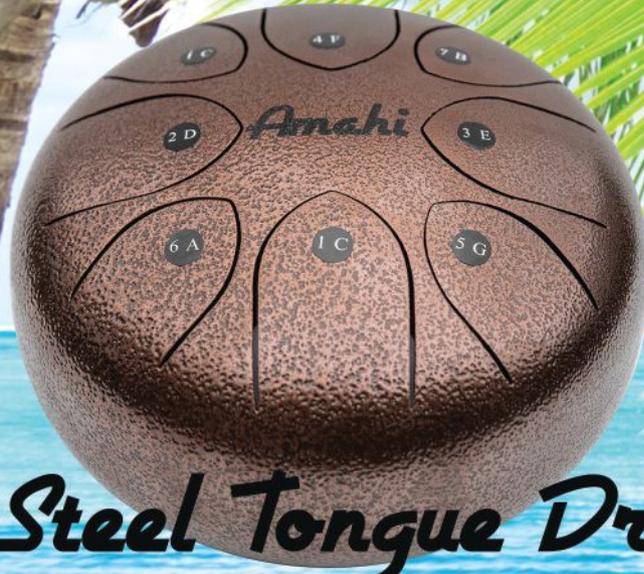


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Local Music on Life Support... Still



By Christian Wissmuller

"Across the pond," Insure4Music recently reported that, over the past two years, on average one small music venue has closed each month in the United Kingdom. Further, it is believed that in the last 15 years, 20 percent of the UK's small music venues have closed.

This trend is by no means limited to foreign shores. In mid-September of this year, the *Wisconsin State Journal* published a photo essay of 11 beloved – and now shuttered – venues in Madison, Wisconsin. The beginning of this current calendar year spelled the end for Seattle's beloved Highway 99 Blues Club. It was revealed that the venue's owners were simply unable to keep afloat after their landlord unexpectedly attempted to raise the rent by \$10,000(!) a month. In a January, 2018 post on the DNA Lounge blog, author Jaimie Zawinski noted with dismay the growing number of music rooms in San Francisco now controlled by entertainment behemoths such as Live Nation and Goldenvoice and encouraged local music fans to patronize the independently owned and operated clubs in the city – at the time his tally of such spots included 18. Less than a year later three of those 18 were no more.

Why this trend is of concern to *MMR* readers – MI retailers and suppliers – is fairly obvious. If there are no places for smaller acts to perform, there will be less actively gigging musicians in a given area and therefore fewer customers looking to purchase or repair gear. By extension, if there are fewer spots for younger folks to witness under-the-radar acts and to experience that, "Hey – if they, can do it, so can I!" epiphany, there will be fewer future music-makers and potential MI consumers.

Almost 10 years ago to the day, I wrote an editorial on this exact topic. At the time, I concluded on a hopeful note by referencing developments at a favorite local Boston area club, The Abbey Lounge. To prevent what had seemed a sure-thing closure due to raising rents, those of us who played at and frequented The Abbey organized benefit shows, generated fundraisers, lobbied the landlord and local government figures – and we won! The Abbey was granted a stay of execution (I've come to despise that phrase as it pertains to music venues...) and all was well with the world.

Until The Abbey closed for good five weeks later.

The same culprits that killed the Abbey a decade ago and closed Highway 99 on New Year's Eve 2018 are still at play: ever-increasing rents, gentrification, lack of regular clientele.

I am drawing a blank as to how to, in an era defined culturally by online distraction and video games and streaming services, inspire people to get off the couch and experience live music. I don't know how to effectively encourage/force redevelopment plans in thriving urban centers to somehow also accommodate for the continued health of local cultural outposts that in no small part *make* these cities desirable destinations in the first place.

But I know it's a problem. And if it hasn't already negatively impacted your hometown – and your business – odds are it will.

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Industry News

DANSR to Distribute Super-Sensitive

DANSR, Inc., has announced the addition of Super-Sensitive Musical String Co., to their family of products for distribution. DANSR will assume worldwide distribution effective November 1. Founded in 1930 by Ed Wackerle, the Super-Sensitive Musical String Co. has always been a collaboration between manufacturing and musicians. Wackerle consulted with artists like Igor Patigorsky, Fritz Kreisler, Mischa Elman, and luthier Frank Sindelar and developed a solid core string known as the Red Label brand. It is still the flagship of the company today. The Red Label brand is the string of choice by most educators for beginner and intermediate players.

In 1967, John and his father Vincent Cavanaugh bought the Chicago-based company to continue its traditions. Their mission has remained the same: to manufacture bowed instrument strings of the highest quality with the finest materials. After moving the company to Sarasota, Florida in 1972, John set up a research and development department. His research started with the Old Fiddler Line which has become the favorite string among country western and bluegrass musicians. With the introduction of new and exotic metals in string making, experiments with synthetic cores resulted in the Sensicore line of violin, viola, cello and bass strings.

"We are excited to represent Super-Sensitive Musical Strings," commented DANSR executive VP Gary Winder. "Super-Sensitive fits our mission of representing legacy companies and supporting the families that have made these products such a success over the years. It is our mission to serve the existing markets and expand sales in places not as familiar with this famous product line."

"My wife, Susan, and I have owned and operated Super-Sensitive for many years," commented Jim Cavanaugh. "We are very excited to enter into this partnership with Dansr."

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- People on the Move

NAMM Joins World-ETF

NAMM has joined World-ETF, the World Entertainment Technology Federation. The organization joins fellow international industry associations, Entertainment Services and Technology Association (ESTA), Professional Lighting and Sound Association (PLASA), and The German Entertainment Technology Association (VPLT), who co-created the federation to debate and examine the role of entertainment technology around the world.

"The worlds of entertainment technology, musical instruments, and pro audio products are deeply connected, each depending on the other to play their part in creating magical live events for audiences around the world," said Joe Lamond, NAMM president and CEO. "We are honored to join this respected group and hope to be able to contribute in some small way as we share information, training, and best practices with our ten-thousand member companies who provide products, equipment, expertise, and services for this rapidly growing ecosystem."

PLASA's managing director Peter Heath comments, "We are delighted that NAMM has become a part of the World-ETF. Their

historical importance as an association and expertise in the industry will contribute greatly to the federation, enabling us to tackle more industry challenges and form a more cohesive and influential presence on behalf of our members."

Erin Grabe, ESTA's executive director adds, "NAMM is the perfect addition to the World-ETF. Their involvement strengthens our partnership and greatly adds to our global voice."

The World-ETF aims to promote the interests of the entertainment technology industry in the global marketplace and encourage international cooperation. Together, the associations communicate mutual challenges and opportunities on behalf of their respective members, with NAMM offering a greater understanding of all industry sectors, with a focus on musical instruments, audio recording and live stage technology.

The World-ETF meets regularly at key industry trade shows such as PLASA Show in London, NAMM in California, and Pro-light+Sound in Frankfurt, represented by key personnel and elected executives.

To learn more about the World-ETF, visit world-etf.org.

KORG USA Sponsors the AWFC

KORG USA showed support for the Alliance for Women Film Composers (AWFC), a community of female-led professionals in multi-media, by sponsoring a recent event panel featuring diverse composers discussing gender matters in the music and film industries. The panel preceded the Lincoln Center "Women Warriors, Voices of Change" concert with the "Orchestra Moderne NYC," an 80-minute live-action performance featuring the music of established Hollywood female film composers, including Starr Paroli, current president of the AWFC.



Joe Castronovo, President of Korg USA and Starr Paroli, President of AWFC

"KORG and I have a very special relationship spanning many years. I personally want to thank Joe Castronovo and his team for their continued support of my artistic endeavors and for their enthusiastic and generous support of the AWFC and the work we are doing," shared Paroli.

Following the exclusive panel, KORG hosted an intimate reception for those in attendance at Pless Hall, New York University in Manhattan,

New York. Attendees networked with panel leaders and musicians alike, discussing better advocacy for female composers.



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Yorkville Sound to Distribute Aston Microphones in U.S.

Aston Microphones will now be distributed for all of North America by Yorkville Sound. After enjoying over three years in partnership for the Canadian market, extending distribution in to the Yorkville U.S. office is a natural progression for both Yorkville Sound and Aston Microphones. The two companies have formed a strong bond that far exceeds a typical distributor-manufacturer relationship.

"Aston's attention to product excellence reliability, and customer care mirrors the very foundation of Yorkville Sound," says Jeff Cowling, Yorkville's VP of sales & marketing, "We are thrilled to bring our joined entrepreneurial spirit to the U.S. market."

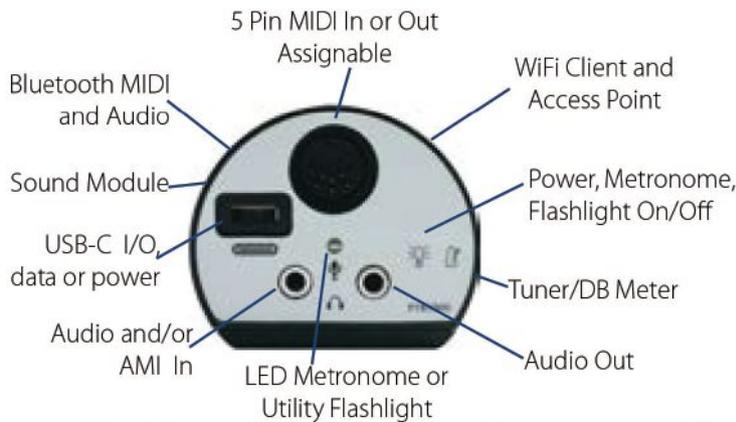
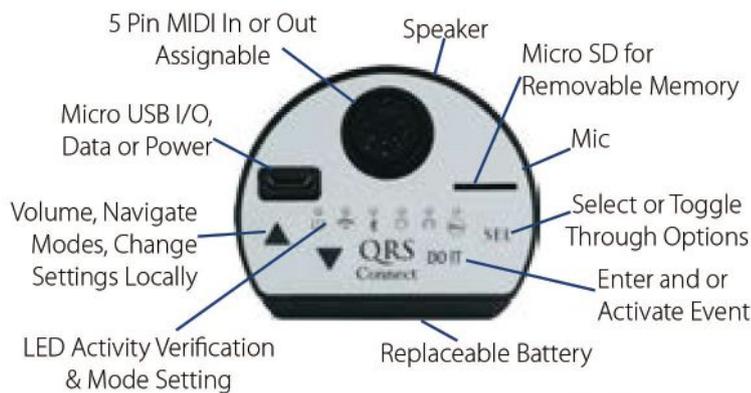
Steve Hendee, Yorkville's U.S. director of sales sees endless opportunity for the Aston partnership. "As we've seen in

Canada, Aston Microphones provide high quality mics that are sought after by professional and hobbyists alike. The product itself is well-paired with studio equipment such as monitors and mixers in our family, giving retailers opportunities to bundle and upsell end users with world class studio solutions. Our team can't wait to hit the ground running."

Ray Wilson, Yorkville's national sales manager in Canada, is especially excited about Aston's expansion as he is instrumental in nurturing the Yorkville-Aston Relationship. "Aston's enthusiasm for trying new things is off the charts. In just three years, they named us Distributor of The Year (2017 and 2018) and international Canadian artists such as Drake, Jordan Honsinger (Cold Creek County), and Ian D'sa used Aston on their recordings," says Wilson. "A highlight was developing the Aston Stealth together. It was released just last August and has earned amazing reviews and user experiences."

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CITES Exemption for Instruments Takes Effect

On October 3, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) issued an official notification stating that the effective date for the musical instrument exemption from the dalbergia permitting requirement is November 26, 2019.

The official notification, found on page 6 at cites.org/sites/default/files/notif/E-Notif-2019-052.pdf, also contains definitions applicable to the exemption. As noted upon the approval of Annotation 15, imports and exports of finished musical instruments, finished parts, and finished accessories will no longer need a CITES permit. The exception applies to all species of dalbergia except Brazilian rosewood, which remains on CITES Appendix I. As a best practice, NAMM Member companies should continue to work with their management authorities in their country of export/import to ensure compliance.

The notification comes at the closure of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18) in Geneva, Switzerland, in August of this year, where Annotation 15 was adopted by the 182 countries and the EU. Read more here: www.namm.org/issues-and-advocacy/regulatory-compliance/cites

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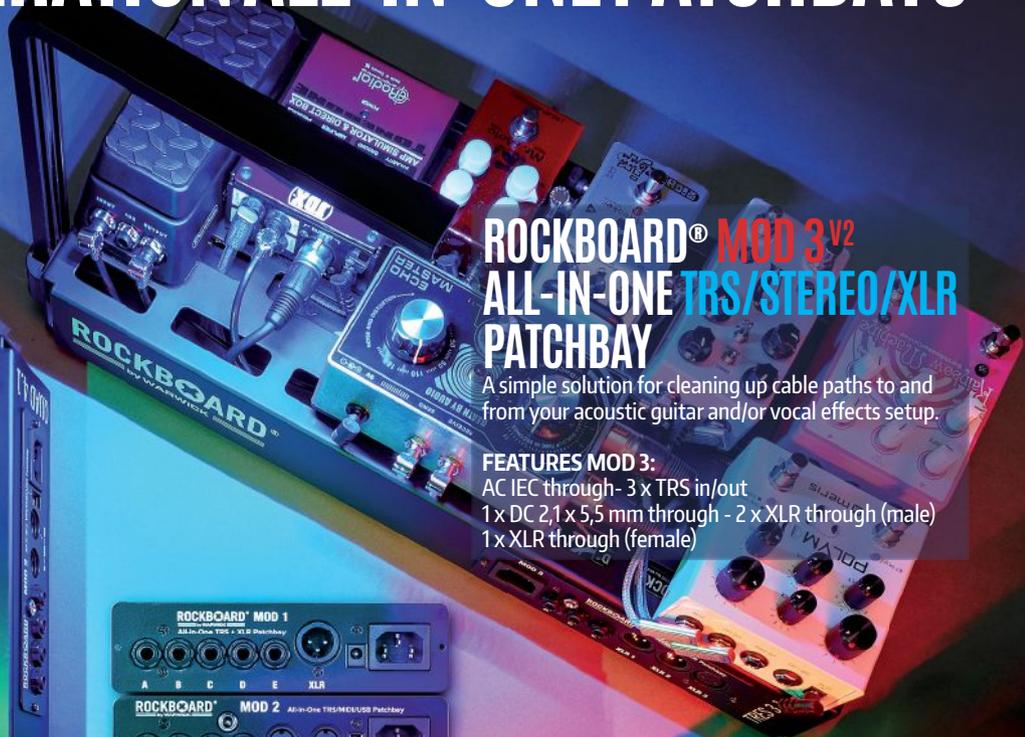


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QSC Announces Acquisition of Attero Tech

QSC recently announced the acquisition of Attero Tech, effective September 30, 2019. This combines the rapidly growing portfolio of the Q-SYS audio, video and control (AV&C) Ecosystem with Attero Tech's portfolio of networked AV endpoints and I/O peripherals, as well as boosting QSC's development capabilities with Attero Tech's Fort Wayne-based engineering staff joining the multi-national QSC team.

"This acquisition is a natural next step for our organizations given our long relationship, highly compatible portfolios and the exceptional shared values and company cooperation that have developed over the last several years," says Jatan Shah, chief operating and technology Officer, QSC. "Both QSC and Attero

Tech were early adopters of network audio transport technology, including CobraNet, Dante and AES67. In addition, when QSC expanded the control capabilities of the Q-SYS Ecosystem in 2017, it allowed Attero Tech to become the first manufacturer partner to independently develop Q-SYS Control integration plugins, and has since developed 20 plugins for their portfolio of I/O devices."

"A primary guiding principal of our Q-SYS product development strategy has been a protocol agnostic, software-based approach utilizing the best hardware available, combined with

innovation at the software and application layer. This approach allowed us to deliver a standards-based, powerful, flexible and scalable AV&C platform unlike anything on the market," says TJ Adams, VP, systems product strategy and development, QSC. "Adding the Attero Tech peripherals to the greater Q-SYS Ecosystem will expand existing options for integration endpoints today, and enlist this new engineering talent pool to accelerate the pace of future software innovation and native end points for the platform."

"Attero Tech has grown to become the premier provider of innovative, cost-effective audio networking I/O endpoints and AV connectivity solutions," says Rus Sundholm, president of Attero Tech. "Our

catalog of products have a well-earned reputation as highly robust, innovative products within the AV industry. We are excited and confident for the future of our combined organization."

Joe Pham, president and CEO, QSC, says, "This is such an exciting time for QSC and I am thrilled to welcome the Attero Tech team to the QSC family. We look forward to executing an integration strategy that prioritizes the needs of our customers, incorporating Attero Tech into QSC sales, support, service, marketing and training for our channel, while always striving to ensure and maintain a positive experience for our customers."



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NAMM Foundation Seeks the Best Communities for Music Education

The NAMM Foundation is seeking school districts and schools with an exemplary commitment to music education to be recognized as part of the Foundation's Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) program. Now in its 21st year, the Best Communities for Music Education (district level) and the SupportMusic Merit Award (school level) offers national recognition and visibility for school music programs, and honors the efforts of educators, administrators, students and community music education champions who share in the common goal to ensure access to music for all students as part of the curriculum.

"For the past twenty-one years, the Best Communities for Music Education program has celebrated districts, schools, parents, and communities for ensuring that music education is part of the school day and available to all children," said Mary Luehrs-en, executive director of The NAMM Foundation.

Over the past two decades, the awards program has served as a catalyst to rally and expand music education programs, as well as to gain additional community support and funding.

The designations will be awarded based on a school or district submitted survey process, and evaluated on funding, staffing of qualified teachers, standards, curriculum, community support, participation, facilities and other factors which affect access and demonstrate a commitment to music education. The Music Research Institute at the University of Kansas reviews the survey data and offers the designation to districts or schools which meet the criteria and qualifications for designation.

Since its inception, over 2,000 schools and school districts have submitted a survey for evaluation. Based on survey responses in 2019, 623 school districts were recognized as Best Communities for Music Education, and 98 schools with the SupportMusic Merit Award. Past districts named a Best Community for Music Education included urban, suburban and rural districts. Schools which have received the SupportMusic Merit Award designation included both public and private schools and range from elementary to middle and high schools.

District officials, music educators, and school staff in the domestic United States are invited to complete the survey by Jan-

uary 31, 2020, by visiting www.nammfoundation.org/bcme.

In conducting the annual survey, The NAMM Foundation and the survey designers are also joined by advisory organizations in the fields of music and education including: Americans for the Arts; League

of American Orchestras; John Lennon Educational Tour Bus; Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation; Music for All; Music Teachers National Association; National Guild For Community Arts Education; Yamaha Corporation of America; Young Audiences; and Save The Music Foundation.



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Supplier Scene

Liebich Joins Mojave Audio

Mojave Audio has announced a new partnership with industry veteran Colin Leibich. With an extensive background in professional audio, Leibich will be focused on the company's marketing, sales initiatives, social media functions, trade shows, and other events. He started with Mojave Audio in late September.



Reflecting on his new relationship with Mojave Audio, Leibich said, "I'm very pleased to be joining the Mojave team. Dusty Wakeman and I have been looking forward to taking Mojave to the next level for quite a while and recent events made this an opportune time to get started. With a comprehensive product line that has earned an enviable reputation within pro audio circles, Mojave Audio is well positioned for growth. My goal is to help leverage the company's strengths and develop programs that will help elevate the company's position with the industry. I look forward to working with everyone associated with the company."

Dusty Wakeman, president of Mojave Audio, is equally enthusiastic about Leibich joining the company. "Colin brings a wealth of pro audio experience and a fresh perspective that, I'm confident, will be most beneficial to our company," Wakeman enthused. "With a new outlook and a rich pro audio background, I believe Colin's presence will enable us to find opportunities that we hadn't considered. All of us on the Mojave Audio team welcome Colin aboard and look forward to working with him."



Greg Shade (Audio-Technica U.S. Midwest Territory manager, professional markets); BP Marketing Group personnel Dave Olson, Joe Super and Steve Garber; and Reid Peterson (Audio-Technica U.S. director of sales, professional markets).

Audio-Technica Partners with BP Marketing

Audio-Technica has appointed the sales rep firm BP Marketing Group for the territory comprising Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and western Wisconsin.

BP Marketing Group principals Steve Garber and Dave Olson will be joined by the rest of the Midwest AV sales team in representing Audio-Technica in this region. A-T is the latest addition to BP Marketing Group's brand roster, which also includes such manufacturers as Absen, Alps AV, Atlas, Casio, Global Cache, Klipsch, Kramer, MaxHub, Media Vision, Panacast, Screen Innovations, South Control Technologies, SunBrite TV, T1V, Total Channel, TrippLite, and TVOne.

Reid Peterson, Audio-Technica executive director of sales, professional mar-

kets, stated, "Audio-Technica is excited to have the opportunity to bring on BP Marketing to represent us in the Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and western Wisconsin territory. Steve Garber and Dave Olson, along with their entire team, bring years of experience to representing the Audio-Technica name. We believe that their knowledge of the markets, technologies and the longstanding relationships will be a great addition and a valuable asset in broadening the reach of Audio-Technica. We feel that the addition of Audio-Technica with BP Marketing's current line card will allow us to provide a complete solution for the Commercial accounts in their territory. We are looking forward to explore this partnership and grow together."

Rhythm Tech Launches New Website

Rhythm Tech has launched a new website, featuring a streamlined interface that's fully optimized to ensure a seamless customer experience.

"The new Rhythm Tech website represents a colossal upgrade from the original site's framework," Rhythm Tech vice president and general manager Gil Soucy said. "It features a strong new home page that highlights multiple featured products simultaneously, updated categories to better organize our extensive product library, and vital mobile device optimization."

According to Soucy, over time product screens will receive a glossy update, highlighting key features: "This new site allows us to hammer home what is most import-

ant and unique about each Rhythm Tech product in a way that really catches the buyer's eye."

The new site also eliminates clutter through displaying products by model instead of color, resulting in a more consumer and dealer-friendly experience than ever before.

"With every addition and enhancement," Soucy emphasized, "the new Rhythm Tech website lives up to the standard of quality and excellence that consumers have come to expect from Rhythm Tech instruments and accessories. With the launch of the new site, Rhythm Tech is better equipped for a new generation of players to find the product that best suits their heart's desire."

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Yamaha Young Performing Artists Accepting Applications

Applications are now being accepted for the 2020 Yamaha Young Performing Artists (YYPA) competition, an annual program that has helped build the musical careers of outstanding young talent for more than 30 years.

Between now and December 18, 2019, jazz, classical, and contemporary musicians between the ages of 18 and 22 are invited to apply to the program.

The 2020 winners will receive an all-expense-paid trip to the YYPA Celebration Weekend at the Music for All Summer Symposium in Muncie, Indiana. There, they will perform before thousands of students and music educators, take part in professional career-building workshops, receive national press coverage, and take home a professional recording and photos of their live performance. In addition, winners will receive ongoing support and career counseling from Yamaha Artist Relations.

"Since YYPA began more than 30 years ago, the program has given countless stu-

dents the opportunity to share their voice and establish themselves as musicians," says John Wittmann, director, Yamaha Artist Services Indianapolis. "The ability of these young musicians never ceases to amaze us. Giving each of them the tools and support that they need to grow is precisely what we stand for as a company."

"The Yamaha Young Performing Artist experience remains one of the most rewarding endeavors of my artistic life," said Stephen Page, 2004 YYPA saxophone winner and current Yamaha performing artist. "Being surrounded by such wonderful musicians for a week of music-making and collaboration was an experience I'll never forget. The opportunity to connect with some of the strongest figures in our field helped me find greater focus in career development, and I am so grateful to Yamaha for offering such an exceptional program, and for their dedication to music education."

To be eligible, applicants must be studying in the U.S. and between the ages

of 18 and 22 at the time of entry. Applications will be accepted for the following categories: piccolo, flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, French horn, trombone, euphonium, tuba, mallet or concert percussion, drums, violin, viola, cello, upright bass, and piano.

"We encourage as many students to apply for the program as possible. YYPA is a wonderful way for aspiring musicians to get their name out there, and hopefully begin a long-lasting career," Wittmann adds.

For more details about YYPA and applying, visit usa.yamaha.com/education/yypa/.



Cade Gotthardt, 2019 YYPA Trumpet Winner; and Will Kjeer, 2019 YYPA Piano Winner, take the stage during the 2019 Yamaha Young Performing Artists Concert

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Reason Studios Partners with M-Audio

Reason Studios has announced that it is partnering with M-Audio to offer Reason Lite with select M-Audio controllers. Reason Lite gives access to Reason's famous workflow, an assortment of legendary instruments and effects, intuitive and essential recording tools, and studio-grade mixing tools.

"M-Audio customers will now be able to get started making music without compromising the quality of the instruments, effects and recording tools they need," said Mattias Häggström Gerdt, Reason Studios product manager. "Reason Lite gives customers access to some of Reason's best instruments and effects that we've ever created and Reason's famous workflow."

Reason Lite offers eight instru-

ment and/or audio tracks with the same workflow, instruments and effects, and recording and mixing tools as Reason Intro, but does not include Reason Rack plugin support. Reason Lite is available for free with the purchase of select hardware products including M-Audio's Oxygen MKIV, Code and Keystation MK3 series products. Owners of these qualified M-Audio products simply need to register their product at M-Audio.com to get their free Reason Lite license. The Reason Lite offer ends December 31, 2019.

Reason Lite customers can upgrade to Reason 11 full version at a reduced price and access the Reason Rack Plugin, unlimited tracks, the full set of features, instruments and effects, and expanded sound library.

Casio Supports Music Education with Donation to Notes for Notes

Casio America, Inc. has teamed up with Notes for Notes (N4N) – a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that builds, equips, and staffs after-school recording studios inside Boys & Girls Clubs and youth facilities giving youth the opportunity to explore, create, and record music for free – to gift more than 10 keyboards and digital pianos to the organization’s newest studio and more.

“N4N studios offer students the chance to discover their passions with professional instruments, without the worry of financial burden,” said Stephen Schmidt, vice president of Casio’s electronic musical instrument division. “Casio is proud to be a part of the N4N community to not only help educate youth about music, but also to inspire creativity and encourage freedom of expression.”

N4N studios are drop-in recording studio environments where youth (ages 6 to 18 and over) can gain regular, free access to a wide variety of musical instruments, expert instruction, and the tools to create and record their own music. The studios are staffed by N4N team members and offer a knowledge base of engineering, instrumentals, and songwriting, as

well as opportunities to learn about professional musicianship and other careers in the industry. The newest studio is slated to open in Las Vegas, Nevada later this year, and like its predecessors, will be outfitted with a range of Casio products including 11 LK-265 Lighted Key keyboards.

As a way to support its ongoing efforts, N4N hosts a wide range of charitable events including benefit concerts and more. This month, Casio donated a PRIVIA PX-S1000 digital piano and a G-Shock Blue Note Record Limited Edition timepiece to N4N for a silent auction in Santa Barbara geared towards raising funds for current and future studios in partnership with Seymour Duncan featuring the Steve Miller Band.

“N4N was founded on the core belief that music is the universal language of humankind,” says CEO and co-founder for N4N, Philip Gilley. “Enabling our youth to explore music is critical and we couldn’t make it happen without companies like Casio. Casio’s generosity in providing keyboards goes beyond simply putting instruments in the hands of youth – it showcases an ongoing commitment to growing music education across the nation.”



2020 She Rocks Awards Honorees Announced

The Women’s International Music Network (the WiMN) has announced the honorees for the 2020 She Rocks Awards, which will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, January 17 at the House of Blues Anaheim during the NAMM Show.

The 2020 She Rocks Awards recipients include Gloria Gaynor, Linda Perry, Lzzy Hale, Suzi Quatro, Beatie Wolfe, Suzanne D’Addario Brouder, Tara Low, Myrna Sisen, Judy Schaefer, and Ebonie Smith. This year’s opening performers will be Japanese act D_Drive, hosted by Marshall Amplification.

“We’re ready to kick off 2020 in a big way, and our upcoming honorees are an exciting part of that,” says The WiMN founder Laura B. Whitmore. “These wom-



en go above and beyond in their respective corners of our industry and are perfect examples of why we are proud to celebrate women in music.”

Tickets are now on sale for the 2020 She Rocks Awards, available in four tiers that include dinner and more. This event is open to the public; a NAMM Show badge is not required to attend the She Rocks Awards. Find out more and purchase tickets at sherocksawards.com.

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Musical Innovations and Fox Music House Host Clarinet Day

Musical Innovations and its Charleston affiliate, Fox Music House, recently hosted a Clarinet Day at their North Charleston (South Carolina) location. The event was co-sponsored by Buffet-Crampon and featured Buffet clarinets, Vandoren mouthpieces, and other related products; and co-hosted by Joseph Fox, owner of Fox Music House, and Marilee Barela, Charleston area clarinet specialist.

Clarinet clinician for the day was Andy Hudson, lecturer of clarinet at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. Hudson earned his DMA in Clarinet Performance from Northwestern University, where he also earned his Master of Music degree; his Bachelor of Music degree was from Columbus State University's Schwob School of Music. He is a noted interpreter of contemporary music and has performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; and at the Art Institute of Chicago, at the Eastman School of Music and at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic. Donnie Todd, Southeast district manager for Buffet Crampon, also attended the event and presented a display of step up and professional clarinets, music, and relat-

ed accessories.

Marilee Barela, an area private instructor who organized the event, said, "The clinician, Dr. Andy Hudson, was top caliber, he got each student excited about music and the school year ahead. Plus, he engaged with parents and gave an inspiring performance. We were incredibly blessed to have him share his gifts



with our students at Charleston's Clarinet Day! The joy he brought to the room and to the students has already been felt by their parents, families and teachers. And I can't wait to use all of this new information with the rest of my students!"

She also noted, "The students who are college-bound gained even more experience and setup for auditions. Then, the younger musicians got the opportunity to experience pro-level instruments

for the first time. Big thanks to Musical Innovations for inspiring the next generations of clarinetists, and also to Fox Music and Buffet Crampon and the tireless teachers that put this together. This is the second year of our event, and it nearly doubled; I see the growth continuing year after year."

KORG USA Staff Joins in Annual Charity Race

KORG USA, Inc. joined thousands of Long Island professionals for the 2019 Marcum Challenge, an annual 5k organized to raise money and awareness for the company's brand mission: to provide critical assistance for local non-profit organizations. Sporting their traditional matching company shirts, KORG USA, Inc. joined together for a night of fun, as family members, friends and co-workers all united for the inspirational cause.

"The Marcum Workplace Challenge is an amazing opportunity for our staff to spend a beautiful summer night at Jones Beach, soaking in the sun and networking with other Long Island professionals. The health and well-being of our staff is crucial to KORG USA management, so we were glad to see so many employees attend the run and make strides to enhance their lifestyles," says Kristin Goad, director of talent management at KORG USA, Inc.

Since the Marcum Workplace Challenge began, the event has raised over \$900,000.



Allen & Heath Avantis Digital Console

The third chapter in the company's 96k Hz mixer trilogy...

By George Petersen

One of the highlights of last month's Audio Engineering Society (AES) show in New York City was a new entry in UK-based Allen & Heath's line of 24-bit/96 kHz digital consoles. In a move reminiscent to Goldilocks' saying, "This one is just right," the new 64-channel/42 configurable bus Avantis console falls right between the company's 48-channel SQ and flagship 128-channel dLive models. And this is no stripped-down version. Serious live sound users will surely appreciate how Avantis takes full advantage of Allen & Heath's XCVI FPGA engine, while offering two large, bright, 1080i HD touch screens, extensive I/O options and processing from the company's flagship dLive mixing system.

"Avantis completes our trilogy of next-gen 96k Hz consoles," says the company's managing director Rob Clark. "Avantis takes many of the features that have made SQ and dLive so popular, putting them in a standalone 64-channel mixer that offers a new UI experience, connectivity with our 'Everything I/O' ecosystem, and the dPack option, which gives you access to our advanced dLive processing options." Allen & Heath takes Avantis one step further, notes Clark, adding "we've taken a new approach with the industrial design, coming up with a full-metal alloy chassis and tubular frame exoskeleton that's super-strong, lightweight, and looks fantastic."

Although packing substantial mix and DSP power, Avantis requires only a fairly modest 36.1 x 24.7-inch footprint, something with obvious appeal in live theater and installation applications, while its manageable 57.4-pound heft is a plus to portable system users.

Need for Speed

Surrounded by its rugged exterior, operations focus on the twin massive 15.6" (diagonal) displays with 206 square-inches of total screen space, combined with 24 assignable softkeys and motorized faders that react on touch to immediately highlight the active channels for instant visual feedback. The 24 individual channel rotaries offer quick tweaking gains or pans, then at the touch of a button, can dynamically fold the display to show EQ or compressor parameters across the whole bank. Fader strips can be configured as input channels, mixes, FX sends, FX returns, DCA masters or MIDI strips. Each fader strip has dedicated PAFL, mix and mute buttons with indicators and a rotary controller. Six buttons with indicators provide global mode for the rotary controls, as gain, pan, sends and up to three custom functions.

Everything is built for speed – and efficiency. Continuity UI lets users see and instantly interact with more of what matters, enabling a seamless connection between the physical controls and the displays. A FastGrab tab on the right side of each screen provides split-second access to parameters such as aux sends, EQ, dynamics and FX on the currently selected or specific channel. The name blocks display each visible channel's name, color, type, number, status, pan, gain, trim, metering, processor gain reduction and other data.

I/O — To Go!

While many users will pair Avantis with the 48 in/16 out GX4816 audio expander, Avantis supports Allen & Heath's "Everything I/O" ecosystem, connecting to a huge range of audio expander hardware – including any of the existing Allen & Heath stageboxes already in your inventory. Avantis is also compatible with Allen & Heath's range of ME Personal Mixers and IP hardware remote controllers.

In terms of local I/O, Avantis is well equipped, with 12 XLR analog mic/line inputs, 12 XLR analog outs, plus AES (stereo in and two stereo outs). The digital outs default to 96k Hz sampling rate but are globally switchable to 48k Hz or 44.1k Hz if required. The fully recallable onboard mic preamps offer ultra-low-noise performance (-127 dB EIN) and feature individually switchable phantom power.

Two rear panel I/O expansion ports allow Avantis to benefit from the full range of current dLive option cards, including Dante (64x64 and 128x128), Waves, gigaACE, MADI and more, expanding the scope for system integration, FOH/monitor splits and multi-track recording. Word clock I/O is also standard.



Allen & Heath Avantis: The New Mid-Line Entry

This British console manufacturer launches a new model that bridges the gap between its SQ Series and its flagship dLive with a 64-channel desk intended squarely for the portable, install and touring markets.

STATS

Configuration	64 input channels; 42 output buses
DAC/ADC Resolution	96k Hz; 32-bit
Layers	Two banks, each with six layers
Faders	(20) input, (4) bus output; motorized
Outputs	12 XLR analog, (2) AES/EBU stereo pairs, USB, Dante (optional)
Scene Memories	500
Frequency Response	20 Hz - 30k Hz (+0/-0.8 dB)
Footprint	36.1" x 24.7" (WxL)
AC Power	100-240 VAC; 50/60 Hz
Weight	57.4 pounds
Price	mixer only \$9,999; dPack add-on, \$1,399; GX4816 Remote Expander, \$3,999
Manufacturer	Allen & Heath
More Info	allen-heath.com

Need More?

Right out of the box, Avantis is loaded with processing tools designed to meet the demands of most users and applications, including compressors, EQs and Allen & Heath's acclaimed RackExtra FX units (12 slots). Upgrading to dPack expands Avantis further with additional dLive processing including the Dyn8 dynamics engine (up to 16 instances), DEEP Compressors, and the Dual-Stage Valve preamp. dPack purchasers will automatically receive all future DEEP and FX updates free of charge, future-proofing their investment. And all FX have dedicated stereo returns so you don't need to "waste" input channels.

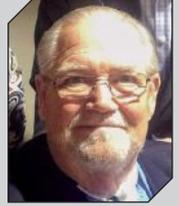
USB recording/playback to/from stereo WAV files is standard, as is a built-in signal generator (sine waves, white noise, pink noise and band-pass) that's routable to any input and output mix and onboard graphic EQs with RTA function on all output mix channels. Avantis also features 16 DCA groups (with DCA Spill functionality) and eight mute groups along with Automatic Mic Mixing (AMM) of up to 64 microphone sources into 1, 2 or 4 zones.

"There are still a number of DSP-based 'old-school' 48k Hz desks plunking along out there," says Jeff Hawley, Allen & Heath USA marketing manager. "With Avantis, forward-thinking house of worship, touring and rental customers will be excited about the leap into a much more modern and efficient and expansive mixing ecosystem."

Avantis has an MSRP of \$9,999 and initial deliveries began in October 2019. More info is available at allen-heath.com. 

Trade Regrets

William (Bill) R. Reglein, owner/chairman of jj Babbitt Company, Inc. died October 17th in Ocala, Florida after a brief illness. "It is with a heavy heart that I announce Bill's passing," said Rocco (Rocky) Giglio, president and chief operating officer of jj Babbitt. "He was a longtime friend to me and my family as well as to many people in the music industry. He will be greatly missed."



Bill joined the company as a teenager and worked in every aspect of the business. In 1999, he became president of jj Babbitt and, eventually, owner/chairman, serving the company for 52 years. In 2007, Reglein placed the firm's daily operation in the hands of his capable staff, led by Giglio, but remained involved in jj Babbitt's overall function. Most recently, Bill was integral in planning the celebration of jj Babbitt's 100th year in business (2019). He was the great-nephew of Jesse J. Babbitt, the company's founder, and the son of music industry legend Eugene (Bud) Reglein. Funeral arrangements are pending.

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ON THE MOVE

QSC has announced the promotions of **Anna Csontos** and **Markus Winkler** effective October 1, 2019. Csontos, who joined the company in 2011, has been promoted to executive vice president, chief market officer and chief of staff, adding to her current executive sales leadership responsibility for QSC's business and product portfolio in the Americas. Markus Winkler, who joined QSC in 2017, has been promoted to senior vice president, EMEA & APAC, expanding his executive sales leadership responsibilities to include QSC's business and product portfolio for all of EMEA and APAC.



Anna Csontos



Markus Winkler

The timing of these leadership changes were in part triggered by Gene Joly's decision to retire at the end of January 2020. Joly joined QSC in 2016, assuming executive sales and business unit leadership responsibility for QSC's Live Sound business globally as vice president, QSC Professional. In 2018, Joly was promoted to senior vice president, Americas, adding responsibility for QSC's Systems business in the Americas.

"Gene's contributions to QSC have been tremendous and include reinvigorating growth in our Live Sound business and working cross-functionally to lead and guide QSC through some of the biggest and most successful product introductions in QSC history, including TouchMix 30 Pro, and the K.2, KS and CP Series loudspeakers," says Joe Pham, president and CEO. "It's been a professional and personal pleasure to have Gene part of the executive team at QSC, and I know I speak for everyone in wishing him the very best in his retirement starting in January."

DANSR, Inc. has promoted **Troy Hamilton** from shipping and warehouse manager to vice president, logistics.



Hamilton began his career in supply chain management working for Roger's Supply Co. as their distribution manager in 1990 and subsequently was promoted to lead buyer in 1992. He left Roger's Supply in 1996 to help manage Randolph Ag Service, his family's business. In the summer of 2004 Hamilton was hired as one of the first employees of the new DANSR, Inc. Over the fifteen years of distinguished service, Troy was crucial to the growth of Vandoren, Denis Wick, and now Smith Mallets and Super-Sensitive strings.

Guitar Center (GC) has announced two new key appointments to its merchandising team: **Karl Bracken** as executive vice president of merchandising and private brands, and **Matt Allred** as vice president of merchandising. The announcement was made by Guitar Center's CEO Ron Japinga.

Kanile`a `Ukulele has announced **Kaimana Souza** as its new director of sales & marketing. This change in leadership is effective now.



As the eldest child of company owners Joe and Kristen Souza, Kaimana has literally grown up with Kanile`a, from its humble beginnings in the Souza's garage to the current 7,000 square foot facility on Kahuhipa Street. Because of this, he has learned all aspects of the family business including, but not limited to, the acquisition of wood,

production, inventory, sales, and marketing.

In 2016, Kaimana graduated with a degree in business administration with a minor in psychology. Immediately after graduation, he took lead of the Islander by Kanile`a `Ukulele Distribution Center in Irvine, California.

In 2018, Kaimana returned to Hawai`i to manage production of the Kanile`a `Ukulele factory while heading the marketing team in successful projects.

Ashly Audio has appointed **Andy Lopez** as export sales manager. The addition is a strategic hire to support the company's long-term plan to grow the business in the international market.



Lopez, who has worked in the A/V industry for more than two decades, has spent the past 17 years of his career focused primarily on international business development. Before joining Ashly, Lopez worked as director of international sales at MSE Audio. In that role, he worked directly with international dealers and representatives to support the sales goals of the company. Lopez will have a similar role with Ashly as he oversees all distribution of Ashly solutions outside of the United States.

"We have very ambitious growth plans for Ashly, and for us to meet – and ultimately exceed – those goals we must be razor focused on our global presence," said Jim Mack, CEO of Ashly Audio. "Hiring Andy is a major step in ensuring we have a direct global presence and are effectively supporting our partners in all major markets across the world."

Powersoft recently announced that it has appointed industry veteran **Tom Knesel** to the position of general manager, North America. Knesel, who will be located at the company's U.S. headquarters in Kearny, New Jersey, will report directly to Luca Giorgi, sales & business development director, Powersoft. The announcement follows the successful relocation of Powersoft's North American headquarters two years ago, and coincides with the company's increased focus on the systems integration market and launch of the Mezzo amplifier platform earlier this year.



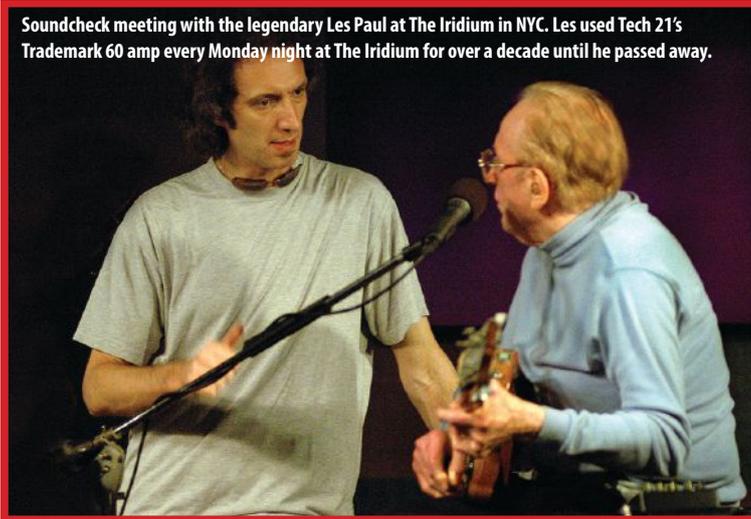
Before joining Powersoft, Knesel was regional business development manager, Americas, for MUSIC Tribe and responsible for driving revenue and managing the Americas for the company's commercial audio brands – including Midas, Klark Teknik, Lake, Lab Gruppen, TC Electronics, Tannoy, and Turbosound. Prior to that, he spent several years in the manufacturer, design and systems integration markets, serving in both sales and executive roles at companies including Ashly Audio, AE Global Media and others. Knesel studied engineering at Southern Polytechnic State University.

Luca Giorgi, who has served in a dual role for Powersoft as GM, North America and sales & business development director for the past two years, will relocate to the company's global headquarters in Florence, Italy at the end of December, and now that the transition is complete, will continue in his role as sales & business director for the global organization.



'We Must Be Doing Something Right!'

Soundcheck meeting with the legendary Les Paul at The Iridium in NYC. Les used Tech 21's Trademark 60 amp every Monday night at The Iridium for over a decade until he passed away.



Taken at the 2019 She Rocks Awards, where Dale was honored with an award for "Mad Skills."



Dale Krevens of Tech 21 Discusses the Company's First 30 Years

By Christian **Wissmuller**

From its signature product, the SansAmp, to subsequent effects pedals, DI boxes, rackmount units, and amplifiers, Tech 21 has been breaking new ground and setting industry standards. Vice president Dale Krevens has worked alongside lead designer and company president Andrew Barta since the very beginning. She recently sat down with *MMR* to discuss the genesis and evolution of the brand that countless musicians depend upon in the studio and on-stage...

For those who aren't familiar, can you summarize the beginnings of Tech 21?

Sure thing. Andrew was a performing musician who was in a band, but also had a background in electronics and worked on amplifiers as a tech for a living. The idea of coming up with a lighter, more portable solution – what came to be known as “amp modelling” – that still sounded as good as tube amplifiers was the starting-point for what ultimately became the SansAmp, really.

He had the basic idea for the product and over the course of that 10 years, he kept fiddling with this, fiddling with that, and he finally came up with this little prototype and started showing it to people because he liked it and he was wondering what everybody else thought about it and they were all like, “Yeah, this is great.” And Mick Jones (Foreigner) was one of the first artists he showed it to because, again, what he was doing for a living was repairing, and customizing, and modifying amplifiers and he had some pretty big-name clients – Mick Jones being one of them. So he said, “Well, all right. Let me see. Let me try and sell this to one of the established manufacturers out there like a Fender or Marshall, and I’ll take my money and then I’ll sync that into my music career,” but nobody got it. Everybody just said, “Yeah, thanks, but no...” Nobody’s going to give up tube amplifiers. And he just got so frustrated with it so I told him, “You gotta do this yourself. It’s so good!” And that’s what started it, you know?



Andrew and Dale in Andrew's office

What was your own background in the industry and your own background with him? What led to your current and evolving role at the company?

Well, my background was advertising and marketing, but prior to that, I was a huge music fan. You know, my brother is a guitar player. I have been listening to music since I could walk, I think, and being that my brother was in a band, I used to go to all the rehearsals. I’d listen to guys talk about gear for hours and hours and hours, so I got a lot of that osmosis.

And you knew Andrew how?

He was just a friend of mine and he was talking about what he was working on and I got all excited about it. When he first told me what the thing was, he said, “Oh, I invented this thing,” and I said, “What is it?” I reacted the exact same way that everyone else in the world did. It was like, “What? You’ve got to be kidding me. That’s not possible.” So he brought it to my apartment and he plugged it into my stereo and he played it, and I just sat there and I said, “How did you do that?” I mean, I was used to following my brother around with his Marshall stack, you know, and I’m like, “Oh, my God. It sounds just like a tube amp!”

So this is back in the beginning – mid- late-'80s. Can you tell me, initially, how many employees were there? What was the original headquarters, so to speak?

Well, I mean, he kinda started out of... Let me think about this for a second. I think he started selling them when he was working at... He had an office or a workshop in the back of Rogue Music on 30th Street, and he kind of sold it out of there. And then he later moved to 49th and Broadway and he had one employee. He decided it was him and an assembler. That was it. And then he hired a guy to help out

with sales and office stuff and then I think he hired another assembler.

I was working behind the scenes because I had a really good job, but he kept saying, "You've got to come work with me," and I'm like, "Hell, no. You can't afford me!" you know? But I was always really into the whole thing and, a lot of times, I would be working on his stuff rather than what I should've been working on, but that's another story [laughs]. But getting it off the ground, I said, "First thing we've got to do is we gotta name this thing. We've come up with a company name." So we worked together on that, and then I actually came up with the name, "SansAmp" and I didn't tell him about it for three days because I had to make sure I really liked it, but...

What was the genesis of the term SansAmp? It was a contraction of, obviously, amp, but did the "sans" part refer to "without?"

Exactly – "sans" in French means "without." It was hilarious. I'd be sitting on the living room couch and Andrew would be pacing back and forth shouting out names, and then I'd be shouting out names and I just wrote them all down. I don't know what happened to that list because I saved it for the longest time and it just disappeared but I just kept saying, "No, at least have 'amp' in the name. It has to have to that," because, otherwise, you're not going to get it. So, I don't know – "SansAmp" just popped into my head one day.

It was a good thing that it did, obviously – now it's an iconic name and iconic product! When did you come on board officially and when did the company become Tech 21?

The company became Tech 21 in May of 1989. He spent two years

trying to sell the technology to others. I had been working behind the scenes for a year before that. I wrote the original owner's manual. I did all of the copies, ads, and the layouts, although I used to work with an artist at the agency where I was, but nobody cares about that. And I physically went to work with him in October of '91, but I was involved the whole time, you know – before day one, obviously.

So it was initially the little workshop with one other guy in addition to himself working as an assembler. Cue to the present day, how many employees are there?

Well, we've always managed to remain a small company. There's about 20 of us now.

Still, 20 compared to two...

Well, the thing is, Andrew doesn't want to take over the world, you know what I mean? He doesn't have a really huge ego and his whole thing is he wants to design really good products, really useful products. Andrew doesn't want to copy anybody and he doesn't want design a product if there's already a million of them already out there. If Andrew can't bring something new to the table, he doesn't want to do it, you know?

Sure. He's coming at it from an artist's standpoint as opposed to a pure commerce standpoint.

Absolutely, absolutely. That's why we didn't grow into this big, giant mega-corporation with shareholders and all of that other stuff. That's not how he's programmed, you know what I mean? He likes



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to have control over things – the quality is really important. He's very hands-on and he really cares about what he's designing and how people are going to use it. He's very aware of that.

Speaking to that, most brands have partnerships with the endorsing artists and they leverage that to varying degrees. How important has it been to be embraced by such a wide swath of really high-profile, accomplished, technically proficient artists?

You know, that's it – we must be doing something right. I think, actually, it's more on a personal level, because we don't chase after artists. We don't knock on their doors just to say, "Hey, we want you to endorse the product. We want to make a signature piece for you." Every instance has all been very organic. As an example, we happen to be fans of King's X – both Andrew and I, and several other people that work here. We were at a NAMM Show one day and this guy comes over and he starts talking to me and he mentions something about the band being here and I was like, "Dude, you gotta bring them over here." I was dying. And so he did and that's how we met Doug [Pinnick]. And Andrew was... you know, he was totally like a giddy little girl, you know what I mean? I mean, I knew he was inside. He wasn't exhibiting that time, but, you know, it was just really funny. So he's like, "Oh, I'd love to

make an amp head for you," and Doug was like, "Cool. I'm into it." And that's how it kinda snowballed, you know, and then I don't... I mean, Geddy Lee has been using our stuff for a really long time.

Yeah. Talk about the biggest name in the rock bass – my goodness, Geddy Lee.

I know, I know! And, you know, he's not one of these... He doesn't endorse a whole lot of products. He just wants to have a really good sound and he doesn't want to make a big deal about it. We had been working with him and we talked to the tech one thing led to another. It's like, "Hey, how about we do this?" Because he had a whole lot of gear and that was the thing: Rush was winding down and they were going to basically retire. But Geddy still wanted to be able to do projects and float around and not have to carry all of the Rush gear with him, so we realized, "Hey, how about we make a signature rack-mount?" He said, "Yeah. Let's do it." And even Les Paul... I don't even remember how that got started but, Les Paul had been using our amp for a really long time.

Well, obviously, Les is such a gear guy in the first place.

Yeah, but you never know who is going to be impressed. Sometimes, I'll meet somebody and say, "Oh, this is right up your alley," and they don't like it and you kind of scratch your head and go, "I don't understand." So

you never take for granted that people are going love your stuff. You can't. So with Les, I mean, he and Andrew were very similar. They were similar souls, shall we say, and because they're both tinkerers, they like to take things apart and make other things. They would see things differently which is what sets those kinds of people apart from everybody else. And, in fact, Les invited Andrew over to show him all of his goodies and everything. He was just the coolest and it was great.

But going back to the personal aspect of it all, we don't want to just make a signature piece for the sake of making a signature piece. In terms of marketing, obviously, people really sit up and pay attention. When you put Geddy Lee, Richie Kotzen, and Les Paul on the product, people say, "Whoa, what's this?" So it's a no-brainer that, you know, that's going to help you.

Can you talk a little bit about the evolution of the product line?

Well, I mean, after we came out with the original SansAmp, part of the evolution was we went to the GT2 because people had some issues with the dip switches. They didn't like that. And it is a very sophisticated piece and it's fairly easy to not get a good sound out of it if you don't know what you're doing, so that's how we developed the GT2. I mean, you cannot get a bad sound out of that no matter how you twist the knobs. And then, of course, people were like, "Oh, I want it for bass," so we went to bass and went to acoustic. So we went through the whole thing and then rackmount, programmable. It's just the natural evolution of all of that.

People kept saying they would love to have a SansAmp in an amp and we were like, "Okay... Well, that's kind of ironic, but okay. Let's do it." So that's how we came out with the Trademark series. And then the other thing was a lot of people were asking, "What amp should I use the SansAmp with?" because you needed a clean, flat amp, and that's how we developed the Power Engine. That was the inspiration behind that and that was very successful and now we've re-issued that with the Power Engine Deuce Deluxe, so that it's just one that you can use for both guitar and bass, which is fantastic.

And then Andrew wanted to do some effects and we did the Roto Choir, and delays, and reverbs, and stuff. That was more fun stuff for us because, again, he always tries to bring something unique into whatever it is that we're doing rather than just regurgitating something that someone else has



done. And we had the Comp Tortion where we put compression and distortion together. There's always, like, some little extra functionality or bonus with any of those products. And then, of course, the Fly Rig series, that's doing really, really well and it's the perfect timing for it, I gotta say, because everybody wants to downsize. Even though pedals are all the rage, you know, the pedalboards have gotten really, really big. You can't travel with those things, you know? So we were able to shrink everything down and put it in one unit, all of those different varieties.

Absolutely. You can put that in your overhead and off you go. Do you have any events, or special anniversary products lined up? What have you done and/or are you planning to do to sort of mark this milestone?

Well, unfortunately, I was trying to plan this huge party for this past NAMM Show, but it just got out of control and we had so many things that we were introducing. There was so much going on, we couldn't do it. And then I got an award from the She Rocks people, yeah, so that was really exciting. All right, this is good timing. All right, that's going to be the party, you know, for us. We'll just celebrate it on our own. We do have something coming out. We were hoping to have it out by now but, of course, things never go on time. So we do have something we're going to be releasing to commemorate our 30th anniversary. It's not the classic. It's not going to be like, "Oh, the 30th-anniversary version of the classic..." It's something completely different and we're very excited that it's close and, hopefully, it will be out before the end of this year. We're pushing for it, and we think we're on track but you never know.

Can you talk about Tech 21's distribution model and how interested dealers would go about partnering with you guys?

They can contact us directly because we do work directly. We don't sell online ourselves, you know? We don't want to compete with our dealers.

We're very supportive of our dealers. We don't make them buy products that are slow-movers. If anything, we actually do the opposite. If they say, "Well, we want to order this, this, and that," we'd say, "No, don't get that because..." I mean, unless you know you have a customer for it, right? We want the product to move, so we will guide them and tell them which ones are the ones that they absolutely must have just in terms of, "This is what you need to have because it's going to move and this is what people want." We know what moves and which ones are the slower ones.

That's great because there are those brands that have prohibitive minimum orders which sort of hogtie the smaller independent retailers: "Oh, if you want to order this popular product, you also have to get ten of these," and then those ten "others" end up sitting on the shelf for a year.

Nope. We don't do that. I mean, we do have a minimum order, but it's really not a lot of money, especially for the mom-and-pops because we support them. We still believe in mom-and-pops and online stuff is great, but we understand from a musician's point of view that they want to touch it, they want to feel it, they want to hear it, they want to try it out. And that's an important thing and it keeps going by the wayside. It's like clothes shopping, you know? I want to go into a store, I want to feel the fabric, I want to try it on. I don't want it to show up and then realize, "Oh, it's terrible. I've got to return it."

Absolutely. Is there anything else that we haven't yet broached that you want to share with our readers?

Yes. Now that you mentioned it, it just hit me. The thing is that there's so much digital out there, but we stay analog. That's our thing and that's what sets us apart from everybody else. And that's why we think people think our stuff sounds better. I mean, we think it sounds better, but it doesn't matter what we think – it matters what people who buy it think. And Andrew's a real stickler with

that. We only use digital if it's absolutely necessary or if it's for programming purposes, but the single pass and the sound, it's all analog. 



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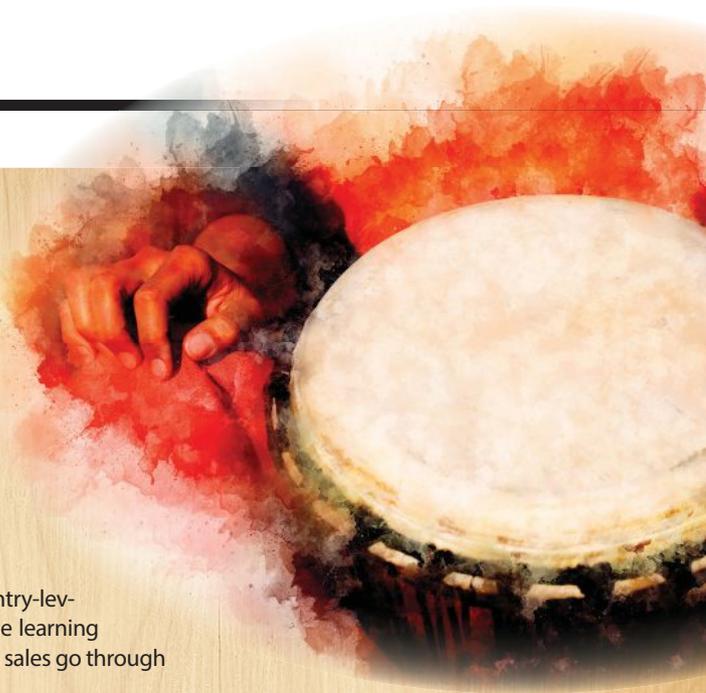
A SHOW OF HANDS

Hand Percussion Sales in 2019

By Christian Wissmuller

Hand percussion instruments: they're relatively compact (usually), entry-level models are some of the most accessible instruments out there, the learning curve and gentle and forgiving, and whenever Santana has a hit song, sales go through the roof.

How are these versatile percussion products doing in 2019, though? A few years ago, everyone was all about cajons – are they still the hot sellers? We recently touched base with reps from five of the biggest name in hand percussion to take the pulse of this market segment.



For your brand, what are currently the top-selling hand percussion instruments?

Derek Zimmerman: For LP, congas are still king and we continue to grow in the conga market. Cajons are also big contributors to our sales and are a key category for our continued growth.

Gil Soucy: We are seeing strong sales across our offerings, but our patented half-moon tambourines which were invented by Rhythm Tech in the '70s continue to be top sellers for us. We are also seeing very strong sales on the new Palma Series range of cajons launched this year at NAMM, including our new djembe which is the only djembe available with a snare "on-off" feature.

Glen Caruba: Cajons, cowbells.

Adam Anderson: Cajons, cajons, and cajons – specifically our Subwoofer Bass Cajon and the Turbo Slaptop Cajon, which some people prefer since you do not have to lean over to play. Oh, and also our Synthetic Djembes. The classics never go out of style.

Lane Davy: I guess the answer depends on whether you measure "best-selling" by units or dollars. In sheer unit volume, it's a toss-up between our Synergy congas and bongos or the Colorsound djembes. In terms of sales revenue, the new Jimmie Morales line of fiberglass congas and bongos have rocketed to the top.

Have you been noticing any significant shifts or trends in this market segment – on the vendor, retailer, or end-user sides of things?

GS: Online sales are growing at a higher rate than in past years, but brick and mortar shops are also up. End-users have been more quality conscious and less price sensitive and want great sounding instruments first and foremost.

AA: Versatile instruments. People want items that are not only perfect for their immediate needs, but ones they can and will use for a long time.

LD: The thing I hear most often is that cajons are not the hot commodity they once were. For us, it's hard to tell. Historically, Toca has not been a big player in the cajon market, but we also sell the high-end Peruvian brand, A Tempo. In that segment of the market, sales are steady.

GC: The market has reached a saturation point for cajons and we are seeing and hearing an overall decline in sales. Typical "Latin" percussion instruments are also stagnant partly due to a robust used market.

DZ: There is the obvious migration to online retail and we are seeing that shift in line with other industries. There are many traditional brick and mortar retailers that are using creative and savvy tactics to get people in their store fronts while growing their online presence, which is ideal. I also see that many retailers are becoming more specialized and wanting more and more customization for their customers.

On the consumer side, there is a resurgence of "Latin" influence in pop music as well continued growth in the recreational, ritual, and world drumming market. This is a great time for growing our customer base as more folks enter the hand drumming space.



“My biggest concern is really the overall economy and the general wackiness of the macroeconomic environment. So far, consumers have managed to shrug off the daily news and forge ahead.”



Lane Davy, Executive Vice President of Sales & Marketing, RBI Music



What are some best practices that especially savvy retailers embrace when it comes to displaying, promoting, and selling hand percussion?

LD: This question always makes me nervous because retailers spend their days in the trenches and know their business so much better than we do. If I had to pick a couple things, my first thought is to be sure the tunable instruments are tuned and set up correctly. I can't tell you how often I've gone into a shop that has all of the guitars at least in the ballpark of being tuned, but the congas and bongos have almost zero tension on the heads. My second recommendation is pretty basic too: if something isn't working, let us help you try something different. We have a lot of ways to help mitigate the risk of trying new things.

AA: There are three basic points:

- Having the largest selection possible, which helps combat the notion that you might be missing something cool online.
- Making sure the instruments are properly displayed in a way that encourages the customer to try them out.
- Using social media to promote that you have the selection in stock and that you can have it *today*.

GC: The best promotions are centered around digital tactics. Videos with quality sound samples are the best way to promote these products through commercials and social campaigns.

GS: We recently updated the packaging across our brand to be consistent from item to item. When all of our products are now displayed together as a group it really looks great and draws attention to the brand. We have many retailers dedicating a good portion of their percussion wall to this "new look" and the feedback from them is, "It's really helping sales." For online retailers, expanding video content of the instruments being used as well as "feature and benefit" style videos are producing great results for our dealers.



“On the consumer side, there is a resurgence of ‘Latin’ influence in pop music as well continued growth in the recreational, ritual, and world drumming market.”



Derek Zimmerman, Brand Manager, Latin Percussion

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Gil Soucy, VP of Sales, Rhythm Tech



“End-users have been more quality conscious and less price sensitive and want great sounding instruments first and foremost.”

DZ: For brick and mortar it's about having a good assortment of hand drums and percussion in all price points along with clean orderly displays. Also, having a well-informed sales staff is key.

In the online space, logical upsells and add-ons (“Customers who bought this also bought...”) proves to be consistently effective. Also, having detailed product information, so the consumer can make educated choices will always lead to getting the sale along with great customer service. It really comes down to having the best customer experience. We supply product videos for our dealers to use which is a great sales tool. Those, along with dealer specific product videos, are an additional bonus for the customer.

In your estimation, are sales of these instruments up, down, or level when compared to last year?

DZ: We are seeing increases in all of our product categories and we continue to expand categories to capture new opportunities.

GS: Sales for Rhythm Tech have been up. Despite the entry of many new items in the market from a number of brands, the sound and quality of Rhythm Tech is still highly sought by many professional players and percussion enthusiasts alike. The addition of the new cajons, dejmbes, and our new range of group play “Rhythm Village” instruments have really added a nice overall lift to the brand.

GC: Flat.

LD: Up! It's hard to say whether this has more to do with a resurgence of the Toca brand or that the market in general. For whatever reason, we're happy to see sales improving across all categories (yes, even cajons).

AA: Every year since 2006 we have seen an increase in hand percussion and this year is on track to continue that trend. We're lucky to work with dealers that trust us and are willing to try our very broad range of instruments which stimulates

the consumer. Most of the time all it takes is putting it on the showroom floor and [seeing] what happens.

Expectations for the hand percussion market in the coming months?

GS: I think it will continue to grow and look forward to a terrific holiday sales season.

GC: The acoustic market overall is on a decline and we anticipate the hand drum segment to follow that trend.

LD: My biggest concern is really the overall economy and the general wackiness of the macroeconomic environment. So far, consumers have managed to shrug off the daily news and forge ahead. We're cautiously optimistic that will continue. We have fairly aggressive plans for expanding with new products, markets and programs. As long as we have a little cooperation from the overall economy, we expect continued growth.



Adam Anderson, Meinl Percussion Brand Manager, Meinl USA

“We expect the growth to continue. Percussion is not just for drummers and percussionists. It is for everyone.”



AA: We expect the growth to continue. Percussion is not just for drummers and percussionists. It is for everyone – singers, guitar players with a home studio, churches, schools, sound therapy, retirement homes, home school moms and dads, et cetera. Even to people who have no interest in playing music, they just want a drum.

DZ: As we head into the fourth quarter and 2020 we are excited about the offering we have and where the percussion market is headed. In addition to our core customers, there is a resurgence of “Latin” influence in pop music as well as the recreational and world drumming market continuing to grow. These two factors create great opportunities for LP and the hand percussion market. MEINL



Glen Caruba, Vice President of Sales & Marketing, Pearl Corporation

“The market has reached a saturation point for cajons, and we are seeing and hearing an overall decline in sales.”



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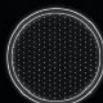


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'People Don't Seem to be Shopping or Buying'

The Cymbal Market Struggles (for Many)

By Christian **Wissmuller**

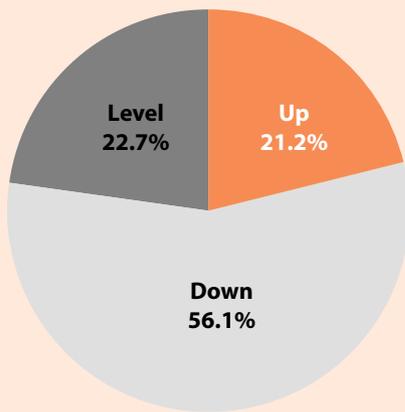
"Drums and cymbals are dead, and have been for a while," declares Jason Struble of Muncie, Indiana's Sight & Sound Music Center. "I often ask myself why I still carry them... then I answer myself because I sell accessories, hardware, sticks, and heads which all have grown softer over the years."

A gloomy take on this market segment, but with nearly 60 percent (56.1%) of participants in this month's dealer survey reporting a downwards trend for sales, Struble's assessment – while drastic – is far enough away from hyperbole for comfort. What are the reasons? Increasing prices for both retailers and players were most often cited as culprits, but in particular the relative lack of a

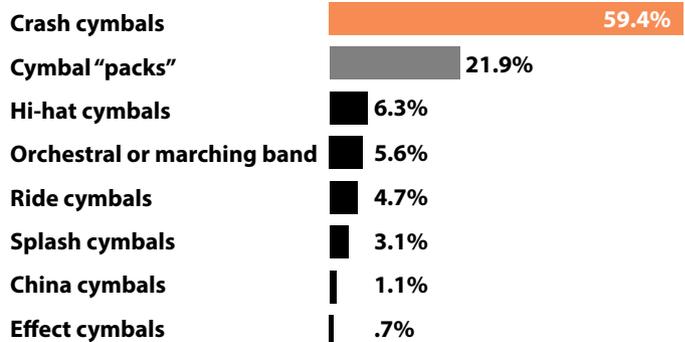
viable middle tier option seems to be keeping customers away. As Shane Kinney of Drum Center of Portsmouth (New Hampshire) says, "Boutique and cheap do well. The middle is a wasteland. The market needs a pro-level, name-brand line with models that street for \$200 or less."

Of course, as with virtually anything, no truth is absolute across the board. Certain dealers in some parts of the country are doing just fine. "There has been an increase in sales in this area this year," enthuses Ronnie Green of Green Music (Murphy, North Carolina). "Thanks to all of our customers and suppliers for making this a great year for cymbals!"

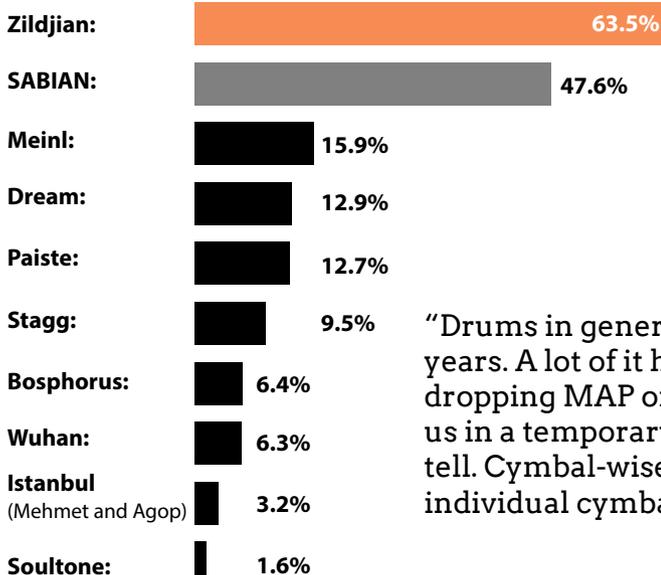
Compared to last autumn, sales of cymbals for your business are...



In terms of volume (number of units sold) which category of cymbal sells most for your store?



What brand of cymbals generate the most profit for your operation?



"We try *not* to stock many cymbal 'packs,' as cymbal sounds and the drummers who seek them are unique, and the sound they're trying to cultivate may not fit in to a standard cymbal 'pack.'"

C.E. Surine

The Drum Shop, Tulsa, Oklahoma

"Drums in general have slowed way down for us the last couple of years. A lot of it had to do with a certain well-known brand of drum dropping MAP on all of their products... no thanks. It sort of threw us in a temporary funk. What does the future hold? Only time will tell. Cymbal-wise we do still sell more of the cymbal packs than individual cymbals – usually in the medium price range."

Tim Bascom

Morgan Music Services, Inc., Lebanon, Missouri

Have you noticed any significant shifts or tendencies when it comes to cymbals – either on the supplier or consumer sides?

“Drummers are the ‘nomadic customers’ of the Music Industry. That means they gallop through the store and buy whatever you put in front of them, as long as it is shiny, unboxed, and easy to handle. They don’t look up or down, they typically walk the store in a quick circle, and you must have it right smack dab in front of them to get a purchase. So boxed packs don’t work. If the item is over \$250 then it needs to be Zildjian, if it is cheaper and/or a used cymbal, it will sell if you display it.”

Anthony Mantova
Mantova’s Two Street Music
Eureka, California

“Great reduction in shoppers and buyers!”

Derek Sharp
Supersonic Music
Topeka, Kansas

“Only [the] very cheapest ones are selling now.”

Joanne Julier
Cerdd Ystwyth Music
Aberystwyth, Ceredigion
United Kingdom

“The variety of cymbals has been exponential and I would think some dealers are having trouble stocking so wide a variety. It’s expensive!”

John Nasshan
Vesely Music
Parowan, Utah

“People don’t seem to be shopping or buying.”

Mitchel D Banks
Don Banks Music
Tampa, Florida

“Cymbals have always been a good seller. Different drummers in this area have their own preference and we try to always meet their need. Our suppliers have always been there for us. In previous years we saw an increase in drum kit sales and now most of the drummers are upgrading some of their cymbals and hi-hats and such. There has been an increase in sales in this area this year. Thanks to all of our customers and suppliers for making this a great year for cymbals!”

Ronnie Green
Green Music
Murphy, North Carolina

“Meinl has captured that dry/complex market quite well and SABIAN has been picking up the pieces of the rebrand along with their computer system swap preventing them from meeting certain demand. Zildjian’s K Sweet Cymbals came out really nice and have done well.”

Roger Nottestad
The Drum Shop
Tulsa, Oklahoma



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18th Annual Music China Largest Yet

The 2019 Music China gathering was the biggest event of its kind yet. 2,414 MI vendors occupied 13 exhibition halls on the fairground in the Shanghai New International Expo Centre, with 122,519 visitors (up 11 percent from 2018's 110,381) dropping by to check out the newest instruments and related gear. Organizers point to a notable increase in new exhibitors from the music education category. This year also saw a 15 percent increase in exhibition space for pianos and bowed instruments – due primarily to more interest from Chinese companies and European pavilions, such as Germany and Italy.

Judy Cheung, deputy general manager of Messe Frankfurt (HK) Ltd, reflects on the event's 18th edition: "We're always incredibly excited when a fair is about to start and the four exhibition days have flown by. It was our biggest edition so far, and I was happy to hear that the quality of the show was not in any way influenced by its growth. This year's expansion was reflected

by a number of product categories. Next to the increase in the gross area for the piano and bowed sectors, there's clearly more interest in everything that has to do with music education. This category could be found in two halls (compared to only one in 2018), which allowed us to offer a variation of traditional as well as less conventional ways of learning how to play a musical instrument. We also responded to the increasing interest by focusing on music education in a number of fringe program events."

While show organizers offered no official stance and many suppliers on-hand declined to be quoted on the record, accelerating trade tensions between the U.S. and China was unquestionably a main topic of discussion and concern, offering a somewhat dour counterpoint to an otherwise vibrant and positive convention.

The 19th edition of Music China will be held October 28-31, 2020. Visit www.musikmesse-china.com for more information.



C. Bechstein's Sphinx Grand Piano is very pricy, indeed (\$1.4 million dollars)



Jody Espina and Colin Schofield of JodyJazz/Chedeville



Dr. Hendrik Müller-Giegler and Michael Biber of Messe Frankfurt discussing the upcoming 2020 event in Frankfurt.



DW endorsing artist Felix Lehrmann put on quite the drum clinic on Thursday morning.



Gibson CEO James "JC" Curleigh



The On-Stage/TMP Pro team



Stephen Wick of Denis Wick Products, Ltd.



Andy Powers of Taylor Guitars



The Music Link's Scott Thompson



Voices from the Show Floor...

"The Music China show only continues to grow in size and significance, and in its importance to our business. From what I understand the 2019 show was the biggest one yet with over 2,400 exhibitors. Every single type of instrument can be found there and there is even one exhibition hall is completely dedicated to traditional Chinese instruments. What is great about Music China is that it brings together so many different people from so many different countries; it's a fascinating mix of cultures. Music is an essential part of the culture and music education in schools continues to grow and become more widespread and ever more sophisticated. Furthermore, interest in the saxophone as an instrument, is particularly high for a variety of reasons. The saxophone is a very popular instrument in China and is featured in a variety of locally popular music including traditional Chinese folk songs and their version of a kind of 'smooth jazz,' which is incredibly popular mainstream music. In addition to JodyJazz, this year we added an additional booth to showcase the new Chedeville classical products and both booths were incredibly busy each day. We were very pleased with the reaction to all our products at the show.

Music China is second only to the NAMM show in terms of importance to our business. Winter NAMM is still the #1 show – not only for the USA market, but for our business worldwide. This is where we meet with all our North American customers and also many from Europe and Asia. With NAMM at the beginning of the year, it's the natural time to launch new products, and because of its location, it's logistically easier for Asian, Canadian, Mexican, and South American customers to attend. The Music China show is now aimed squarely at the China market and stands on its own because of the size and potential of that market. It also attracts a lot of customers from Southeast Asia and Australia, and increasingly from Europe, which is another compelling reason to attend. We used to exhibit at Musikmesse but have not done so for the past two years. Most of our most important larger overseas accounts all now come to NAMM and so many of our smaller European customers simply no longer attend. We always consider going back to Musikmesse each year and if enough of these smaller customers started to attend again then we would most certainly exhibit there.

The only threat to this accelerating growth is in the China market due to the heightened trade tensions with the USA. Given the relatively 'niche' nature of the music products industry, we are not seeing any direct effect to our business due to the trade tensions at the current time. But we certainly were made aware of the discontent at the current state of affairs between the two nations and very negative

comments regarding a certain U.S. President. It's a major threat to our business and a great concern. A boycott of USA-made goods among Chinese consumers at the urging of the Chinese government is a real threat and one that would be very detrimental to our business."

Colin Schofield

*Vice President of Sales & Marketing
JodyJazz/Chedeville*

"Overall the show was successful for TMP. We are starting to see [fewer] international customers at this show, but it is very strong for our domestic China business which is an emphasis for us. Some of the feedback we heard was that the Chinese market was down but the buyer interaction was not representative of that feeling."

Tom Tedesco

*Vice President of Sales & Business Development
The Music People*

"Overall the show seemed well attended and busy. Although it did seem like many of our key partners were skipping this show and focusing on Winter NAMM. I think this is an 'every other year' event for many. I did not get to walk the show as much this year (busy! good problem!) but what I did see seemed more organized and focused. I saw more known brands and less "trading company" brands. This is always an interesting show and with Frankfurt out of the picture for us it is really the place to do much of our international business now!"

Scott Thompson

*Vice President of Key Accounts
The Music Link*

"It's both exciting and encouraging to witness the optimism of a growing show in person. I take that as an indicator of a thriving musical environment full of people with an appetite for music and the instruments we create. One of the more interesting observations echoed by veterans of our industry was the apparent shifting of the tide away from China as a mere producer of export instruments, but as a destination market for instruments created elsewhere brought into the country to satisfy the demand of players in China. The music scene and appetite for western instruments is growing, and we see this as an opportunity to serve ever increase numbers of guitar players."

Andy Powers

*Partner
Taylor-Listug, Inc.*



Alen Palislamovic of **Thomastik-Infeld GmbH**



Yamaha showcased the motorcycle-design influence of their Revstar guitars



Anthony Mantova (left) with the staff winning a local Chamber of Commerce award for best small store in Eureka, California



**ONE WAY
STREET**

TO SUCCESS

Mantova's Two Street Music

By Victoria Wasylak

At Mantova's Two-Street Music, order takers aren't allowed: only salespeople. It's an important distinction to the Eureka, California-based music business, currently run by brothers Anthony and Nick Mantova, but that aggressive salesmanship is in their blood. Both gentlemen are experts at qualifying customers, which is the base of their business.

"Most clerks in this industry that I've seen are order takers, they're not salesmen," Anthony shares. "Salesmen have to qualify salesmen have to have a strategy, and you have to go through these steps to get your customer to buy."

Since taking over the original store 10 years ago – then titled merely Two Street Music – the two have sharpened their sales skills with a seven-step qualifying process that aims to break the barrier between customers and employees.

It wasn't always that simple, though: taking on a decades-old business has unique challenges versus from starting from scratch.

Originally founded in 1976, the business moved from its original location to 136 Second Street in 1978, and has remained there ever since (although, the front door has shifted between #136 and #124 over the years). Anthony and his two brothers bought the biz in 2009, and while one brother has since pursued other ventures, Anthony and Nick remain rooted in the company.

"My brothers and I were looking to start a

business 10 plus years ago. To tell you the truth, I never thought of a music store until a friend of a friend suggested taking a look at it because it was priced to sell," Anthony says. "We were at multi-level marketing at the time. I was working several jobs at the time just to pay my bills. It was really a friend of a friend who said, 'Hey, the Two String Music in Old Town is for sale. Maybe it's something that your brothers and you should take a look at.'"

In their family history, their father's influence looms large in the background, as Lindy Mantova is a well-known accordion player and accordion sales representative who worked with brands like Titano, Ernest Deffner, and Panlitalia in the Northern California region. Both current co-owners are musicians, too - Anthony plays saxophone and Nick plays trumpet.

"It was tough," Anthony explains of their first few years in business. "I can't tell you how many times we've changed business models, how many times we've changed core concepts.

The first few years are really rough. We had kind of a goofy idea that we would be absentee operators and not on the floor. And, of course, that changed after two years. So I think it took us about two to three years to come to terms with how the business works, what the expectations of the customer are. We had a lot of expectations that did not turn out; we had a lot of beliefs that were just not correct. We turned things around, because we, as owners, rolled up our sleeves, jumped into the sales position. Where before, we weren't necessarily the lead





salesmen. We made ourselves lead salesmen. We made concrete strategies for helping supply meet demand. You can't interfere with the fact that you've had 40 years-worth of customers' hard-wired to buy with you. I mean, we got kicked in the face the first few years. And there's no cliché there, we really did."

From there, Anthony's seven-step qualifying process was born, and the store hasn't shied away from it since. With any luck, employees won't have to go through every step, but if they're spinning their wheels on making a sale, the steps are there to guide them.

"Dabbling in the business, that doesn't work. You have to be all in, all hands on deck, you know," he says. "Every strategy needs to be sales-oriented. Every customer needs to be presented with every opportunity to buy. My process for how to handle a customer as soon as they walk in the door, and they walk around, and they leave, is very different than most stores. Most customers are conditioned to wanna put up sort of a security wall between themselves and the retail stores. When they go in, they say something like, 'I'm just looking.'"

Factoring in the added means of purchasing items (Amazon, big box stores, even social media), Mantova adds in layaway, financing, and trade options to help sway customers into purchasing. The classic, "But my wife will kill me for buying this!" excuse factors into the equation too. The last step – adjusting the price, if needed – almost never comes up.

"What can I do to puncture their reality, become a part of their reality, and not just deliver a great experience, but make sure

that the experience is sales-driven?" Anthony asks himself, "Of course, you're not an automaton, it's not that scripted. But you are going through the litany and you're listening to their answers. And usually the answer opens up the opportunity to make the sale happen. Basically just trying to requalify, A, is this person serious and, B, do they really want it? It's a simple... It's a process. It's the same seven things over and over again. We're hitting them with the same [options], and in the same order, too."

The process ties in with the Mantova family's experience-heavy sales strategy, which attracts and keeps customers with the promise of a more invigorating visit. Because the lowest prices are almost always on sites like Amazon, Anthony says that stores can't rely on low prices alone to draw customers. Instead, they have to give them an impressive selection of inventory and an engaging store to peruse.

"You're not trying to give people the price, you're trying to give people the best experience, because they can get the best price staying at home," Anthony explains. "Any store owner that feels sorry for himself because he's giving people the best price and nobody's buying is not qualifying the customers correctly, and/or is not carrying the right stuff. That's why trade is essential. That's why breaking into their little world is essential."

Along with in-store workshops that Mantova's Two-Street Music frequently host, Anthony also explains that creative in-store displays (and not mere cardboard ones) have been a game-changer. Often, he ends up creating the displays himself because so few that are readily available for purchase are actually quality.

"I can create an awe-inspiring experience for the customer as soon as they walk in," he notes. "In years four, five and six of the business, we were in what I call building mode where we hand-build all of our displays. And we've done articles and asked some people about how effective these displays were. But back

then, I understood that there was a serious need to stand out from other stores. And when you have cedar in for wooden displays, that tower, you know, 12, 14 feet tall, you've got the opportunity to wow the customer as soon as they walk in. And that's crucial. I believe that everybody wants a good experience before worrying about price."

"I do everything I can to disconnect price from product," he adds, emphasizing the customer's eye for experience. "It's such a huge mistake our industry is making right now. We're so fixated on price per product, we have to get away from that. We've gotta start embracing a new model of experience, buy this now kind of stuff. 25 percent of customers care only about price first. We have to be concerned with price, we have to think about it because 25 percent is a big number. But if you're not the 25 percent, you're a wanderer, you're the wanderer customer."

Changing Times in California

Sitting in California's Humboldt County, Mantova's Two Street Music has four

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employees – two owners, and two other staff members – that man a 5,000 square foot warehouse, a 1,000 square foot repair shop, and a 5,000 square foot showroom.

Their small staff is emblematic of just one of the many struggles that the store and other area California business face. On one hand, rent is cheap in the area for the store. On the other, much of the middle class has moved in recent years. Also gone are the immigrant populations who flocked to the area to work on cannabish farms, who frequently came in with hard-earned cash to spend.

"I'm a skeleton crew. I need people, I really do, but I can't afford them," Anthony says. "And that's a California problem. The state charges a massive amount per employee. The withholding is ridiculous, the money that you pay out per month. There is a reason middle-class people are leaving. Nobody *wants* to leave. It's beautiful out here. We have the tallest trees in the world. We have the best landscapes. We have the best oceans outside of Southern California. But people are voting with their feet. They're leaving because they can't find jobs. According to some reports I'm hearing, we went from 8,000 family farms to 1,000."

The dip in middle class families has resulted in mainly upper-and lower-class customers coming through the door for Mantova's Two Street Music – both important groups of people, but ones with vastly different needs. In an effort to adapt, Anthony says that he's crafted successful strategies for both types of customer. For folks with less expendable income, he offers generous trades, as well as a spare change program that lets shoppers bring in their buckets and jars of extra coins for full store credit. For more affluent customers, he makes sure they get what they want as quickly as possible.

"I'm still coming to terms with where we don't really have a vibrant middle class anymore, because it's leaving, it's going to other states," Anthony says. "We don't have that nice big middle class that we can do rentals to, that we do rent-to-own contracts to, that we can do things that a store typically does with middle class. I don't get that option. I don't get that anymore. That's gone. Our trade ability is unique to us. Our change program is unique to us. Also, just being incredibly isolated and able to have massive square footage. You can't build a store like mine in the Bay Area because you'd be paying outrageous amount for rent. So those are three, right off the top, things we can do that nobody else can do. And that gives us a huge advantage."

The store has also switched away from rent-to-own contracts, because the middle class was the main demographic for that sales model. Instead, he utilizes Veritas out of Florida. Repairs also stir up quite a bit of business – Anthony says he sees roughly six re-

pairs come in every single morning. Additionally, the shop does setups for \$45, netting them quick cash for less than an hour's worth of work. On the sales front, Yamaha and Fender still dominate at the shop.

"For me, almost since the beginning, we've been a Yamaha dealer. Yamaha is the core of our business," he says. "And then that's closely, secondly, followed by Fender. We added Fender two years ago, best decision we ever made. We're a Fender and a Yamaha store. And we're on the verge of hopefully becoming a Gibson store. And there's, of course, a lot of other brands but Fender and Yamaha are the ones that I'm constantly pushing, constantly moving."



“What can I do to puncture their reality, become a part of their reality, and not just deliver a great experience, but make sure that the experience is sales-driven?”
- Anthony Mantova



A Not-So-Typical General Store

There's a final factor that separates Mantova's Two Street Music from the rest of most American MI stores: Anthony loves curating some offbeat items for the store, since his original idea for a brick and mortar location was a general-store-type endeavor. Of course, he and his family ended up taking on an MI business instead, but that doesn't mean that you can't see his flair in his inventory.

"I had sort of a dream at the time to pursue a general store, a kind of a store an eclectic mix of everything, like an old timey kind of country store," Anthony says. "I'm not gonna be starting a general store anytime soon, but it does kinda show why I have things that you don't usually find in music stores. I have Australian cane toad pick pouches. They're purses from Australia. They're real cane toads and you zipper the butt open, you stuff them with picks. I'm not the only store in America that has them, but I'm certainly one of the very few. So I do kinda have a little bit of that general store kind of angle that I bring out a little bit."

Also in stock are Tenacious D picks from Chesbro, Dava's grip picks, singing bowls, jewelry and necklaces,

and special Guatemalan-made guitar straps, crafted by Mayan villagers. There are other items he's retired or grown away from, like the company's own cleaning product (called Mr. Garrett's cleaner) and special percussion items from Africa, such as baby djembes. With the last few years of business being especially sales-driven, Anthony says the store stocks fewer "eccentric" items than before, yet the influence remains, not in the least of which is obvious in quirky imported pick pouches.

The quiriness fuses with so many other aspects of the biz – the sales process, the experience-oriented tactics and displays – to create an MI retail operation that's entirely effective, efficient, and evocative. That's just the Mantova way.

"The merchant has the ability to reach out and touch the customer through the price tag," Anthony says. "It doesn't *have* to be static." 



Electro-Harmonix Attack Decay Tape Reverse Simulator

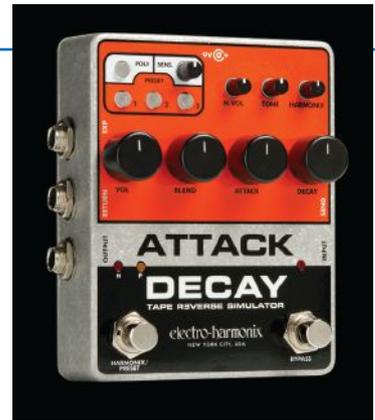
At first glance, the Attack Decay Tape Reverse Simulator might appear to be something of a novelty pedal, recreating a psychedelic studio trick. Then, when you actually dig in, you realize that the EHX team designed a ton of practical ingenuity into this effect pedal. Yes, you can get a nice backwards delay effect – but you can also get way more, including one of the more unique fuzz sounds I’ve ever come across.

Based on the classic (and rare!) original Attack Decay pedal, this modern version is feature loaded: a button toggle that switches between mono and polyphonic processing, a mini knob to adjust sensitivity, three mini knobs that adjust the volume, tone and gain of the Harmonix fuzz circuit (more on that later), four big knobs that adjust level, blend, attack, and decay, two foot switches, your in/out jacks, extra jacks for send/return and an expression pedal input. It’s also got three buttons that let you save and recall presets (up to three, one for each button). As I mentioned at the top, feature loaded. The instruction manual reads 24 pages and includes a lot of detail that the discerning player will find useful and critical.

Basic operation of the reverse tape delay simulator effect is straightforward – the Attack knob controls the fade-in speed of the volume envelope. The Decay knob sets the fade out speed of the volume envelope. These two knobs essentially drive the reverse tape delay effect, from long swells to short

staccato bursts. Toggling between mono and poly will change the nature of the effect – mono applies to the effect to a single strum, where poly will apply the effect to each note you play, independent of any notes that have been played or are being sustained.

I had a blast experimenting with just these three parameters (mono/poly, attack and decay), getting into some very exotic sounds. When I applied the Harmonix fuzz circuit, things got really interesting. And when I say interesting, I mean good. Things got really good. First, the fuzz circuit is loud. Second, when combined with the attack and decay parameters, you get this lush, tubey fuzz – straight off of *Paranoid*. In fact, if you turn the attack all the way down and the decay all the way up, the Attack Decay acts as a unique fuzz pedal – which immediately pulls this pedal from the “novelty” category to “fulltime spot on the pedal board” category. The Attack Decay pedal is a surprisingly adaptable pedal that does much more than the name applies. *(Daniel Sussman)*



Korg B2 Digital Piano

The Korg B2 Digital Piano is all about comfort, feel and quality sound. By tailoring the B2 towards individual practice and intimate, un-amped performances, Korg has prioritized the simple enjoyment of playing piano. They omitted some professional stage and studio features, and that appears to keep the cost competitive for someone who needs a keyboard with realism. There is an immediately satisfying weight to the hammer action keyboard. The B2’s 88 keys are natural feeling as advertised, and become heavier or lighter depending on the register you’re playing in. The result is expressivity that’s nearly impossible to achieve with the semi-weighted keys one finds on most consumer-grade keyboards and MIDI controllers. Lovers of grand pianos might find that the keys have a slight springiness to them. I wasn’t bothered at all by this - the keyboard is a joy to play. The on-board sounds are immersive replications of classical, jazz and electric pianos, organs, harpsichord and strings. The harpsichord sound includes the sound of plectra coming back to rest, a nice detail. Chorus and reverb effects can be turned up, down, and off – an inclusion that makes the B2 a more useful tool for recording. More sounds and features can be accessed by using the USB port to sync to phone apps and DAW’s. Remember to keep the manual on hand, since features such as the metronome tempo are mapped to specific notes on the keyboard. As for the previously



mentioned missing professional features: Most artists working in a production studio would like the B2 to have a 6-pin MIDI port for easy connection to other sound modules. There are no pitch and mod wheels, which takes it a notch down in the field of MIDI controllers. Someone looking to take the B2 on an amplified stage would like see left and right 1/4" outputs. Some minor issues: There is no onboard power transformer - make room for a wall wart. Headphone cables might be less likely to collide with the player’s hands if the jack were on the front. The keyboard also makes a short buzz sound when powering on, even if the volume knob all the way down. Hardly a big deal, it just seemed to take away a bit of polish from an otherwise well designed and expressive, natural feeling instrument. *(Jeff Allen)*

Fender Vintera 70s Telecaster Deluxe

How often do you get to review an updated version of an already-beloved guitar you own?

My own "Alpine White" Tele Deluxe dates from around 2008 and I'm happy to say that this newest iteration – my review copy came in the quite lovely "Mocha" finish – has most of the features I love on my own, earlier model, along with some improvements. While I can't accurately speak to all of the actual measurements, specs, and metrics (manually measuring the radius of the fingerboards on the two guitars is above my pay-grade. Sorry), I can vouch that the current version of this guitar is a joy to play in virtually any setting.

Much is made – both online and in Fender's promotional materials – about the so-called "Thin C" shaped neck on the Vintera and it unquestionably is a very nice, fast, slippery neck. Truth be told, those same qualities apply to my own Tele Deluxe from a decade-plus ago. Not a bad thing! And, who knows: get the measuring tape out (these apparently have a 9.5" fretboard radius. I believe it! Why not?) and it's likely this newer guitar is, in fact, more in keeping with those from the '70s.

How about the pickups? Are these new ones more in keeping with those from "back in the day" than my own? I'm told the 2019 Wide Range humbucking PUPs have been recreated, "to sound more like the originals." While I don't have a '72 Tele Deluxe to use

as a point of reference, I can say that while I love the punchy, full tone of these humbuckers (as well as their absolutely dope embossed pickup covers), they don't strike me as all that different from those on my '08 (or '07. I'm not on trial) version. In no way microphonic, these are still a little prone to feedback at high volume. Still: a Fender Tele with humbuckers (albeit a little noisy), a four-knob control set, three-way pickup switching, and a six-saddle Stat-style bridge for fine-tuned intonation? This is sort of the "best of all worlds" dream that the original, vintage guitars promised.

The Vintera Telecaster Deluxe is gorgeous, smooth, and comfortable to play, with a number of period-correct touches. Add to that an MSRP (\$899) that puts instruments of similar quality from most of FMIC's primary competitors (names withheld to protect the... well, the competitors) to shame and you've got an instrument that leaves many in its wake. If you don't already stock these guitars, you're likely missing out. (Christian Wissmuller)



My 2008 (or 2007?) Alpine White Fender Telecaster Deluxe alongside 2019's Vintera Tele Deluxe in Mocha

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Eastman Romeo
Epiphone Les Paul Standard
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CASIO Privia PX-S3000
KAWAI THE FUTURE OF THE PIANO CN Series
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Roland FP-90
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Looking Forward Through the Rearview Mirror

Ken Burns and Abbey Road



By Menzie Pittman

The buzz on the streets right now is about the Ken Burns documentary “Country Music.” Also, any interest or excitement around the release of the 50th anniversary of The Beatles’ *Abbey Road* is certainly music to the ears of manufacturers, retailers, and music educators. They absolutely benefit when events in their industry generate that eager anticipation and fervent enthusiasm.

In its attempts to find a fresh sound, the music industry has overused a lot of tricks in recent years. Unfortunately, most of those tricks have failed, backfiring miserably. On every ballad, we now have finger-snaps on the back beats, no matter what the genre. It might have been a clever idea when used once, but like a cheap carpet, now it has worn thin.

When production tricks become the music, we have lost the point of the craft and the value of good songwriting. It happens with lyrics too. Humorously, my least favorite lyric in any country music recording is the term “rear-view.” I make no bones about it. It’s a “Bro Country” cheat-phrase to help poor writers sound legitimate. And today’s songwriters have completely worn it out, and that’s putting it mildly. Then of course, we have the 32-note drum machine, hi-hat rolls. This artificial machine texture serves little purpose other than providing subdivided, pulsed, white noise. But, if that’s what you’re into, then it’s awesome.

Don’t get me wrong “affected sounds” can redefine musical boundaries. A world-class example would be “In the Air Tonight” by Phil Collins, or Don Henley’s “Sunset Grill.” Those songs all used odd synthetic sounds to enhance the feel and attitude of the songs, as did The Who’s “Baba O’Riley.” But the key word here is “enhance.”

So, it’s not that gadgets don’t work, but when gadgets *become the music*, we have removed all human capital – and that is why the industry is grappling to find its current identity. Ken Burns reminds us, we need stars with big personalities to celebrate. We need big talent.

Because of Ken Burns and The Beatles, we can now experience a reprieve, and a contrasting opportunity from today’s music. Through the Burns’ documentary, we can revisit history, have the chance to experience the excitement that was live country music, and we can watch it mushroom into a frenzy. With the release of The Beatles’ 50th anniversary edition of *Abbey Road*, we have the chance to revisit a unique record – one that stole the hearts of its listeners and captured the magic of great songwriting and creative imaginations.

50 years after its initial release, The Beatles’ *Abbey Road* debuted at number one for a second time in the UK. At the same time, Ken Burns with his documentary “Country Music” takes us back to a time when audiences enjoyed learning about their music heroes – a time when the musicians put a high standard on musicianship and showmanship. The personalities of the new stars then were huge, captivating, and enthralling. These mega stars influenced each other. Add to that the power of new 50,000-watt radio stations, toss in a unique theater like the Ryman, and boom! There you have it. Magic. The Beatles understood that same magic and have allowed us the chance to revisit that magic with the 50th anniversary release of their great work: *Abbey Road*.

By showing respect and paying homage to the many musical talents and trendsetters that have come before us, we are reminded that sometimes the most forward thinking is honoring the great ideas of the past. We are well served to stop and examine why the great moments are great. To quote Mike Curb: “Let us start at the beginning because we are more than just a moment in time; we all stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us – both personally and professionally – and we owe a great debt to them for paving the highway on which we now travel.”

Ideas that revitalize interest in music also offer the possibility of revitalizing the entire music industry. So, yes, I am a fan of the Ken Burns’ documentary, “Country Music” and love the fact that *Abbey Road* on its 50th anniversary release went to Number 1 on the charts. The real favor Ken Burns and The Beatles have done for us is to remind us of how we got to where we are and that we are all connected. Burns walks through the beginning of traditional music into bluegrass, and then into the birth of country.

“By showing respect and paying homage to the many musical talents and trendsetters that have come before us, we are reminded that sometimes the most forward thinking is honoring the great ideas of the past.”

We are reminded that connectivity can be as simple as a song. Look no further than the song, “I am a Poor Wayfaring Stranger.” This one song connects artists as diverse as Burl Ives, Bill Monroe, Emmylou Harris, Eva Cassidy, Johnny Cash, Ed Sheeran, Sam Bush, Glen Campbell, Jerry Reed, Alison Krause, and Dolly Parton, to name a very few. This one song has been covered in every musical style from traditional to jazz. Even Ed Sheeran has modernized a version of the song by looping the harmony vocals.

The gift from Burns and the Beatles is that they have hit the reset button. Passion is the new discussion, and old is new again. Celebrity is also cool again – but this time the examples are real: Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, Bill Monroe, Dolly Parton, The Carter Family, Loretta Lynn, Louis Armstrong, Jimmie Rodgers, Willie Nelson, and on and on. I am now hearing these names in our store lobbies again. Thank you, Ken Burns. Thank you, The Beatles. Now on your quest to share the importance of music with your customers, you have a great topic and good stories to tell as you both look forward thru the rearview mirror! 

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



Hate Meetings? Try Facilitating

By Jaimie Blackman

Hypothetical: Repair believes that Sales is making promises to customers that are impossible to keep – like the time it takes to repair an instrument. Sales believes that repair is deliberately slowing down work, preventing them from being competitive. Your team is at war and the loser is the organization which is experiencing a drop in both sales and repairs. The biggest stakeholders of the organization are in the middle. The knee-jerk reaction is to schedule a meeting and have the owner or general manager read the riot act. Instead of telling repair and sales what to do, try helping them agree on a way to improve the process. Be the facilitator.

The word “facilitate” comes from the Latin “facile” and means “to make easy.”

“Facilitation is the body of expertise associated with cooperation and collaboration among equals, and is concerned with ways of ensuring that everyone in a group can, if they wish, fully participate in all decisions that affect them.” (*The Art of Facilitation* – Dale Hunter)

Think of facilitation as kind of like a jam session. The best jamming is achieved when you are building on each other’s strengths and searching for synergy and common ground. You are doing as much or more listening than playing. Even if you disagree with the other musicians, you are building consensus and participating in the decision-making process united by the common goal of making great music. Being able to find common ground is key to being a successful facilitator.

The history of facilitation is as old as the tribes dating back 3,000 years when the tribal chief summoned fellow tribesman to gather around the fire, to share ideas on how best not to get eaten. Alaskan natives report that in ancient times the leadership style was more like chief facilitator, who embraced the wisdom and creativity of people coming together for the common good. This contrasts sharply with a more controlled dictatorial leadership style which is the seeding ground for disgruntled employees and dysfunctional dynamics.

Some of the benefits of facilitation is knowledge-sharing within and across teams and group decision-making. Still being an effective facilitator takes work. At its core is the

belief that every person has an equal right to speak and participate in the decision-making process. Because facilitators do not take sides, and must at least appear to be neutral, the style is in sharp contrast when the owner or manager who has the right to hire or fire and otherwise influence its staff.

According to Hunter, there is a continuum of decision-making.

- Autocratic: One person deciding on behalf of all others
- Democratic: Majority deciding on behalf of all others
- Cooperative: Commitment by all to reach agreement. That’s facilitation

How can a busy music retailer get collective decision making to work? The answer is threefold.

- Everyone must agree to reach an agreement
- Have a clear idea on what the concerns are
- Create an agenda which incorporates the concerns and encourages the participation of all parties

Ok. Facilitation sounds cool. I’m ready to change my song. As Mahatma Gandhi said, “If you want to change the world, start with yourself.” Another way of saying this: How can you expect to facilitate your repair and sales team if you can’t facilitate your own behavior? Here’s what I have learned as serving as board president of a non-profit. When I disagree with a fellow board member, the first thing I need to do is check my ego at the door. Breathing helps. Saying, “Tell me more,” and then shutting up, has helped me immensely. It gives the facilitator time to get control of one’s emotions and quiet the mind, while practicing active listening.

The idea is to increase your available free attention. Other venues can include mindfulness meditation, prayer, and creative visualizations.

Just as dissonance is part of making great music, conflicts will inevitably arise when working with people. Egos will clash and are difficult when the crescendo occurs during a group meeting.

Here’s a novel idea for music retailers. Why not carve out time, and make music as a way to team build? As musicians, we don’t need a researcher to convince you that making music releases the “feel-good” neurochemicals.

It’s important to remember that advice, or telling someone what to do, is not facilitative.

You are not the judge. A facilitative attitude creates a “safe” environment for change, which is exactly the way to get Repair working once again with Sales. Of course, if you find yourself in a mission-critical situation and are not confident in your own abilities, you may want to consider hiring a professional facilitator. A good start is visiting the International Association of Facilitators, at iaf-world.org.



Jaimie Blackman – a former music educator & retailer – is a financial advisor, succession planner, and certified business advisor. Blackman helps music retailers

accelerate business value through team building, coaching & mentoring. Blackman is a frequent speaker at NAMM’s Idea Center. Visit jaimieblackman.com to subscribe to Unlocking the Wealth newsletter and webinars. Follow Jaimie on twitter @jaimieblackman.



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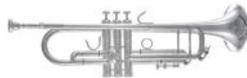


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www.rockboard.de

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www.ehx.com

Godlyke's Maxon 40th Anniversary OD808-40K Overdrive Pedal

Godlyke, Inc. has released the limited-edition Maxon 40th Anniversary OD808-40K Keeley-modified Overdrive pedal. Featuring Robert Keeley's "Max-Gain" mod, the OD808-40K features increased gain, output and low-end response than a standard OD808. Production will be limited to 400 pieces and each unit will be serial numbered and come with a certificate of authenticity. The first 40 units will be hand-signed by Robert Keeley and feature a mini-toggle to switch between the stock OD808 sound and the Max Gain mod. Street price is \$199 for the unsigned version and \$400 for the signed version.



www.godlyke.com

The 5-String Ray Ross Bass Bridge

Inventor Aaron Ross and AP International have released a 5-string version of the acclaimed Ray Ross Bass Bridge featuring his proprietary saddle-less tone pin design. Rather than utilizing a traditional saddle to provide a string break, the Ray Ross tone pin keeps the string completely straight from the bridge to the nut. This concept removes the "kink" from the string, providing increased vibrational energy through the strings and into the body of the instrument. The tone pin feature allows maximum transference to the instrument so you can get the most of the bass itself, not solely the "color" of the bridge. Comprised of solid naval brass, the ensuing sound is articulate, resonant, and full-bodied. Available in both narrow 17 mm and wide 19 mm string spacings to fit a variety of basses.



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Vandoren's new Profile mouthpiece for classical saxophone is currently available in a single facing for soprano (SP3) and alto saxophone (AP3). The Profile features an elegant exterior design and tapered beak that allows for increased comfort and enhanced flexibility. These attributes combine to create a mouthpiece that boasts dynamic response, powerful projection, and an expansive color spectrum that enables classical saxophonists to shape their sound to fit the music of any era.



www.vandoren.fr/en

Pro Audio

New iRig Microphones from IK Multimedia

The iRig Mic Cast 2 and iRig Mic Cast HD microphones from IK Multimedia offer featherweight, pocket-sized portability and crystal-clear voice recording using an iPad, iPhone or Android device. The ultra-compact, travel-friendly, iRig Mic Cast 2 offers an affordable solution for crisp, clear voice recording for YouTube videos, Instagram, live streams, or audio for Skype and FaceTime calls. This mic mounts securely onto an iPad or smartphone. Its innovative magnetic design lets users snap it into place on their device in seconds (even with a case). The iRig Mic Cast HD offers all the core features of iRig Mic Cast 2, along with enhancements for professional use. It adds gold-sputtered capsules for superior sound, a 40 Hz to 20 kHz frequency response, and 24-bit, 96 kHz converters for crystal clear audio via Lightning, Micro-USB and USB-C cables, all included. iRig Mic Cast HD also offers front and rear selectable recording plus a bi-directional, figure 8 pick-up pattern that's ideal for conducting interviews while rejecting off-axis noise.



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www.allen-heath.com

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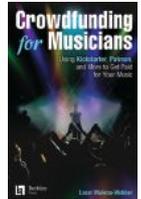


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Crowdfunding for Musicians from Berklee Press

In *Crowdfunding for Musicians*, Laser Malena-Webber outlines how to become a successful independent artist through crowdfunding platforms. It outlines effective strategies and components of successful campaigns, including networking, press relations, reward levels, and more. Malena-Webber focuses on helping independent artists maximize their earning potential while connecting their art and fans in a genuine way. The book also features interviews from artists and industry insiders who have led successful crowdfunding campaigns, who share advice and real-world examples of taking the crowdfunding route for your career.



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www.blackstaramps.com

Yamaha's HR-II Series Amplifiers

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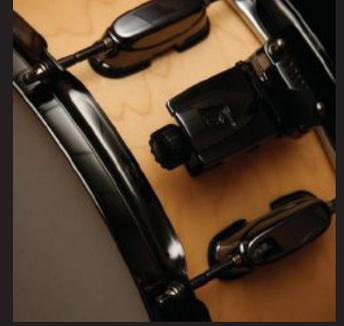



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By Dan Daley

Christmas is Coming and We Should Have Some Toys in the Attic

What does every guitar player want for Christmas? Another guitar, of course. The formula works for any instrument, year after year. But there are some more whimsical representations of what makes musicians tick, and retailers don't need a lot of extra shelf space come December to make room for some clever – and sometimes revealing – *tchotchkes* that, like Hallmark cards, tell us something we've been wanting to hear.

They run the gamut from cute and quotidian, like the piano cufflinks that will come out, like the mistletoe, once a year, to the sturdily utilitarian, such as the amp-head key holder, to the alluringly strange, like the 20-pound bust of Lionel Richie made out of chocolate (\$893 from Firebox).



Some MI manufacturers have figured this part of Christmas out. Amp maker Marshall, for instance, has licensed its brand on enough toys to fill up Barbie's downtown loft space that she shares with a broke metalhead. Fender and Gibson have both been longtime purveyors and licensors of their IP for gift items. Or not – their iconic guitar shapes have not surprisingly led to plenty of unlicensed pins and battery-powered wall clocks over the decades.

Fortunately, we've moved beyond lapel pins: for instance, both the Strat and the Les Paul have seen a rise in artworks based on – or that at least strongly resemble – their product-patent drawings. At a time when the electric guitar remains an icon of contemporary music but its sales paradoxically remain challenged, having a sort of *Grey's Anatomy* iteration of these guitars could make for a very meta Christmas. Fender has also broken some new ground in the gift department: gift cards for its Fender Play online lessons program. At \$49.99 for six months and \$89.99 for a year, they're innovative stocking stuffers, and give the industry back a present in the form of potential new lifelong customers.

In fact, the musical-gift category has become a staple of MI retail. For instance, Reverb.com has over 600 listings of gifts. These are overwhelmingly of the keychain-and-t-shirt variety, but their sheer numbers underscore the value of the category. Among the coffee mugs and t-shirts are a few actual gems. One is a vintage Kustom PA system, circa

1978, way before you could carry a Bose L1 onto the subway and cover an audience five times the size that those old columnar PA systems could reach. But the Kustom's glittery plush covering is the Tolex of the disco era. In fact, older instruments and products from the lamented bygone era of the late 20th century that could barely get noticed in a flea market are transformed into kitschy artworks when properly wrapped at Christmas, just as LP covers have become more desirable in some cases than the vinyl they house. (Try putting a red ribbon bow on a \$19 Chinese microphone and watch what happens. And certain musical "gift baskets" found online look very much like nicely packaged assortments of products that never made it on their own at retail.)

“The musical-gift category has become a staple of MI retail.”



Some guitar stomp boxes have become so intricately designed that they're as much works of graphic arts as they are sonic tools. They could easily be gifted to a graphically minded esthete who may not know which end to plug in but is happy to admire them for their inspired scrimshaw. Brian Wampler, of Wampler Pedals, which has created several Christmas-themed pedals in the past, told me that stomp boxes “have become something to show off, something that tells a story to the person looking at the pedal board.”

In short, anything can be a gift, if it's given in the right spirit. The holiday sales season (aka Christmas) is a good time to experiment with products that convey both the uniqueness of your store and your customers. Music outlets, online and otherwise, have plenty of original ideas that creative recipients will appreciate. You just have to know where to look. 

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