

# MMR

## MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW



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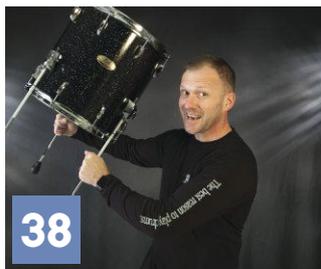
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# MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW



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# The Next Big Thing?

**M**any MMR readers recently returned from the annual NAMM Show in Anaheim (see our Show Report on page 26). Along with more traditional instruments, the gathering is a venue for innovative new gear and instruments that make use of emerging and evolving technologies (Ronnie Dungan has a somewhat different take. See his column on page 20).

We've shone the spotlight on a number of these types of products over the years: "This one makes music with lasers! This is a plastic orb that you manipulate like a puzzle to make sounds! This device makes use of a water-tank to generate sonic frequencies!" Generally speaking – and for a myriad of reasons – these "new instruments," while possibly very cool and impressive in their own ways, don't take off in any significant manner, though.

5G is on the way, however, and just as the Internet changed the way music is made, shared, and how we purchase and sell musical gear, this could be another true game-changer.

What's 5G? Odds are you own a smartphone and, unless you're one of those who still defiantly holds onto your clamshell model from 1997, odds are your current phone makes use of 4G (or at the very least 3G) wireless network technology. 4G is the reason why you can use your smartphone to hop online, text, or watch video. As you've probably guessed by now, 5G would therefore be the next generation of this type of technology. While this will, indeed, mean that phones can operate with a speedier connection (10 times faster than 4G) it also represents a boost in bandwidth that will allow appliances, robots, self-driving cars, and more to be connected to 5G.

Currently each of the major cell carriers – AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, and Sprint – are de-

veloping and testing 5G technology and the likes of Intel and Qualcomm have begun designing processors that enable 5G communication. The wireless industry expects 5G networks to launch in 2020.

So what does this have to do with music-making or the MI industry?

At the moment, Ericsson is currently exploring forward-thinking applications for 5G in a partnership with researchers from King's College London. Mischa Dohler, a professor at King's College, is developing technology that would allow a surgeon with haptic gloves (which sense motion and pressure) and VR gear could operate on a patient on the other side of the globe.

That same tech could teach music students, and work is already being done to develop those systems.

To really get a full picture for how this sort of thing could be a game-changer, track down some video and articles online – it's truly more impressive than I'm doing justice.

Is 5G going to change the practice of learning and playing music in a week or so? No. Am I making too much of what could, on the surface, just seem to be a "technological upgrade?" Time will tell, but this isn't some wacky device introduced at a trade show that allows vegetables to make sounds and be used as "musical instruments."

The future keeps on coming and this breakthrough looks like it'll be a truly big deal.



by Christian Wissmuller

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# Industry News

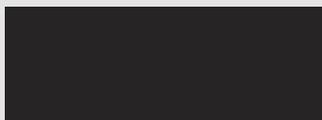
## Zildjian to Acquire Mike Balter Mallets



The Avedis Zildjian Company has entered into an agreement to acquire the Mike Balter Mallet Company, the world's largest percussion mallet manufacturer.

"We've long respected Mike as a first call percussionist and drummer who founded his own business to address a void in the marketplace, and grew his company to become the leading maker of mallets worldwide," says CEO Craigie Zildjian. "Over the past 40 years, Mike has developed the broadest selection of mallets in the industry, including signature series models for such renowned artists as Louie Bellson, Joe Locke, Tony Miceli, Christos Rafalides, Keiko Kotoku, and Emil Richards. We look forward to bringing the Mike Balter brand into the Zildjian family and continuing its legacy of innovation."

The transition of the Balter brand to Zildjian, to include sales and marketing, will occur over the first half of 2018 allowing the company to offer, in conjunction with its Vic Firth line of products, the most complete and diverse line of mallets for percussionists of all ability levels. In addition, Balter Mallet manufacturing will be moving from Prospect Heights, Illinois to the Vic Firth factory in Newport, Maine.



- Industry News
- Supplier Scene
- MMR Global

- People on the Move
- Trade Regrets
- Letters

## Gator Cases Acquires Levy's Leathers

Gator Cases has announced the acquisition of Levy's Leathers Ltd.

Operations for both companies will continue at their current facilities. Levy's manufacturing of leather goods will remain in Canada, and Gator's rotomolded plastics and custom flight case divisions look to continue growth in Indiana. Both parties look forward to increased efficiencies and expansion utilizing Gator's expertise in product development and numerous offshore manufacturing facilities. Additionally, both companies are well known for their customer-centric practices and intend to leverage their combined expertise to increase both individual and overall customer experience and brand family success.

Executive Staff from both companies commented on the acquisition with a focus on collaboration and growth:

Company founder, Dennis Levy said, "Levy's Leathers has been my life and passion since I started it 45 years ago. After all these years when the time came to sell, it was an emotional decision. Gator Cases, and particularly Crystal Morris herself, made that tough decision easier. Gator stood out amongst a number of strong potential buyers. Crystal's management style and vision for Levy's is a mirror image of mine. My wife Cheryl and I have always considered Levy's employees and customers our very large extended family. With Gator these customers, employees and the Levy's brand are in the best of hands. Of this I am 100 percent confident."



Danica Levy shared, "I am extremely excited to move forward under the direction and expertise of Crystal Morris and Gator Cases. This transition opens up a world of new opportunities for Levy's and I am looking very forward to being a part of it!"

Harvey Levy commented, "I see the purchase of Levy's by Gator Cases as an exciting opportunity to take Levy's guitar straps and gig bags to the next level. The guitar focused mix of products offered by these two, well respected, companies dovetail beautifully and present a world of possibilities to grow both brands. Guitar players everywhere will reap the benefits of this event."

Gator's founder and CEO, Crystal Morris said, "I am very honored to be entrusted with this incredible brand and operation. Dennis and the rest of the Levy's family have built a well-known standard of excellence in their products and business relationships over the last 42 years, and we intend to reinforce that with Gator's resources. The entire Gator team is extremely excited to start working together to further grow both Gator and Levy's collectively for many decades to come."

## CEO and President of Ultimate Support Acquires Radial Engineering Ltd.

Mike Belitz, president and CEO of Ultimate Support Systems, has acquired Radial Engineering Ltd.

Ultimate Support and Radial Engineering Ltd will enjoy shared strategic and logistical advantages under leadership of Mike Belitz; with the end result of wider availability to retailers, distributors, and end-users all over the world.

"I have always been passionate about premium accessories in the music industry," says Belitz. "Instruments come in and out of fashion, but musicians and audio professionals will always need well designed, high quality solutions. Ownership of Ultimate Support Systems and Radial Engineering Ltd will offer incredible possibilities for the future."



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## Davitt & Hanser Appointed Exclusive Distributor of Ashdown

JAM US Music Group subsidiary Davitt & Hanser has announced that it has been appointed to serve as the exclusive United States distributor of Ashdown Engineering.

According to Davitt & Hanser General Manager Jay Ensminger, the appointment also marks a shift in strategy for the distribution company, which will now focus entirely on representing its growing line-

up of exclusive brands while sister company KMC Music continues to provide a full complement of combo instruments, B&O, Pro Audio, and the industry's largest selection of MI accessories.

"The addition of Ashdown Engineering to our portfolio of exclusive brands enables us to focus all of our time and resources on expanding the market for the 10 brands we now represent – Aerod-

rums, Ashdown Engineering, Cort Guitars, G7th, Jay Turser Guitars, Kustom Amps, Mahalo Ukuleles, Powerwerks Audio Solutions, Valencia Guitars and UFIP Cymbals," Ensminger said. All 10 lines will be sold through the company's current network of independent sales representatives.

According to Terry, the transition will be transparent to Davitt & Hanser dealers, as all of the products the company formerly carried, as well as their account histories, credit lines and some account managers will be immediately available at KMC Music.

Terry said that the JAM US Music Group has invested the last two years analyzing customer demographics and market trends.

## Peavey Returns to Direct to Dealers in Canada

Peavey Electronics has announced that they will now sell direct to Canadian dealers.



Peavey will now process orders directly from their Meridian, Mississippi, corporate office and fulfill orders from their new warehouse hub in Ontario. The change is effective immediately and will also include the Peavey owned brands Trace Elliot®, Budda®, and Composite Acoustics®.

Initial orders can be placed directly with the Meridian HQ and Peavey will roll out incentive programs to begin fulfillment to the dealers later this month.

## JHS to Distribute Lizard Spit

JHS has announced that with immediate effect they will be exclusive distributors for Lizard Spit cleaning products.

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# Yamaha Unveils Five New Products as it Makes the Future Happen

By Bryan Reesman

At Yamaha Artist Services in Manhattan on January 16, the veteran music instrument manufacturer unveiled five key new products a week before they, and 85 others, were showcased at the annual NAMM convention outside Los Angeles. A combination of Yamaha employees and musical guest stars debuted the instruments, demoed them, and explained how they will benefit musicians particularly when it comes to songwriting.

The first product presented was new TransAcoustic guitars – the FG-TA dreadnought and its concert-size counterpart, the FS-TA – both six-string instruments with effects built into it. Dennis Webster, product marketing manager, Yamaha Guitars, explained that the FG technology first emerged in the LL-TA and LS-TA TransAcoustic models in 2016. He says those models became popular in the industry, but Yamaha only produced a limited quantity because they did not foresee the initial demand for them. They sold for \$1,000 and won a handful of awards. Those models garnered a lot of media coverage for being portable guitars with effects you can dial in with no external devices; technology which was borrowed from their piano division.

The new FG-TA and FS-TA guitars will retail for \$599. Webster explained how they work. “Inside attached to the back braces you’ll see a device we call an actuator, and it looks like the inside of a speaker driver,” he told the audience. “When you engage the actuator, it picks up the sound vibrations from the instrument and vibrates the back of the guitar, turning the guitar box into the speaker. That how’s how the TransAcoustic technology works.” The guitar has three knobs: for reverb (hall and room), chorus, and one with a button to engage the actuator that also controls the line out volume.

New York-based singer-songwriter Oz Noy then played the instrument and commented on his initial impressions from when he first tried one out. “I was freaked out,” he exclaimed with a smile. “It’s really great. You can actually hear a reverb out of the guitar. Usually if you play without reverb it’s just really dead. Whatever you hear on records is usually processed with some reverb, so the fact that you can turn this on is amazing. It’s very inspiring.” He also sees it as a good songwriting tool, plus it sounds good live, giving a musician total control over their



The Yamaha team at Yamaha Artist Services



Yamaha’s Genos digital workstation



The feature-rich TransAcoustic guitars

sound rather than just relying on a soundman’s assistance or choices. One imagines these guitars would be great for acoustic shows.

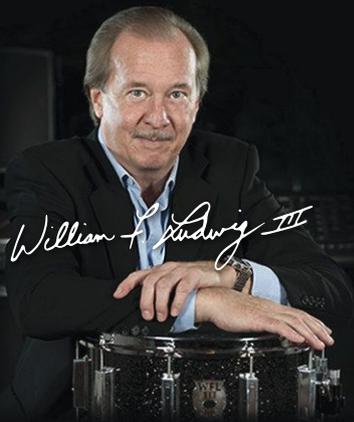
Gabriel Aldort, musician and Yamaha employee, then came up and immediately played the “Game of Thrones” theme on the Genos Digital Workstation “to showcase the versatility and sonic power of what Genos is,” he said. “I’ve worked with Yamaha for 12 years, and Genos is the most incredible sounding, most versatile keyboard that we’ve ever made. And I don’t say that lightly. It’s a dream come true for a live musician, studio recording, and songwriting.”

The Genos only weighs 30 pounds, and he said for the first time Yamaha has put a 9” color touchscreen on a keyboard. They have streamlined the interface and allow for real-time control. There are nine flyer fades and six knobs. Further, the keyboard can sense the chords a musician is playing and can play along with arpeggios, and AI fingering allows a player to use only two fingers to create a chord. Aldort said the company has “faithfully reproduced” their acoustic 9-foot concert grand, the CFX, on the Genos and that this is the first keyboard ever to include the sounds of the C-7 studio grand (“the most recorded piano in history”). Other sounds he demonstrated included strings, organ, flugelhorn, guitars, and drums. He also lauded the nuances within the individual instrument sounds.

“One of the most powerful features of this keyboard is the ability to create a professional quality demo without having to turn on a computer,” enthused Aldort. “The production quality in this keyboard is unparalleled and unprecedented.” He added that one could create a demo on the spot (thanks to a 16-track MIDI recorder inside) – the keyboard can separate out the tracks, one can overdub a vocal, then save it onto a thumb drive.

Hit country songwriter Ashley Gorley came in to discuss the Genos, which he had begun using recently. “When you’re writing songs you’re trying to capture the magic in the room, and it comes and goes quickly, unfortunately,” explained Gorley, nothing how the studio recording process can slow down that spontaneous momentum. “With the Genos, you can capture the moment and start a groove quickly. You can have a few chords, you could do it with two fingers, put that on loop and write to that. When I write now

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[with my collaborators], we're a little of bored picking up an acoustic guitar or even just a keyboard to try to play and write in the room. We're really inspired by grooves, by licks, by things that maybe don't go with the genre, so if we're writing a country song we could pull up an old Motown groove or British pop or whatever else to see what kind of country thing could go over that."

Following the Genos presentation, Matt Kerns, Yamaha's marketing manager, B&O Accessories, introduced acclaimed and prolific sax player Grace Kelly to play and discuss the Venova YVS-100, a recorder-like instrument that replicates the sound of a soprano saxophone. The Venova is compact and easily portable, as Kelked.

After Kelly played for a minute or two to a backing track (presumably from one of her studio albums), Kerns noted that this "casual wind instrument" is like a ukulele for wind instruments, blending the simplicity of a recorder with the sound of a saxophone, and it uses a real soprano sax mouthpiece and reed. It's a small instrument with a full sound. It is made out of plastic and weighs less than half a pound, making it ideal to take on a business trip or a vacation. The evolution of the instrument first came from '90s research focused on replicating the conical body of a sax in a keyboard.

Kerns stated the Venova received the Grand Award of Japan's Good Design Award in 2017, competing against 500 submissions. He said it was the first time an instrument has ever won this specific award.

Following two weeks of using the instrument, Kelly was enjoying her Venova. "It's a lot of fun and so lightweight," she said. "I've been noticing that there's more and more expression as I've been playing with it and bending notes."

For the fourth presentation, Steven Fisher, manager, Yamaha acoustic and DTX electronic drum division, came up to discuss the new EAD10. He first began by playing the drums. The company just celebrated 50 years of making hand crafted acoustic drums, and this next device was meant to enhance a player's performing and songwriting experience. He said that the EAD10 "makes your drums do more."

The EAD10 is comprised of a sensor box attached to the hoop of a bass drum. Two cables run from the box into a module, thus it is quickly hooked up. How it works is simple. "You have the sensor unit that captures all the audio from your acoustic drums," said Fisher. "There is one added special element, a bass drum trigger that's also in that sensor box. I can trigger sounds from the module. I can enhance the bass drum sound or actually change the sound if I want to. The module has internal sounds I can trigger. It also has a sampler I can also put my own sounds into, and also great digital effects that I run all of my audio through. It captures all the audio from the microphone and puts



The new Venova wind instrument



Yamaha's Clavinova CSP



The recently introduced EAD10 Drum Module

it into the EAD10 module."

A drummer can play his acoustic drums along with songs through his headphones. As Fisher played he adjusted various sounds that one might hear once drums had been tweaked through processing via a mixing board. The EAD10 has a USB drive, and one can record to that or the module. The free app records audio and video together, and Fisher showed a video that he had made the day before. One can download a song sent by a band-mate or a known recording via iTunes or Dropbox, put it into the app, do a beat calculation, even adjust tempo and add effects to it. The EAD10 has 50 preset and 200 user scenes and allows one to connect triggers and drum pads to augment his/her setup. This makes it easy for practicing, songwriting and collaborating.

The fifth and final presentation was made by Dane Madsen, marketing manager for digital pianos at Yamaha, who discussed the new Clavinova CSP series (CSP-150 and CSP-170). "It's our flagship digital line," he said. "It's built for the home primarily with the pro level quality you always expect from Yamaha." Clavinova celebrates its 35th anniversary this year, and as Madsen stated, you can practice with headphones, they never require tuning, and they have the touch and tone of a piano.

The company is tapping into the large tablet market by making them the interactive device mounted on the CSP. An exclusive app, Smart Pianist, analyzes iTunes music files on one's iPad (Android support coming this spring), then generates a piano accompaniment and a chart of chord symbols for those songs. The player can read them while "Stream Lights," which Yamaha describes as "a ladder of four cascading LED lights above each key," light up in sync with the tempo. They allow the player to anticipate the next note to play. Anyone who has played Rock Band or Guitar Hero experience can translate that experience to the Clavinova CSP, which Madsen described as having "the body of an upright piano but the brain of a fully featured Yamaha keyboard product."

The CSP can play piano sounds and has hundreds of voices for different instruments. The tempo slider can be used to change the tempo of a song but keep the vocal pitch the same. Conversely, one can also maintain the tempo but alter the pitch of the vocals, so a singer can sound like a chipmunk. The CSP has 50 built-in pop hits and 50 iconic classical tunes.

At the end of the entire event, it was announced that Yamaha would offer full Amazon Alexa integration with the reproducing piano and MusicCast Multiroom Audio System, enabling the piano to play in any room in one's house through spoken commands.

It looks like Yamaha will never stop evolving.

## Musikmesse to Cooperate with European Music-Export Initiatives

For the first time, Musikmesse will present showcases in cooperation with international music-promotion initiatives.

There will be performances by innovative acts and networking events for players from different parts of the music and entertainment business during Musikmesse 2018 and the accompanying Musikmesse Festival (Frankfurt am Main, April 11-14 April). With the integration of showcases, Musikmesse is expanding its thematic spectrum and bringing together artists and professionals from the music and creative sector, as well as key players from the musical-instrument segment – another innovation following the recent announcement that MerchDays are to be included as a new event segment of the fair.

Already confirmed as the first three showcase partners are the

CEE Central Party initiative, a collaboration of music-export offices from Central and East European countries, such as Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Estonia, Ireland's annual showcase festival and summit youbloomDublin and Luxembourg's Music:LX music export office.

Together with the concurrent Prolight + Sound, the global market place for event and media technology, the last edition of the event attracted around 100,000 visitors from 144 countries.

Further information about artists and events within the framework of the international showcases will follow soon.



Hey Christian,

Just saw your bit in the December, 2017 Editorial regarding the ups and downs of '17. Here's my story: Rentals were up somewhat, sales of supplies also up somewhat, and students up somewhat. Repairs [were] up and '18 started off

with some indications that this will continue. Piano services – tuning and repair – [are] up significantly. Instrument sales: flat as a pancake. Notice that it is all the “subsidiary” stuff – rentals, supplies and repair, piano, and teaching services, which are up – and those are up significantly enough that the overall bottom line went up signifi-

cantly as well.

My biggest concern is that a store with deep pockets from a nearby metro area decided to open a branch here. This is not a large market to begin with and the additional competition is not a good thing. But in this respect, the services I provide give me an edge – particularly the piano work.

Later,

**Richard Hannemann**  
**Hannemann Music**  
**Los Alamos, New Mexico**

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# Supplier Scene

## Dawn Birr of Sennheiser Receives She Rocks Award

Dawn Birr, channel manager for the Americas, Sennheiser Business Solutions, was an award recipient at the 2018 She Rocks Awards.

The awards, which pay tribute to women in the music industry, are presented by the Women's International Music Network (WiMN) each year during the NAMM convention.

This year's awards ceremony was held on January 26 at the House of Blues in Anaheim, California, and was hosted by KROQ Los Angeles DJ Kat Corbett and WiMN founder Laura B. Whitmore. Among the She Rocks Awards recipients were Pat Benatar, Melissa Etheridge, and The B-52s' Katie Pierson and Cindy Wilson.

"It is an enormous honor to be acknowledged at the She Rocks Awards this year," said Birr. "I am very proud of Sennheiser's unwavering support of women in the music industry and grateful for the platform that my work for Sennheiser has provided for me to engage with so many inspiring women at the top of their field."

Dawn Birr began her career in the audio industry in 2000, joining Sennheiser immediately following her college graduation. Soon she received promotions to Neumann product manager, Professional RF product manager, vice president of sales for U.S. Installed Sound, Global Commercial Manager for Audio Recording, and most recently Channel Manager for the Americas for Sennheiser Business Solutions. She attributes her ascent in part to a nurturing company culture and strong role models within Sennheiser who encouraged her to learn as much as possible at every opportunity. Dawn completed her MBA in 2006 and is a proud Advisory Board Member for the Women's International Music Network and member of Soundgirls.org.

## Podium Victorie Installs New CHAUVET Professional Lighting Rig

As part of their recent move to expand Podium Victorie's audience capacity, the owners of the cult Dutch club recently decided to move to an all-new inner-city location and installed a new state-of-the-art lighting rig, featuring CHAUVET Professional Maverick, Rogue and COLORdash fixtures.

Dutch distributor Rolight was responsible for selecting the fixtures and updates.

All in all, 20 Maverick MK2 Spot LEDs, 61 Rogue R2 Washes, 6 Rogue RH1 Hybrids and 36 COLORdash Par-Hex 12 RGBAWUV fixtures were specified for the stage.

"The combination of Maverick LED spots, and Rogue LED washes and hybrids creates a perfect concoction of lighting for the main stage," commented Rolight project manager Christian Borgers. "And thanks to the competitive price point of the fixtures, both the lighting crew and management could be happy about the installation."

Maverick fixtures are used as back lighting, as well as front lighting for the band and effect lighting on the dancefloor. With its 440W white LED engine, a CMY + CTO color system and wide zoom range, the powerful Maverick provides the punchy energy needed for high-octane rock shows.

"The fixture is a true workhorse," commented Borgers. "Its super-bright beam cuts through any wash, and the optics keep the gobos very crisp all through the beam field. Even putting a mildly saturated color over a projected gobo will not lead to color shadows or uneven sharpness of the image."

Complementing the Maverick fixtures is a selection of Rogue R2 Wash fixtures positioned from trussing upstage, downstage, stage left and right to the main grid above the audience. While the majority are used



in the main grid pointing down into the audience, 14 pieces are mounted close to the walls and under the balcony to cover all angles.

"The Rogue R2 Wash quickly shifts from a powerful parallel beam to a wide wash, so they're great for both colorful mood lighting and dynamic beam effects," commented Borgers.

Adding a different wash element to the overall look of the stage is a collection of COLORdash Par-Hex 12 RGBAWUV and COLORdash Par-Hex 7 RGBAWUV fixtures.

"The six-color LED system of the COLORdash is great for creating a basic color mood upon which to build," Borgers added. "They also serve as a great foundation for club nights and events, where evenly distributed wash lighting is required for hours on end."

On the club's smaller stage, Rolight installed 26 CHAUVET DJ Intimidator Spot 155 units.

"The Intimidator fixtures ticked all the boxes for the second stage," Borgers said. "Not only do they provide a compact and cost-effective solution to provide energetic looks, they offer lighting designers plenty of options, thanks to their built-in effects and rotating gobos."

## Ibanez Announces Collaboration with FourChords App

Ibanez has announced a collaboration with FourChords Guitar Karaoke app. FourChords is a guitar learning app whose advanced technology gets beginners playing faster.

The app is loaded with over 1,700 popular current hit and classic songs which can be browsed by artist, song title, or the chords you are able to play. FourChords also contains other useful features like lesson tutorials, key transposition, playback tempo control, as well as a host of additional educational tools.

"FourChords is a fast-track for the fun part of playing" says Topi Lopponen, CEO of Mupia, the developer of FourChords. "It's much more fun to practice chord changes with the adjustable backing track and easy visualization of your favorite song compared to rote scales and repetitive exercises."

For 30 days of free full access to FourChords, just type in the activation code "PLAY-IBANEZ." This code will give you the opportunity to explore the premium features of FourChords before committing to a subscription.





KA-15T



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KALA WANDERER U-BASS



K17B-SS1-KK

## Korg EDU Creates License Plate Grant Program with Texas Music Office

Korg Education has teamed up with the Texas Office of Music to help celebrate some of the best communities for music education in Texas.

"This prestigious recognition by the NAMM Foundation is given to only those communities that demonstrate an exceptionally high commitment and access to music education," says Tiffany Stalker, senior manager of education for Korg USA. "In our ongoing efforts to help create and promote more music makers in the classroom, it is an honor to celebrate so many music heroes in my home state."

As part of the visits to congratulate Texas school districts, the Governor's Office presented framed certificates from Texas Governor, Greg Abbott. The Office of Music was also able to spread the message about their grant program targeted to support music in the classroom with their specialty license plate grant to financially assist schools across the Lone Star state with costs of musical instruments, lessons, community music programs and more. Texas drivers can personalize their license plates through the Texas DMV, which will donate the majority of the proceeds to the grant program, helping underprivileged children make music a part of their education curriculum.

"The State of Texas' license plate grant program is a way in which we can help to provide musical instruments and music education to communities in need," says Clint Strait, owner of local music store,

Strait Music. "Music aids children's learning abilities, can help to heal emotional stress and provides a creative outlet for our Texas youth. Strait Music is proud to support such an amazing program."

Presented by The NAMM Foundation, the Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) and its counterpart, the Support Music Merit Award (SMMA) is an annual national recognition program which honors the outstanding efforts by teachers, administrators, students and community leaders at the district and individual level who share in the common goal to ensure access to music for all students in the classroom.



## Promark Adds McIntosh and Shah to Artist Family

Promark has welcomed Michael McIntosh and Kevin Shah to their family of signature artists.

Michael McIntosh graduated Butler University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music with an emphasis in Composition. From 1997 to 2011, McIntosh was a percussion specialist at Carmel High School in Carmel, Indiana, and he still an active clinician and adjudicator, giving clinics throughout the U.S., Europe and Asia with performed clinics in Japan and Beijing, China. He is also a current adjudicator for WGI and Bands of America.

In addition to designing, coordinating, consulting and composing for marching bands all over the United States, McIntosh is also the percussion coordinator for the Music For All Summer Symposium, as well as the percussion caption supervisor, music coordinator and one of two percussion designers for The Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps.

Compositionally, McIntosh has had works commissioned for the Midwest Band Directors Convention as well as the West Point HellCats. Currently, he has works published by SmartMusic, Row-Loft Publications, Yamaha Sounds of Summer, Tap Space Publications, Key Poulan Music, Drop 6 Media, The Hal Leonard Corporation, Innovative Percussion, Marching Show Concepts and Dynamic Marching.

A longtime Evans and D'Addario artist, McIntosh will be teaming up with Promark for a line of signature Snare and Tenor drum implements.

"I am beyond excited to be a member of the Promark family," McIntosh says. "After getting a chance to see the Promark 'farm-to-table' process, and meeting with their creative team to discuss the vision, I felt immediately at home. What D'Addario is capable of and the reach they have is unprecedented. I can't wait to get started with Promark!"



On the other hand, Shah is active designer and educator in the world of the marching arts. Known for his innovative work in marrying acoustic winds and percussion with electronic sound design, Shah has designed for some of the

top ensembles in the pageantry arts. He is the music designer for Arcadia High School, Broken City Percussion, and also serves as Music Coordinator and a Percussion Arranger for the Blue Knights Drum and Bugle Corps from Denver, Colorado. Many of his works for marching band and percussion ensemble can be found on projectRISEmusic.com, a music publishing company he owns and operates.

He has a passion for outreach, education, and travel fostered through his work with Winter Guard International, Drum Corps International, and the Arcadia Music and Arts Symposium. He serves on the DCI Rules and Systems Task Force, the WGI Board of Directors as well as the WGI Percussion Steering Committee.

Shah holds a B.M. in percussion performance from UCLA where he studied with Mitchell Peters, and an M.M. in percussion performance from the Juilliard School of Music where he studied with Greg Zuber, Daniel Druckman, Gordon Gottlieb, Joseph Pereira, and Roland Kohloff. As a percussionist, he has performed with many orchestras, including the Metropolitan Opera and Pacific Symphony.

"I'm extremely excited about this new partnership with Promark," Shah says. "Being a part of the D'Addario family for over a decade through my relationships with Evans Drumheads, I've had an opportunity to see the kind of innovation and forward thinking fostered by this company. It's truly amazing to be involved in Promark's renaissance and I can't wait to show the world what we've been working on."

Shah has been an Evans artist since 2003.

## Yamaha To Sponsor Six String Theory Competition

For the sixth consecutive time, Yamaha is sponsoring the Six String Theory Competition, hosted by Grammy-winning guitarist and producer, Lee Ritenour.

The biennial competition accepts performer applications for guitar, bass, piano/keyboards, and drums, and offers winners performance opportunities and scholarships, as well as prizes from sponsors. Yamaha supports the competition with its contribution to a prize package worth approximately \$15,000.00.

Registration opened on January 15 via the contest website, and entries can be made by submitting two YouTube videos for consideration. Registration closes May 31, 2018 and winners are announced the first week of June 2018.

Advisory judges to Lee Ritenour include Joe Satriani, Brent Mason, Julian



Lage, Guthrie Govan, Steve Lukather, Daryl Stuermer, Harvey Mason, John Beasley, Sonny Emory, Will Kennedy, and Dave Grusin, as well as Yamaha Artists Nathan East, John Patitucci, Dave Weckl and Patrice Rushen, who will work with Ritenour to determine

the 2018 winners.

Yamaha will fly the winners to Los Angeles for the 2019 NAMM Show. The prize package includes travel, lodging, food/per diem, ground transportation and NAMM passes. During the day, winners will be at the Yamaha booth to demonstrate and perform on Yamaha products. One of the nights, the winners will perform with Lee at a live Yamaha event.

Other prizes include scholarships for Berklee College of Music, 2018 performance opportunities at The Blue Note Tokyo and Festival da Jazz in St. Moritz, Switzerland with Lee Ritenour, recording sessions at Woodshed Recording Studio in Malibu with Lee Ritenour, and music products from several other manufacturers including Monster, Line 6 and D'Addario.

For more information, visit the official Six String Theory website or YouTube.

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# Sweetwater Partners with Purdue School of Music



Purdue University Fort Wayne and Sweetwater officials have announced a partnership that will locate a majority of the university's music technology program on the Sweetwater campus.

The company will turn an existing 8,000 square foot facility, just south of the main building, into a learning center that will include studios, classrooms, and other teaching spaces.

The facility is expected to open in August 2018, prior to the university's fall semester and first day of classes.

Chuck and Lisa Surack and Sweetwater will provide \$1.6 million for the build-

out of the facility, and the university will reimburse the \$1.6 million over a six-year period. In addition, Purdue is receiving a gift-in-kind in the amount of \$1.465 million, based on the Surack's not charging any interest or rent for the building. Additionally, the students and faculty will enjoy the many benefits of the Sweetwater campus from its recording studios to the amenities that its employees take advantage of, including the Downbeat Diner, Crescendo Cafe, Health Club and more.

In addition to funding from Sweetwater, the State of Indiana and the English Bonner Mitchell foundation have each provided \$1 million to the Purdue music program.

"This music technology facility is a major new collaboration between Purdue Fort Wayne and the local business community," said Chancellor Ronald Elsenbaumer. "We're extremely grateful to Chuck Surack and Lisa for working with us in what I hope will be the first of many

partnerships we hope to build over the coming years."

"Sweetwater's relationship with the Music Department at the IU and Purdue campus has been strong for decades," said Chuck Surack, Sweetwater founder and president. "This music technology facility takes that relationship to an entirely new level. It will not only provide a fully-equipped, state-of-the-art learning facility, but will allow for more collaboration and integration between students and the professional work of Sweetwater's talented and dedicated music professionals, as well as access through internships to our three professional recording studios and Performance Theatre. We also look forward to having Purdue students here to explore and enjoy the many unique features of our campus."

The facility has been designed by The Russ Berger Design Group. The new construction will include a world-class recording studio with an adjacent teaching lab, three isolation booths, four editing suites, a student musical collaboration center, an equipment library, classrooms, conference rooms, and administrative offices.

This learning center will accommodate two proposed new majors. A B.S. in Music Industry will be essential in preparing graduating students to find employment in the music industry. A B.S. in Popular Music will offer concentrations in Recording or Songwriting.

Indiana Senate President Pro Tempore David Long said, "The new partnership between Sweetwater and Purdue University Fort Wayne is exactly the kind of innovation we need as we look to the future of our state's workforce. These are the kinds of ventures required to develop the next generation of talent here in northeast Indiana and throughout the Hoosier state.

"More importantly," Long added, "this will be the first, and only, School of Music in the Purdue University system. The fact that Purdue is collaborating with one of the cutting edge, global leaders in the musical world in Sweetwater Sound makes it a home run for everyone concerned."

"The visibility of the new Purdue Fort Wayne music technology program will be greatly enhanced by the thousands of visitors to the Sweetwater campus who will see our presence and meet our students in our building and the main Sweetwater

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continued from page 18

facility as well," said Greg Jones, chair and professor of music.

As announced in mid-December, the Purdue University Board of Trustees approved the College of Visual and Performing Arts to establish a School of Music (previously a department of music) at Purdue University Fort Wayne effective July 1, 2018.

In addition to the new degrees mentioned above, The School of Music will offer degrees to existing programs in music performance, music education, and music therapy, plus an international performers certificate. The school also plans to host more national music festivals on campus.

"Our music program is already home to world-class faculty and staff and

growing it from a music department to a school of music will attract more students nationally and internationally," said John O'Connell, dean of the college of visual and performing arts. "Creating a state-of-the-art facility on the Sweetwater campus sets our program above and beyond that of any program of this kind in the nation."

## Hit Like A Girl Female Drumming Contest Announces Schedule and Updates for 2018

Now entering its seventh year, the 2018 edition of the Hit Like A Girl international drum contest promises to build on the success and growing popularity of the program to expand the public awareness of the female drummers and grow the female drumming community.

The 2018 theme, "Break Through," is an acknowledgement of the progress already made in shattering barriers and stereotypes as well as a call to action aimed at empowering more women and girls to become players.

Hit Like A Girl 2018 will run from March through May. During the entry period, there are six weekly competitions open to all contestants. The weekly contests are judged by top female drum industry executives

along with a female endorser from presenting sponsors.

After the entry period, there are 2 weeks of public voting followed by the selection of finalists and judging by an all-star panel of celebrity drummers. Winners will be announced during a webcast ceremony in mid-May.

This year, online entries will be accepted in the over and under 18 age divisions of the drum set, concert, marching and world percussion categories as well as the new Music Technology category run by Beats By Girlz. In addition, the updated HLAG website will offer links to professional backing tracks suggested by artists such as Anika Nilles and Kaz Rodriguez and sponsors including Drum Channel, Drumeo and Drum Guru.



Other developments for 2018 include a version of Hit Like a Girl in China organized by the 9 Beats drum schools, expanded local contests in Mexico, France, the UK, and other areas around the world organized through the HLAG Ambassadors program and new alliances, with educational organizations such as DCI, School Of Rock and Girls Rock Camps.

The lists of 2018 judges, prizes and sponsors are pending and will be announced as they are confirmed.

## Ricci Joins American Way Marketing Team

American Way Marketing (AWM) has announced that Tim Ricci has joined the company as vice president. Ricci will be involved in all aspects of the business, initially concentrating on purchasing, sourcing, and product development to enhance distribution, branding and custom packaging solutions for retail music dealers in the domestic and international markets. Ricci brings a wealth of experience to AWM with 13 years of increasing responsibilities at Music & Arts including store management, corporate operations, buying, category management, and last serving as the Director of Merchandising and Proprietary Band & Orchestra Products. His experience in these areas as well as his passion for getting people involved in music make him a perfect fit for the continued growth and expansion of AWM.



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by **Ronnie Dungan**

**All in This Together**

NAMM Show-time brings with it some much-welcomed activity in a market that otherwise chugs along with little in the way of change or innovation from year to year. It's not exactly a commentator's dream.

Trying to spot trends at a trade show is not easy in the MI market which is largely short on genuine innovation, particularly in traditional instruments, despite its best efforts. And while there might be the occasional acquisition such as Radial Engineering this month or Levy's Leathers being purchased by Gator Cases, the sector went through its period of consolidation a long time ago, so it's something of a rarity.

Innovation is also often expensive. Take a look at the new \$3 million injection into Swiss brand, Relish Guitars. They are well marketed, cleverly designed, nice looking guitars, if a little over-priced for what you get.

There's an old adage – how do you make £1 million out of the MI market? Invest £2 million. Credit to the Relish lads for raising the cash, but it's very hard to establish a new guitar brand in a market where customers seem only to be interested in old shapes and old materials. Even the market leaders struggle to deviate from the formula too much. Furthermore, the guitar market is not exactly in great shape at the moment. There's not enough demand for those market leading models, let alone new brands. They must have talked a great game to those financiers.

No one steals the show at NAMM, but what it delivers for the retailers and suppliers is at least a sense that they're all in it together and that the industry is at least trying to move forward, even if it is at walking pace.

**JHS Ties Up Latin American Deal**

JHS and Import Music have joined forces to distribute Vintage, Encore and Santos Martinez fretted instruments, and Odyssey brasswind in the extended region of Mexico, Central America, Caribbean Islands, and South America.

Import Music has developed a web-based wholesale distribution system which is successfully reaching dealers and consumers all over the region through a network of 25 websites.

The individual territory websites provide product information, videos, pricing in local currency, inventory and account information as well stockist information.

"All of us at Import Music are very excited with this opportunity that will let us take advantage of our decades of expertise selling guitars. The Vintage brand of electric, bass, acoustic and electro acoustic guitars is so clever, well done and nicely priced, that it will make many musicians happy. Its variety is fantastic covering all type of popular models. Encore, its younger brother, offers a selection of the best selling models at very affordable prices, so both brands together will satisfy all guitar and bass needs just when other leading brands seems to be falling in the market," said Alfredo Campanelli, CEO of Import Music.



"Odyssey brass and woodwind offers beautiful instruments, from student entry level at very affordable prices all the way to professional instruments. We are very happy to be able to offer these great instruments. Finally, Santos Martinez offers an affordable but beautifully built classic and electro-acoustic nylon string guitars, at the price our region can afford."

Adam Butterworth, JHS export manager, commented: "This is a fantastic opportunity for our brands to be fully visible in some prominent export markets. Import Music go way back and have a great understanding of the industry. We're extremely pleased to have them on board. With a growing demand for our Vintage, Encore, Santos Martinez and Odyssey brands, we're all excited about working with Alfredo and his excellent team."

**Tanglewood Tightens Elixir Strings Deal**

After many years of collaboration on premium ranges of Tanglewood instruments, the partnership between Elixir Strings has been extended across to the more high volume selling models in the catalogue.

Elixir will now feature exclusively on the Winterleaf series, Java series and Sundance Premier as well as the previously selected original equipment for Sundance Performance Pro, Sundance Historic and Masterdesign by Sanden.

Dan Reeks, Tanglewood marketing manager, said: "This progression into a stronger partnership with Elixir Strings was firmly founded in the belief that our playing family depend on us to offer

only the very best components in the construction of our instruments and in blind tests and real world field studies, Elixir Strings was proven to add value in terms of sound and tonal longevity, making it ultimately an easy choice for us to make. A good string can make a great guitar sound really good... a great string can make a great guitar sound unbelievable, and that's the benchmark we believe we have now set with this partnership agreement".

Tanglewood Guitars equipped with Elixir Strings will be arriving in stores across 62 countries in January and by March 2018, all production should be shipping to this new specification.

## Relish Guitars Raises Over \$3 Million For Global Expansion

Relish Brothers AG has recently raised over \$3 million to continue developing its aluminum-based, modular guitar products.

The Switzerland-based company has developed an innovative approach to electric guitar production that has resulted in 300 percent yearly sales growth along with production volume of over 1,000 Swiss-made guitars since their founding in 2013.

The newly raised capital will be used to finance international expansion. Distribution partners in the USA, Japan, and China are already lined up and more are expected follow.



## Darkglass Adds New Bass Pre-Amp

Darkglass Electronics has introduced a new bass pre-amp, the Alpha-Omega Ultra.

It has two distinct distortion circuits (Alpha and Omega), extremely high dynamic range, six-band active graphic EQ, dedicated headphone output, and balanced direct output with switchable digital impulse-response cabinet emulation, designed to be a complete tool for the modern bass player.

It allows users to get a consistent studio-grade setup by incorporating an accurate representation of a cabinet's character. And since they exist in the digital domain, they can be changed in a matter of seconds via a USB port with the Darkglass Suite.

Available for both PC and Mac, the Darkglass Suite is a free, easy-to-use platform for experimenting with your favorite cabinet configurations. This feature is fully switchable on the Direct Output and always-on for the headphone output, which gives you the chance to practice silently with an indescribably realistic, full-rip sound.

# Neumann Brings Back U67 Microphone

Neumann has re-released its U67 tube microphone.

The U 67 tube microphone, introduced in 1960, was the quintessential studio workhorse throughout the formative years of modern music. Now, the iconic tube microphone is back in production and built to the original specifications.

"The sound and technical design of the U 67 are truly timeless," said Wolfgang Fraissinet, president of Neumann Berlin. "Its cone-shaped body and the tapered headgrill have become iconic for the Neumann brand. The re-issue has been meticulously reproduced to original specifications, and we are very proud to re-launch this superb tube microphone at NAMM."

With three selectable polar patterns – omni-directional, cardioid, and figure-of-8 – and advanced tube circuitry, including low-cut and pad switches, the Neumann U 67 is well-equipped for virtually any recording task. Due to its essentially linear response in the three polar patterns, the U 67 can be used for instruments such as strings, woodwinds, brass, piano, drums, acoustic and electric guitar, bass guitar and upright bass as well as vocals.

Sonically, the current re-issue is identical to the U 67 made from 1960–1971. It uses the same capsule and electronic design. Key parts, such as the BV 12 output transformer, have been meticulously reproduced according to original documentation. Its EF86 tubes have been carefully selected in a dedicated measurement facility for optimal characteristics and lowest noise.

The U 67 comes in a vintage case that is – just like the U 67 re-issue – hand-made in Germany. Besides the microphone, it includes an elastic suspension, a microphone cable and the NU 67 V power supply. The power supply was redesigned to meet today's strict safety requirements and to accommodate the slightly higher filament current of newer premium-grade tubes. The new NU 67 V is fully compatible with older U 67 microphones, and automatically adapts to the local mains voltage.

It will be available in March.

### Features

- Dual distortion engines (Alpha & Omega)
- Bite and Growl frequency emphasis switches
- Clean and Distortion type Blend controls
- Separate Bypass and Distortion foot-switches - allows use of Distortion and EQ independently
- Six-band active Graphic EQ
- $\pm 20$ dB master volume control
- IR (impulse response) cabinet simulation
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- Connect to your PC/Mac via Micro-USB
- Free 'Darkglass Suite' software
- 3.5mm headphone output with cabinet simulation
- Balanced XLR output with switchable IR cabinet simulation
- Switchable ground lift
- Input impedance: 1M Ohm
- Output impedance: 1k Ohm
- Powered by optional 9V PSU - (9V DC, center -, 2.1mm, ~110mA current draw)



## Iron Maiden Drummer Gets into Retail

Iron Maiden drummer Nicko McBrain has become co-owner of a drum shop in Manchester.

Nicko McBrain's Drum One shop boasts a dedicated performance space and the biggest collection of Sonor products in the country. The store, at Astra Business Park



in Stretford, Trafford, was the site of the Manchester Drum Centre, but was taken over by McBrain and his

business partner last November when the shop's owner retired.

The center opened in 1983. Former manager Sam McGoran is part of the new venture as a shareholder.

McBrain commented: "I am extremely excited to be a part of this wonderful adventure.

"It is a departure from my usual day job, but nevertheless it is one that I am ready to take on. I'm so grateful for this wonderful opportunity to embrace and serve the retail side of the percussion world.

"I am looking forward to the commitment, dedication and experience that is Nicko McBrain's Drum One."

As well as selling drums and equipment, the store will host manufacturer's events, seminars, shows, and clinics.

McBrain's business partner Craig Buckley, said: "We want drummers to come along and hang out at the store whether they are buying or not, the kettle is always on. Drum One is going to be an adventure and we want as many drummers as possible to be a part of it."

## New Aussie Distributor for QSC

QSC has appointed Jands as its Australia distribution partner for the company's pro division.

The QSC portfolio of live sound products and solutions will be represented by the company throughout the country. The firm will be responsible for providing and enabling QSC brand-growth opportunities with Australia channel partners and their customers.

"Jands brings a long legacy of success serving customers in the M.I. retail channel as well as A.V. rental and production companies in Australia," said Gene Joly, vice president, QSC Professional Division. "QSC Professional is thrilled to have them join us as our partner in the region."

Paul Mulholland, Jands managing director added: "My first introduction to QSC goes back to the late 80s when, as the JBL distributor, Jands sold JBL power amplifiers manufactured by QSC. What stood out then as it does today were the products' reliability and the company's commitment to quality. Following that first association I have watched with admiration as QSC expanded their product offering and attracted some of the best people in our industry, many of whom are old friends." Mulholland adds, "I speak for everyone at Jands when I say how excited we are to have the opportunity to represent a true innovator and leader in our industry and one whose business philosophy aligns so well with ours."

Distribution for the QSC Professional Division, serving the retail, AV rental, and production channels, began on January 22.

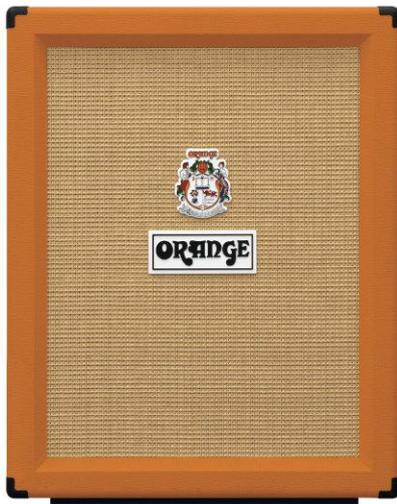


## Orange Launches First Vertical Cabinet

Designed to provide the "Orange Sound" in a lightweight, portable cabinet, the new PPC212V is Orange's first vertical cab.

It combines 15mm Birch Plywood and an open back design to reduce weight, without compromising on tone or durability. The new cabinet uses Celestion Neo Creamback speakers.

Finished in Orange's traditional livery the PPC212V is a companion to the Orange Terror range, with all the benefits of a smaller stage footprint. The cab is significantly lighter than the PPC212 and capable of handling up to 120 Watts of power.



## New French Operation for Chauvet

Lighting specialist Chauvet has opened a wholly-owned subsidiary located in Paris.

The new facility is responsible for directly distributing and supporting the company's brands: Chauvet Professional, Chauvet DJ, and Illuminaric in France.

Previously the brand was distributed by third parties in France for over a decade.

"Many of our French customers have been buying our lights for years, so the time had come to support them by having a direct presence in France," said Albert Chauvet, CEO of Chauvet. "Having a local presence will make us more responsive to the specific needs of our customers."

The new team includes the recently appointed Chauvet European sales director, Martin Fournier, Jerome Garnier, Nicolas Pommier, and Juliette Mason. "We are focused on delivering the highest quality customer experience" said Fournier. "We have a broad range of products, all designed to meet specific customer needs."



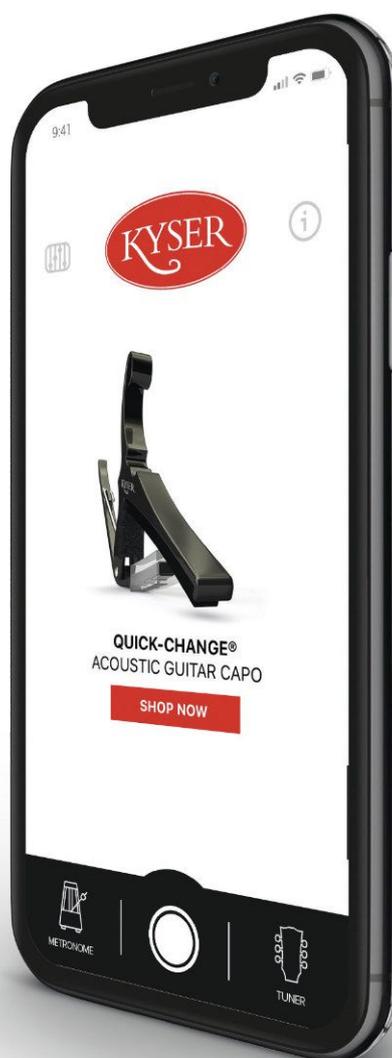


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# ON THE MOVE

**Yamaha Corporation of America (YCA)** has announced that Jeff Scott has been appointed as the company's corporate vice president of finance and administration.



Scott, who joined Yamaha this month, reports directly to YCA president Hitoshi Fukutome and oversees the company's finance, customer financial services, operations, and IT divisions. In his new role, Scott will lead YCA financial management strategy, risk management, contribute to YCA strategic goals and serve as both an officer of the company and a key member of the senior management team.

"Jeff has demonstrated exceptional and consistent leadership at several growing companies where he was instrumental in providing finance and IT vision, along with the strategies to help these organizations get to the next level," said Fukutome. "I am confident that his experience, knowledge, passion and integrity are a great match for Yamaha, and together, we will continue to grow our company, as well as strengthen our market-leading position in our industry."

Immediately prior to joining Yamaha on January 8, Scott served as director of finance and corporate planning for Hyundai Capital America, a position he held for more than four years. Previously, he was director of Ascendant International and held several senior finance and business positions at Northrop Grumman.

Scott received his bachelor of science from Pepperdine University, holds an MBA from the UCLA Anderson School of Management and completed his post-graduate work in global enterprise management at the University of Oxford.

**Martin Audio North America** has named Paul Giansante as product support specialist.



In this position, Giansante will enable sales by providing technical support services and training in the U.S. and Canada to the sales team, distributors and dealers. He will also assist in the development of

new products, identify and report sales opportunities.

Giansante brings a wealth of experience in the audio industry to his new post including sales, touring and product management positions at Danley, Meyer, Sennheiser, and Turbosound and an audio engineer for different distributors, DisneyFest Asia, Britannia Row Productions, Maryland Sound Industries, and more.

Over the years, he has toured in a variety of audio engineering capacities with Pink Floyd, David Bowie, David Gilmore, Neil Young, Stevie Wonder, Frank Sinatra, Whitney Houston, Hall and Oates, and George Benson, to name a few. He was also involved in leading installations such as Oakland-Alameda County Stadium, Lambeau Field, Caesar's Magical Empire and Pleasure Island, Disney World.

A graduate of Mynderse Academy in Seneca Falls, New York, Giansante has also attended Cayuga Community College and graduated with honors in audio recording from Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York.

Commenting on the appointment, Lee Stein, VP of sales, North America, said, "I am thrilled to add Paul to the US team as our product support representative. I've known him for years and we have worked together with great success. He not only has an impressive resume and has held key positions for manufacturers before, but he has vast technical knowledge, great ears and practical experience, including touring with Pink Floyd and other major artists. He is a great asset and will provide exceptional support to our customers and users."

**Noteflight**, a Hal Leonard company, has announced that John Mlynczak has been promoted to managing director.



Previously the VP of sales and marketing, Mlynczak has been overseeing all sales, marketing, and business development activities at the company. This new position expands upon these duties and allows John to lead the entire Noteflight team forward with some exciting new initiatives in 2018. An experienced musician and music educator with a focus on music technology, composition, and arranging, he will continue to represent Noteflight at conferences and trade shows and will offer professional development for educators and sessions for retailers to help them

provide a variety of technology solutions from Noteflight/Hal Leonard.

Mlynczak has an extensive range of experiences in music education and the music industry. He has taught music, music technology, and music business at the elementary, secondary, and collegiate levels, is an active performer, and is a highly sought-after clinician on music technology and music advocacy. He is currently president of the Technology Institute for Music Educators and an adjunct professor of music technology at LSU. He serves on the NAMM Support Music and State Advocacy Coalitions, the NAFME Advocacy Leadership Force, and is Advocacy Chairman for the Massachusetts Music Educators Association. Mlynczak holds a bachelor's degree in music education from Virginia Commonwealth University, and master's degrees in both music performance and educational leadership from Louisiana State University.

As part of this leadership change, Joe Berkovitz, the founder of Noteflight, will continue to work with the company in a part-time consulting role, advising the company on technology developments and other strategic priorities.

**Heil Sound** has announced the appointment of Ash Levitt to the position of head of research and business development.



In this role Levitt will oversee user and dealer research, new product development, as well as have direct interface with international distributors and U.S.-based dealers. He will be based at the company headquarters in Fairview Heights, Illinois.

Prior to joining Heil Sound full time, Levitt, with an academic background in behavioral research and statistical analysis, conducted research on behavioral motivation. An avid fan of music and a musician, he has consulted with Heil Sound for over a decade. "It was a natural fit," Levitt says of the transition to Heil. "I've known everyone at Heil Sound for years. And most people I have dealt with in the industry over the years through Heil probably were never aware that my other foot was in academic research. Now I'm bringing all of that experience to Heil full time. I'm excited to create value for the company with a data-driven approach, and to continue to build on what is already a great brand with the best microphones in the business."

**Jackson and Charvel** announce that Joe Williams has been promoted from an apprentice to Custom Shop master builder.



“Given his diverse talents as a builder, outstanding work ethic and enthusiasm, Joe Williams is an invaluable asset to the Custom Shop,” said Jackson/Charvel vice president of category management Jon Romanowski. “As a player and true fan of hard rock and heavy metal himself, Williams also brings a unique perspective and key insight into the exacting needs of modern guitarists. We couldn’t be happier to have his firepower in the shop as we continue to build upon our storied Jackson and Charvel brands.”

Williams has trained over the last decade under the expert wing of master builder Mike Shannon, earning the prestigious guru’s full endorsement and stamp of approval.

“Joe is probably one of the most valuable people in the building, one of very few people who can do every process – from the mill all the way to final assembly and figuring out some of the most difficult wiring issues that we have,” said Shannon.

Williams has contributed to many high-profile Custom Shop projects, including management of the relic process, assembly and setup for the Randy Rhoads Tribute Concorde Replica models, and initial conception and design of the B7 and B8 models.

He also built the first Jackson “multi-scale” instrument. In what he good-naturedly referred to as “a beast of a build,” he created an eight-string Soloist model with an innovative 27.75”-25” scale length and asymmetrical five-piece neck.

Williams’ passion for tinkering with guitars dates back to his teens when he first started out playing the instrument. Assuming it was only a phase, his parents got him an inexpensive Squier beginner instrument. An enterprising teen, Williams quickly taught himself to modify and improve his \$100 guitar to sound and feel like his friend’s high-performance Charvel.

He later leveraged those skills with a paying gig at a vintage guitar shop, where he repaired and set up used guitars. Upon joining Jackson in 2005, he continued developing his skills in final assembly, handling wiring and setup work. His attention to detail caught Shannon’s interest, and

Williams was subsequently given sole responsibility for custom assembly work.

During the last 10 years, Williams attended school to learn CNC programming and manufacturing technology, while also training aside Shannon in the Custom Shop, slowly working his way backward through the production process – from final assembly to buffing and polishing to mill work.

**Gretsch** has announced that luthier Gonzalo Madrigal, an integral part of the Gretsch Custom Shop for the last 12 years, has now been elevated to master builder.



“Gonzalo is a builder’s builder,” said Gretsch Guitars vice president of category management Jason Barnes. “His wood-working ability seems surpassed only by his artistic vision, and his talent emerges not only in an instrument’s design but also in its sound. If anyone can be called a master builder, it is certainly Gonzalo.”

Madrigal began his career with Fender Musical Instruments Corporation in 1996 on the Fender production line where he handled binding and sanding guitar bodies. A superior craftsman, he gradually made his way to the Fender Custom Shop in 2004, where he worked on Benedetto guitar bodies, binding, and neck fitting.

Madrigal also worked on various high-profile “tribute” projects, including the Fender Custom Shop Eric Clapton Blackie Stratocaster, Stevie Ray Vaughan Number One and Lenny Stratocaster guitars and Andy Summers Tribute Telecaster, and the EVH Frankenstein replica guitar.

Madrigal’s exemplary work brought him to the attention of Gretsch Custom Shop senior master builder Stephen Stern, who enlisted his contributions for the Brian Setzer and Eddie Cochran 6120 models, the Billy Zoom Silver Jet and the G6128T-GH George Harrison Tribute Duo Jet.

During the last dozen years under Stern’s tutelage, Madrigal has flourished, becoming an elite all-around craftsman while continuing upon his reputation for his artistry and intricate binding specialty.

Madrigal’s latest build, a Gretsch Custom ‘59 Penguin in Roasted Birdseye Maple, which will debut later this month at the NAMM Show in Anaheim, Calif., is a magnificent illustration of Madrigal’s artistry and detailed approach to his craft.

“The intricate binding work that Gonzalo did on his Penguin is immaculate,” said Gretsch Custom Shop team member Chad Henrichsen. “My bench area is right next to his and sometimes I just watch him and am amazed by his skill. His attention to detail and his exactness just comes natural to him.”

Master-built Gonzalo Madrigal orders can now be placed through the Gretsch Custom Shop.

**GHS Strings** has named entertainment industry veteran, Alexx Calise as their new assistant of social media, marketing and A&R.



As a GHS endorsing artist for the past 12 years, Calise is already well acquainted with the Battle Creek-based string company. She brings a wealth of experience not only as an accomplished musician and entertainer, but also as a small business owner, former entertainment columnist, promotions manager, and brand ambassador.

As an independent musician, Calise’s music has been featured on a variety of TV shows such as “Dance Moms,” “One Tree Hill,” “Grimm,” “The Voice” and more. She has been profiled in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Guitar Player*, *Guitar World*, and other publications. Calise also has an extensive background in music licensing, publishing, and copyright, and is in the works to start her own full service music agency.

Alternatively, her Southern California-based children’s party company has put on celebrity events for Chris Brown, Reese Witherspoon and Christina Aguilera, and it has been profiled on TV shows such as “Ellen” and David Tutera’s “Celebrations.”

# 'The Big One'

## 2018 NAMM Show Expands in More Ways than One

By Christian **Wissmuller** and Victoria **Wasylak**

"Our members deserve all the credit for creating such an incredible show," says NAMM president and CEO Joe Lamond. "It's their innovative products and displays, the lifelong friendships and business relationships, and dedication to drive business forward that results in those only-at-NAMM opportunities."

Those NAMM Show-exclusive opportunities have both expanded and changed drastically in recent years. A quick search for news related to the gathering offers all the evidence one would need to conclude that this once strictly "industry-only" – and consequently somewhat under-the-radar event as far as the general public is concerned – is now a major cultural event that virtually anyone with even a casual interest in music and music-making is aware of. These days, outlets reporting on the Show include lifestyle magazines and websites, as well as all types of news media. That fact isn't "new" to the 2018 get-together, but the scope of this current reality is unquestionably growing.

The good news is that the increased numbers of attendees (115,085 – up 7.6 percent) and exhibitors (1,931 – up 9 percent) in Anaheim speaks to a robust and rebounded industry and a healthy interest in musical gear and the culture of making music. The bad (depending on who you ask – see the "Voices from the Show Floor" section below) news is that with ever-more folks crowding the aisles, making noise – particularly those visitors *not* from within the industry – some are finding the NAMM Show an increasingly challenging venue at which to do actual business. However, many we spoke with, both at and after the convention, observe that *all* trade shows have changed and it's not necessarily a negative. Due to technology-driven developments in how we all communicate and engage in commerce, events like the NAMM Show, Musikmesse, Music China, and the like aren't the annual one-stop-shopping centers for placing orders and doing business that they used to be. As much as (more than?) these events offer opportunities to showcase and buy or sell new gear, they also afford industry insiders with the chance to exchange ideas with colleagues, interact with one another, and celebrate the community.

### New Digs

The expansion of the Show into the new Anaheim Convention Center North building saw increased pro audio and event technology participation at the Show. The convergence of industry members on the floor in each new "neighborhood" was met with enthusiastic response for ease in getting from location to location, and for the sound quality control, that was also balanced with the palpable energy that permeated throughout the convention.

### Global Presence

International attendees increased by eight percent with representation from over 100 countries totaling 19,356 registrants. As the steady, reliable platform, the Show presented a valuable opportunity to convene and conduct business in a central meeting space.

Attendees were a mix of traditional NAMM members, including domestic and international retail and distribution buyers and employees, exhibitors, event tech and pro audio professionals and buyers, media, artists, invited guests, NAMM Foundation GenNext (college music students), Music Education Day (school music administrators and buyers) and Nonprofit Institute (NAMM grantees and affiliates) participants. The convergence of the industry was met with enthusiasm as new innovations were revealed from all sectors of industry, as members also worked to establish new relationships.

### Learn Somethin', Pal

From peer-to-peer networking events and best-in-class education, the show set the stage for engaging participants over the course of the four days by offering over 500 educational sessions. NAMM Show attendees had the opportunity to participate in education provided by several NAMM partners at the new NAMM U Education Center in the Anaheim Hilton. Education partners and opportunities included sessions from A3E: Advanced Audio + Applications Exchange; Audinate Dante Training and Certification; Music Education Days, GenNext career development and the Nonprofit Institute from The NAMM Foundation; AES@NAMM: Pro Sound Symposium Live and Studio, curated by the Audio Engineering Society; NAMM U; TEC Tracks; and event technology sessions curated by ESTA (Entertainment Services and Technology Association), The Pro Production Sessions presented by Front of House and Projection Lights & Staging News magazines, as well as Lighting&Sound America/PLASA.

### It's not Just NAMM at the NAMM Show

The inaugural AES@NAMM program, which included a mix of AES members and prospective new members, was a hit with attendees. The program includ-



Jackson Browne speaks at the TEC Awards (photo credit: Jesse Grant/Getty Images for NAMM)

ed four training academies, a variety of tutorials and sessions, as well as whitepapers, resulting in more than 300 total sessions.

The Event Technology sessions, as curated by ESTA (Entertainment Services Technology Association), The Pro Production Sessions presented by *Front of House* and *Projection, Lights & Staging News* magazines, as well as programming from Lighting&Sound America/PLASA, gave emerging and established professionals the opportunity to learn from industry luminaries in a series of sessions and tracks.

Terry Lowe, president of Timeless Communications, the Parnelli Awards and education partner, affirmed that sentiment: "From everyone I have spoken to, they all feel it has been a good first year. The Parnelli Awards were a smashing success which seems to have translated to the show floor!"

### Most Important Meal of the Day

Each morning of the show, registrants were treated to inspiring business insights and key lessons learned from a variety of NAMM U Breakfast Session speakers. Thursday morning opened the show with the annual favorite, "Breakfast of Champions." NAMM President and CEO Joe Lamond took an up-close look at the people changing the music products industry, their trials and successes, and the importance of risk in business. Bob Weir, legendary co-founder of the Grateful Dead, was recognized with the "Music for Life" award.

### Busy, Busy...

As the NAMM community prepared to gather for the show, the mission of NAMM came alive at the pre-show NAMM Day of Service. Held on Tuesday, January 23 at Orange Grove Elementary, the day supported the school's administrators, teachers and students with a generous, member-enabled donation from The NAMM Foundation of \$10,000 that will help to ensure that every child has access to music during the school day. Across the school's classrooms, 23 NAMM members, including Foundation board member and former New York Yankee Bernie Williams, rolled up their sleeves and offered music lesson instruction with hand drums, guitars and ukuleles.

Once at the show, a variety of networking and musical events awaited members, including nightly performances on the NAMM Yamaha Grand Plaza Stage. The NAMM Foundation Celebration for Music Education kicked off all four days with a dazzling performance from indie rockers, OK Go.

On Saturday, The NAMM Foundation and The John Lennon Educational Tour Bus presented acclaimed singer-songwriter Andy Grammer at the annual Imagine Party. At the start of the evening, funk legend Bootsy Collins performed "Together We Can" alongside children from Anaheim's Loara Elementary and Country Club Hills (Chicago), who received a visit from the Lennon Educational Tour Bus last year.

On Friday, The Parnelli Awards debuted at The NAMM Show, honoring event tech professionals across 22 categories, including Billy Joel's long-time Production Manager, Bobby "Boomer" Thrasher, who received the Lifetime Achievement Award. Lighting designer and innovator, Jonathan Smeeton (The Rolling Stones, Marilyn Manson, Jane's Addiction, Taylor Swift), received the Parnelli Visionary Award; and DiGiCo technical director John Stadius was honored with the Audio Innovator Award. The same evening at the House of Blues, the sixth annu-

al She Rocks Awards recognized notable women in the industry, along with artists Pat Benatar, Melissa Etheridge, and the B52's Kate Pierson and Cindy Wilson, among others.

At the Grand Rally for Music Education on Saturday morning, singer-songwriter Vanessa Carlton was recognized with the SupportMusic Champion Award.

The special day also included two incredible performances by Country Club Hills school children, The Manhattan School of Music and Bernie Williams. The group performed "Unbreakable," a song written by the students of Country Club Hills. Closing out the morning was vocal trio, FORTE (Josh Page, Victor Ryan Robinson and Alok Kumar), who delighted the audience with their a capella performance.

The morning also marked the presentation of The Don Johnson Award, presented by MMR, to NAMM Foundation secretary-treasurer and Founder/President of Sweetwater, Chuck Surack.



MMR's Terry Lowe presents the 2018 Don Johnson Industry Service Award to Sweetwater Sound's Chuck Surack

At the Annual Meeting of Members at The 2018 NAMM Show, NAMM welcomed eight new board members to the organization's Board of Directors. Each board member will serve a three-year term and provide oversight, input and direction to the organization.

NAMM welcomes the following members to the organization's Board of Directors:

Christie Carter, Carter's Vintage Guitars; Jimmy Edwards, Marshall Music Company; Mark Hebert, Cosmo Music Co.; Louis Hernandez, Avid Technology Inc.; David Kalt, Chicago Music Exchange; Tim Miklaucic, Cordoba Music Group; Mark Terry, KMC Music Group; and Barbara Wight, Taylor Guitars.

The meeting also celebrated the service, leadership and the many contributions of the outgoing members of the board, including Joe Castronovo, Korg USA, Inc.; Paul Decker, Music Villa; Greg Deering, Deering Banjo Company, Inc.; Michael Doyle, Guitar Center; Ron Losby, Steinway & Sons; Brian Reardon, Monster Music; Peter Sides, Robert M. Sides Family Music Centers; and Martin Szpiro, Jam Industries Ltd.

The Summer NAMM Show will return to Nashville's Music City Center June 28-30. Later in the year, NAMM Musikmesse Russia will return to Moscow September 13-16, and Prolight + Sound Russia will commence September 13-15. In 2019, The NAMM Show returns to Anaheim January 24-27, 2019.



NAMM's Joe Lamond; Christie Carter, Carter's Vintage Guitars; Jimmy Edwards, Marshall Music Company; Mark Hebert, Cosmo Music Co.; Louis Hernandez, Avid Technology Inc.; David Kalt, Chicago Music Exchange; Tim Miklaucic, Cordoba Music Group; Mark Terry, KMC Music Group; and Barbara Wight, Taylor Guitars.

## GAMA Annual Membership Meeting and Breakfast

The Annual GAMA Breakfast, held on January 24, welcomed eight new members to the group, which vice president Skip Beltz noted was the first net gain in membership for GAMA, according to his recollection.

The meeting detailed ways that GAMA had been working to keep the spark of curiosity for learning how to play the guitar alive, from giving out swag bags to programs, to creating and placing children-focused advertisements for guitars and guitar lessons. The meeting also noted an increased interest in ukuleles, which GAMA plans to capitalize on through partnering with ukulele dealers.

"Without players, you just have materials," noted Menzie Pittman, owner of Contemporary Music Center. "That's where I think GAMA has a really unique place in the industry. We are a legit voice working hand in hand."

The meeting concluded with a panel discussion from Pittman, Laura B. Whitmore (She Rocks Awards), Mike Molenda (*Guitar Player Magazine*) and Squiggy DiGiacomo (The Music Experience) on the state of the guitar market.

"There are guitar heroes out there – they [just] may not be what we experienced," Molenda said in reference to the now-infamous *Washington Post* article about the "death of the guitar."

The meeting commenced as all new and current members in attendance received a plaque from GAMA.



Evan Skopp and Brad Smith of GAMA



Panelists Mike Molenda, Laura B. Whitmore, Squiggy DiGiacomo, and Menzie Pittman



Remo's Bob Yerby

## Remo Debuts New Colortone Drumheads

Remo debuted their new offerings for Winter NAMM 2018 on January 25, featuring their new Colortone drumheads, Festival Drums, Dorado XE Cajon, Flareout Djembe, and Artbeat artistic collection of drumheads, cajons, tambourines, and djembes. Bob Yerby, vice president of sales and marketing, called the six different Colortone heads "one of the coolest things we've ever done."

Despite their decision to stop producing bongos and congos, Remo president Brock Kaericher reassured that founder Remo Belli's desires for the company remained front and center, and that his passing had nothing to do with the decision. "His thoughts and his visions drive the company and continue to drive the company," he said.

During the presentation, Remo also presented a plaque to Izzo Musical of Brazil for their 100th anniversary.

## Gretsch Celebrates 135th Anniversary

The Gretsch and Lombardi families celebrate Gretsch Drums' 135th Anniversary with two drum-shaped cakes



## Casio Hosts Steve Weingart Album Release Party

On January 25, jazz pianist Steve Weingart performed in the Avalon Ballroom of the Hilton to celebrate the release of his new album *Oasis* with Casio. Weingart, who uses Casio's GP-500 Grand Hybrid Piano, performed with Renee Jones, Dave Weckl, Carlitos del Puerto, and Eric Marientha



Steve Weingart at his album release show with Casio

## PRS Guitars Expands Product Line

Paul Reed Smith of PRS Guitars introduced musicians to the company's newest guitar offerings on Friday, January 26, bringing in Mark Tremonti forward to demonstrate the new MT 15 amplifier, as well as Dustie Waring to discuss new CE Dustie Waring.



Dustie Waring and Paul Reed Smith at PRS Guitars' NAMM press conference

## Ibanez Releases New Signature Models

Ibanez hosted guitarists Tom Quayle and Martin Miller at their press conference on January 26 to allow both guitarists to discuss their new signature models with the company. Boasting an "ideal neck" and newly-designed tremolo, both models from Ibanez were made with the input of Quayle and Miller, respectively.



Mike Orrigo of Ibanez



Guitarists Tom Quayle and Martin Miller for Ibanez Guitars

## Fender Guitars Q&A with Eric Johnson



Eric Johnson performs after his Q&A with Fender

To introduce the new Eric Johnson Stratocaster Thinline to the world, Fender met up with guitarist Eric Johnson to discuss their third signature model with Johnson, who is currently performing with the new model on tour.

"I've always loved semi-hollow body guitars," Johnson said. "I used it last night and I felt totally comfortable. I was like 'oh I don't have to always play old guitars anymore.' I think it's bringing music back to where... you don't have to pay an arm and a leg for an instrument to be a certain excellent value."

The Eric Johnson Stratocaster Thinline will be available to the public on February 20.

## Voices from the Show Floor

We had a terrific show, with sales up 10 percent over last year and booth traffic much higher than prior years. Retailers seemed upbeat and eager to hear about new products and programs, as well as hearing about industry trends.

We found the new show layout to be a big success. The North Hall was busy and took a lot of pressure off of the other halls. With wider aisles and better traffic flow, it was far easier to get around the show and it felt much better managed than prior years.

**Larry Morton, Hal Leonard**

I love going to NAMM, and Winter NAMM 2018 in Anaheim was just as exciting as my first NAMM, back in 1973 at McCormick Place in Chicago. It was much easier to navigate the halls now with the wider aisles, and the reshuffle of vendors meant less time spent between booths... Sounds levels were improved but need to come down more; it's tough to talk business when you have to shout!

In summary: fabulous! NAMM's opportunity for product knowledge, professional development and networking are unparalleled in the industry; some good meals while catching up with friends are a welcome bonus.

**Nick Rail, Nick Rail Music**

This year's NAMM was very successful for MXL. I definitely felt a lift in the overall mood of the show. There didn't seem to be much risk for retailers to explore expanding their assortments and adding new products. I think most economies globally are in a good place to buy.

Being in the new hall helped even more because we were surrounded by buyers from all countries specifically looking for Pro Audio and Recording. We were able to spend more time with more category managers since most of their vendors were in the same place.

**Scott Krueckeberg, MXL Microphones**

This show has become antiquated and has lost its way. It seems far more concerned about the "number of bodies through the turnstiles" than what the intention of the show is/was.

NAMM can no longer deter the line of a trade show vs. open-to-the-public. It is a 100 percent fact that *anyone* with the patience to go through the NAMM online registry and pay a price "premium" will get a badge... My solution? Thursday: Dealers only. Friday: Dealers and Press only. Saturday and Sunday: Open to the Public.

**Michael Ciravolo, Schecter Guitar Research**

The 2018 NAMM show was a success for our company. We accomplished our objectives and had positive meetings with our vendors. I believe the NAMM staff did an extraordinary job of pre-planning and executing this ever-expanding show.

**Bill Everitt, Brook Mays Music Company**

The Show for us was a great success. As you know, we invest considerably in a new booth, not only in an effort to elevate our brands but also show support to NAMM and our Industry in general. We have extremely positive engagement with dealers throughout the show... As for the show layout, I did indeed like it. While the wider aisles made it seem like it wasn't as busy as in the past, it made it much easier to navigate the show floor. All in all, NAMM 2018 was an inspiring and extremely positive experience.

**John D'Addario III, D'Addario & Co.**

This year it was difficult for me to get to the Convention Center. I did a really quick lap, but didn't make it over to ACC North. From my somewhat narrowed experience, this year's show was very positive. Booth traffic was good and overall the feeling from dealers about the state of the music industry was upbeat.

**Garth Gillman, Yamaha Corporation of America**

Overall, I thought the vibe was positive and optimistic. From what I could tell, there appeared to be more general consumer traffic this year, which definitely increased the overall excitement of the crowd. I wasn't a huge fan of the new layout as it seemed to really separate the guitarists and the bassists from the recording enthusiasts. We sell everything on the site, so we go to NAMM with the aim to talk to all sorts of folks – being situated in the "fretted instrument hall" seemed to limit the number of attendees we saw from outside of the guitar/bass world.

**Heather Farr, Reverb.com**

We loved the changes at the show. Having the new North Halls allowed NAMM to reshuffle the mix in the main convention center and it all felt very logical. The wider isles helped tremendously and we didn't experience the traffic jams of previous years. Noise was certainly an issue in the drum area but I suppose that's a never-ending battle. I know from experience that NAMM is on it and it's just very difficult to manage to everyone's satisfaction. We had a tremendous 2017 and we don't see any reason for the momentum to stop. With our robust economy and the tax cuts we look for 2018 to be a banner year.

**Kevin Cranley, Willis Music**

For us, we're bigger than ever here at NAMM. The energy we're seeing is really high, there's a lot of interest in the products that we've had here, and a lot of excitement. Traditionally Thursday is a quiet day, but it was absolutely booming this year, and I think that the new focus on technology and pro audio shows that NAMM is trying to focus on the future of the industry and be more inclusive across the entire range of genres and music-making formats.

**Lauren Hendry Parsons, Bandlab Technologies**

This year is definitely unique for us because we're in a new location. We've been in the main hall for so long and now that we're in this beautiful North hall, it's definitely some new digs.

I think the market is really robust and I think if you look across out various product offerings, especially things that have been introduced over the past couple of years, I think you can see that we're definitely growing and expanding, and trying to keep up with what's going on in the world at large – not just worrying about live performance microphones, but expanding that to microphones for content creators and things for content creators and mobile recording. Connectivity is changing and the way we connect to our devices, especially when we're talking about our listening, is also changing too.

**Cheryl Jennison Daproza, Shure**

This year, the room is full of energy, and a lot of the energy is because many people got introduced to the ukulele, and they may have been introduced on a more affordable instrument initially, but now they're really ready for the next step, and that's where we are as Kanile'a Ukulele, a real traditional Hawaiian-made ukulele.

With 2018, we see the boom still continuing. Some people say,



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## Note From Zach

# 2018 Retail Resolutions

**Our members tell us that getting one good idea can pay for your entire trip to The NAMM Show. But in reality, I believe most attendees walk away from NAMM U sessions with dozens of great ideas. The only challenge is finding time to put those ideas to use when you leave Anaheim and return to your business.**

To help you get started, we've outlined some key areas below to focus on in the new year. Think of this as a priority list to navigate 2018. And don't wait until the next NAMM Show to pick up more ideas. Summer NAMM, held June 28–30 at Nashville's Music City Center, promises to offer new tips, strategies and best practices to help you grow your business. Start planning your travel now!

**Map your customer's journey.** At 2017 Summer NAMM, retail futurist Doug Stephens referred to an airline that earned his business with brilliant marketing. Only when he boarded his flight, he spotted a duct-taped window—not exactly inspiring his confidence. When your customers want new musical products or services, what's their complete experience, from their first Google search, to the moment they purchase to their experience post-purchase? Where are you exceeding expectations? Where could you up your game? Walk through the entire customer experience, identify your duct-taped windows and make fixing them a goal.

**Focus on voice search.** A few years ago, you nailed down your search engine optimization strategy, and now you're done, right? If only. Between Siri, Alexa and Cortana, voice search has changed the SEO game. More than ever before, consumers search for musical products and services online by asking questions and using phrases. Is your website optimized for natural language search? It's time to give this a second look.

**Consider upping your events schedule.** I recently spoke with a new independent combo retailer operating in a competitive

market. In its first year, the store is projected to hit \$1.4 million, and it's driving business—and traffic—largely with a bustling events series. This includes everything from manufacturer-sponsored clinics to themed sales to participation in Make Music Day. The takeaway? If you're a brick-and-mortar retailer, you're in the events business.

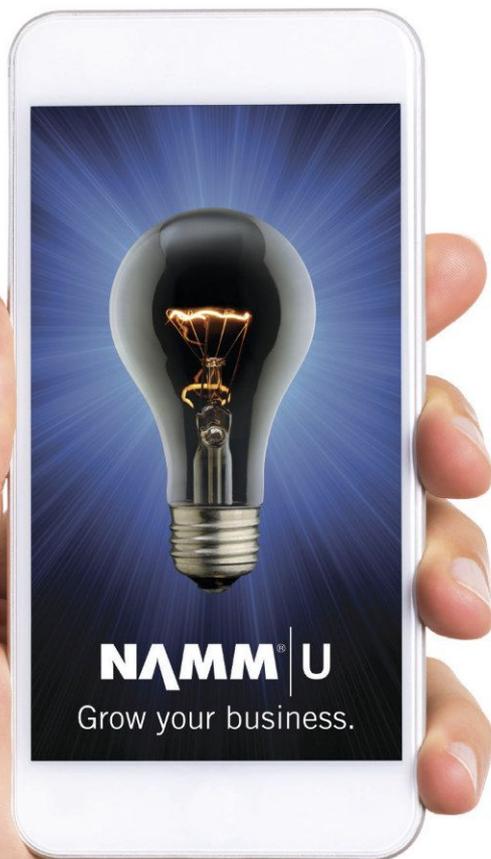
**Expand your sales channels.** If you're already selling through eBay, Reverb.com and Craigslist, consider creating a Facebook store or selling through Instagram. Make purchasing easy for your customers by going where millions are already buying and selling.

**Keep an eye on emerging technologies.** If you're a school music retailer, how will self-driving cars impact you in the future? For brick-and-mortar operations, how can virtual and augmented reality be integrated into your showroom experience? And what new opportunities do these technologies present? New smartphones already have augmented reality technology built into their operating systems. Now's the time to start exploring these questions.

And keep looking for great ideas year-round at NAMM U Online, by visiting [namm.org/nammu](http://namm.org/nammu). It's a fantastic resource designed with you in mind.

**Zach Phillips**  
NAMM Director of Professional Development

# Business growth is only a click away.



## NAMM | U Online

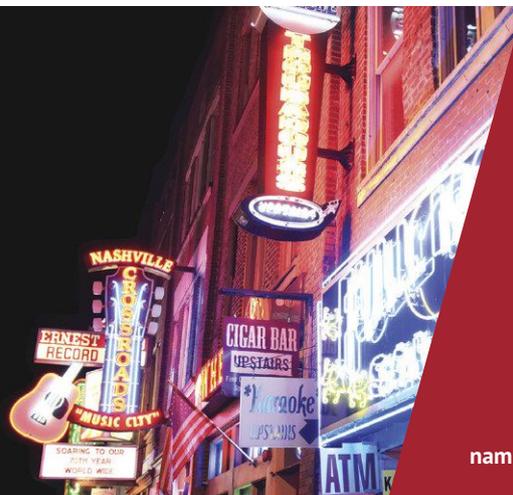
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## Voices from the Show Floor

'well, the ukulele plateaued,' but for us, I see the ukulele is just being reintroduced, and there is a while ukulele community that is ready to step up to the next level, and that's where we are.

**Joseph Souza, Kanile'a 'Ukulele**

We're at a new venue over at the House of Blues, so that's been a really fun production cycle for us. It's a top-line venue with great audio and the setup is really nice on two levels. This is one of the first times we've gone offsite, and one of the reasons we went to this new location was just because it's brand-new and so close.

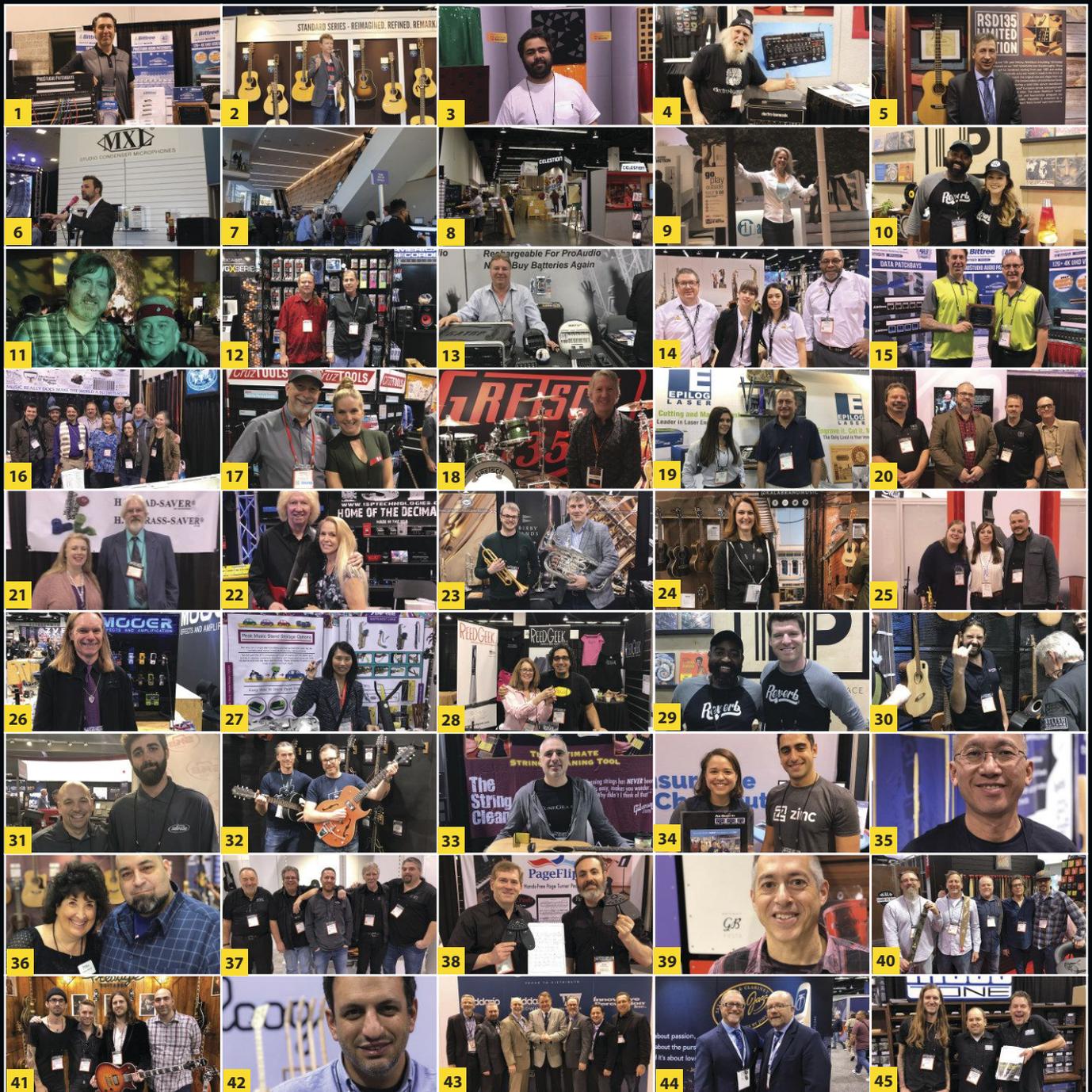
**Laura B. Whitmore, She Rocks Awards**

## MMR Dealers' Choice Awards



**1.** Casio's Mike Martin, Stephen Schmidt, and Rich Formidoni with the company's Dealers' Choice Award trophy for "Pro Digital Keyboard Line of the Year" **2.** The **Chauvet** team receives the Dealers' Choice Award for "Lighting Line of the Year" **3.** Rob Cunningham, John D'Addario III, Jim D'Addario, Chris Griffiths, and Jonathan Turitz with **D'Addario & Co.**'s Dealers' Choice Award trophy for "Accessory Line of the Year" **4.** Tammy Vandonk and Justin Norvell of FMIC with **Fender's** Dealers' Choice Award (DCA) for "Electric Guitar of the Year" **5.** The **Hal Leonard** crew receives their *MMR* Dealers' Choice Award for "Print Music Publisher of the Year" **6.** Mao Nakamura and Tom Appleton with **Ibanez's** DCA for "Electric Bass of the Year" **7.** Karam Kaul and Bryan Bradlee receive **JBL's** trophy for "Sound Reinforcement Line of the Year" **8.** **Kawai's** Naoki Mori and Hirota Kawai receive the DCA trophy for "Home Digital Keyboard of the Year" from *MMR's* Dave Jeans **9.** The **Ludwig** team with the DCA trophy for "Percussion Line of the Year" **10.** **Marshall Amplification's** managing director, Jon Ellery, and Marshall USA general manager Ryan Rhodes receive the Dealers' Choice Award for "Amplifier Line of the Year" **11.** Chris Martin IV of **C.F. Martin & Co.** with the 2017 *MMR* Dealers' Choice Award for "Acoustic Guitar of the Year" **12.** **Pioneer DJ's** Matthew Pekmezian with the DCA trophy for "DJ Line of the Year" **13.** The **PreSonus** team receives the Dealers' Choice Award for "Recording Line of the Year" **14.** Yoshi Ikegami with **BOSS's** DCA trophy for "Product of the Year" **15.** Greg Beebe receives **Sennheiser's** Dealers' Choice Award for "Microphone Line of the Year" **16.** **Yamaha Corporation's** Brian Petterson, Garth Gillman, Jonathan Breen, Lisa Steele-MacDonald, and Daisuke Yamamura receive the DCA trophy for "Band & Orchestra Line of the Year" from *MMR's* Christian Wissmuller (center) **17.** **Hailun Pianos:** Steve Witkowski, Florence Estrin, Anthony Mantova, Basilio Strmec, Shawn Bruce, Joe DeFio, Grant Wolach, Joanna Ruiz, Robert Estrin, Cliff Gordon, Paul Rea, Eriz Zehr, and Angela Harmon with the DCA trophy for "Acoustic Piano Line of the Year"

Choice Award for "Acoustic Guitar of the Year" **12.** **Pioneer DJ's** Matthew Pekmezian with the DCA trophy for "DJ Line of the Year" **13.** The **PreSonus** team receives the Dealers' Choice Award for "Recording Line of the Year" **14.** Yoshi Ikegami with **BOSS's** DCA trophy for "Product of the Year" **15.** Greg Beebe receives **Sennheiser's** Dealers' Choice Award for "Microphone Line of the Year" **16.** **Yamaha Corporation's** Brian Petterson, Garth Gillman, Jonathan Breen, Lisa Steele-MacDonald, and Daisuke Yamamura receive the DCA trophy for "Band & Orchestra Line of the Year" from *MMR's* Christian Wissmuller (center) **17.** **Hailun Pianos:** Steve Witkowski, Florence Estrin, Anthony Mantova, Basilio Strmec, Shawn Bruce, Joe DeFio, Grant Wolach, Joanna Ruiz, Robert Estrin, Cliff Gordon, Paul Rea, Eriz Zehr, and Angela Harmon with the DCA trophy for "Acoustic Piano Line of the Year"

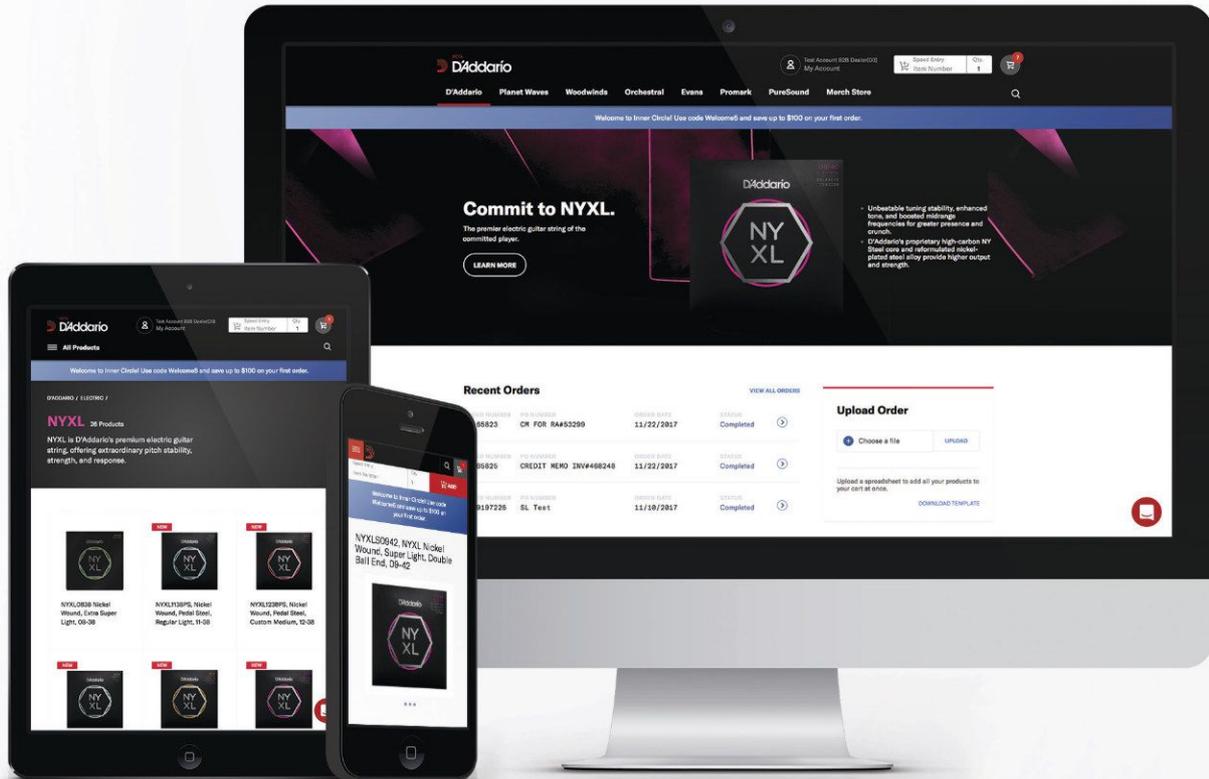


1. Ari Baron of **Bittree 2**. C.F. Martin & Co.'s Chris Martin speaks at the company's press event on Wednesday evening, prior to "Day One" of the Show. 3. Luis Valdez of **Jocavi Acoustic Panels**. 4. The man, the myth, the legend: **Electro-Harmonix**'s Mike Matthews 5. Gil Soucy of **KMC Music and U.S. Music Corp.** 6. **MXL**'s Scott Krueckeberg discusses new models at the Show 7. Traffic was brisk and feedback was positive for the newly opened North Halls at the Anaheim Convention Center, which were "home base" for most music technology-based exhibitors 8. Folks scramble to complete setting up booths on Wednesday evening 9. **Adam Hall GmbH**'s Nikke Blout 10. Ernest Wilkins and Heather Farr of **Reverb** 11. MMR's Matt King with Tom Bedell of **Breedlove Guitars** 12. **American Recorder**'s Alan Poe and Alan Adelstein 13. **Ansmann**'s David Schliep 14. **Antigua Winds** Mike Summers, Beth Sarah-Fly, Amanda Arnold, and Bobby Norwood 15. **Bittree**'s Ari Baron and Bryan Carpenter with 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary plaque. 16. **Breezy Ridge Instruments** L to R Anthony Troy, Dave Kurtz, Todd Newman, Sam and Cyndi Morrison, Karl Broderix, Melissa Rios, John Kimmel, and Mary Faith Rhoads-Lewis 17. **CrutzTools** Dan and Heather Parks 18. **Drum Workshop**'s Andrew Shreve 19. **Epilog Laser**'s Alicia Jones and Steve Cortesy 20. **Galaxy Audio**'s Chris Locke, Yule Jabara, Bacheus Jabara and Tony O'Keefe 21. **HW Products** Liz Schaefer and Jim Klingler 22. **ISP**'s Buck and Shell Waller 23. **John Packer Music**'s Matt Sherwood and Rob Hanson 24. **Kala Brand Music**'s Joy Cañero 25. **Kyser Music Product**'s Jenna Terry, Meredith Hamlin, and Max Lintner 26. **Osiamo**'s Ed Matthiak 27. **Peak Stand**'s Pamela Liu 28. **ReedGeek**'s Peggy and Mauro DiGioia 29. **Reverb**'s Ernest Wilkins & Dan Abel 30. **Riverson Guitar**'s Michael Millimore 31. **SKB**'s Will Steven and Sean Gauci commemorate the company's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 32. **The Music Link**'s Craig Reiter and Jim Laplaca 33. **ToneGear**'s David Chiappetta 34. **Zinc Platform**'s Joycie Bernstein and Pourmer Sarram Growth 35. Shun Hwa Chang of **Hollywoodwinds** 36. Lauren Mandel and Chris Walker of **JAM Industries USA** 37. Everett Porter, Tom Nicholson, Kevin Dougherty, Tom Dougherty and Tommy Dougherty of **TKL** 38. George Wolberg and Dov Manski of **PageFlip** 39. Luis Cardoso of **Sabian/Gon Bops** 40. Mark Blasko, Brett Marcus, Ben Myron, Larry Greene and Justin McGowin of **OMG Music** 41. Sebastien Favre, Adrian O'Brien, Daniel James and Mike Kurkdjian of **Prestige Guitars** 42. Rafael Atijas of **Loog Guitars** 43. Tim Henry, Rock Clouser, John Richardson, Tabor Stamper, Kevin Philbin, Andres Matallana and Gilbert Reyes of **KHS America** 44. Jody Espina and Colin Schofield of **JodyJazz** 45. Worth Weaver, Andrew Simmons and Jon Croft of **Mojotone**



**46.** Tim Pennington, Brian King and Milo LaBaron of **Rain Retail Software** **47.** Chad Smith and Sean Williamson of **Option Knob** **48.** Giorgio Rizzo, Luciano Nigro, Sonia Vallis, Tim Wallis and Hannah Marshall of **LPD Music** **49.** Iokepa, Kahiau, Kristen, Joe, Kaimana and Nainoa Souza, and Reggie Foo of **Kanile'a Ukulele** **50.** Nancy Balik, Charlene Hovey, Lee Oskar and Sri Oskar of **Lee Oskar Harmonicas** **51.** Ellie Shapiro and Rob Grad of **Vic Firth** **52.** George & Lynn Reeder of **Rovner Products** **53.** Chuck Phillips, Allen Gatchell, James Phillips of **Gatchell Violins** **54.** Warren Kus, Jordan Olinsky, Marivel Lavoy Miguel, Al Maniscalco, John Hadden, and Tim Ornato of **Buffet-Crampon** **55.** Charles Duigan and Max Clissold of **Nuvo Instrumental** **56.** Jack Kanstul of **Kanstul** **57.** Tim Elvy of **Elvy Sound Solutions** **58.** Franck Bichon and Garijo Juan Manuel of **BG Franck Bichon** **59.** Shana McClellan, Kathy Donahoe and Susan Laffoon of **AWM** **60.** Ron Van Ostenbridge and Gary Spears of **Bari Woodwinds** **61.** Tim Price, Pete La Placa and Richard Parma of **PJLA Music Sales** **62.** David Benedetto and Peter La Placa of **F.E. Olds & Sons** **63.** Kipton Blue, Bobby Torello, and William F. Ludwig III of **WFL III Drums** **64.** Dan & Terri Spriggel of **Cymbolt** **65.** Paul Chu of **Hunter Music** **66.** Nicolas Righi of **Marca Reeds** **67.** Ann Hodge, Alan Hodge of **Hodge Products, Inc.** **68.** Rocky Giglio, Dominic Massaro, Jim Green of **J.J. Babbitt** **69.** W. Michael Rust of **Wells Fargo CDF** **70.** Perry Pinto and John Fullerton of **AIM Gifts** **71.** Scott Wunschel, Robert Turner, and Alison Turner of **EMG, Inc.** **72.** Amahi Ukuleles' Autumn Lembert and Jacqueline Schear **73.** Scott Peterson of Peterson **Electro-Musical Products** **74.** Kevin White, Gary Lenaire, Tom Ostrander, Chris Demario, Katie Campo, Jason Cambra, Ryan Fitzsimmons, Amanda Thompson **75.** Tim Pfouts, Eddie Speedy, Brock Speedy, and Brian Strong of **S.I.T. Strings** **76.** Gary Spears and Ron Van Ostenbridge of **Bari Woodwinds** **77.** Didier Del Corse, Carole Boutry, and Robert Goetz of **BAM Cases** **78.** Floyd Rose's David Yockey and Matt Haramis **79.** Andy Zildjian of **Sabian** **80.** RBIMusic's Brad Kirkpatrick, Lane Davy, Rick Taylor, and Chris Pittman **81.** Dave Kurtiak, Krista Nunnally, and Aaron Zeigler of **eMedia** **82.** Jorma Winkler of **Jacy Inc.** **83.** Giles Orford of **Focusrite** **84.** Nord Electric's Staffan Lindroth **85.** Valerie Fröhlich and Roman Preschen of **Lewitt** **86.** Jonathan Lee of **Washburn Guitars** **87.** Sean Sullivan of **Shure** **88.** Ron Howard and Pete Farmer of **Heritage Guitars** **89.** Mikey Woodward and Grant Klassen of **Goodwood Audio**

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# NAMM<sup>®</sup>

## Best & Worst In Show

By Christian **Wissmuller**



Butch Walker performs at Yamaha's All-Star Concert on the Grand. Thousands gathered on Friday evening to experience the "Yamaha All-Star Concert on the Grand," the marquis music event held this week during the 2018 NAMM Show in Anaheim, California.

### Best Big-Time Musical Event

The **Yamaha All Star Concert on the Grand** featured superstars Michael McDonald, Melissa Etheridge, Lindsey Stirling, Sam Moore, Marc Broussard, Butch Walker, and Sheléa on the Yamaha Grand Plaza stage.

The combination of legendary performers and flawless execution and production would have already made this one a near-lock for one of the week's best events, but props also must be given to the ample food and drink spread on-hand. I think I'm still full of cheese...

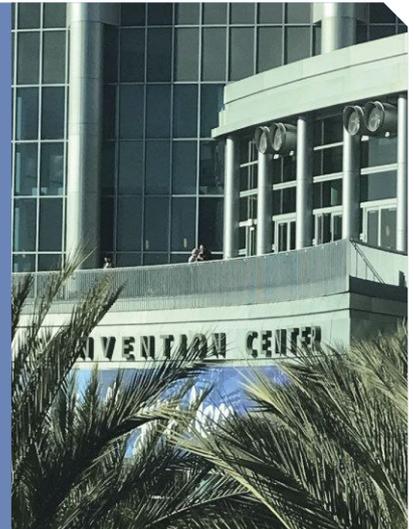
### Best Plumage

I had no fewer than three separate conversations with folks who, when considering the 2018 Winter NAMM Show, observed somewhat wistfully that there used to be more colorfully attired and coiffed individuals at the annual gathering. While this may be true (#keepNAMMweird), *MMR's* Matt King did spot and take a quick photo of this young lady who easily had **a hairdo as memorable as any** ever in Anaheim!



### Worst Harsh Reality

Oh, were folks excited to see "U2" playing atop the Convention Center on the morning of Day-two at the show (they're the little specks by the railing in this photo). Easily the worst "Oh, man – I can't believe I fell for that!" moment of the week. In fairness to tribute band, **Hollywood U2**, that they were able to fool so many industry types speaks to their talent. However, it was a rough bait-and-switch when they waited until the last song of their roof-top set to reveal that they were *not* the legendary Irish rockers...



### Best New Partnership

On January 26, the **17th annual Parnelli Awards gala** was held at the Anaheim Hilton – the first time the Awards ceremony has been part of the NAMM Show. This year's event honored Bobby "Boomer" Thrasher (pictured here), Jonathan Smeeton, and John Stadius with the Lifetime Achievement Award, Visionary Award, and Audio Innovator Award, respectively. This year's iteration of the premier awards show for the live production community was a highlight for many at the 2018 Anaheim get-together.





Brian Alli, Roland Corporation vice president of Global Key Influencers; Jun-ichi Miki, Roland Corporation CEO and representative director; award recipients Thomas Dolby and Steve Vai; Yoshi Ikegami, president of BOSS Corporation; and Paul McCabe, Roland Corporation vice president of Global Marketing

### Best Acceptance Speech

During the 2018 Roland International Press Conference, held Wednesday, January 24, 2018, on the eve of the NAMM Show in Anaheim, California, **Roland** and **BOSS** presented their third-annual Lifetime Achievement Awards to synthpop and electronic music pioneer and solo artist Thomas Dolby (Roland), and guitar virtuoso, artist, and producer Steve Vai (BOSS).

While Vai's skills are, of course, legendary and his acceptance speech was well-received, **Dolby's acceptance soon transformed into the best and funniest impromptu master-class** as he walked attendees through each step of the creation of his 1982 hit "She Blinded Me With Science" – using vintage gear from that time period that Roland had tracked down for him!



### Best Spot to Chill

With tons of vintage (and new!) gear on display, lots of choice freebies (clip-on tuners!), and a laid back, comfortable vibe, **Reverb's space was probably the most relaxing booth to hang out in at the 2018 NAMM Show.**

### Worst Depth Perception

This one would have to go to yours truly. It really is important to turn the lights on before you go to plug the iron into the baseboard socket. Not doing so can lead to, oh I don't know, **banging your face on the corner of the dark wood reading table** directly above said outlet...



### Best Wheels

Lots of attendees to the NAMM Show go to great lengths to refine their attire and overall appearance in order to impress and/or leave a lasting impression. While some of the cars outside the hotels were pretty luxurious, **the best rims at the show** go to these tricked out wheels on a Segway.



### Best Display of Sheer Talent

High-school me was delighted when **Eric Johnson played with every bit of velocity and impeccable tone as back in the day** as he put his new **Fender** signature model through its paces at a private concert.

### Best Elevator Companion of the Week

It never gets old running into musical heroes, no matter how many times you've crossed paths before. Bumping into Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen in the elevator on Thursday morning was a fun way to start the Show.



# Top-Tier TIMEKEEPERS



## High-end Drum Kits Sales in 2018

By Christian **Wissmuller**

**M**MR checks in with representatives from five major players in the design and production of high-end drum sets to learn about trends in that market segment, technical innovations, and the strategies of successful dealers who do particularly well with these instruments...

### How are sales of truly upper-tier, high-end drum sets doing for your brand, compared to this same time in 2017?

**Scott Donnell:** This a relative question at DW. We're fortunate to enjoy market share at this price point, and we have a breadth of product produced at our California facility that would be considered high-end. Drummers can choose from our high-quality Performance Series production sets at an exceptional value, or go custom and sky's the limit! I think we have a very unique value proposition as compared to our boutique competitors. With so many shell configurations now available, customers can sonically customize their sets, as well visually personalize them. They're willing to save up to build their "dream kit." Our independent dealer network has broken records this year and they know how to service the "dream kit" customer.

**Terry Bisette:** They are stable and sales are a constant. Not our top selling series in units sold due to the price point, but sales are quite steady and growing.

**Stephen Fisher:** Yamaha sales have improved with our high-end sets compared to last year, mainly due to the launch of the new Recording Custom sets in 2016 and, most recently, our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary sets in 2017. Both have been selling well. Our recent Yamaha Drums 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event in Los Angeles, where customers had the opportunity to try all of our series of sets, brought attention to our other high-end series of drum sets like the Absolute Hybrid Maple, Live Custom, and PHX lines.

**Kevin D. Packard:** We are having an exceptional year for high-end sales. Pearl offers more custom options for high-end

drums than any other drum company with our Masterworks series. We can also deliver hand-customized Reference, Reference Pure, and Masters Maple Reserve series drums with the strongest delivery promise in our industry (14 business days, to be precise) through our Music City Custom Shop. These may sound like two very bold statements, but the significant investments we have made in expanding our USA workshop facilities and making our high-end programs better suited to the boutique dealer have set the stage for some really stunning instruments. We have also increased our outreach to the drumming consumer and made them part of the process, and more players are taking notice as a result. Increasing options and decreasing the wait time have given us a significant increase in these kits and components over the previous year.

**Gary Ingraf:** We have seen a considerable sales increase in high end drum sets this year.

### Of these elite drum kits, what model is your "hottest" seller at the moment?

**TB:** Legacy series. Legacy series drums are offered in Maple or Mahogany version shells. They are faithful recreations of the design and sound characteristics we offered in the '50s, '60s and '70s. They are the same type of shells played historically by Joe Morello, Max Roach, Ginger Baker, Mitch Mitchell, John Bonham, Ian Paice, and Ringo, to name just a few.

**GI:** Our SQ2 Custom kits and snares have proven to be our hottest seller over the past year.

**KDP:** With so many options to choose from in our Masterworks series, we tried to narrow the scope a little by introducing five different performance-specific drum shell formulas in 2017 called the Sonic Select Shell Recipes. The Studio Formula, comprised of heavier hardware elements on a thin Maple/Gum shell, has been particularly popular with players and dealers. The kits have a classic Pearl look and the sound they produce is punchy, immediate, and powerful. This seems to be the most popular of the Sonic Select Recipes, so we have actually been designing kits in this formula (and others) for stock and getting them out through our Concierge Drum Dealers so players can experience them first-hand.

**SF:** The Recording Custom sets have done very well. Due in part to the popularity and name, so has the Recording Custom line of snare drums.

**SD:** Whether it's our flagship Collector's Series, or our more esoteric Jazz, Classics, or other series, they're all built-to-order. Drummers that save for a custom set often take it to the limit with an exotic wood finish. They're steady sellers, and 2017 was no exception. Again, this is something that is synonymous with DW, and we invest in offering our customers a level of customization that is second to none.

### What factors, specifically, make these sets worth the price? What are end-users looking for?

**KDP:** A high-end drum set is like a luxury timepiece – it's a personal investment in precision, performance, and prestige. As such, it is also a lifetime investment and not one you really want to take chances on or make exceptions for. The player that makes an investment in a Masterworks or Reference drum kit knows the sound they want and the look they want to be represented by. With this in mind we have made the selection process something very personal, and we work with our Concierge Dealers to interact with the drummer so they know these



Scott Donnell, Vice President of Marketing, Drum Workshop, Inc.



Terry Bisette, Director, Percussion Sales, Ludwig Drums



Steven Fisher, Manager Acoustic and DTX Electronic Drum Division, Yamaha Corporation of America



Kevin D. Packard, Combo Marketing Manager, Pearl Corporation



Gary Ingrafia, Combo Drum Business Unit Manager, KHS America/Sonor Drums

drums were made specifically for them. The instruments we select are not only a reflection of our playing, but our personalities as well, so making sure the player's voice is heard in the design of these drums is paramount.

**SF:** The Recording Custom is an iconic, well-established name as a premium drum set with unique features. With the new Recording Custom, the set retains the essence of the famous Recording Custom "sound," but with an improved tone we developed that works well not

only with today's music aesthetically, but also with how music is recorded today. When you collaborate for three years with Steve Gadd, and then combine that with additional evaluations by a host of our top artists, you create a drum set that is desired by just about every drummer.

**GI:** The SQ2 line of drums is a true custom drum-building experience, allowing the customer to choose between four shell materials, four shell thicknesses, hardware finishes, and thousands of

outer and inner shell finish combinations. The SQ2 line represents the best the SONOR has to offer. End users are looking for a great sounding high quality drum kit. They are also looking for the ability to customize their purchase. End users will not hesitate to pay a premium for this experience.

**SD:** Drummers want their set-up to be their fingerprint. It's a symbol of their creativity and musical expression. They like to choose sizes and finishes that are a reflection of their personality. To that

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Yamaha's Recording Custom Series



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end, having five drum hardware color options is a plus. They can mix and match with a multitude of finishes to create a truly unique visual statement. We've also continued to upgrade features such as our tuning systems, throw-offs, counter-hoops, head selections, et cetera, so that the drums remain state-of-the-art. Innovation is a huge part of the DW brand image.

**TB:** Simply put? The sound! For many years people have been looking for the "classic drum sound" that defined jazz and many facets of rock and roll. For a lot of folks, this was the sound they grew up with, the sound that defined their formative years as a player. A few years ago Ludwig decided to recreate the thin three-ply shells that delivered the sound and feel consumers were pining for. Prior to this, the only way to get those sounds was to buy a used vintage kit. But as we all know, many of those older kits are no longer in the best of shape. Many have been abused or stored improperly and age has taken its toll. Drummers back in the day liked to take the bottom heads off, so the result now is a vintage kit with chipped up bearing edges that aren't suitable for tuning. We spend a lot of time and effort in the recreation process, using similar, period-correct raw materials to produce the sound. This includes the installation of maple reinforcement rings inside the three-ply shells. This is a key ingredient in relation to how the shells vibrate and also provides a "sweet spot" for the head placement while tuning. The shell design also provides a "feel factor" that you don't typically find on many modern day drums. The stick-to-head rebound is softer to the touch, and some folks say the sound produced is "warm and buttery."

**What strategies have you observed to be successful for dealers who do especially well in terms of marketing and selling high-end drums?**

**TB:** I find those dealers typically have a very well trained and educated staff. They can talk the talk and they know their stuff. Many of them offer tutorial videos that demonstrate the sound of the drums in a variety of tunings and applications. And their business flourishes as a result.

**GI:** Dealers who provide the most useful end user content seem to be having the most success selling high-end drums. Product videos that include detailed information as well as sound samples and performance. We have also seen that dealers who stock high-end drums are outselling those who do not at least 4 to 1.

**SD:** The dealers that understand their audience always have the edge. They know what we do and can communicate that to their customers. We're also proactive about keeping them educated on our latest upgrades and innovations. In fact, we recently launched the "Book of Plies" that outlines our shell making process in detail: [www.dwdrums.com/digitalliterature/bookofplies](http://www.dwdrums.com/digitalliterature/bookofplies)

We also work hard to train our internal sales staff so they can pass on the information whenever possible. These days, we're adding new options at a rapid rate, so it's a challenge to get the information out to the public, but it's an exciting time for consumers, to be sure!

**KDP:** Every drummer can relate to looking at their "dream drum kit" in a catalog or on the web and imagining what it must be like to play it. It's one thing to watch a video of someone playing a kit or hear one in a concert setting, but it's entirely different to see it in person to see if the hype and "marketing speak" is really worth the price tag. This is why we work with the stores in our Concierge Dealer Program to not only assure that there is a kit on their sales floor that consumers can experience, but that there is HD video and audio content backing it up on the web. We are consistently adding new content produced at our state-of-the-art in-house studio facility, to make sure dealers have the tools to help drummers make an informed decision in crafting the kit of their dreams.

**SF:** We see success with high-end drum sets among dealers who have an exceptional buying experience online and/or in-store, and most importantly those who have skilled salespeople. Being knowledgeable is necessary for sales staff, but it's not enough; they must also be able to develop relationships with customers that can add value during and after the sale.

**To what extent does affiliation with a big name drummer or band impact sales of these big-ticket sets?**

**SD:** This is an interesting one. Artists can be a huge asset and, at the same time, they can be polarizing. This has never been more true than in the age of social media. We witness consumer reaction in real time and oftentimes, we can be surprised at what we see. That said, we have some very high-profile endorsers and they certainly move the needle in terms of credibility and public perception.

**SF:** We find that with high-end drums, it does make an impact. If the customer sees and hears well-respected or favor-



Drum Workshop's Private Reserve Collection



Ludwig's Legacy in Mod Orange



Sonor's SQ2 Series

ite drummers playing a certain brand or series, that will count among the first considerations in a customer's journey to a purchase.

**KDP:** There are definitely influencers in the playing field and we are very proud of our growing roster of Pearl drummers. However, I feel the definition of today's "big name" drummer is changing rapidly thanks to YouTube and other online performance platforms. The right drummer playing the right gear can go a long way in influencing a drummer, even if they aren't playing to sold-out arena crowds every night. However, there are certain players that just seem to resonate with drummers of all ages, and the drums they play definitely have an impact on the people who are paying attention.

**TB:** In today's world, I think it helps. Product credibility is often dictated by high profile players' visibility and accessibility. You can't always find top tier offerings in many brick and mortar stores, so the next best thing is to see a touring drummer and decide for yourself. Of course, you need to also consider the amplification involved, et cetera.

**GI:** Well known artists have a considerable positive influence over high-end drum sales. Through these artists, end users can find a true, real-world representation of these drums through live performances, studio recordings, and instructional videos that most drummers are producing these days.

**Do you have any new or upcoming product introductions in this category that you'd like to share with our readers?**

**KDP:** The first five Sonic Select Shell Recipe kits (one of each in the Stadium, Studio, Urban, Heritage, and Modern Dry Recipes) of this year will be featured in our 2018 catalog and were at the Winter NAMM show in January. Each one has a luxurious look and feel, with exotic elements that make them truly special. Each will tie-in with a video series featuring the drums and drummers of these genre-specific kits, and be available through one of our Concierge Dealers at a special price.

**GI:** Sonor has just introduced our new kit configurator, providing a fully immersive 3D drum building experience that is revolutionary in the MI world. End users and dealers can build their custom drum set and see their choices in real time using photo realistic 3D modeling. We have seen a considerable spike in sales due to this interactive interface.

**TB:** Not at this point in time. But watch out for 2019, the 110th Anniversary of Ludwig!

**SD:** For 2018, we'll be launching some kits that are very much in keeping with the DW expectation: a new, Limited Edition Pure wood kit, some new Collector's Series hybrid shells, and an offshoot of DW Classics, our vintage-inspired line. We also have something top-secret scheduled for mid-year. Have to keep you guessing on that one.

**SF:** We will have several new exciting products this next year that will expand the Yamaha drum series lineup.

**Expectations for high-end drum set sales in 2018?**

**SF:** Sales of high-end products tend to show some volatility as the economy evolves. Provided the economy stays strong, we expect to keep growing in our high-end series of drum sets.

**KDP:** We want to continue with these programs aggressively in the Masterworks and Music City Custom lines to maintain the momentum we saw through 2016 and 2017. Additionally, innovations developed for our boutique series kits, and many of the features that make them unique, have found their way into our more player-accessible drum lines. For instance, some of the edge and wood combinations in the Sonic Select recipes have been integrated into our new Session Studio Select drums. These are drums made with marquee materials at a value-centered price, and top Pearl Artists are taking them on tour regardless of the cost because they look and sound amazing. Sales for Pearl's high-end segment can no longer be traced merely in how many Masterworks kits we sell, it's also in the Masters, Session, and even Export kits we sell that have many of the same components.

**SD:** We're bullish. Not that high-end drums are growing in any significant way, but we're confident that we deliver a quality instrument, as the economy seems to be headed in the right direction, at least in the immediate future.

**TB:** Given the growth curve we've seen for the last few years, I think it's safe to say it will continue to grow as consumers discover what we have to offer nowadays.

**GI:** We feel that high-end drum sales will continue to grow in 2018 as end users are continuing to seek premium products for their needs. Even though the entry and intermediate market leads in units sold, the high-end market is getting more traction as drummers seek to play and be seen playing unique and premium instruments. These instruments are crucial for success as profit centers and brand equity builders. 

# The Short End of the Stick?

In an Increasingly Crowded Field, Artist Signature Series Drumsticks are Less Impactful In Today's Market for MI Dealers

By Christian Wissmuller

**W**hile some of our MI retailer surveys can provide a somewhat mixed-bag in terms of results, this month's poll points to a generally clear direction for the Artist Series drumstick market segment: Down.

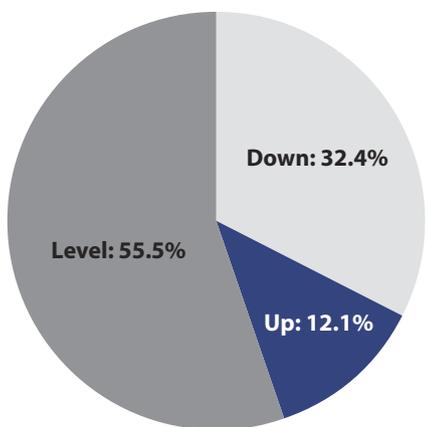
Some of the participants in this survey – sent out to over 300 dealers – observe that Signature Series sticks were a bigger deal in years past, while many also note that mainly only younger players are impacted by a stick's association with a specific, "big name" player. There do seem to be certain artist sticks that *do* make an impact, either due to the extremely high status of the drummer in question, the unique features of the drumstick design, or both – but this would appear to be well in the minority, overall.

Many more – easily the vast majority – point to the fact that the volume of different artist sticks out there is so massive that it's

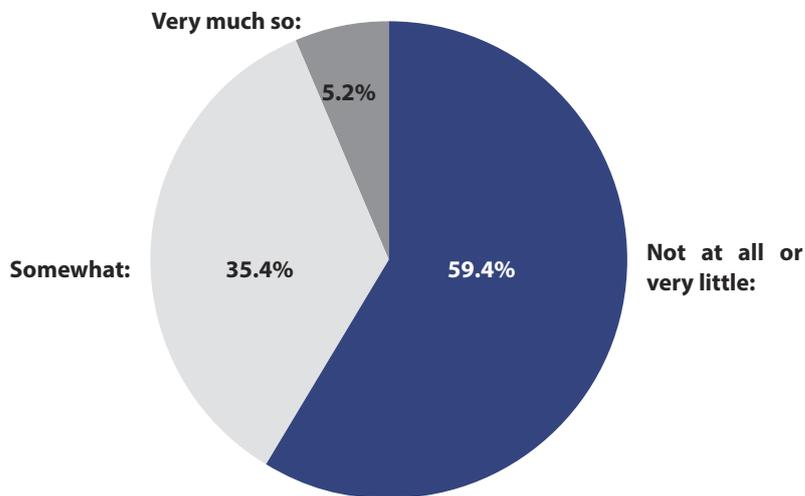
difficult to navigate, market, and sell the product. "Suppliers are providing many, many choices. It is confusing as a non-drummer storeowner. I generally ignore them," says Dean Tower of Dean's Strings and Music Supplies (Whitehouse, Yukon, Canada). Richard "Gus" Guastamachio (Dynamic Percussion, East Hartford, Connecticut) agrees: "[There are] too many artists sticks, across the board. [The] majority of customers just want the basic stick models." Or, as Anthony Mantova of Eureka, California's Mantova's Two Street Music puts it, "Seems like every drummer and their donkey has their name on some company's sticks!"

It seems likely that in the quest to attach their brands to well-known artists, stick suppliers have over-saturated the market – maybe not from a general PR standpoint, but certainly in terms of units moved.

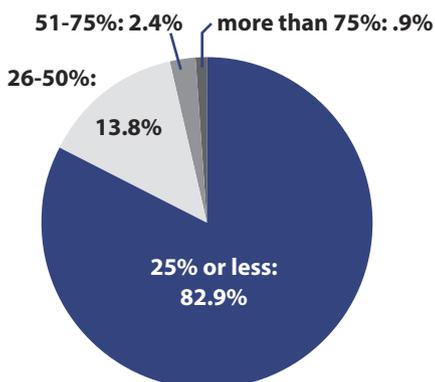
**Compared to this time last year, sales of artist/signature drumsticks for your store are...**



**The attachment to or endorsement of a specific musician affects the purchasing choices of drumstick customers at your store...**



**Artist drumsticks account for what percentage of overall drumstick sales for your business?**



*"It really depends on the customer. Some will lean towards the signature stick of their favorite artist, but a lot of people just like certain features of particular artist sticks."*

Adam York  
The Music Store  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

*"Mostly, marching stick sales are impacted more than typical drumsticks."*

Dave St. John  
Gard's Music  
Glendora, California

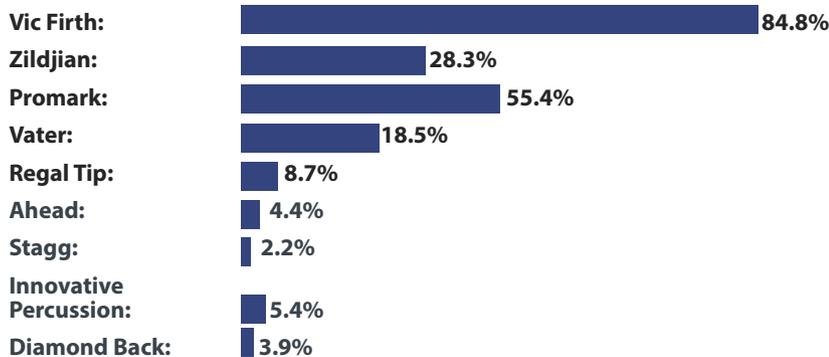
*"More than the signature of an artist, the uniqueness that is used in some Signature sticks make them attractive. i.e.: Zildjian's Josh Dun [model] with the bright red finish and Trilok Gurtu model with the unique grip."*

Dave Heath  
Ted Brown Music Co.  
Tacoma, Washington

*"I think 10-30 years ago a Signature stick had significant impact, as many drummers were looking to emulate [a given player's] sound and feel. Today, it matters less whose name is on it. If it feels right and does the job, it doesn't matter if it's Signature or not."*

Greg Allen  
Long Island Drum Center of Nyack  
Nyack, New York

**What brands of artist/signature drumsticks are generating the most profit for your store?**



*"Profit? Bwahaha... Really? 'Profit' has become a dirty word, it seems. We should be making triple money on drumsticks... among other items."*

Tim Bascom  
Morgan Music  
Lebanon, Missouri

**Have you been noticing any significant trends when it comes to artist series drumsticks, either on the supplier or consumer side of the equation?**

*"The Billy Cobham sticks are hot this year with the schools."*

Paul Lewis  
Lewis Music Store  
Kissimmee, Florida

*"Most long-term drummers realize that 'signature' sticks are simply variations on basic models, that they can get cheaper without the endorsement price!"*

Frank Karnes  
Lynchburg Music Center  
Lynchburg, Virginia

*"No, it is basically teacher driven."*

Colin Campbell  
Riverton Music  
Sandy, Utah

*"Colored sticks are moving well."*

Terry Nirva  
Leithold Music  
La Crosse, Wisconsin

*"Artist sticks carry less and less weight."*

Bob Goodden  
Bell Music  
Vernon, Wisconsin

*"Not just in sticks, but in strings and other products as well: putting the name of a mostly obscure player on a package doesn't make them more desirable to the average MI shopper. Major names (Neal Peart or Steve Gadd, for example) might very well prompt sales out of curiosity."*

Allen McBroom  
Backstage Music  
Starkville, Mississippi

*"Our business is mainly oriented to the school band and orchestra markets. The marching artist sticks have some impact, but otherwise this doesn't affect us much."*

Jeff Young  
Marshall Music Company  
Lansing, Michigan

*"Most customers have a model they normally play. Younger players do gravitate toward the sticks of their favorite drummer."*

Glenn Weber  
Glenn Weber Drum Shop  
West Orange, New Jersey

*"Our customers will occasionally try a different pair because of the artist endorsement, but they generally tend to 'stick' with the ones they're used to."*

C.E. Surine  
The Drum Shop Tulsa  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

*"You need to sell a ton of stock really quickly to make anything, and as you can't mark things up at all at this point, good luck with that. Should they sit too long, they may turn into twisted junk and end up in the blowout bin and then you make nothing. It may be just a trend in music retail. Move it fast, get in, and get out."*

Rusty Olson  
Rockhaus  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

*"Less interest, both sides of the fence."*

D. Brooke  
Nilam Music  
Hereford, Herefordshire  
England

*"Yeah the new Diamond back sticks are carved for better grip. And Promark's Fire Sticks are nearly unbreakable and they look cool, too."*

Jeremy Barnett  
The Vox Box  
Marshall, Missouri

*"Artist products are very streaky. A particular artist may be a customer's favorite artist this month, but not the next."*

Dan Patterson  
Roger's Music  
Fort Payne, Alabama

*"Drummers buy sticks mostly by the way a stick feels, and how it works for them. If it happens to be an artist series stick then the buyer has more reinforcement in their decision. That being the case, the artists name brings an initial curiosity and some clout, but if the stick does not feel good to the user it doesn't matter. The upside to an artist stick is that they usually have a unique trait about them, and that can be a good conversation-starter and sales tool."*

Menzie Pittman  
Contemporary Music Center  
Haymarket, Virginia

*"Suppliers are providing many, many choices. It is confusing as a non-drummer store-owner. I generally ignore them."*

Dean Tower  
Dean's Strings and Music Supplies  
Whitehouse, Yukon  
Canada

*"Not really. Drummers, like other musicians, will experiment, but seem to come back to their favorites."*

Cary Nasatir  
Nasatir School of Percussion  
Castro Valley, California

*"[There are] too many artists sticks, across the board. [The] majority of customers just want the basic stick models. Teenagers seem to be the only ones who 'follow and crave' artist-endorsed, or signature sticks."*

Richard "Gus" Guastamachio  
Dynamic Percussion

*"I think 10-30 years ago a Signature stick had significant impact, as many drummers were looking to emulate [a given player's] sound and feel. Today, it matters less whose name is on it. If it feels right and does the job, it doesn't matter if it's Signature or not."*

Greg Allen  
Long Island Drum Center of Nyack  
Nyack, New York

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# Warb-A-Palooza!



## Warburton Music Celebrates Factory Grand Opening and 44 Years in Business

By Denyce **Neilson**

On February 22 and 23, there's going to be a party in Titusville, Florida: Warb-a-palooza! The two-day event will celebrate the grand opening of Warburton Music's new factory in Titusville. The events will kick off with a concert at the Astronaut High School Theater and will feature music of all styles, including the high school jazz ensemble and performances by Warburton artists from all over the country. The following day, Warburton's 12-person staff will host an open house and offer tours of the new factory. In this 12,000-square-foot space, the company will continue to manufacture their complete line of mouthpieces for trumpet, flugelhorn, piccolo trumpet, cornet, French horn, trombone, tuba, accessories for brass and woodwind, and their own line of trumpets, coronets, and flugelhorns.

Warburton Music will also be celebrating their 44<sup>th</sup> year in business. In 1974, in Toronto, Canada, 24-year-old Terry Warburton opened a music store and began manufacturing his own mouthpieces. Then in 1980, Terry moved his business to Florida. Since then, Warburton Music has continued to grow, and along with his staff, the very hands-on founder has continued to develop and design Warburton products. As Product and Education coordinator Kim Aubuchon states, "Everything we make is touched by Terry at some point in the production process. He assembles



Terry Warburton hard at work soldering

and makes every one of our instruments. He makes every trumpet, flugelhorn, and cornet. He is the only one who builds the instruments, and he likes it that way."

Terry's tenacity may be what has given Warburton Music its longevity. In 2005, the company headquarters and manufacturing center were housed in a building at-

tached to Warburton home. In June of that year, the Warburton factory, along with Terry's home, burned to the ground. Nearly everything was lost – machines, tools, and inventory. The cause of the fire was never clearly determined, but most likely came from an electrical source, possibly an air conditioner in the rear of the factory. To make matters worse, being in a rural area of Florida, there were no water hydrants on site, and the fire department had to call for a water truck. This loss of time certainly hindered the fire fighters' ability to battle the combustion and allowed for the blaze to spread and incinerate the entire structure and all of its contents. Warburton wanted to run back in and grab some possessions, but most likely for the best, he was not allowed to. One of the only things spared from flames was their stamping machine, used to stamp the Warburton name and instrument model on most of their products. With the loss of his home, factory, and inventory, Terry picked up and started over. He relocated to Oviedo, Florida and began to rebuild Warburton Music, his factory, and inventory.

Following the 2005 fire, Warburton Music held a fundraiser concert to help the business get back on its feet. It took years to rebuild, but finally, as Kim Aubuchon tells it, "About six or seven years ago, the business started expanding. Things were picking up, and the business real-

“Everything we make is touched by Terry at some point in the production process. He assembles and makes every one of our instruments. He makes every trumpet, flugelhorn, and coronet. He is the only one who builds the instruments, and he likes it that way.” - Kim Aubuchon, Product and Education Coordinator

ly started to recover from the fire. Since then, we’ve moved the locations several times. Our last space, which we were leasing, was 8,000 square feet. Around that time, business was continuing to pick up. Our lease was running out, and we were outgrowing the space, so we started searching for new locations. We finally found the new building. It’s on the same road, about two to three miles away from the previous location.”

Warburton Music has played a location hopscotch of sorts, which makes the grand opening of their new factory even more special. Unlike previous locations, Warburton Music is no longer a renter – they were able to purchase the property and now, for the first time since 2005, have a place to call home. Additionally, the new building sits on three acres of land, allowing for expansion in the future. They’ve already revamped the front area of the building for a showroom. Aubuchon notes, “We’ve been getting the office spaces arranged, along with the main factory building and all of the machines situated. A thousand pounds of machinery isn’t easy to move around. Once you set it down, if you want to move it, you can’t just scoot it over a bit. It’s been very exciting – a lot of work, but very exciting. It’s been so neat to walk into an empty building and make it what you want it to be and look like. In our previous location, we started with an empty building, but it wasn’t ours. We couldn’t make a lot of permanent changes like we can now.” The move was completed and the doors were opened on January 1, 2018.

Things seem to be looking up, and speaking of the industry in general, Kim says, “There have been changes in the industry. There were the top companies based in Indiana and Ohio – The Bach Corporation, of course, and then Yamaha came in and became a major player, Schilke in Chicago, all of the big manufacturers. Over the years, we’ve seen smaller, more one-on-one manufacturers pop up, at least in the trumpet world. Things have become more and more diversified. It used

to be that everyone wanted to play a Bach or a Schilke, et cetera, but now you see players who are much more willing to try something new and go with smaller, more localized manufacturer like Warburton because they like what we’re doing. It’s about the product and the sense of family within the company.” They may manufacture locally, in a single location, but Warburton products and dealers can be found in just about all 50 states and locations all over the world. The company also offers products through their online store, warburtonstore.com, and eBay.

Aubuchon received a bachelor’s degree in music, with a minor in jazz, at the University of Missouri–St. Louis. She plays and has studied the trumpet for over 20 years and still performs in the St. Louis area. She’s been with Warburton for three years now, but says that most of the employees are long-time veterans, “In the early days it was just Terry and Ken, but then things started to grow and that changed.” The Titmus who she refers to is Ken Titmus, Warburton’s vice president, who has been with the company for over 30 years. Titmus, a trumpet player himself, is the inventor of the P.E.T.E., Personal Embouchure Training Exerciser, a tool to exercise and help develop strength in the lips, facial muscles, and tongue, needed to play a wind instrument. Ken also developed a backbore that bears his initials, KT. Kim and Ken are not the only musicians on staff at the Warburton factory – all are. The relatively small staff includes some very seasoned players.

The fundraiser that followed the 2005 fire helped Warburton Music get back on its feet, and the grand opening concert is, in some way, a thank you. “It’s the other way around this time,” Aubuchon says, “The grand opening celebration is also a way to show everyone our appreciation, how we’ve grown over the last 12 years and finally made it back.” Warburton Music has arrived, again! They’re enjoying their new digs and are looking forward to celebrating this milestone – with a Warb-a-palooza of a party. 🎉

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# Progressive Music: Over 1.2 Million Served

**P**rogressive Music, a 25-year and million-plus lessons operation, started in a broom closet. Actually, to be more accurate, the North Carolina lesson and retail center started out of the trunk of a car in 1992, and then graduated to a broom closet. It's all about those baby steps.

Somehow, founder Bill Cuthrell, now 43 years old, isn't fatigued by any of it.

"I've talked to other people in the industry who are in their 50s and late 50s, and they're just tired, and I don't know what it is, but I don't feel like I've been in business that long," Cuthrell says. "Maybe it's because I've always enjoyed playing music - I was a touring drummer, and owning this business, so I've had to do both sides of it. I don't know, it's funny. I looked at it and went, 'Man, where did those 25 years go?'"

But when he reflects on all the different locations he's held over the years - one location for 8 years, another location for 9, and then some - then yes, he can see how the years have added up.

Now sporting two North Carolina locations - one in Wake Forest and the other in Raleigh, both very much stationary - Progressive Music just celebrated its quarter of a century anniversary with Rocktober Fest last October, roping in guests with live music and food trucks that would ultimately run out of chow from the sheer quantity of guests in attendance.

"Because we had multiple bands play throughout the day, we probably had 600 people or more show up," he says. "This event wasn't about trying to sign up a hundred new music students or a big sales event. This was to say thank you for your business and supporting us for all these years. This was really a customer appreciation event that we want to do every year now."

But once the festival folded at the end of the day, the chunk of time that Progressive Music has been up and running remains a miracle mile. For all the cultural and technological changes in a "regular" 25-year span, 1992 to 2017 saw a particularly large boom of with the internet age. Gone are the days of scribbling receipts with carbon copies, and even crunching numbers on a desktop computer; the age of the iPads and mobile, wireless devices reign supreme.

"It's just crazy. I can definitely tell you that the landscape has fully changed," Cuthrell explains. Videos games and YouTube tutorials now push sales, as opposed to more in-real-life sources of inspiration. The desire to play remains, of course, but the inspirational sparks are flying from different sources these days.

"There are no Eddie Van Halens, there are no guitar gods that are moving guitars - there's great guitar players, but that's not what in the mainstream right now," he adds. "What's in the mainstream is 'The Voice' and 'American Idol.' So that landscape has just



## Celebrating 25 Years of North Carolina's Progressive Music

By Victoria Wasylak

changed so dramatically in 25 years. I've seen it go from Slash and Guns 'n' Roses, and I watched it sequence into 'Guitar Hero' and 'Rock Band' - that drove a lot of sales, and drove a ton of people in. Gosh, we would just have a ton of people come in the shop, and we'd ask 'what got you interested in playing?' 'Oh, I'm pretty good at Rock Band.'"

But with the flash-in-the-pan technological fads, even Guitar Hero and Rock Band, both extraordinarily popular less than ten years ago, have moved out of the periphery, and online tutorials - for makeup, DIY projects, and music lessons - are the new go-to for learning across the board.

"It went from a real, live person who was a great guitar player, who really should be driving people in to play a guitar, to a video game, and what draws

them in the door [now] is YouTube," Cuthrell says. "I hear this all the time - I heard it yesterday. 'I've been thinking about taking lessons and I tried to teach myself on YouTube, but I just really hit a wall and I don't understand it.' I tell them 'Youtube's great - as long as you understand the fundamentals first.' I just don't think you're getting that on video lessons. Videos lessons are fantastic, but I think they're great as a supplemental thing with real lessons."

"It's like witnessing the second industrial revolution, but it is a technological evolution. I've been fortunate enough - and maybe unfortunate enough in some ways - to witness this technological revolution that we've been through," he adds. "It's like, man, am I seeing the slow extinction of the dinosaurs, or am I seeing the next generation? It's an interesting time. It's hard to pinpoint. I think virtual reality is really going to play a bigger part. We're going to see a whole new ball game with video learning, and I think we're rapidly heading towards that."

Instructions aren't the only changing facets of the industry - with the advent of autotune and drum machines, tech has replaced some forms of elbow grease in music.

"There's not been one thing in my entire business that has not been touched by technology - some in good ways, and some in bad ways," he adds.

But outside the world of video streaming services, and game consoles, Progressive Music has taken advantage of the instructional video trend to help students get lessons when life has other plans. Through private online portals, students can access videos of their instructors if they have to miss a lesson for whatever reason, therefore replacing the need to schedule and makeup sessions.

"Makeup lessons were the bane of my existence. How do you do them all?" Cuthrell says. "You've a kid out because he's got a doctor's appointment, or he's sick, or there's a death in the family,

or it's a holiday, and then next thing you know, you're not in the business of doing lessons, you're in the business of doing makeup lessons. We were just trying to find the most flexible solution. It's all got to be tailored to that individual student."

While Cuthrell himself hasn't taught any lessons since about 2001, the portal system has been revolutionary for the other 40 teachers on his staff.

"I think for the most part, the technology has really allowed us to be flexible," he says.

And if anyone knows the importance of a steady regimen of lessons, it's Cuthrell, who tells his own story to government representatives at the NAMM Fly-In.

Before the broom closet, before the on-the-road drum lessons, Billy Cuthrell was a "ninth grade flunk-out" repeating his freshman year of high school after his futile first attempt. Goofing off in the hallway, hair down to his waist, decked in Vans, and "probably high," one day Cuthrell met school band director Miles Huggins.

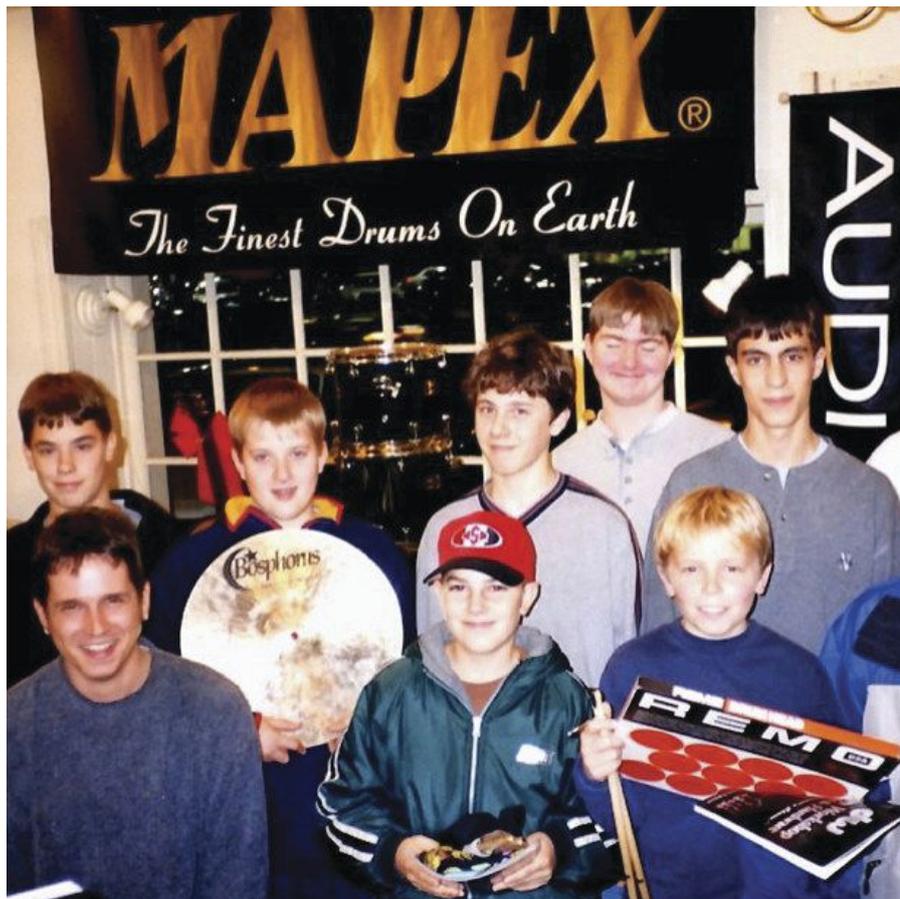
"You're always in this hallway. What is going on, man?" Huggins asked Cuthrell. The conversation ended with an invitation to join him after school with the school band – one he would initially blow off, but ultimately accept when he missed his ride and went looking for a pal to take him home.

"I tried a little guitar, I sucked at that, I tried a little bass, I was terrible at that, but I knew drums were my thing. I just got this feeling," he says. From there, Cuthrell would go on to complete high school on time, despite having to repeat a year, by staying late every day to make up on coursework.

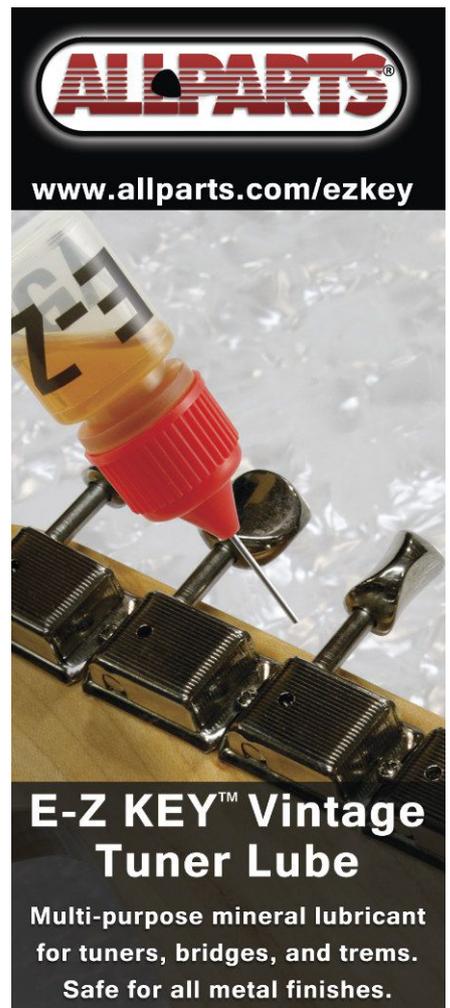
"I credit Miles and that band program for getting me back on track and giving me something to focus on," he says. "Music is push-ups for the brain."

Better yet, he had a booming career in music by the time he was college-age. When Cuthrell was about to finish high school, he had landed himself in the top 5 on college charts and was touring the country – more than most minors can say, let alone people who had to repeat a year of high school. But the young musical success was short-lived - with that band in particular, at least – and at 18, Cuthrell was faced with the need to find some new job prospects.

"As we got out [of school,] the band kind of imploded. I thought "I need to find a way to make some cash here, because my band is falling apart."



Progressive Music, circa 1995, with a group of students after a drum clinic. Billy Cuthrell is to the far left of the bottom row.



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Cuthrell at NAMM in 2015

And so Cuthrell turned to what he himself had learned just a few years ago and founded his own business, named Progressive Beat, a door-to-door drum lesson service he operated out of his car at 18 years old. The original flyer from the October of 1992 still remains in Cuthrell's collection of relics.

The mobile business model Cuthrell has established quickly lost its luster as schlepping from house to house and constantly unloading drum kits became a burden.

"It just dawned on me one day as I was sitting in traffic – I was like 'Man, this is

ridiculous,'" he explains. "In the time it's going to take me to drive to this next student's house, and get in there and get all that crap loaded into his house, set top and do this lesson, I could have taught two more lessons if I was stationary and they came to me."

Upon this revelation, Cuthrell located a local music business and rented a literal broom closet ("This thing wasn't even 10' by 10', man!" he says of the space), fashioning a custom drum kit to fit inside the area so that he and a student could still comfortably practice together. Without the need to relocate for students, busi-

ness picked as he had expected, and when a space next door to his beloved broom closet opened up, he rented it.

Since then, Progressive Music has held a number of locations in North Carolina, and tweaked its name to Progressive Percussion upon introducing a retail aspect, and again to Progressive Music. The two current locations.

"I think two is the right recipe for us," Cuthrell says, explaining his admiration for stores with tens, even scores, of locations.

But Progressive Music doesn't need that kind of numbers to rack up statistics and achievements in other ways. In addition to the school's mind-boggling amount of lessons over the years, Progressive Music is also responsible for the first rock-school-format summer program in the country in 1996 (not counting Skip's Music's Stairway to Stardom program, Cuthrell notes). Technically, Cuthrell taught the "School of Rock" far before Jack Black did in the flick of the same name in 2003.

"We've done well over a million private lessons - from my calculations, we've surpassed 1.2 million," he laughs. "We used to joke - we need the McDonalds sign."

"When I started the business I wasn't thinking long term, I was just trying to survive and make it through the second year," Cuthrell says as he reflects on the anniversary of Progressive Music. "Now I look back and realize I have five teachers that have been with me for over 17 years, and I think that says a lot. The old saying is true, find something you love to do and you'll never work a day in your life. My staff and I still love the industry and our jobs just as much today as we did in the beginning." 

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# Experiencing the Perfect Sales Presentation

By Menzie **Pittman**

**I**t finally happened. I actually met someone who has the exact formula needed for making any customer trust that the sales person has the customer's best interest in mind. Enter Katie Campo, our new Fishman rep. Our meeting was set for Saturday at the NAMM show, and this was the first time we had personally met.

## You Win the Sale by Showing the Customer You are Invested Specifically in Them

Right out of the gate, from our first email exchange, Katie was fast, articulate, and on top of both her product information as well as her professionalism. While I have found most reps have the email side down, in general, that is how they elect to communicate. To this point, Katie had definitely met my expectations, but there was a surprise I had no idea was coming.

What are the odds that someone could surprise a person who has been in the industry a long time? Our world is an internet vortex swirling with massive amounts of information, so the opportunity to be a standout salesperson is limited. The information is already out there for any interested consumer to find.

As the information highway has begun to move faster and faster, the unique individualism of a sales rep seems to have diminished, and we seem to have forgotten the personal side of the sale. In a business that is based on expression, to ignore the personal aspect could be a mistake.

## Even in Today's World of the Internet, Sales are Still Based in Trust

Katie and I were to meet at 3:00, and at 3:00 I was there with a smile, but not sure who to give it to because I didn't know what Katie looked like, as we had not yet met. But as I walked onto the floor and looked around, I heard a voice, "Menzie! Over here." Katie was standing at a workstation, and as I prepared myself for a standard presentation, I couldn't help but wonder how she knew who I was. Pleasantly, I would soon find out.

Her first words were about @4410, CMC's performance center, and about its uniqueness, and how well it is doing. She knew every detail about the different programs we offer, and she had run the data on every aspect of everything we do. Katie knew my company's history, the regional style of our customers, and she knew how her product could be integrated into my business, and she knew how it could help us grow in sales. Within five minutes, Katie had shown me she was a completely unique sales person. *Instead of telling me about her product first, she told me about my business.*

Katie knew more about my business than my mother, and she discussed with me what role her product could serve to better facilitate growth in our stores. Don't get me wrong: certainly, Katie knew her product inside and out, but her angle of engagement was first letting me know that she knew about my business. Once she had made me comfortable and had established a rapport, she moved into why she believed her product was a great fit.

## The Big Take-Away

What do you do when someone or something makes a deep impression on you? That's right, you talk about it. No sooner than

five minutes after my meeting with Katie, I happened to cross paths with Joe Lamond. As you would expect, we talked about the NAMM Show and how it was this year with the expanded convention center, and we shared different experiences we both had at the show. Guess what I talked about... Katie and Fishman and how refreshing she was. Joe and I often talk about millennials because we both are knee-deep in that world. We also are knee-deep in the world of sales, and we know that with an expanded internet, styles of salesmanship are changing and becoming less personal. Well, at least, that is what I used to think.

**“As long as we come from the space of making our priority interacting with others, and as long as we put the needs of others first, our industry will be fine.”**

## The Close and the Lesson

As luck would have it, at a NAMM function on Saturday morning, I ended up in a conversation with several folks, one of them being Larry Fishman. Anyone who knows me knows that when I believe in something, I share it. This was my chance to let Larry know how impressed I was with Katie, *and how well she represents his company.* We spent the next several minutes talking about how happy he was with her work. By that time, I knew she would be the subject of my next column in *MMR* and the reason is a no-brainer. As I shared with Larry, Katie's method of sales embodies the very principles of best practices in real time.

Right now, in our industry, people are trying to figure out whether it's good times or bad. So here's my closing thought: As long as we come from the space of making our priority interacting with others, and as long as we put the needs of others first, our industry will be fine. It's when we serve our agenda first, and put the well-being of relationships second that there is "Trouble in River City."

Thanks, Katie, for reminding me of that!  



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.



# Got Value?

By Jaimie Blackman

As a 13-year-old guitarist in the '60s, I would often visit my local MI dealer. The policy of the store was: "You can look at the guitars, but no touching unless your parents are with you." Needless to say, this was not a very engaging customer experience. A lot has changed... or has it?

While MI stores today, large and small, have an overflowing inventory of instruments, all ready to be played, (no parents required) there are two key points to consider:

Tangible assets, like your inventory, are worth considerably less than intangible assets, like customer relationships and employee talent. As researched by Ocean Tomo, LLC, in 2015 the intangible assets of the S&P500 – the public listing of 500 large companies – represented 87% of its total value. Pundits keep telling us that for brick-and-mortar stores to survive a virtual AI powered world of online only box-pushers, the customer experience, or the "wow" factor has to come first, and the product second.

If intangible assets – customer experience, employee talent, process & technology – contribute more to the bottom line than tangible assets like music instruments and accessories, why do most community retailers continue to play by the rules of the online-only box pusher retailers who only have three cards to play: price, selection, and speed of delivery?

“Why do most community retailers continue to play by the rules of the online-only box pusher retailers”

Why are brick & mortar stores with an online presence not promoting their physical space where people can gather, learn, share, and be musically inspired?

This is kind of like drawing a straight flush, only to throw away the winning card, which is your music store.

I recently experienced music instrument nirvana in a beautifully designed space, but unfortunately it was not an MI store. It was an MI museum.

The Musical Instrument Museum, located in Phoenix Arizona promotes itself as "The World's Only Global Musical Instrument Museum."

For me this was a "wow" for two reasons: 1) the museum offered a dazzling array of global instruments and 2) each instrument was accompanied by a video story creating engaging context. Want more wow? My VIP tour guide told me *if you can't find an instrument, tell us and we will find it and put it on display.* This is a great story. What is your story?

You're probably thinking that all very nice Jaimie, but we don't have 200,000 square feet of free space to create geo galleries, and we

don't have a collection of global instruments and even if we did, if I can't sell it, I'm not giving up floor space.

Firstly, you can start small carve out whatever space you can. And secondly, the sales per square foot ROI rule may have to be reexamined. Many of the largest retailers in the world increasingly believe that when designing space, retailers will spotlight the entertainment factor first, and the product second.

## Five 'Storytelling' Tips.

**TIP #1:** The Aging Population. *MMR* ran a story by Victoria Wasylak and Christian Wissmuller in August 2017, about how Michael Kelly Guitars launched a new group of six-pound electric guitars called the "Enlightened Collection." The increasing demand from an aging demographic with lightweight instruments is certainly worthy of an exhibition. I can tell you that I love my Gibson 347, but when playing standing up, it is heavy.

**Tip #2:** Science Brings Music To Life. STEM educates students in four specific disciplines: science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Teaching students about the science of sound waves by using musical instruments is not new. What is new, would be a class field trip to your store bringing the story to life. MIM had a great exhibit on Electronic Music.

**Tip #3:** Artist Residency Program. Reach out to your jazz history buffs, your classic, or rock nerds and invite them to an "explore big ideas from the first hundred years of jazz, classical history." Reach out to your music teachers and invite them to your special event. Parents and children are invited.

**Tip #4:** The Culture of Music Instruments. Partner with the cultural and religious institutions in your market place. Cultural diversity is a hot topic today, more than ever. Using different music styles to provide positive global awareness is of value to school across America. Create a performing and educational event around the diverse cultures in your market place. For example, I blow the shofar-an ancient bugle like musical instrument made of ram's horn- for my house of worship. If you service this community, why not create an exhibition right before the holidays on the different types of shofars and tips how to blow it? Easy picking for a trumpet player.

**Tip #5:** Music & Wellness: When my dad lost the capacity to speak and walk, music literally enabled him to sing lyrics and dance. Email me and I will send you the video link of me strumming and my dad singing and dancing. Partner with a music therapist and invite your community.

Start small. Carve out a small space for events and ask your suppliers for help. Tell a great story, and let your imagination go wild and share your unique value. 



Jaimie Blackman – a former music educator & retailer – is a certified wealth strategist & creator of MoneyCapsules Value-Builder, which capsule value-building activities into 90-day sprints. Blackman helps music retailers accelerate business value now and maximize value when it's time to exit.

Blackman is a frequent speaker at NAMM's Idea Center. Visit [jaimieblackman.com](http://jaimieblackman.com) to register for educational webinars and to subscribe to his podcasts.

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**Cort Guitars B6 Plus AS Electric Bass Guitar**

The B6 Plus AS electric bass guitar by Cort is the newest new six-string, open-pore model to Cort's Artisan Series. Featuring bolt-on construction and a warm open sound with excellent sonic dispersion, the B6 Plus AS offers modern upgrades while staying true to classic components and features in a design that represents the best of both worlds. Built with Bartolini MK-1 pickups for superb sound quality, it delivers plenty of punchy and warm mids, along with transparent and brilliant highs for excellent balance. These pickups are paired with the Markbass MB-1 EQ, which combines crystal clarity and natural warmth to exude a passive feel with smooth lows, full-bodied mids and bell-like highs.



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

**Seagull Guitar's Updated Entourage Series**

The new Entourage series from Seagull Guitars features a variety of body shapes in the new warm and vibrant "Autumn Burst" finish. The guitars in the series also feature white crisp binding and travel-sized models. Other special updated features include a Godin EPM Q1T preamp and the addition of two parlor-sized models in natural almond and natural finishes. Each Entourage will be priced under \$600.



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

**PIANOS & KEYBOARDS**

**New Products from Casio**



The brand-new CT-X line of portable keyboards boasts AiX (Acoustic & Intelligent Multi-Expression), Casio's next generation sound source, which is eight times more powerful than Casio's current portables. Some features from the new series include: 600 tones, 195 rhythms and a new System Delay DSP in the CT-X700; while the CT-X3000 and CT-X5000 are equipped with 800 tones, 235 rhythms, 64 note polyphony, tone editing and a phrase recorder with four pads. The new series offers a re-designed chassis, in addition to enhanced speaker systems. They are outfitted with Casio's Step-up Lesson System which enable beginners to learn built-in songs, phase-by-phase, at their own individual pace. CT-X700 (MSRP: \$259.99), CT-X800 (MSRP: \$299.99), CT-X3000 (MSRP: \$419.99), and CT-X5000 (MSRP: \$799.99).



Casio's new Celviano AP-470 digital piano boasts a redesigned cabinet with all of the controls located on the side panel. The cabinet includes a top panel that can be manually raised and lowered. The lid's position not only physically affects the sound coming from the speakers, but also works in conjunction with the "Lid Position" setting to accurately duplicate the characteristics of the adjustable lid on an acoustic grand piano. This new model is also equipped with an 88-key Tri-Sensor Scaled Hammer Action Keyboard with simulated ebony and ivory textured keys to reproduce the touch feeling of an acoustic piano while the scaled weighted action keyboard provides the depth and integrity of an acoustic piano. The AP-470 also offers 22 tones including a New York Grand Piano, a Key Mechanical Noise Simulation, new String Resonance System from, and an upgraded 40-watt speaker system. MSRP: \$1,499.

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

## ACCESSORIES

## Cordial CPI PZ Adapter Cables for Modular Synthesizers

Cordial has extended its adapter cable range with a mono version, the CPI PZ, equipped with hand soldered REAN 3.5mm and 6.3mm full metal connectors. In contrast to the current customary cables featuring welded on plastic connectors, these connectors prevent interferences to the full extent. The unusually massive bulk cable CIK 122 also features an additional inner shield made of conductive plastic to minimize noise caused by electrostatic phenomena. The cable comes in three lengths: 1, 2, or 3 meters.



[www.cordial.eu](http://www.cordial.eu)

## GluBoost GluDry Pinpoint Extender Kit Add-On Accessory

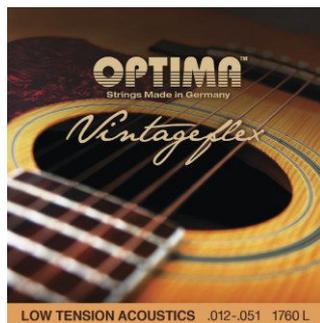
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[www.gluboost.com](http://www.gluboost.com)

## New Strings from Optima

Optima is introducing three new strings in 2018: VintageFlex for acoustic guitar, Violin "Tricolore" and the 24K Goldbrotat Premium e" for violin. All strings are made in Germany. 24K Gold brings a wider spectrum of overtones, it doesn't rust, and it is not affected by any natural form of acid. Come by our booth, get to know our full line of products in gold, silver, chrome, gut and bronze, experience the "Sound of Gold" with live music performances and take home a free set of strings for acoustic or electric guitar.



[www.optima-strings.com](http://www.optima-strings.com)

## New Products from D'Addario Accessories

The Screaching Halt from D'Addario Accessories is a hybrid feedback reducer and humidifier that allows you to humidify your guitar's body and neck joint, even in the driest conditions—while on display, or during extended periods when your instrument will be outside its case. With a sponge that holds twelve times its weight in water, the humidifier releases moisture slowly and evenly while capturing the vapor inside the body of the instrument to retain the proper humidity level. Maintaining the humidifier is as simple as moistening the sponge when the humidity falls below a safe level (40-60% relative humidity). The product also doubles as a feedback reducer when playing live, keeping your guitar properly humidified even during performances. Price: \$17.95.



D'Addario Accessories is excited to round out its line of high-quality straps while catering to the growing ukulele market with our new Premium Ukulele Straps. Combining strength, durability and elegance, these ukulele straps are precision crafted with top-of-the-line webbing and fabric made from PET recycled material. With a soundhole hook style, an improved clasp securely clips into the soundhole of the instrument with a soft yet durable rubber hook that is non-damaging to the instrument. In addition to a standard black, the straps also come in four beach-inspired colors: coral, stone, sand, and seafoam.



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AMPLIFIERS

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www.randallamplifiers.com

New Amps from Fender

Long-revered by players of all stripes, the 15-watt Pro Junior IV adds a modified volume circuit and a classic tweed appearance to this workhorse amplifier. A compact and straightforward tone machine, this amp is ideal for performing guitarists who need great tone and remarkably touch-sensitive dynamic response. The Pro Junior IV includes a 10" Jensen P10R speaker for tight, well-balanced output with plenty of high-end sparkle. The modified volume circuit breaks up more gradually, allowing precise gain adjustment to make tones that range from immaculately clean to devilishly mean, and offering tighter bass with improved definition when overdriven.



The Hot Rod Deluxe IV features modified pre-amp circuitry, smoother-sounding spring reverb and updated aesthetics that any player is sure to appreciate. A supercharged amp decked out with player-requested features, this scorching 40-watt 1x12" combo is ideal for guitarists who need hot-rod power with performance to spare. The Hot Rod Deluxe IV includes a 12" Celestion A-Type speaker for well-balanced output with smooth highs, laidback midrange and full, round lows. The modified preamp circuitry improves overdriven note definition, so you'll have articulate sound no matter how hard you push this amp. The onboard spring reverb has been modified to add smoothness, so you still get rich, shimmering tone, no matter how much reverb you use.



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By Dan Daley

# There's Nothing Neutral About the Internet When it Comes to Retail

**R**etailers are watching how the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act bills that worked their way through the Senate and the House of Representatives late last year will ultimately turn out. It's a drama that's already sending retailers large and small to their accountants for strategic advice. What will take longer to determine – and what may ultimately prove to be even more economically significant in the long run – is how the FCC's decision to end the Obama-era net neutrality regulations will impact everything from Netflix to the GDP.

Simply put – and nothing is truly simple about this far-reaching decision – removing the net neutrality regulations means that internet service goes from being classified as a regulatable public utility and becomes instead a market-based commodity. Internet service providers (ISPs) would, in theory, be able to determine the bandwidth (i.e., speed) at which online presences can move through them. AT&T or Comcast could provide more bandwidth for content from subsidiaries they own, such as DirecTV or NBC, respectively, or provide less bandwidth by comparison to competitors' content, a process known as throttling. Throttled content will get through, but more slowly and with all sorts of artifacts, such as buffering, which is anathema to video. Consumers will go where the experience is better, even if it means watching some content they might have viewed as second best.

This is one kind of a problem when it comes to movies and sports, but an even bigger one when it comes to retail. Remember when big box stores moved into communities and squeezed out smaller independent retailers? That's what proponents of keeping net neutrality in place predict will happen if those guidelines go away. Without regulations to keep the online playing field even, the largest retailers could pay higher rates for favored access, elbowing their smaller competition out of the way.

*– Visitors who have to wait more than three seconds for a mobile site to load will abandon their search 53 percent of the time. Large retailers will have speed on their side, while smaller shops might get pushed deeper into niches that the bigger stores don't serve –*

ISPs have already created "fast lanes" for their own content, as AT&T does with DirecTV, using loopholes in the existing regulations. That's already causing consternation within the content community. Netflix ripped the decision, saying it would result in higher bandwidth costs for them, which will inevitably get passed through to their customers in the form of higher subscription rates. Now apply that to retail, where milliseconds count: online metrics company

DoubleClick found that visitors who have to wait more than three seconds for a mobile site to load will abandon their search 53 percent of the time. Large retailers will have speed on their side, while smaller shops might get pushed deeper into niches that the bigger stores don't serve. It's a formula for more of the kind of inequality that has come to characterize the world we now live in.

## In This Thing Together

Interestingly, the net neutrality issue is also a shared one for MI retailers and musicians, who in the new music industry have become retailers themselves, using the internet to sell not only their most basic wares, their music, but also concert tickets and branded merchandise. If mom-and-pop stores have to be wary of big-box stores and their pricing power, indie musicians see the same kind of bogeyman in corporations like Live Nation and AEG Live, which control performance venues from arenas and stadiums down to hundreds of local pubs across the country.

**“Remember when big box stores moved into communities and squeezed out smaller independent retailers? That's what proponents of keeping net neutrality in place predict will happen if those guidelines go away.”**

Proponents of removing net neutrality regulations assert that it will foster more innovation and competition. As for the former, there's been no shortage of creative invention in the last couple of years; regarding the latter, we already know what happens when the largest corporations are allowed free rein over a "free" market landscape. Scale always wins.

We've been through this sort of thing before, from the oil monopolies of the turn of the last century to, ironically, the disassembling of AT&T at the hands of regulators 30 years ago. That last one is within living memory and is why our mobile phone bills have been steadily decreasing over the last decade. Competition is not only good, it's the basis for free enterprise, and a truly neutral internet is critical for that to continue into the future. 

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