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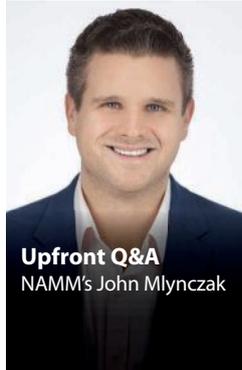
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INSIDE



Upfront Q&A
NAMM's John Mlynczak



Survey
Guitar & Bass Cases and Bags



Anniversary
Swing City Music Reaches 60-Year Milestone

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C O N T E N T S



MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

FEATURES

Vol. 183 MARCH 2024 No. 3

Upfront Q&A

NAMM's John Mlynczak 12

We sit down with NAMM president and CEO John Mlynczak to discuss the recent NAMM Show – the first under his watch – how a return to the “traditional” dates and location make sense for the industry, and how the organization is continuing to evolve to better serve the changing face of MI retail.

Roundtable

Classically Beautiful – Nylon-String and Classical Guitars in 2024 14

MMR chats with from reps for five of the most significant suppliers of classical guitars to learn how these instruments are now being embraced by players well outside of the classical or flamenco realms who are drawn to the warm, rich tones they produce.

Anniversary

Swing City Music Reaches 60-Year Milestone 20

When a young drummer named Art Risavy launched a humble musical instrument store in a strip mall back in 1964, odds are he didn't envision the business becoming a beloved resource for Illinois musicians that's still going strong 60 years later.

Dealer Survey

'Pro Usage is Up, Overall' – Guitar & Bass Cases and Bags 22

Only 10.5% of participating dealers are reporting a downwards trend when it comes to guitar & bass cases and gig bags sales, making it one of the more robust segments out there. Beyond that, though, there's very little agreement in terms of trends impacting the market.

Departments

Editorial	4
UpFront	6
Trade Regrets	10
People	10
Small Business Matters	19
New Products	24
Classifieds.....	27

12



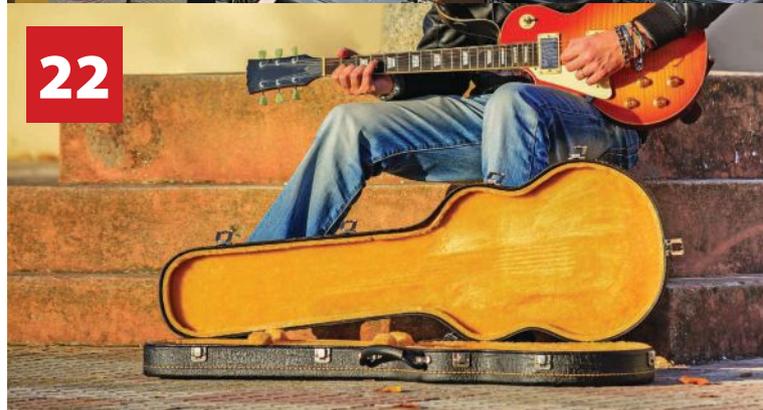
14



20



22



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'Don't Even Jinx Me with That!'

By
**Christian
Wissmuller**

"Music education isn't just about creating incredible musicians, it's about creating incredible humans."

Kris Bowers, film maker of "The Last Repair Shop," said the above when accepting the Academy Award for Best Documentary Short a few weeks ago. It's a lovely, heartwarming – and, to my mind, entirely spot-on – sentiment from the co-director of a documentary which does an excellent job highlighting the passionate undertakings of four individuals who work hard every day to keep 80,000 (give or take) musical instruments in working order for the Los Angeles Unified School District. There's a lot to appreciate about this film and quite a lot to unpack about the state of music education in the nation – particularly when you factor in that the L.A. Unified School District is one of the very last districts in the nation to provide freely repaired instruments, free of charge, to its public schoolchildren.

In the very opening minutes of this short film, 12-year old Porchè Brinker, a student at Palms Middle School (who, frankly, stole the show at the Oscars as she took to the stage to accept the trophy in her princess gown and with beaming smile that absolutely lit up the room), says, "If I didn't have my violin from school, I would probably... I don't know what I would do! Don't even jinx me with that!"

I could easily – happily! – walk you through the entirety of this special film, scene by scene, but what "The Last Repair Shop" does so successfully is underscore the inexorable connection between humanity and music and how irrefutably vital music is to the developments of young minds. Anyone reading this column has, no doubt, read repeatedly within the pages of *MMR* and elsewhere of the collateral benefits of music scholarship – how math scores go up, social interaction skills improve, self-confidence elevates and senses of solitude and fear diminish. What certain moments, interactions, and testimonials such as this documentary achieve, however, is so much less clinical. You and I know how vitally valuable music and music education is to the human spirit and the culture, at large, but it is sometimes instructive for someone to hold up the mirror and put those truths right in front of our faces. I know how important music is to my own life – it's a secret language, a magic, and a drug more powerfully appealing and addictive than any. But even I can use the occasional impactful reminder.

In this issue's "Small Business Matters" installment, Menzie Pittman pays tribute to executive director of the NAMM Foundation and NAMM director of Public Affairs and Government Relations, Mary Luehrsen, who will soon be stepping down from her long-held roles. Luehrsen has spent her entire professional life advocating for music education and government support of the types of free-of-charge services profiled in "The Last Repair Shop." I first met Ms. Luehrsen at the 2009 NAMM Advocacy Fly-In – one of the first such campaigns – during which MI retailer and supplier members of NAMM, along with like-minded celebrities and political figures, lobby sitting legislators to ensure that music education remains a core component of public education in this country. Luehrsen struck me as intimidating, no-nonsense, driven, and of precisely the correct character to *lead* and instruct the group of mostly clueless, "So how do we do this? What are we doing?" types (speaking for myself, at least) she was presented with that week. With patience, confidence, and an exhaustive wealth of knowledge Mary Luehrsen brought us all up to speed and guided the team to an extremely successful campaign that ultimately resulted in real, meaningful changes to core curriculum across the U.S.

If I hadn't been gifted violin lessons as a young kid, if I hadn't landed the lead in the 4th grade school musical, if my dad didn't teach me the three chords to play "Crimson and Clover" on guitar when I was 13, and if I hadn't continued my studies through classes at Berklee, casual get-togethers with friends, and hundreds of shows... I don't know what I would do. Don't jinx me!

You may, understandably, believe that you're crystal clear on your own mission to spread the culture of music-making. You almost certainly are correct! That said, do yourself a favor and spend the less than 40 minutes it'll take to watch "The Last Repair Shop" – it's free on YouTube – and I bet you'll be surprised at how much more sharp that crystal-clear understanding of the importance of music in the human experience comes into focus.

I tip my hat to powerful activists like Mary Luehrsen for her decades of hard work on behalf of others, and to creative supporters of music education such as Ben Proudfoot and Kris Bowers for their wonderful film.

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Pick one up. You may never put it down.

Marshall Music Unveils New State-of-the-Art Service and Education Center

Marshall Music, a leader in the music retail and education sector, is proud to announce the upcoming opening of its newest Retail and Service Center for Music Education, located in the heart of Troy, Michigan. This state-of-the-art facility is designed to cater to the specific needs of band and orchestra educators at secondary and collegiate levels, their students, and the vibrant music community in the Detroit Metropolitan area.

The new center represents a significant expansion of Marshall Music's commitment to enhancing music education, providing an unparalleled resource for educators and students alike. With a focus on both retail and comprehensive services, the facility is poised to become a pivotal hub for music education in the region.

The Retail and Service Center for Music Education in Troy is meticulously crafted to serve as more than just a retail space. It will offer a wide range of services and products, specifically tailored to support the educational music community. From advanced repair facilities for wind instruments and string luthiery to an expansive showroom of band and orchestra instruments, the center is dedicated to meeting the comprehensive needs of music educators and their students.

The opening of the Retail and Service Center for Music Education marks a new chapter in Marshall Music's long history of supporting music education. With this expansion, Marshall Music reaffirms its commitment to providing high-quality services and products, ensuring that music educators and students have the resources they need to succeed.

Marshall Music invites educators, students, and the music community to join them in celebrating the grand opening of the new facility in Troy, Michigan. Further details about the opening date and upcoming events will be announced shortly.



Jody Espina presents a check to Caleb Chapman for JodyJazz's \$10,000 donation to the Sound Support Foundation at their recent scholarship concert in Salt Lake City

JodyJazz Supports Sound Support Scholarship & Concert

JodyJazz has contributed \$10,000 to the Sound Support Foundation Scholarship fund in support of Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse. Based in Salt Lake City, Soundhouse is nationally recognized as one of the leading music performance training studios for musicians ages 8-18. The donation was announced at the recent Sound Support Foundation Scholarship Concert which was presented by the artists and staff of Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse. Jody Espina, founder & president of JodyJazz and world-class saxophonist, was one of the special guest performers at the concert and made the presentation to Soundhouse founder, chairman & chief executive producer, Caleb Chapman.

The Sound Support Foundation Scholarship Concert took place at the Eccles Theater in Salt Lake City on Feb 10, 2024. In addition to Espina, special guest artists were Thurl Bailey (NBA player and NCAA national champion), Michael Ward (guitarist of The Wallflowers and School of Fish), and Sal Craciolo (Tower of Power and the Poncho Sanchez Band).

"Caleb Chapman's Soundhouse is one of the very best places in the world for aspiring musicians and Caleb is one of the world's preeminent music educators," said Espina. "JodyJazz has been a longtime supporter of Soundhouse and Caleb's activities and is proud to have provided mouthpieces for the Crescent Super Band for almost 20 years. Having seen the phenomenal growth of what we consider to be one of the very best extracurricular music programs on the planet, I could not have been prouder to participate in the concert and to contribute \$10,000 to the scholarship program to provide opportunities for youth that might not be able to attend otherwise."

Blackstar Amplification Joins Yorkville Sound for Canadian Distribution

Canadian pro audio manufacturer and distributor, Yorkville Sound, and innovative instrument amplifier brand, Blackstar Amplification, announced a new distribution partnership. Effective immediately, Yorkville Sound will distribute Blackstar Amplification products in Canada.

Since its emergence in 2007, Blackstar Amplification has been widely celebrated as one of the world's most innovative guitar amp brands by some of the world's greatest musicians and bands.

"The Canadian market has always been incredibly important to Blackstar and having our products represented nationally, in the best stores is integral to our brand," says Joel Richardson, Blackstar Amplification's director of marketing. "Producing world-leading products is just one part of the Blackstar



story, having world-class partners to help deliver those products is paramount to realizing our vision. Yorkville Sound is that partner, and we're looking forward to the team stitching Blackstar into the fabric of the illustrious and dynamic Canadian music scene."

Jeff Cowling, Yorkville's vice president of sales and marketing comments; "Yorkville's distribution catalog is curated with brands that help musicians take their craft to new heights. Blackstar's constant goal is to provide musicians with innovative amplifier designs that inspire their art. We are excited to have this exceptional brand as part of our distribution family."

Blackstar Amplification products are now available through Yorkville Sound. Contact a Yorkville sales representative to learn more about this exciting new addition to Yorkville's catalog.



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Proel Introduces Ida Maria Grassi Wind Instruments

Proel North America proudly announces the introduction of Ida Maria Grassi wind instruments to the United States and Canada, marking a significant milestone in the Italian company's commitment to delivering exceptional musical instruments to musicians worldwide. Rooted in a rich history of tradition, innovation, and female entrepreneurship, Grassi instruments epitomize the harmony of Italian ingenuity and design.

The story of Ida Maria Grassi wind instruments traces back to 1945 post-war Italy, where the brand's journey began in a humble garage on Via Dezza in Milan. It was here that Grassi, a groundbreaking female instrument maker with a dream, started crafting flutes and piccolos characterized by a distinguished Italian style. In a remarkable development, these instruments swiftly captured the attention of musicians, propelling Grassi to establish a factory in Cinisello Balsamo.

Grassi's passions then expanded to the realm of saxophones. In the late 1950s, during a period of great economic challenges, numerous skilled craftsmen from a struggling saxophone factory sought employment with Ida Maria. Grassi seized an opportunity to expand her vision, prompting the establishment of a second Grassi factory in Piedmont, Italy, which not only realized her entrepreneurial ambition and also provided economic stability to the musical craftsmen in the region.

Despite the many challenges of her growing start-up, including the pervasive gender-biases of the time, Grassi persevered. Through dedication, hard work, and leadership her brand gained international renown, becoming a symbol of quality wind instruments crafted in Italy.



The legacy of Grassi lives on as part of the Proel family of Italian brands, through a commitment to continuous innovation and global distribution. Each instrument undergoes meticulous refinement, combining today's manufacturing advancements with the expertise of designers and master craftsmen to meet the demanding expectations of high quality and performance by today's students, teachers, and performers.

From the aspiring player to the professional musician, Grassi produces a wide range of woodwind and brass wind instruments in two series (student series, and master series) to include: flute, oboe, bassoon, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, cornet, flugel-

horn, french horn, trombone, euphonium, and tuba; and each bearing the hallmark of excellence synonymous with the brand. And for the discerning saxophone professional, Grassi offers the exceptional Accademia Series.

Each and every Grassi wind instrument offers the perfect blend of tradition, craftsmanship, and design that elevates musical and artistic expression. Music dealers, teachers, and parents will be pleased with the industry-leading 4-years warranty that backs each Grassi wind instrument sold.

Grassi Wind Instruments were first showcased in North America at the 2024 NAMM Show and will be available to the Proel North America network of dealers in the USA and Canada starting April 1, 2024.

Reverb Sellers See Sales Growth During Successful Holiday Season

Reverb, the largest online marketplace dedicated to buying and selling used and new musical instruments, announced on February 22 that its Q4 gross merchandise sales (GMS) grew in the mid-single digits year-over-year. Sellers on the platform had a successful holiday season, as they met the demand for instruments that fit within buyers' budgets with used, B-Stock, refurbished, and other competitively priced music gear.

Over the past decade, Reverb's global community of millions of music makers have turned to Reverb sellers for affordable used musical instruments, and in 2023, Reverb saw a record number of orders for used music gear. Used gear sales, coupled with more than 30% year-over-year growth in Q4 for outlet gear – which includes B-Stock, refurbished, floor models, and more – contributed to sellers' Q4 sales on Reverb growing nearly 50% from the pre-pandemic levels of Q4 2019.

During Q4 of 2023, Reverb saw an 8% increase in transactions where the buyer and the seller were located in different countries compared to the previous quarter. Over the past few years, buyers have grown increasingly comfortable with purchasing gear from outside of their own country, especially when searching for something particularly unique, thanks in part to Reverb's investment in trust and safety in recent years, improved search functionality, and access to one-of-a-kind gear you can't find anywhere else. For sellers who can ship internationally, this represents an opportunity to reach a new set of music makers on Reverb outside of their local areas.

To learn more about how to connect with the millions of music makers on Reverb looking for competitively priced music gear, contact sellerengagement@reverb.com.

C. F. Martin Launches Artist Showcase

C. F. Martin & Co. is excited to unveil its latest initiative: the Martin Artist Showcase.

Artists are the lifeblood of Martin Guitar. From Eric Clapton to Post Malone, Joan Baez to John Mayer, major artists have helped make Martin what it is today. Now, Martin is forging ahead with its sights set on the next generation of stars.

Designed to celebrate, support, and promote artists who are making waves in the music industry, the Martin Artist Showcase program serves as a platform to feature talent, foster creativity, and connect artists with Martin's global audience.

Each year, Martin will handpick a group of artists who demonstrate exceptional artistry, authenticity, and innovation in their craft. These artists will receive widespread exposure through various channels, including Martin's website and social media platforms, Backstage event appearances and giveaways, and features in the *Martin Journal* and other industry publications, ensuring their music reaches a vast and diverse audience.

The Martin Artist Showcase aims to keep Martin at the forefront of contemporary music, while also fostering a vibrant community of artists. By creating a pipeline of talent for future classes, Martin continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of music.

The inaugural class of 2024 includes Drayton Farley, Devon Giffillian, Ian Munsick, Joy Oladokun, Nate Smith, and Hailey Whitters.

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people on the move

L-Acoustics has recently appointed **Marc Glattes** as executive director of sales & business development. In this role, Glattes will be responsible for driving the company's global sales and business strategy while providing leadership, guidance, and resources to the global sales & sales operations team headed by Jacob Barfoed, the market intelligence function led by Stephane Ecalte, and the global business development team to which Scott Wakelin has been appointed global director.



Prior to joining L-Acoustics, Glattes held senior leadership positions at Daimler, Bain & Company and Sony, where he was member of the team that conceived, built, and launched PlayStation Vue, the

first and highest-rated streaming pay television service in the United States.

Roland Corporation announces the appointment of **Matt Wechsler** to the newly created position of chief marketing officer. Wechsler joins Roland Corporation following the brand's 2022 acquisition of Drum Workshop (DW), where he has been serving as the chief marketing officer since 2021. In this newly expanded role, Wechsler will oversee the company's full portfolio of brands, including Roland, BOSS, V-MODA, DW Drums and Hardware, PDP, Latin Percussion (LP), and Slingerland.



At Drum Workshop, Wechsler has been responsible for the company's

marketing function, focusing on driving strategic growth through brand management, consumer marketing, communications, digital, content, and artist relations. He led noteworthy efforts around DW's 50th anniversary in 2022, has transformed DW's consumer facing digital properties to drive engagement across platforms, and helped introduce DW's new innovative acoustic-electronic convertible line of drums, DWe.

Since Roland's acquisition of DW in September 2022, Wechsler has played a key role in driving collaboration between the two companies. In his new role, Wechsler will drive deeper synergy across Roland's entire portfolio, with a core focus on deepening the relationship between Roland and music creators around the world.

traderegrets

Bill's Music, a retail musical instrument store located in Catonsville, "Music City" Maryland, was started by **William "Bill" Higgins** and has been family owned and operated since 1965.



Higgins' interest in music started with the introduction of rock n' roll in the 1950's and more specifically with Elvis, the Beatles and Rolling Stones. He learned how to play their songs on guitar, put on his Beatle boots and started going to people's homes and giving them guitar lessons.

In 1965, Higgins and his wife Nancy rented a small 8'x8' room behind a coin shop on Frederick Road in Catonsville, MD, and started teaching music lessons there. Eventually, they took over that space, and in addition to teaching guitar lessons, began selling accessories and a few instruments.

During these early years, the store was slowly but surely obtaining dealerships for all the major lines in the music industry. It was also at this time, that Bill's Music pioneered a young adult credit plan to help aspiring young musicians acquire the instruments and equipment that they needed. While operating the store, Higgins found time to perform the music he loved as the bass player in several local rock bands, one of which was called "The Henchmen."

Over the years, Bill's Music expanded seven times along Frederick Road and now occupies a 36,000 sq. ft. building chock full of new, used and vintage equipment from the top name brands in the industry. Bill enjoyed working in the business each day alongside his wife Nancy and three children, Brian, Tracey and Jamie until he retired just a few years ago. Bill's Music has exploded into one of the largest musical instrument retailers on the East Coast specializing in musical instrument sales, rentals, repairs, lessons, sound consultations, trade-ins, & the purchase of used gear. The designation of Catonsville as "Music City" in 2002 was largely credited to the influence the family owned store music

has had on the community, paving the way for other musical instrument retailers, record stores, live music venues, etc. Bill had a "larger than life" personality and has been described in the recent outpouring of love as; a true gentleman, legend, good man, kind, honest, old school, generous and the "Mayor" of Music City. The passing of Bill Higgins on February 14 2024 has left a guitar-shaped whole in the hearts of his family, friends, and the "Music City" community which he loved so dearly.

It is with great sadness that Korg USA shares the news that longtime industry veteran and former colleague **Joe Bredau** passed away on January 13 at the age of 82.



Over his more than 50-year career in the MI industry, Bredau held a variety of executive positions at companies including M. Hohner, Raki International, and Korg USA. In 2009 he founded Marketing for Industry (MFI), a consulting organization dedicated to providing guidance in all aspects of executive communications to personnel, clients, and trade.

During his time as vice president of marketing/sales for Korg USA (1989-2008), Bredau spearheaded numerous innovative PR campaigns, developed key account teams to serve the company's largest customers, pioneered an ongoing performance review program that identified strengths and weaknesses within development programs, and served a key role on a corporate management team responsible for driving record sales figures with improved profits for the company.

"Joe Bredau joined the company at a critical time in Korg USA's history," says CEO Joe Castronovo. "His contributions to the organization to promote the brands that we represented cannot be put into words. He spent the majority of his career in the music product industry and should be remembered as a hard-driving sales and marketing executive. It was my pleasure to work with him during his time with Korg and we have great memories of his time with us."



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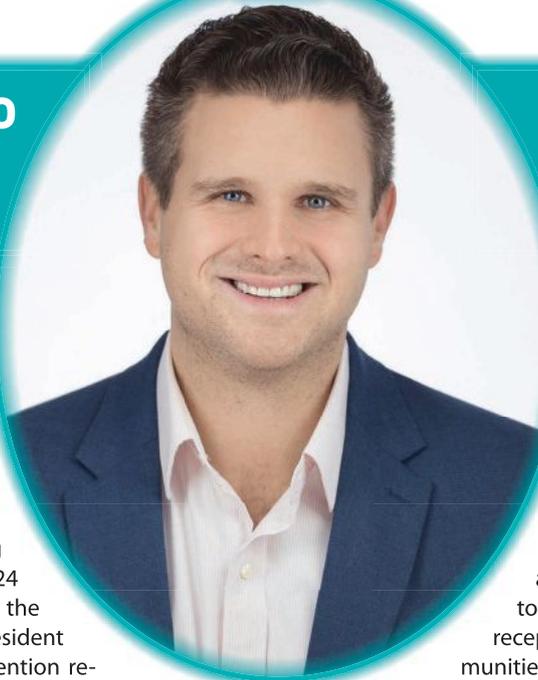
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'We're Going to Continue this Momentum'

NAMM President & CEO John Mlynczak



by Christian **Wissmuller**

Following what can only be described as a tumultuous few years, during which our industry and the world struggled through a once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic, the first few attempts at reviving the NAMM Show struggled to find a groove and recapture the magic that had long characterized the gathering. The 2024 NAMM Show, however – the first under the stewardship of the organization's new president and CEO John Mlynczak – saw the convention return to Anaheim, California with familiar winter dates in late January and many felt the energy and vitality of the event was back in full force.

MMR recently sat down with Mlynczak to discuss what worked about this year's Show, how necessary changes are being made, and why he and his team aren't content to just rest on their achievements, however successful, thus far.

Do you think the NAMM Show will ever be back to the crazy numbers that we saw in January of 2020, in terms of attendance and exhibitors?

I felt like this Show, more than probably any Show I've ever attended, set the tone for the industry. January is the right time for the NAMM Show because that is the time that sets the tone, and that's how businesses use the NAMM Show, and that's how NAMM serves the industry. And coming out of, obviously, four years of disruption, if there was ever a year where NAMM had to set a tone, it was this one. Historically, what are probably top five most high-stakes NAMM Shows ever? I'm comparing to 1946 or 1984, or 2009, when you're just beat up and wondering, "What's gonna happen next?" And [this year's Show] really delivered.

The industry was positive. People were thinking about the future. There was very little talk about the past. And we came out, very deliberately, on the opening address, talking about the future. That Industry Insights opening, the first half, didn't talk about the NAMM Show. It talked about where we're going, how we work together as an industry, and we really knew we had to set a tone for the industry – not just put a Show together. And I think it was wildly successful. We have members saying it was the best Show they've ever attended.

You know, I think we never looked at this as "coming back." This was always about how can we, as NAMM, as an industry, set the tone for the future of the industry? Can we be the association that helps our industry grow, through gathering? And that was wildly successful. I really attribute it to our members.

Our work is done the moment that Show opens, in a lot of ways. It's like any other performance. You know, you set up the stage, you do everything, but once the band starts, you have no control. But what we did is, first of all, we focused on the right mix of people. We never focused on attaining crazy numbers. We never focused on the quantity. The goal wasn't 90,000 or 100,000 [attendees and exhibitors]. The goal was the right mix of people. And every month we were looking at who was registering, who

we're advertising to, who's exhibiting: "Okay, what sectors do we have? Do we have buyers? Do we have international?"

We recognized that we've never actually created a home for influencers, and content creators, and product reviewers. And so we created that new audience. We opened up more formally to educator members. We brought in more receptions to make sure international communities felt welcomed, and not just as guests.

So we were very strategic the whole time about achieving the right mix of people. We don't want an over-balance. If you get, you know, way too many buyers, but with not enough product, then they're not happy. If you get a bunch of product without enough buyers, if you don't have enough distributors, you don't have the right worldwide market, so it's always about the mix. And the mix was dead-on. And it lets us know that, yes, trade shows, or the NAMM Show, really, has a future. There's not a single person I've heard still saying trade shows are dead anymore. That is just squashed.

Excellent!

We know the NAMM Show has a purpose. But we also recognize our purpose is not just to put on a trade show. It's to gather, it's to listen to the industry, and deliver the message that we're hearing from our industry, to set the tone. And this year, the tone was positive about the future. I don't think in my next 20 years or however long I get to ride this wave, it will always have that tone. But we did it this year. And I think we learned that that's our purpose. And that sort of drives businesses and the way people operate during the rest of the year.

One thing I was very happy to see leading up to the show was the return of some brands who had been absent in the years post-2020. There were, of course, a few notable hold-outs. What are your thoughts on any of those who chose not to exhibit in 2024, and what would your messaging be to them? What are your thoughts on why they would be making those choices in the first place?

The decision to bring your company and make that investment is actually made, usually, 6 to 12 before. So, these decisions were made during pandemic times. These decisions were made at times when things were still really a struggle, in early '23. So, I recognize that those decisions to cut something from the budget were made in pandemic times.

Having said that, and in fairness to the noticeable absences on the floor, I will say that every single one of those companies was at the Show. And I personally met with every single one of those companies. I have personal relationships with every single company CEO. I have reached out to them. We've had multiple phone calls. I have listened to them. So, we are talking. They are all, every single one, active NAMM members. They all believe in our mission.

One thing that did come up a lot when talking to dealers and suppliers after this year's NAMM Show is that people would start by saying, "Yeah, man, the NAMM Show is back!" And then they would follow that up with something along the lines of, "Hey, Chris, what's the news on Summer NAMM?" What are your thoughts on Summer NAMM? Do you think that show will come back?

We launched NAMM NeXT, which is an event we're putting on, in the summer, in Nashville, but it's not a trade show. The feedback we've gotten from our members is that we need to develop the people in the industry in a way that can't be achieved at a massive trade show. You know, get people in the room, without having to be on the floor selling product, but just talking about the future of the industry, digging deep into how we reach the modern customer. What does marketing and selling and entrepreneurship and leadership look like in the future?

So, NAMM NeXT is our new inaugural event (<https://next.namm.org>) that brings together outside-the-industry expertise. We'll have a keynote address by Daymond John [Founder and CEO of FUBU, investor, and television personality well-known from the show "Shark Tank" – Ed.]. We just booked one of the heads of Forrester Research, the largest global research firm in the world, of consumer research, to open for us. It's really getting our members together and thinking about the future.

So, this event is what we're focusing on this year, because it's what our members have been asking for for a couple years. It's very limited – our max capacity is 750 people. We wanna do it small, we wanna get it right. And it's really for leadership teams and emerging leaders and companies – manufacturer and retail at the same table, coming together.

As far as a summer trade show, the feedback I've consistently heard is that our industry only wants one trade show. The trade show is valuable because you have international exhibitors and attendees, because you have everyone you need to see there. And, right now, we know that with the cost of travel, the cost of doing business, margins are slimmer than ever. Our industry, to me, is not asking for the cost of a second trade show. They're asking for one place where everyone is at. And Summer NAMM never had everyone. It had a different type of crowd.

Sure. It was called "The Guitar Show" by many for a number of years.

Exactly. So, we're not bringing back Summer NAMM right now. We're focusing on one global show. And it's the same in Europe, you know, without Musikmesse. We went to Europe, we listened to everyone, we talked to all the associations. We had 'em all together at the NAMM Show in January and they're saying the same thing. We don't need to grow back this industry with bifurcated trade shows all over. We just need one place that we can all gather, because



Tom Sumner, President of Yamaha Corporation and NAMM Chair with John Mlynczak at the NAMM Show in Anaheim, California

we kind of know how to do business year-round with different tools.

So, the NAMM Show in January is the world's global gathering. That's the strategy, because that's what our members want. But we also are focusing on professional development seminars, NAMM NeXT, ongoing industry insights. I'm in talks with doing some NAMM U education sessions. We're gonna bring back NAMM U education to Music China. We might do another NAMM U event that I just got pinged about. So, we're gonna be active, but active

in education around different events, year-round.

Excellent. You kind of anticipated my follow-up question by touching upon Musikmesse, and then international reach. I'm in full agreement. I feel like the NAMM Show is positioned very well to be that one major event – no disrespect to Music China. Before I let you go, is there anything else that you want to share with our readers about this year's Show and next year's?

I think for your readers, particularly, what's interesting is that this year we had more innovation and more new products introduced than in quite a while – possibly more than in 2020. This is an incredible amount of product launches, and it's really exciting to see that kind of innovation.

I mean, '24 really set a tone. We're looking at '25 as just a continuation of this momentum, right? We're gonna keep going by setting the tone. We're gonna keep listening to members. We know all the brands are coming back, but we're also talking to 'em. I'm going to visit them and have real conversations about what the Show means to them. We anticipate more brand experiences, more demo rooms, where dealers, and influencers, and content creators can get a unique brand experience. I think the future of trade shows is not big, loud halls, but more curated experiences. And that's what we saw this year. Floors two and three were just completely full. If we could have sold a closet, we would have. We're already selling for '25 and a sizable percentage of the Show's already booked. It's coming in fast.

We're gonna really focus on startups and innovation. This year, we did a test run of an innovation pitch lounge for startup companies. The MIDI Association showed up, and had great startup stuff. So, we know that those communities are big. Pro audio is back in a big way, but we recognize that lighting is still an area of focus. We now have Albert Chauvet [of Chauvet DJ] on our board. And that's a big signal, the first lighting brand to be on our board, to really help us get into more of that pro audio and lighting area.

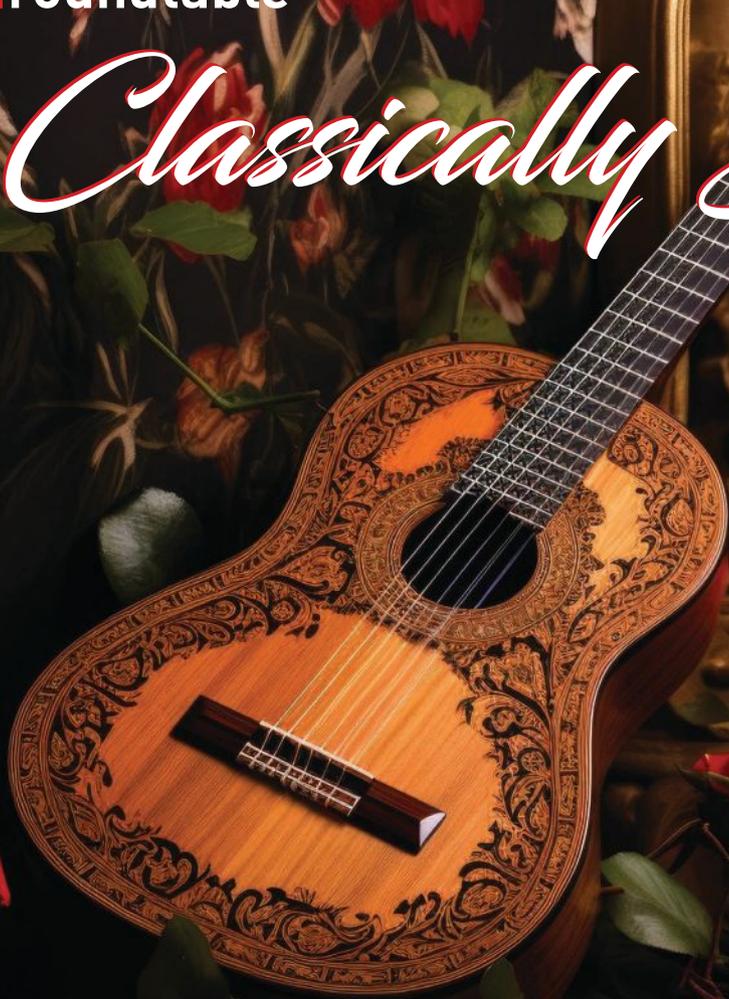
So, we're going continue this momentum. This Show showed us that we're on the right path, but I just want to make sure people know that we're not just saying, "Okay, we're back. Now we can keep rinse-and-repeating." The 2024 NAMM Show showed us that we're on the right path, and now we're gonna run faster down that path.

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At the 2024 NAMM Show, famed musician and producer Mark Ronson (right) received the Music for Life award from NAMM President & CEO John Mlynczak

Classically Beautiful



Nylon-String and Classical Guitars in 2024

By Christian Wissmuller

Soft, “warm,” “soothing” – these and plenty of similar descriptors are used by many to describe the sound of nylon-string acoustic guitars. Classical (or “Spanish”) guitars have long been the go-to instrument for (get ready for a shock...) players of classical or flamenco music, but in recent decades artists who trade in music of genres as wide-ranging as jazz, world, folk, rock, and even metal (truly!), have embraced the distinctive, rich tones afforded by nylon-string axes.

MMR recently picked the brains of reps from five major mainstream suppliers of classical & nylon-string guitars to get the scoop on what’s hot in this market segment. It turns out that, while tradition is of great importance to a number of end-users, innovative design techniques and materials are continuing to push these instruments into ever-expanding applications across popular music of all types.

Have you been noticing any significant trends when it comes to classical & nylon-string guitars: sizes, materials used, features, and other

aspects that are sought after by today’s players? Innovations in design or manufacture? Impact of restrictions on the use of certain traditional tonewoods?

Andy Winston: At Yamaha, we have been utilizing a couple of specific features that are designed to increase ease of play and user satisfaction. Our NTX models (NTX1 and the all-solid wood NTX3) of nylon-string guitars use the smaller and thinner body design of our legendary APX guitars and pair it with an easier-to-play narrower nut width of 48mm. These two features alone allow the steel string acoustic and electric players to add the nylon sound into their playing easily. Yamaha uses a similar narrower 50mm nut width on our SLG200N SILENT nylon-string guitar. The other innovation we are proud of is our Tran-



“Players expect their nylon-string guitar to perform as well as their electric guitars: fast neck, balanced, and lightweight.”

— Mario Biferali, Vice President Sales, Godin Guitars



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■ roundtable

Acoustic technology, which is found in the nylon-string CG-TA. TA technology gives the player two different reverbs and a chorus effect that can be heard from the guitar without the need for an amplification source. It's an amazing playing experience everyone should have.

Mario Biferali: Players expect their nylon-string guitar to perform as well as their electric guitars: fast neck, balanced, and lightweight. Nylon-string guitar is in every genre of music, so that means versatility is key and, in live settings, guitarists don't want to deal with feedback. Our Multiac Series nylon-string guitars have been designed with this in mind. In terms of innovation, our dual chambered body allows the top to vibrate freely while reducing the risk of feedback in live situations, especially when playing with a full band. We listen to artists and remind ourselves that we are making instruments for music makers. That's the priority. I am not seeing many restrictions in the use of traditional woods being used, but we always experiment with different types of tone woods like Canadian Wild cherry and Laurentian basswood.

Rameen John Shayegan: We have been noticing some trends toward non-traditional design elements – for example, radiused fretboards, slim body dimensions, and exotic veneer materials. Here at Martin, we offer “Folk Nylon” instruments on a custom and limited basis, as well as a “crossover” cutaway model for modern players. We also have a nylon-string Backpacker!

Andy Powers: When it comes to classical guitars, one of the more significant developments we've observed is in exactly how players will use a nylon-string guitar today compared to how they might have used these guitars in the past. While there are plenty of musicians learning and performing in a traditional classical style, there is a growing group of players who simply like the sound and feel of nylon-strings, and are adopting those sounds into musical contexts outside of the traditional classical stage. Perhaps the clearest way to illustrate this point is to mention some artists here. While there are many musicians learning and performing in the legacy of the beautiful music made by Segovia or the Romero family, there are a great number of musicians playing nylon-string guitars in the tradition of Willie Nelson or Zac Brown. They might strum chords as a rhythmic part or use a flatpick in front of a rock band. They might play some Latin music or add color to a hip-hop tune. It feels like an open-minded expansion, even liberation, of a worthy musical choice. As a result of these playing styles that fall outside the traditional role of a classical guitar, we've seen enthusiastic response to nylon-string guitars with narrower necks, arched fretboards, guitars with cutaways and pickups for stage use. This open-minded use has also seen players welcoming equally non-traditional wood choices. Rosewood or cypress used to be the only options viewed as legitimate for a classical or flamenco guitar, but with the wider range in playing styles, players have welcomed alternatives as much as they have embraced different woods with steel-string guitars.

Tom Watters: Takamine has long had a reputation for creating outstanding traditional nylon-string guitars for classical performances. One of Takamine's most influential leaders was Mass Hirade, who joined the company in 1968 and became president in 1975. His background was in classical guitar design, and many of his innovations still touch our current lineup of guitars.

One trend that's developed that we helped spearhead was the hybrid nylon-string, which are guitars meant as much for non-classical use in pop, Latin, jazz, and other music genres. These guitars, like the Pro Series P3FCN, offer a more narrow nut width and are much more comfortable for players who would otherwise have trouble with the wider traditional classical guitar neck. In terms of materials, all of Takamine's handcrafted Japan-built nylon-string models tend to use very traditional woods, with solid cedar or spruce tops, and rosewood back and sides. Our lower-cost G Series nylon-strings also offer spruce or cedar tops, but we often use more sustainable back/side woods like black walnut.

For your brand, what are the top-selling nylon-string guitar models?

MB: Our Multiac ACS which is more of a solid body design is a constant top seller, so is our Encore Series which is chambered and has a dual pick up system and is perfect for recording. Our Mundial Series is brand new and guitar players seem to love how light and balanced it is. The non-traditional colors we offer also sets it apart.

RJS: Our best-selling nylon-string model is in our 16 Series, which pairs traditional premium tonewoods with a modern aesthetic. The 000C12-16E nylon is a great Worldbeat instrument, featuring a cutaway, Fishman Matrix VT Enhance electronics and a 26.44" (671.5mm) scale length that is well-complemented by our Magnifico strings. Our most famous nylon-string model would likely be the N-20 which is still being played by none other than Willie Nelson. While vintage models are quite expensive, we do routinely get requests through our Custom Shop to recreate the N-10 and N-20 models, which we are happy to accommodate!

TW: In terms of total guitars sold, our Takamine G Series models like the GC3CE, GC5CE, and GC6CE offer some of the best quality in truly affordable nylon-string guitars that also provide onboard electronics for easy amplification and recording purposes. But for the professional or other serious player, Takamine's Japan-built guitars like the TC132SC, TC135SC, and P3FCN have consistently been very respected and acclaimed.

AP: We have a number of nylon-string models in our portfolio from our Academy 12-N (Academy Series) and 100 Series all the way into our 800 Series guitars. Among the instruments we're making, the spartan Academy 12-N is a favorite. The

“We have been noticing some trends toward non-traditional design elements – for example, radiused fretboards, slim body dimensions, and exotic veneer materials.”

– Rameen John Shayegan, International Instrument Design Manager, C.F. Martin & Co.





“While there are plenty of musicians learning and performing in a traditional classical style, there is a growing group of players who simply like the sound and feel of nylon-strings, and are adopting those sounds into musical contexts outside of the traditional classical stage.”

— Andy Powers, CEO, President, and Chief Guitar Designer, Taylor Guitars



musicality of that guitar is something special to me.

AW: We are proud to manufacture and offer traditional classical Yamaha nylon-string guitars for every player and at every price point. Our C40II guitars are the perfect beginner classical, while the CGX122MC & MS models offer the player an upgraded guitar with a pickup and preamp on a traditional classical body. Staying with the traditional classical guitar, our GC series instruments will elevate the classical player from the recital room to the concert hall. The GC12 and GC22 models give the experienced player an exceptional instrument and an amazing value. As mentioned earlier, our innovative NTX guitar and CG-TA TransAcoustic guitar are finding an audience with players who may have yet to learn or grew up playing a more traditional classical guitar.

What are some impactful marketing and display strategies that you’re observing successful retailers adopt when it comes to these instruments?

TW: The customers for nylon-string guitars place high priority on feel as much as tone. Having the guitars be accessible in a store and playable for customers to try out in person is a big advantage that a brick-and-mortar storefront can offer over online retailers. Also, here’s a sales tip: some customers can be intimidated by the idea of playing classical guitar, so let them know that the nylon-string is just another color to add to their sonic palette. Whether or not they end up as classical virtuosos isn’t the goal. They can sound beautiful in any style of music.

AP: With such a wide variety of instruments these days, it’s easy for nylon-string guitars to get lost at retail. Our strategy has been to partner with our retailers so they can reach their customers with information before they even pick

up an instrument. We provide our dealers with essential materials that help them create content that allows shoppers to have an informed opinion early in their buying journey. Additionally, we have educational programs and content that help young students learn about our nylon instruments early in their musical career.

RJS: As with steel-string guitars, maintaining proper humidity is critical, along with providing a quiet and relaxing space for customers to try out the instruments. Since nylon-strung instruments aren’t as loud as steel-string guitars (or at least, they are often played in delicate fingerstyle), these instruments really do require a nice space to let prospective buyers hear their nuance.

AW: The best retailers will have a thoughtful and well-equipped acoustic guitar room that permits customers to try out and hear what these guitars can do. The room should always feel approachable and welcoming. Another practice I see with our better

dealers is controlling the sale by showing the customer what is currently exciting you and your staff. Suppose a salesperson has been amazed by hearing the internal effects of our CG-TA TransAcoustic nylon-string. In that case, you should want all of your customers to have that same feeling and experience. Be proactive on your floor. Show people what’s new and cool.

MB: I am seeing a larger selection of nylon guitars being carried by dealers. It is no longer just a “classical” guitar on a hook in the store. I feel retailers are giving the nylon-string guitar a dedicated space on the floor and highlighting them. Some are even putting the nylon hybrid guitars closer to the electrics which brings even more attention to them. YouTube has helped everyone discover new modern players, many are electric guitar players doing incredible things on nylon-string guitars. For us, I am always amazed at how many different types of players use our guitars, for example: Steve Stevens, Roger Waters,

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“Having the guitars be accessible in a store and playable for customers to try out in person is a big advantage that a brick-and-mortar storefront can offer over online retailers.”
— Tom Watters, Director of Product Development, Takamine Guitars



Lionel Loueke, Habib Koite, Sylvain Luc, Al Di Meola, Alex Skolnick, Sergio Vallin, India Arie, Leonard Cohen, Hans Zimmer, and Mario Guini (Marc Anthony, Jennifer Lopez).

Do you have any recent or upcoming nylon-string guitar introductions that you'd like to

draw our readers' attention to?

MB: Our new Multiac Mundial is our lightest Multiac with dual source custom pickup system. So well balanced and competitively priced. 100 percent made in Canada. The new Arena CW Black Onyx. I would say the Arena bridges the gap between a classic design and the modern Multiac Series. Our G Tour Series is a nylon-string guitar made for electric guitar players and is a perfect example of a guitar we had been getting asked for, and it has allowed us to expand our audience even further and attract players that we never thought would play nylon-string guitars.

AW: As I've been sharing, the TransAcoustic experience of playing your nylon-string CG-TA guitar while controlling the reverb and chorus that is within the guitar is mind-blowing. The effects you'll hear will have you playing MORE guitar as they help unlock your creativity and drive that inspiration we all clamor for.

RJS: All we can say is, stay tuned!

TW: No, but toward the very highest end of Takamine's nylon-string offering is the TH90, and it's a guitar that should be a choice when a customer is looking for a very serious handcrafted classical guitar. One of the great things about the TH90 is that while it's an amazing classical instrument, it's also popular for pro Latin and bossa nova players.

AP: Seeing as how much we love working with these nylon-string guitars and love the music players are making with these guitars, I'll say only to watch this space for news.

How do you see the classical guitar market evolving in the coming year?

AW: What's exciting about nylon-string guitars is that they

can both live in a world of tradition and history, as well as in this new world of innovation and history-making. At Yamaha, we are proud to have a foot firmly planted in both worlds and will continue to offer players exceptional quality and build.

RJS: The nylon-string guitar and the classical guitar markets are not necessarily the same. The feature set that is most appealing to a dedicated classical guitarist is very different from the nylon-string guitar that is desired by international folk, jazz, and Worldbeat musicians. I think we'll see more innovation in terms of unusual body shapes, materials, and onboard electronics in the nylon-string world. In the classical world specifically, I think the customer is less accepting of design deviations from the standards established in the mid-1800s, so that is a less dynamic space for innovation.

AP: I feel the current trend of players making creative music with what has been a traditional instrument will continue to grow. My impression is that once players realized the broad musicality of a nylon-string guitar could extend beyond the classical genre, they started to discover how much fun these guitars are to play, and how beautifully expressive they can sound. At the end of the day, that a musician is having fun playing an instrument seems like a good reason to continue making these.

TW: By its very nature, classical guitar is a traditional art, both in terms of the music performance and the manufacturing of instruments. Most of the aspects that made a classical guitar great 75 years ago – selection of excellent tonewoods for its top and body, the design of the internal bracing and well-constructed neck joint – are very similar to what they are today. One thing that can influence the nylon-string market is when a pop artist features the beauty of the instrument on a hot new recording, and it does happen from time to time!

MB: It's hard to tell, but I am optimistic that it will continue to grow. Nylon-string guitars can be heard in all kinds of different music so I think players of all different styles want to have at least one nylon-string guitar at their disposal whether it is for gigs or studio sessions. For us, the Multiacs have been a big part of what sets us apart as it is such a different, yet recognizable instrument, from the body design to the EQ sliders right on the top.

“The best retailers will have a thoughtful and well-equipped acoustic guitar room that permits customers to try out and hear what these guitars can do. The room should always feel approachable and welcoming.”
— Andy Winston, Product Training Specialist,
Yamaha Corporation of America



The Legacy We Leave Behind

Mary Luehrsen



By
Menzie
Pittman

At this point, no doubt, we have all returned and survived The NAMM Show, and most folks realize that they are truly glad they went. John Mlynczak and his team certainly did not disappoint.

As every business morphs at one time or another, NAMM currently is undergoing changes in leadership; at the Grand Rally for Music Education, we learned that Mary Luehrsen would be stepping down from her position at NAMM. Mary's official role with NAMM has been Director of Public Affairs and Government Relations. Mary has also been executive director of The NAMM Foundation. Since 2007 I have had the honor of working with Mary Luehrsen on advancing and supporting music education in schools. Therefore, I thought I would reflect on Mary's efforts and successes in forwarding the cause for music education. At this year's Oscars, the Best Documentary Short went to "The Last Repair Shop," a movie about the power of music and the importance of music education. When The Academy announced it as the winner, Mary was the first person I thought of because music and music education have been her life's mission, whether when she was a music instructor or executive director of the NAMM Foundation.

I met Mary simply by chance. Years ago, I was at a NAMM Show and caught a moment with Joe Lamond on the show floor. In our casual conversation, Joe asked me about Contemporary Music Center, where my shop was located, and what we specialized in. I shared with him that CMC was in Virginia and was recognized primarily for our success with music education. As we spoke, Joe wrote something on the back of the card I had given him and put it in his pocket. It was then that he let me know that NAMM was in the second year of an effort they called the "Fly-In," and for me to keep my eye open for an email invitation. Joe kept his word and two weeks later I received an email inviting me to join NAMM at the 2007 NAMM "Fly-in." At that juncture, it was a much smaller undertaking and, for that reason, the participants benefitted from a great deal of face-time with everyone attending. Mary's role, along with the NAMM staff, and Secretary Riley, was to teach everyone how advocacy really works. After a few days of intense training, the NAMM team hit Capitol Hill with a vengeance! Under Mary's leadership, we shared with Congressional leaders our message of the importance of music education in schools, and that it should be available to every student.

Under Luehrsen and Lamond, the NAMM "Fly-In" grew in messaging, focus and size. Every year I watched as Luehrsen tweaked the music education message to have the ultimate effectiveness through well-crafted language. I also watched the harmony between Luehrsen, Lamond, and Secretary Richard Riley, whose law firm always made sure we were perfectly up to speed. Their "work harmony" was akin to Crosby, Stills & Nash.

Luehrsen led the charge with no apologies about the importance of NAMM's music education mission. Her intent was simple: make music education a mandated part of every school's curriculum and make music education available to every child. Every year it was Mary's goal to spend one day at a different Title 1 school. We would watch students perform musically and after their performances, NAMM would host workshops shepherding students to understand that music was a language for everyone. Certainly, the past few years have brought unique challenges to NAMM's ability to host the "Fly-In," but thankfully they were able to rekindle the "Fly-In" last year.

Looking forward, NAMM has formed a search committee to find Luehrsen's successor, however it's a rare breed that understands education, politics, diplomacy, and language. Replacing a visionary such as Mary is not an easy task, but if it can be done, NAMM will find a way.

The cosmic collision of my world and the world of NAMM was clearly fortuitous for me. Because I lived near Washington, D.C., it made attending the "Fly-In" quite palatable. The epitome of this, though, was working beside Mary on her "passion project" and, truly, those who participated with her over the years received an incredibly special education. My personal thanks to Mary for giving my daughter, who at the time was a music major in college, the chance to participate in a "Fly-In" and the opportunity to meet Representative John Lewis. That evening was certainly a special night for our family.

Mary, from everyone in the NAMM "Fly-In" family, we wish you well on your new endeavors. You will never be forgotten!

✉

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."

“Every year I watched as Luehrsen tweaked the music education message to have the ultimate effectiveness through well-crafted language.”

■ anniversary

Swing City Music

Reaches 60-Year Milestone

by Christian Wissmuller



In late 1964, a young drummer named Art Risavy launched the business which would define his professional career. Swing City Music grew and evolved to become the go-to shopping and service destination for countless musicians in Illinois and beyond for

the following six decades. Now a two-storefront operation, Risavy's business remains an incubator for local musical talent, encouraging and supporting players from first-timers to seasoned pros.

Kayden Crews, Swing City Music's chief marketing officer, recently chatted with *MMR* about the operation's history and how the MI retailer will be marking its 60th anniversary with special events and sales throughout the year.

What inspired Art Sr. to found Swing City back in 1964?

The classic story is that Art Sr. went into a local music shop to get last-minute drumsticks before his gig. Senior forgot his wallet and asked the owner if he could come back after his gig to pay him back. The store owner said no, so Senior had to use chair legs on the gig, and from that day Art Sr.'s goal was to open a music shop that was player focused.

In those early days, can you describe the location in the Orchard Shopping store?

The place itself was nothing special. It was a little store in a strip mall, but it was perfect for the time. "It was the place to be," Senior often recalls. Art would let bands start homegrown concerts in the parking lot, so his dream was quickly becoming a reality.

Again, back in the beginning, how many employees were

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“Senior’s goal was to help any musician, and it still is. If he didn’t have it, he knew where to send you, or he would try his best to solve the problem at hand.”



Art Risavy Sr. and Art Risavy Jr.

there?

At first it was just Art Sr. And not only was he the only employee, but he was also the only drum teacher, so for a little bit times were definitely tough. But Senior always says that it was the best of times.

Although the first line for the store was Fender, was the focus initially heavily on drums and related gear, as that was Art Risavy’s personal passion?

Senior’s goal was to help any musician, and it still is. If he didn’t have it, he knew where to send you, or he would try his best to solve the problem at hand.

Can you walk me through the other locations throughout the years?

Swing City Music has had a total of six locations, not including the current Edwardsville location. Starting off at the Orchard Shopping Mall, he soon moved to an old TV Shop in 1972. It was four-to-five times larger than the previous and this was where the famous Golden Eagle Studios got its start. Senior recalls that this location was often open 24 hours to serve musicians at any time of the day. He then shortly moved to a location in St. Louis on Lindberg Ave. From there, he moved back to his roots in Collinsville and opened a location in an old tavern, where Art Sr. would expand his booking agency with over 300 bands booked across the States. This location is where he also provided a sound system to the Mississippi River Festival. Then the iconic Empire Bowl location opened in 1983 and Senior had to say goodbye in 2012 due to a fire in the store. When most think of Swing City Music, they tend to gravitate towards this store. This location is where Senior would open his jewelry store, “Florian’s Fine Jewelry.”

How about the 60th Anniversary year – How many employees are there today?

There are 12 employees at Swing City, all of whom are musicians except our head installer.

When did Swing City add lessons to the picture? How many teachers are there currently?

Lessons were always a part of the Swing City vision. It’s grown

as the company has grown. Today we have lessons at both locations, Collinsville and Edwardsville, and we offer Zoom lessons as well. We currently have 11 teachers teaching a variety of instruments – band instruments, guitar, piano, drums, and more.

How big of your overall business model is installations?

As with everything, we had to start somewhere. Since the pandemic we’ve really stepped up our installs and they’ve become a way bigger part of our day-to-day. We currently have two installation techs – a head installer and his assistant.

Do you offer repairs?

Repairs have also been a service that we’ve offered for a long time. We still do in-house repairs on guitars, band instruments, keyboards, live sound, and even Hammond Organ repairs for churches.

Does Swing City stock used and vintage gear?

Oh, yes. That is the one thing that people say separates our store from the others. Our selection of used/vintage equipment is incredible. I’d say it’s a good 60/40 split in favor of the used section. We have an entire back room filled with used sound equipment, reel-to-reels, and hundreds of used guitars and basses throughout the store.

Of the new lines you carry, what are our top sellers?

Our top sellers are Fender, Gibson, Taylor, and Rickenbacker.

What significant milestones stick out as being particularly meaningful for the development of the business?

Well, of course 60 years is mind-blowing to us. Unfortunately not many companies get to say they’ve been around for 60 years.

Did you attend the 2024 NAMM Show?

No, we haven’t gotten to go to NAMM for a while now.

Expectations and hopes for the coming months?

Big plans! We expect a lot. Our 60th is going to have lots of fun events, giveaways, and sales all year long. We’re trying to take Swing City back to the past. 🎸🎹🥁

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'Pro Usage is Up, Overall'

Sales of Guitar & Bass Cases and Bags Surge As Live

Performance Has Returned at Full-Strength **By ChristianWissmuller**

With only just over 10 percent (10.5%) of participating dealers in this month's poll reporting a downward trend in terms of guitar & bass cases and gig bags sales, it would appear that the post-pandemic "return to the stage" is having a real impact on this market sector.

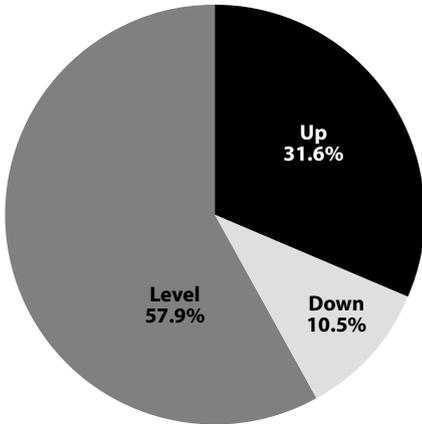
As for observed trends, in most respects it really seems to be an open field. For every MI retailer who bemoans the ever-inflating costs related to cases and bags and how such inflation discouraging sales, there are at least as many noting how even lower-cost instruments come with bags as standard equipment these days. "Increasing costs are driving gig bag prices up to and beyond the cost of hardshell cases," says Spidey Mulrooney of The Music Shop in Southington, Connecticut. "Today only the more expensive guitars leave the shop in a bag. Many lower cost/lower margin guitars

walk out in the shipping box or just as a guitar." Chad Neil Davis of Riverton Music (West Jordan, Utah) sees it differently: "[Even] cheap acoustic guitars are coming in solid weekend warrior hard cases, like the Fender CD-60."

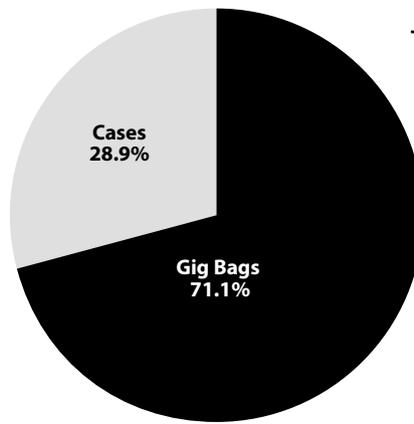
Similarly, some stores are observing non-black bags generate significant sales, while others see no upside to all the multi-color choices available: "Color options do not improve sales for us; black is still the seller for us," shares Joe Chiappone of Pittsford, New York's Northfield Music, Inc., while Joni Dey of Herter Music Center in Bay City, Michigan asserts that, "People are looking for more color choices in gig bags; something besides black please. On-Stage makes a striped gig bag that's been very popular."

Read on to learn more about what dealers think about sales of these protective fretted instrument essentials.

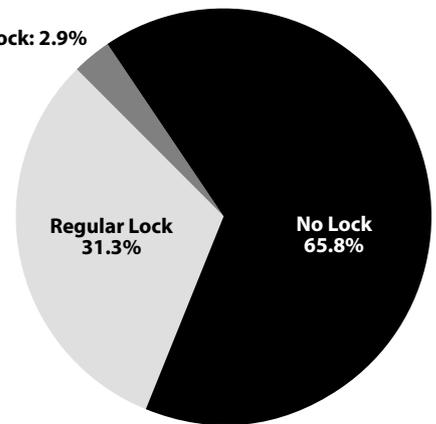
For your store, sales of guitar & bass cases and gig bags in 2024 are...



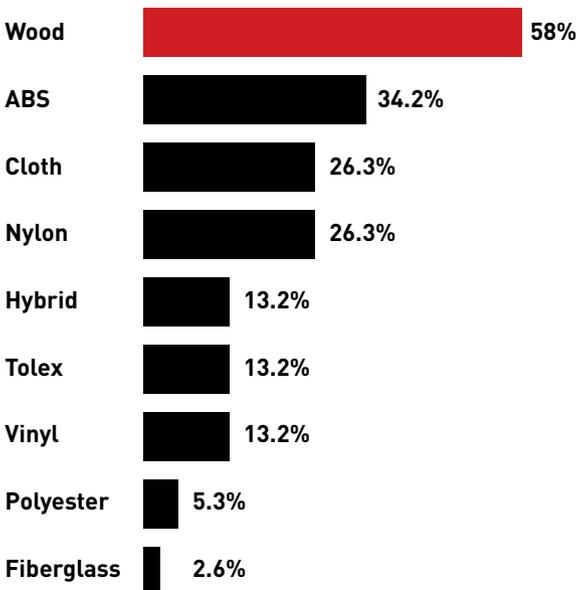
What sells the most for your business: cases or gig bags?



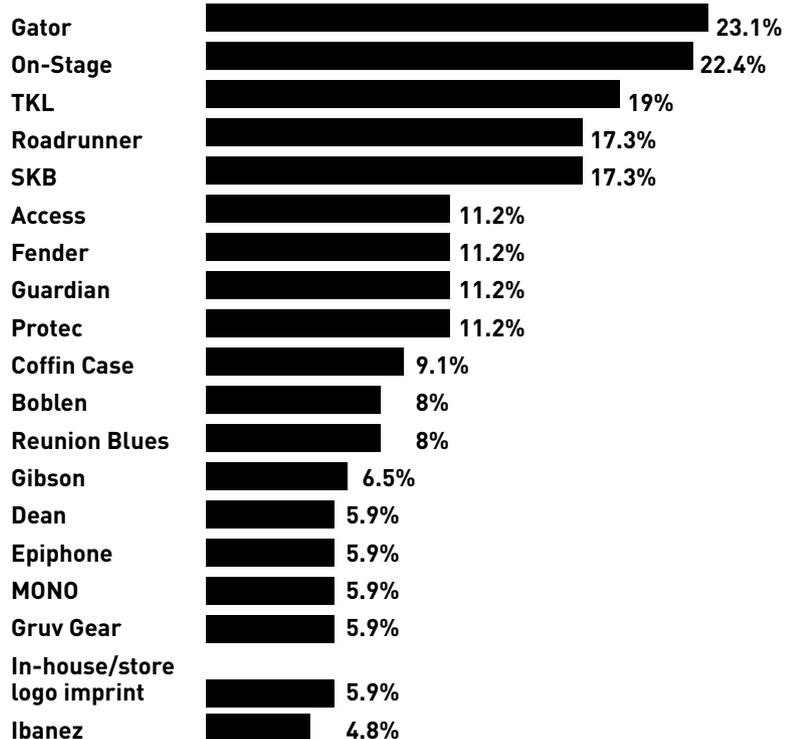
What is your customers' preference re: locking systems?



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



Which brands are the top sellers for your store?



What trends are impacting sales of cases and gig bags for guitar & bass in 2024?

“Quality. Case handles, lining. No one wants something cheap. I include a bag or case with almost every instrument, cheap classicals excluded. It keeps the instrument in good shape and the customer happy.”

Keta Tom
The Fingerboard Extension
Corvallis, Oregon

“Customers seem to appreciate the ease and protection of the top shelf bags that can be carried over the shoulder like the Gator Icon series.”

Will West
Will West Music & Sound
Jefferson City, Missouri

“Increasing costs are driving gig bag prices up to and beyond the cost of hard-shell cases. Gig bags used to be an easy add on to any guitar sale. Today only the more expensive guitars leave the shop in a bag. Many lower cost/lower margin guitars walk out in the shipping box or just as a guitar.”

Spidey Mulrooney
The Music Shop
Southington, Connecticut

“More guitar manufacturers are offering mid-level price points that include cases or bags.”

Todd Peery
Ted Brown Music
Tacoma, Washington

“[Even] cheap acoustic guitars coming in solid weekend warrior hard cases, like the Fender CD-60.”

Chad Neil Davis
Riverton Music West Jordan
West Jordan, Utah

“Inflation is hurting everyone! But people are digging deep and making it happen with a little convincing!”

Anthony Mantova
Mantova’s Two Street Music
Eureka, California

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

Jerry Vesely
Vesely Music
Parowan, Utah

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FRETTED

Epiphone Partners With Dave Grohl to Release the DG-335

Epiphone is proud to unveil its global partnership with Dave Grohl. The Dave Grohl DG-335 pays tribute to the longtime six-string mainstay of Dave's world-spanning tours with the Foo Fighters. As part of the Epiphone Inspired by Custom Collection, the guitar continues a new era of premium features for Epiphone, including high-quality electronics and design upgrades. The Epiphone Dave Grohl DG-335 is now available at authorized Epiphone dealers and worldwide on www.epiphone.com.



A longtime Gibson user, Dave's previous Gibson signature guitars have remained extraordinarily popular and continue to command premium prices on the used market. Epiphone is proud to once again partner with Gibson Custom on the release of the Dave Grohl DG-335. It features the combination of ES-335 and the Trini Lopez model features Dave requested and that fans expect, including a semi-hollow ES™ body made of layered maple/poplar, with bound diamond-shaped sound holes, a one-piece mahogany neck with an elliptical C profile, a Trini Lopez style headstock with Grover Mini Rotomatic tuners, a laurel fretboard, and split diamond inlays. The pickups are Dave's preferred Gibson USA Burstbucker models, with a Burstbucker 2 in the neck and a Burstbucker 3 in the bridge position. They're wired to CTS potentiometers, Mallory capacitors, and a Switchcraft 3-way toggle switch and 1/4" output jack. The Dave Grohl DG-335 is one of the most requested models in Epiphone's history, and Epiphone is X-Static to offer this exceptional guitar to players worldwide. An Epiphone Dave Grohl hardshell case is also included.

www.epiphone.com

Gretsch Unveils Limited Edition Chris Rocha Electromatic Broadcaster Jr.

Gretsch announces the Gretsch Limited Edition Chris Rocha Electromatic Broadcaster Jr., an instrument whose artful construction and sleek design is an ode to Chris Rocha, one of Latin worship music's most distinctive players. The Grammy-nominated and Latin-Grammy nominated artist joins a roster of iconic Gretsch signature artists including legends like AC/DC's Malcolm Young, George Harrison, Billy Duffy, and more recently, indie group boygenius and Portugal. The Man's John Gourley. The Broadcaster Jr. guitar has become a mainstay of the Gretsch catalog, and it's no wonder why—its compact body shape and the unmistakable sustain afforded to the instrument by way of a chambered center block has made this guitar a no-brainer for any player looking for equal parts elegance and sheer sonic power. Not only does this signature Broadcaster Jr. pay homage to an artist whose singular playing has created a new wave of faith-based guitarists, but it's the perfect instrument for anyone looking to discover their own unique sound.



"I'm absolutely thrilled to embark on a musical journey with my new signature Gretsch guitar. The craftsmanship and tonal

excellence of this instrument have ignited a newfound passion in me," said Chris Rocha. "Here's to countless melodies and endless inspiration – the LE Chris Rocha Electromatic Broadcaster Jr. is not just a guitar; it's a symphony waiting to be played."

Rocha's sonic exploration began at a young age when his father taught him how to play guitar at seven years old. He quickly took to the instrument and by the time he was nine he and his family started a traveling band and ministry. Rocha discovered his true calling at the intersection of music and faith in high school. Despite the risks, he recognized that nothing resonated with him as deeply as performing alongside his parish and friends. From there, he forewent a conventional college experience in favor of something more in line with what he knew would be far more spiritually fulfilling. At the age of 20, he took a position at a church in Beaumont, Texas where both his faith and love for playing and performing prospered. This quickly turned into a career spent touring with various bands and as he began building a name for his artful approach to the guitar, Rocha found himself at the center of the Christian Spanish music industry. Since then he has played on two Grammy Award-winning albums, was nominated for five others and a Latin Grammy, won two Dove awards, and one Premios Arpa.

The LE Chris Rocha Electromatic Broadcaster Jr. pays perfect homage to a guitarist whose playing is as technically proficient as it is sublimely emotive. This instrument seamlessly integrates refined aesthetics and top-notch craftsmanship, purpose-built for delivering Rocha's soaring lead lines and angelic chord voicings. At first glance, the vintage white finish and sparkling gold hardware make a stunning visual statement, setting the stage for the remarkable features embedded in this signature guitar.

The Signature Broadcaster Jr. boasts a 14" single-cutaway maple body with a chambered spruce center block, offering a perfect balance between resonance and weight. The thin "U"-shaped maple neck, featuring a 12"-radius rosewood fingerboard with 22 medium jumbo frets and pearloid Neo-Classical thumbnail inlays, ensures a comfortable and smooth playing experience. The heart of this instrument lies in its dual High Sensitive Filter™ Tron pickups, providing a dynamic range for players seeking clarity and precision, whether navigating layers of fuzz or embracing a clean tone. The control setup includes a master volume with treble bleed circuit, master tone, individual pickup volume controls, and a three-position pickup selector switch for versatile tonal options. Additional features include a Graph Tech NuBone nut, anchored Adjusto-Matic bridge, locking tuners, and strap locks. The Bigsby® B70 vibrato tailpiece with wire handle adds expressive possibilities to the playing experience. The gold sparkle binding and hardware further enhance the instrument's overall elegance, making the LE Electromatic Chris Rocha Signature Broadcaster Jr. a standout choice for guitarists who appreciate both style and substance.

"We are excited to welcome Chris Rocha to the Gretsch Artist Signature family," said Jason Barnes, VP of Product at Gretsch. "A long-time partner to the brand, he is an amazing player who fuses incredible virtuosity with a truly inspirational voice."

www.gretschguitars.com

Danelectro Introduces the Fifty Niner Guitar Series

Danelectro has introduced the newest addition to its line guitars: the Fifty Niner. Available in three first class finishes, the guitar is available in goldtop, jade top and red top finishes. The Fifty Niner guitar features Danelectro '50s pickups, and thrown in a CRL pick up selector and a bone nut for the ultimate tone. With an F hole and bound body, the Fifty Niner is available in three fin-

ishes, all with chocolate back, sides and neck.

Fifty Niner features include:

- Gold top, jade top and red top and chocolate back & sides
- Semi Hollow Double Cut Body with F hole and creme top body binding.
- Two Danelectro 50's pickups, CRL pick-up selector
- Rosewood fretboard and maple neck, 25" scale
- Wraparound adjustable bridge
- Black die-cast master volume and tone knobs



See the Fifty Niner Jade Top demo video:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0As1veApMs

Danelectro's Fifty Niner guitar carries a street price of \$599.

www.danelectro.com

PRO AUDIO

Proel PlayMix Mixer Series: Compact, Stylish, and Packed with Professional Features

Proel North America announces the launch of the Proel PlayMix Mixer Series, a groundbreaking line of mixers designed to deliver exceptional audio quality, versatility, and convenience at an unprecedented value. Engineered in Italy by Proel, the PlayMix series combines compact design with professional-grade features, making it the ideal choice for musicians, producers, engineers, DJs, podcasters, and audio enthusiasts alike.



The Proel PlayMix series comprises three models – each offering a perfect balance of inputs density, functionality, and audio fidelity. Available in 6, 8, or 10 input configurations, all models boast a comprehensive set of channel and master functions to meet the demands of modern audio production.

Key features of the Proel PlayMix Mixer Series include:

- High-performance mono MIC/LINE channels with low-noise, high-headroom microphone preamps, 3-band EQ with sweep MIDFs, and HPF.
- 60mm control faders for precise sound control and manipulation.
- Advanced DIGITAL section with a high-quality 24-bit built-in DSP, offering 100 studio-grade presets of single and combined effects such as REVERBS, DELAYS, and MODULATIONS.
- 48KHz stereo USB audio interface for seamless playing and recording through PC connection.
- Built-in MP3 player compatible with USB memory key or BLUETOOTH interface for versatile playback options.
- On-the-go stereo recording capability on USB memory key.

Designed to withstand the rigors of professional use, Proel PlayMix mixers are housed in rugged cases, ensuring durability and reliability on stage and in any demanding environment. Despite their ultra-compact form factor, these mixers deliver the performance of professional consoles, providing clean and accurate sound reproduction for a wide range of applications.

"We are excited to introduce the Proel PlayMix Mixer Series to the North American market," said Antonio Ferranti, President at Proel North America. "With their compact design, comprehensive feature set, and exceptional audio quality, these mixers re-

define what users can expect at this price point. Whether you're a seasoned musician, a budding podcaster, or a mobile DJ, the Proel PlayMix series offers the perfect blend of performance and affordability."

www.proelnorthamerica.com

ACCESSORIES

Hosa Technology Launches Limited Edition Pro Series Guitar Cable

Hosa Technology is pleased to announce the release of their new Limited Edition Pro Series Guitar Cable. The cable build is in keeping with what's made standard Hosa Pro Series Cables some of the top-selling, most-trusted guitar cables on the market: REAN connectors by Neutrik AG, 20 AWG Oxygen-Free Copper (OFC) conductor, and 90% OFC braided shielding.



Coinciding with Hosa's 40th anniversary in 2024, the Hosa Pro Series Limited Edition Cable will also feature a unique white REAN connector and white Techflex around the cable jacket. The Techflex adds a unique look and texture to the cable and an added layer of protection from the rigors of gigging, such as being stepped on or rolled over.

While having an all-white instrument cable is unique to Hosa, what they are most proud of is that part of the proceeds of each cable sold will go to benefit Save the Music Foundation. Hosa has partnered with Save the Music Foundation for the past 5 years, helping to keep music equipment and music education programs alive and flourishing in public schools.

"As exciting as it is to bring in a fresh look to complement our instrument cable line, partnering with Save the Music to give back to our community is even more important," adds CEO Mayumi Allison. "We've all heard about arts programs being cut back in public schools, so we felt it was our responsibility to help support future generations of musicians and creators. The music industry has been our home for 40 years, and we want to be a part of keeping it thriving for another 40."

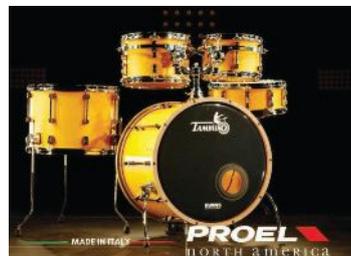
The Hosa Pro Series Limited Edition Cable (HGTR-000LE) are available in two lengths, 10ft and 15ft at a street price of \$24.95 – \$29.95.

www.hosatech.com

DRUMS & PERCUSSION

Introducing MIA by Tamburo: The Surprisingly Revolutionary Nesting Drum Set Redefining Portability and Performance

Tamburo, a leading Italian manufacturer of drums, is thrilled to unveil its latest breakthrough in percussion technology: the Tamburo MIA, the world's first truly nesting drum set. Engineered with the needs of modern drummers in mind, the Tamburo MIA sets a new standard for portability, versatility, and uncompromising sound quality.



Designed for drummers on the move, the Tamburo MIA is designed with a unique nesting capability that allows each shell of the drum set to all fit seamlessly and simultaneously within the bass drum, transforming it into an easily transportable package. Whether you're a touring musician, a session player, or a drum-

mer on the go, the Tamburo MIA ensures that you never have to sacrifice performance for portability.

The Tamburo MIA delivers the exceptional sound and playability that drummers have come to expect from Tamburo instruments, while adding maximum portability through its revolutionary shell design. Each drum shell is meticulously constructed from high-quality materials, producing rich, full-bodied tones with outstanding projection and resonance. From explosive fills to subtle grooves, the Tamburo MIA offers unmatched versatility for a wide range of musical styles and settings.

Key features of the Tamburo MIA nesting drum set include:

- Innovative nesting design for maximum portability and convenience.
- High-quality nesting drum shells with exceptional sound and durability.
- Configurable setup options to suit any playing style or preference.
- Premium hardware and components for reliable performance and portability night after night.
- Sleek and stylish Italian design that stands out on stage or in the studio.

“Our world-class drum luthiers at Tamburo are always striving to push the boundaries of drum set design and innovation,” said Antonio Ferranti, president of Proel North America. “With the MIA, Tamburo has created the world’s first fully nesting drum set that delivers the portability of an all-in-one compact traveling drum kit with the premium sound quality and performance of a traditional full-sized drum set. Whether you’re traveling the world or playing local gigs, the Tamburo MIA is the ultimate solution for drummers who demand the best on the go. No longer does a drummer need to limit their automobile choices based on the inconvenience of their beloved instrument. The Tamburo MIA means drummers can now travel as easily and confidently as any other member of the band.”

www.tamburodrums.com

SOUND REINFORCEMENT

Celestion Introduces the Truvox 0615 Loudspeaker Suitable for a Variety of Applications

Celestion introduces the Truvox 0615, a new six-inch mid-bass driver focused on superior quality at an affordable price point across a wide variety of use cases. Applications in which the Truvox 0615 excels include replacing six-inch drivers in fixed P.A. installations, OEM use in new portable or fixed cabinet construction, improvement upon factory car audio speakers, or virtually any situation where a compact, lightweight driver must perform bass-midrange or even primary woofer duties.

Thanks to the Truvox 0615 being designed to industry-standard mounting dimensions, replacement in P.A. cabinets, cars, bass amplifiers, recessed wall mounts, and other destinations is a drop-in operation that restores clarity and punch to hardworking but tired systems.

The Truvox 0615 is equally at home as the principal woofer in two-way cabinets or as the mid-bass/midrange element in three-way systems. It is also an ideal choice for door placement in cars, as many vehicles share its mounting specifications.

8 ohm impedance ensures the broadest possible compatibility with power amplifiers, whether outboard or built into an active cabinet design. The Truvox 0615 handles an impressive 300 watts of continuous power, but thanks to its sensitivity of 93dB, still reproduces sound efficiently when a more modest al-



lotment of power is on offer.

A pressed steel basket maximizes energy transfer while bringing the Truvox 0615 in at the lightest weight in its product class: a scant 1.6 kilograms (3.5 pounds). The ferrite magnet, 1.5-inch round copper voice coil, Kevlar-loaded cone, and M-shaped dual-roll cone surround work together to allow for high fidelity and low distortion, even at extreme excursion. A centrally located vent assists cooling, and front and rear gaskets are included for ease of mounting.

The Truvox 0615 is the first member of a new product family drawing on Celestion’s long tradition of the company producing high-performing general-purpose speakers as well as the world’s most sought-after drivers for guitar amplification. Truvox was a brand known for its P.A. speakers throughout the mid 20th century, and in 1949, purchased the company then known as Rola Celestion. Thus, the Celestion brand added a broad range of P.A. drivers to its stable.

Celestion will expand the Truvox line throughout 2024 to include eight-, ten-, 12-, and 15-inch sizes. True to Celestion’s ethos, each model will combine rigorous research and development with today’s best materials science, manufacturing processes, and quality assurance metrics. Celestion thus aims to make Truvox speakers the obvious choice when end users and installers alike are in search of outstanding value that refuses to sacrifice quality.

“This latest incarnation brings the famous Truvox brand back to life in the form of a superior performing sound reinforcement transducer,” says Celestion head of marketing Ken Weller. “The Truvox 0615 meets or exceeds competitors’ specifications in all areas, with greater power handling and at a competitive price.”

www.celestion.com

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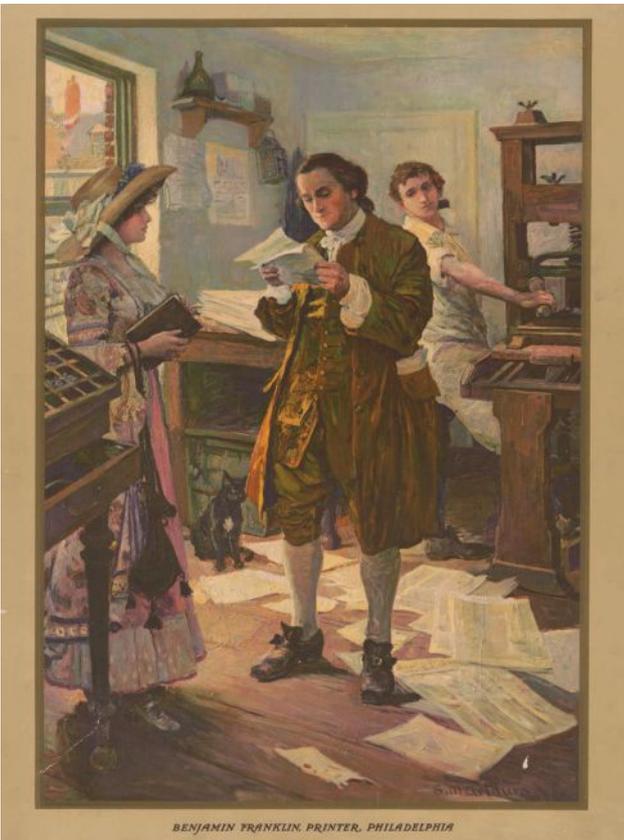
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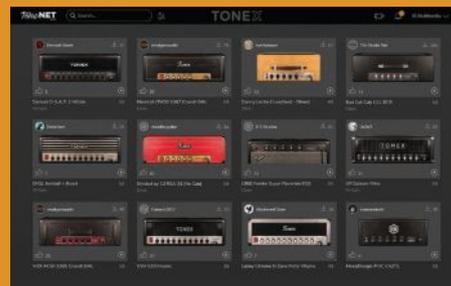
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