

# MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

36th 50 Dealer/50 State Review & Forecast



36



20

**UpFront Q&A:**  
D'Addario & Co's  
Brian Vance



55

**Small Business Matters:** 'The Book of Dreams' – The Ad that Made Everyone Start Talking



22

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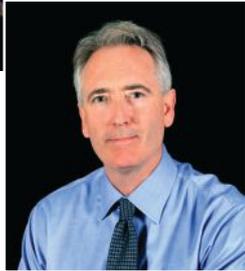


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Note From Joe

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## A Winning Game Plan to Navigate a Complex Adaptive System

**Our industry operates in a complex adaptive system—which means that a perfect understanding of the individual parts does not automatically convey a perfect understanding of the whole system.**

It seems to me that much like our industry, competition in life can be compared to any high-stakes sporting contest. Everyone continually adapts and hedges against offensive and defensive threats and strategies. Great teams know the best way to “win” is by anticipating, seeing opportunities first, innovating to make the most of those shots, taking advantage of every misstep of the competition and playing to their own strengths. This is the basis of a complex adaptive system (CAS), and they exist everywhere, from nature to sports, to industries to countries.

The thousands of NAMM member companies also operate in a CAS, always changing, evolving and compensating for the decisions made by others and any new developments in the ecosystem. Acknowledging this state of play implies a need to be prepared. And, those that neglect this need get blindsided—leading to some of the biggest failures in our industry, and in my opinion, making your attendance at The NAMM Show all the more vital to success.

The strength of a CAS lies in the fact that each player in the system observes the other players and makes decisions to improve their chances based on those observations. There is only one place where all these data points are on display in real time, and that is The NAMM Show!

The largest trade gathering for the music, sound and entertainment technology products industry allows you to take in the news of the day, observe your competitors, and glean insight into key business and technology trends. Not only will you improve your efficiency, but you might just find the next opportunity that could bring incredible growth to your company.

Successful leaders today all seem to have a particular ability to adapt to the changing world, always moving to where the opportunities lie. And like a three-dimensional game of chess, for every move you make, thousands of others are adapting to your decisions with choices of their own. This CAS makes for a resilient and ever-improving industry—one best positioned to fulfill our shared vision of a more musical world.

Where will 2020 take us? While no one can answer that question with any certainty, I do know that the most important clues will be found when the global industry gathers at The NAMM Show. I encourage you to observe the trends: which segments and companies have increased or decreased their exhibits, what are the main themes in NAMM U sessions, what generates the most excitement, and what major headlines, announcements and awards are making waves? Through your well-informed decisions, large and small, you will create strategies toward your own personal definition of the “end zone.”

Make no mistake, even complex adaptive systems break down from time to time. History is full of examples where even the best and brightest have failed. And when the system does fail, there are always winners and losers. Knowing this and being prepared is the best way to position yourself for the inevitable growth and opportunities that come from these resets.

Join your fellow industry leaders at The NAMM Show to see for yourself!

**Joe Lamond**  
NAMM PRESIDENT AND CEO

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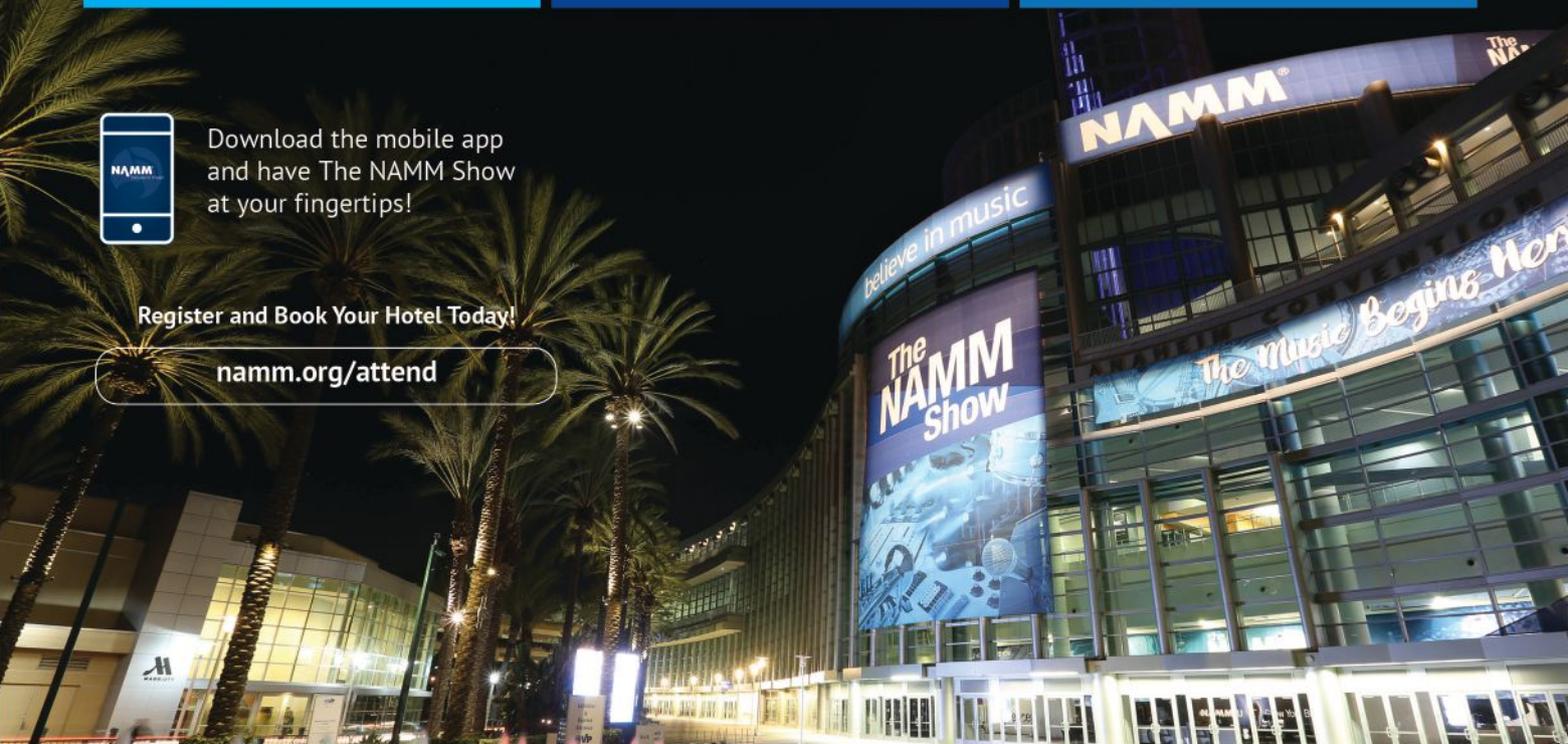
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# C O N T E N T S

# MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

**FEATURES** Vol.178 DECEMBER 2019 No.12

## UpFront Q&A

### D'Addario & Co., Inc.'s Brian Vance 20

MMR recently spoke with Vance about the innovations behind the exciting XT line of strings, available for electric guitar, acoustic, classical, mandolin, and banjo

### 2019 Dealers' Choice Awards Winners 22

This December we're proud to present the brands and products selected as the *crème de la crème* of the industry, as voted by retailers and readers like you

### 36th Annual 50 Dealer/50 State Review & Forecast 36

Based on our annual survey, 2019 shows promise for the coming years of MI sales, boosted by Gibson, Tagima Guitars, and repairs, among other factors

### 38th Annual America's Top Music Chains 51

Read up on this year's data on sales and store openings and closings from the biggest American chains in the MI world



## Departments

Editorial .....	6
UpFront .....	8
Supplier Scene .....	14
MMR Global.....	18
Trade Regrets .....	18
People on the Move.....	19
Small Business Matters .....	55
New Products .....	56
Classifieds.....	57
Ad Index .....	58
The Last Word .....	60

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# See Ya, '19!

As with every December, I happily cede this space to those who *actually* know exactly how good (or bad) the past calendar year was – the dealers! Best wishes for 2020, everybody.

“Each year, Music Go Round focuses on and grows our core KPIs. Those KPIs are the drivers of our business and are not necessarily tied to sales growth. Inventory health, expense management, gross profit, and other KPIs continue to improve year after year, along with our average unit sales volume. This growth is represented in the fact that we continue to open more franchise locations because of the overall financial health of our average store... We are happy with 2019 YTD results, but are never satisfied!”

**Tim Kletti, Music Go Round**

“Rather than prognosticate and ruminate about what the economic future may bring, we just try to improve our business every day and be judicious about our riskier pursuits.”

**Donovan Bankhead, Springfield Music**

“Tariff concerns add some uncertainty to the market, particularly as related to step-up instruments, accessories, and supplies.”

**George Quinlan Jr., Quinlan & Fabish**

“Sort of like wine, the older our company gets, the better it gets. We are very encouraged.”

**Tim Jones, N Tune Music & Sound**

“Keeping inventory updated and corrected with all the price increases due to the tariffs [is a concern].”

**Rosi K. Johnson, Mississippi Music**

“Online retailers have continued to get more and more aggressive with drastic price drops. The piano business always been about building relationships with customers. Our company has been built on exposing new piano products to

the public through outside promotions. Bill Boyce’s philosophy of ‘the outside drives the inside’ still works well today. It’s unfortunate when an online retailer sells solely on price and discredits a full service dealer that simply can’t afford to survive on low margins. If this trend continues, fewer traditional dealers will exist to create and inspire new piano enthusiasts.”

**Frank Harvey, Piano Distributors**

“2019 was an interesting and positive year... School music and educational institutions continue to be strong drivers for our business. Student musicians want to see immediate outcomes and results which means spending more time educating our parents and students on what it takes to find success and for them to enjoy the journey. Services are more important than ever.”

**Ryan West, West Music**

“2019 was solid and positive. Our teams abilities to earn the trust of our customers continues to translate into strong relationships and profitable revenues. The economy is very strong and our customers are optimistic and investing in their kids’ musical futures. Our company is well positioned financially and we’re prepared to ride out any ‘bumps’, if there are any, and thrive.”

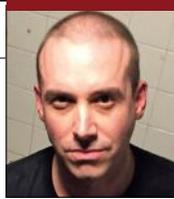
**Jeffrey Eckroth, Eckroth Music Co.**

“The impact of tariffs on sales this holiday season and beyond could be a significant factor on consumer spending and the sourcing of products for retailers.”

**Peter Sides, Robert M. Sides Family Music Center**



Christian Wissmuller  
cwissmuller@timeless.com



By Christian Wissmuller

**PRESIDENT**

Terry Lowe .....tlowe@timeless.com

**PUBLISHER**

Greg Gallardo .....gregg@timeless.com

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

Christian Wissmuller .....cwissmuller@timeless.com

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

Victoria Wasylak .....victoria@timeless.com

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

Mike Lawson .....mlawson@timeless.com

**AUDIO / MI ADVISOR**

George Petersen .....george@timeless.com

**LIGHTING / STAGING ADVISOR**

Nook Schoenfeld .....nook@timeless.com

**CONTRIBUTING EDITOR**

Dan Daley .....ddaley@timeless.com

**WEB DESIGNER**

Mike Hoff .....mike@mikehoff.com

**ADVERTISING / MARKETING DIRECTORS**

Lauren Byrge .....lbyrge@timeless.com

Matt Huber .....mh@timeless.com

Matt King .....mking@timeless.com

**GREATER CHINA**

Judy Wang, Worldwide Focus Media  
C: 0086-13810325171 E: judy@timeless.com

**ART DIRECTOR/PRODUCTION MANAGER**

Mike Street .....mstreet@timeless.com

**SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER**

Angela Marlett .....amarlett@timeless.com

**VICE PRESIDENT**

William Hamilton Vanyo .....wvanyo@timeless.com

**OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR / CIRCULATION**

Naomi Crews .....ncrews@timeless.com

Timeless Communications Corp.  
6000 South Eastern Ave • Suite 14-J  
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## Industry News

### KMC to Distribute Mahalo Ukuleles

KMC Music has announced that it has been tapped to distribute Mahalo Ukuleles throughout the United States.

"The holiday sales season is upon us and KMC has this iconic brand of ukuleles in stock and ready to ship," KMC Music vice president of merchandising Roger Hart said. "We have holiday promotions loaded into our system that are all set to go for our reseller partners. I encourage resellers to contact their KMC sales rep today to learn all about our amazing holiday promotion programs."

According to Hart, Mahalo Ukuleles were previously only available in the United States from KMC's sister company, Davitt & Hanser. "This new appointment strengthens and builds upon an already very successful partnership."

### Manhasset Stands Acquires Monarch Specialties

Manhasset Stands of Yakima, Washington has acquired the assets of Monarch Specialties, manufacturer of injection molded pencil clip holders.

"Monarch Pencil Clip Holders have been big sellers as accessories for music stands for many years and Manhasset is very pleased to add this music stand accessory to our product line. We have been asked many times over the years for pencil clip holders and it will be great to be able to increase the availability of this accessory all over the world," according to Dan Roberts, president of Manhasset Stands.

Roberts adds, "The majority of the Monarch Pencil Clip Holders that have been sold were for use on Manhasset music stands, so it was logical for Manhasset to add this product to its assortment of accessories. We are excited about the opportunity for Manhasset to offer Monarch Pencil Clips to our domestic distributors and to our network of export distributors."

- Industry News
- MMR Global
- Trade Regrets
- Supplier Scene
- People on the Move
- Letters

## Brian Ball Appointed CEO of Ernie Ball, Inc.

Ernie Ball Inc. has named Brian Ball as its new CEO. In his previous role as president, Brian was instrumental in leading a significant growth phase for the company. Brian will continue to work alongside his father, Sterling Ball, and brother Scott Ball as they continue to build upon the legacy that his grandfather Ernie Ball created in 1962.

Ernie Ball's three-generation family legacy is strong, and Brian's rich background and history with the company will allow him to serve the business while creating and implementing a strategic vision for all facets of the business.

Sterling Ball stated, "I am extremely proud to announce Brian Ball as the new CEO of Ernie Ball. The continued growth and innovation that Ernie Ball and Ernie Ball Music Man have had over the last several years are directly a result of Brian's creativity and hard work. The groundbreaking products like Cobalt Slinkys, M-Steel, Paradigm, and Aluminum Bronze, along with a full line of innovative accessories,



are just part of the role Brian has played. Corporate transition in any business is critical and essential. I couldn't be happier passing the baton to Brian. I look forward to watching Brian continue the legacy that his grandfather Ernie Ball started over 57 years ago. The future is bright for our family's business and legacy."

In his new position, Brian will be leading the company at a time of rapid growth, strengthening the company's market position within the guitar industry. He has been with Ernie Ball Inc. since 2000 in various roles, including artist relations, marketing, sales, and leadership positions. Brian has a deep sense of history and respect for the family brand, giving him the tools to stay true to the company culture while also keeping things fresh and relevant. He has also been and will continue to be an integral, hands-on part of Ernie Ball's objectives and goals.

See **ERNIE BALL** page 12

## Avlex Corporation Awarded MIPRO's Portable PA Product Line

Avlex Corporation has announced that MIPRO has awarded Avlex Corporation exclusive distribution rights to the company's portable PA products. With this new addition to its already comprehensive MIPRO lineup, Avlex is now the exclusive distributor of MIPRO products in the United States.

Fred Canning, national sales manager for Avlex Corporation, remarked, "MIPRO has been the world leader in wireless, battery-operated, portable PA systems for over 20 years and these systems truly deliver on performance, simplicity, flexibility, and portability. These go-anywhere, durable systems are easy to use and fully customizable, making them an affordable solution for public



address applications of nearly any size and scope. MIPRO's PA systems are trusted and are used by schools, athletic teams, houses of worship, corporations, street performers, tour guides, public safety personnel, fitness instructors, and more in over 80 countries."



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## Shen Named as President of Remo, Inc.

Remo, Inc. has announced that Brock Kaericher is stepping down as its president and Robert Shen will become president of Remo, Inc, in addition to his role as president of Remo – Asia. Brock will remain as chairman of the board and president emeritus while acting in an advisory role throughout the remainder of 2020. Ami Belli, owner and CEO, announced the transition during a recent shareholder's meet-

ing and thanked Kaericher for his years of service and noted his unique relationship with her late husband, Remo Belli, founder.

Kaericher joined Remo in 1996, coming from an executive background in the electronics industry, and was named president of Remo in 2000. During his tenure, Kaericher served on the NAMM board of directors as well as filling trustee positions on various boards of institutes of higher

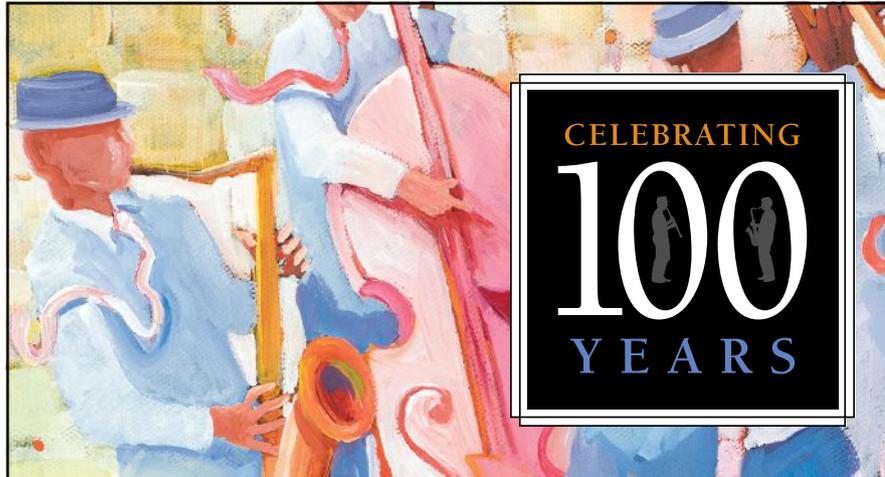


Robert Shen, Ami Belli, and Brock Kaericher

education. Kaericher stated, "I have been very fortunate to work with a wonderful group of people, both within Remo, Inc and with individuals from all areas of the musical products industry. I am so proud of the amazing accomplishments that have been realized during my tenure. The company has been able to follow and continue to foster the agenda of Remo Belli in remaining the undisputed world leader in drumhead technology and innovation while maintaining an unwavering pursuit of delivering products and programs developed as tools in furthering the application and acceptance of active participation in making music as an integral component of an individual's well-being."

Robert Shen, whose father Fredy Shen was executive vice president, has been part of the Remo family for his entire life and joined the company in an active role in 2000 during the start-up of Remo – Asia. Robert has filled multiple capacities during his tenure at Remo, Inc and was named vice president of operations in 2017. In accepting his new role, Shen commented on his desire to continue the great work of Remo, Inc in serving people from all segments of society and remaining the trusted partner of companies from across the globe in striving to present the consumer with quality percussion instruments and accessories.

The new roles for Kaericher and Shen will become effective on January 1, 2020.



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## LETTERS

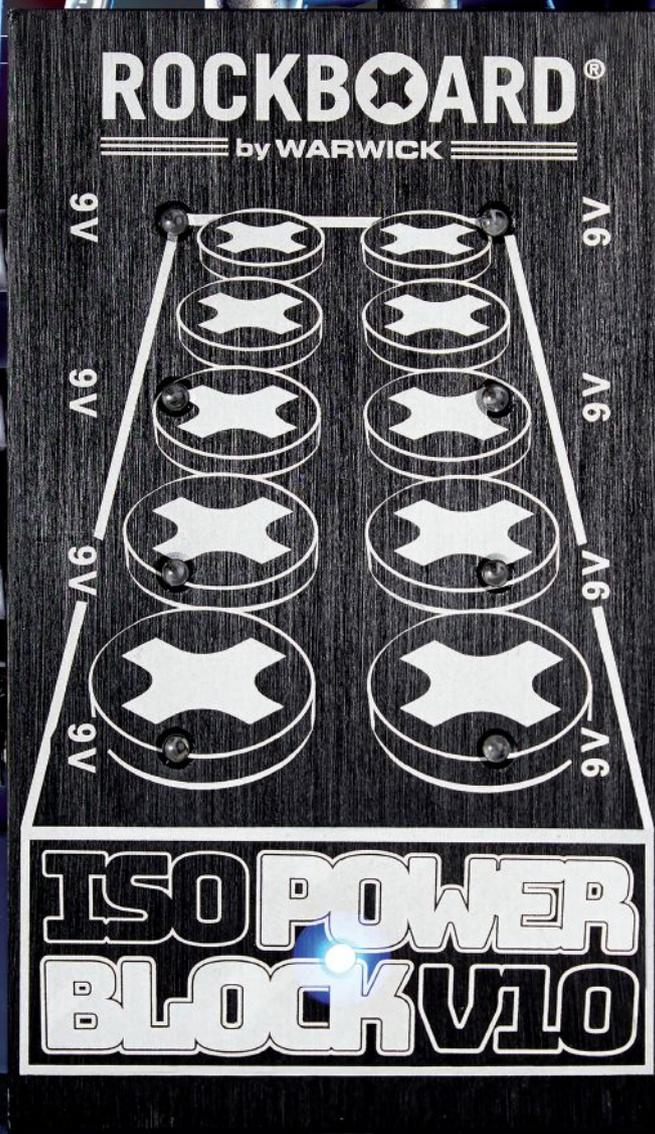
Hey Chris,

It's Marcelo – the guitar player and editor for *Todo Guitarra y Bajo* magazine from Buenos Aires.

I just read your November issue of *MMR* magazine and wanted to congratulate you for the Dale Krevens interview. You managed to synthesize the company's history very well, in an enjoyable way to read. As always, the magazine's information is top grade. *Muchos saludos* from down south, amigo!

Best regards,  
Marcelo Roascio

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**Ernie Ball** *continued from page 8*

As Brian notes, goals for the company moving forward under his leadership will include: building upon the tradition and legacy of the family business; assembling a core leadership team to help drive the brand and sales objectives forward; leading the development and innovation of new products; leveraging growth potential in both domestic and international markets; pursuing strategic brand and

artist collaborations; and continuing to build a groundswell of energy within the Ernie Ball and Ernie Ball Music Man divisions.

Over his tenure with the company, highlights accomplished by Brian and the Ernie Ball team include:

- Overseeing a period of record growth for the company over the course of the past decade
- The implementation of industry-leading technology advances in all areas of

business, including product development, artist collaborations, production, sales, marketing, and more

- Assembling industry-leading staff members who are leaders in their respective fields

- Strategic artist and brand collaborations with the likes of Slash, Metallica, James Valentine, Omar Rodriguez-Lopez, and more

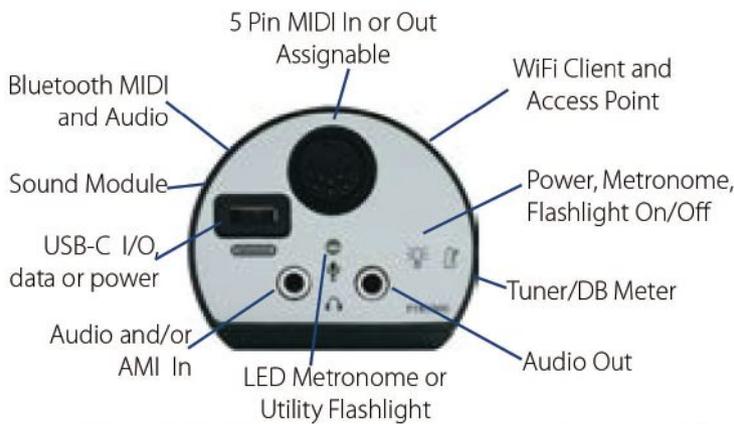
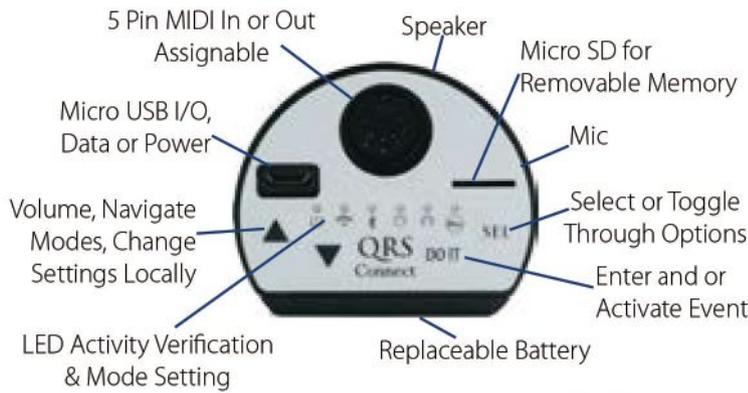
- Spearheading new capital and machine improvements to streamline production efficiencies

- The co-development of new string technologies with four officially granted patents: Paradigm Guitar Strings, Cobalt Instrument Strings, M-Steel Core Wire Technology, and Aluminum Bronze Acoustic Strings

Brian Ball stated, "I'm incredibly excited and extremely fortunate to take on the role as CEO of Ernie Ball. Since I was a young child, this has been the ultimate dream job for me, and I'm very grateful for the opportunity. Working for and alongside my dad Sterling has given me a tremendous foundation, and I'm looking forward to continuing to work with and build upon his and my grandfather Ernie's legacy to the best of my abilities."

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## Allparts Expands Bass Guitar Parts with Purchase of Leo Quan Company

Allparts Music Corporation has announced a new addition to its broad offering. The Leo Quan Company has been a major supplier of popular bass bridges since the seventies, well known for their increased sustain, punch and improved intonation range.

"We are excited to carry on the fine tradition of the Leo Quan Badass® products. Bringing them onboard is a big plus for both Allparts and our customers. These parts extend our product line as we strive to set the standard for guitar and bass parts," says Steve Wark, founder and president of Allparts, "The Badass bass bridges enable manufacturers, guitar shops and luthiers to offer bridges that have been popular and in demand for years. We are pleased to add these products as we continue to expand our product line."

## DW Acquires Slingerland from Gibson

Drum Workshop Inc. (DW) recently announced the acquisition of the Slingerland drum brand from the Nashville-headquartered Gibson Brands. Principals from both companies inked the undisclosed deal that will see the Slingerland name be shepherded by the California-based custom drum maker.

"No question Slingerland is one of the great American drum brands. It's also near and dear to my father's heart. He played Slingerland, as did many of his friends and fellow drummers. The history is undeniable," commented DW CEO, Chris Lombardi.

Founded by H.H. Slingerland, the Illinois-based musical instrument manufacturer began producing drums in 1928 and has remained a favorite among vintage drum enthusiasts. The company's most noted artist affiliations included greats such as Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa and Louie Bellson. Slingerland was fami-



ly owned and operated for more than 60 years. During the '70s and '80s the name was procured by several different companies, including Gretsch. In 1994, Gretsch sold Slingerland to Gibson Musical Instruments, where it has remained until today.

"In recent months we've been working really hard to put the Slingerland brand and that amazing 'drum essence' into the right hands," said Gibson CEO James "J.C." Curleigh. "I'm really proud and pleased to say that DW is now the owner of Slingerland." He continued: "All of us here at Gibson want to thank Chris for persevering on this and we know Slingerland is in great hands."

Slingerland joins a collection of American brands that also includes DW Drums, Gretsch Drums, Latin Percussion, Pacific Drums and Percussion and Ovation Guitars. DW is set to announce plans for a new generation of Slingerland instruments in the coming year.

## RPMDA 2020

The Board of Directors of RPMDA is working hard planning the 2020 Convention, to be held April 30 – May 3 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in New Orleans, Louisiana. The Board has structured the program to be a combination of educational seminars and one-on-one engagement to ensure you have the tools you need to move your business forward.



The RPMDA Convention is unique in that it provides a setting that encourages product knowledge, networking, and camaraderie among publishers, retailers and others in the music industry to discuss the important issues facing music retailers today.

For more information about RPMDA or the 2020 Convention, go to [www.RPMDA.org](http://www.RPMDA.org) or to the RPMDA Facebook page.

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# Supplier Scene

## D'Addario Foundation's Elevate Necklace

The 501c3 non-profit D'Addario Foundation, in collaboration with Heartstrings Jewelry, is elevating quality of life through access to music. The Elevate Necklace is a newly-commissioned, exclusive guitar string necklace that gives back.



The Elevate Necklace transforms retired D'Addario guitar strings into a sterling silver pendant wrapped with acoustic or electric strings and engraved with the D'Addario Foundation's heart symbol of community support. The pendant is set against an adjustable, sterling silver chain. One hundred percent of the proceeds from each Elevate Necklace goes toward financing community music programs in areas of need through the D'Addario Foundation's grant-making initiatives.

The necklace is available in three platings: dark silver with phosphor-bronze string, black with phosphor-bronze string, and gold with electric nickel string.

Michelle Dall'Acqua, lead designer of Heartstrings Jewelry, shares her vision for the piece: "Every set of strings represents someone's passion, joy, favorite song, or maybe a memory of someone they care about. Elevate is a beautiful reflection of the meaning we assign to music. It's a unique showpiece for people to privately cherish or share their stories with others. When you take home an Elevate Necklace, you're giving the gift of music."

The Elevate Necklace made its debut at the D'Addario Foundation's Back 2 School benefit, and can now be purchased online.

# Gibson Plays It Forward with Guitars for Vets

Gibson has partnered with Guitars For Vets to bring the power of music to returning U.S. military veterans. Gibson opened the doors of its Custom Shop in Nashville to debut a donation of 48 guitars and 19,000 string sets, as well as pledge their continued support to Guitars For Vets.

Guitars For Vets provides veterans with guitars and a forum to learn how to play which is in line with the new Gibson Gives mission. Gibson artist Sully Erna of the multi-platinum rock group Godsmack presented the gift to U.S. Veterans Henry Thomas, Pete Nugris, Brandon Branham, and Patrick Nettesheim, co-founder of Guitars For Vets.

"We have a problem in this country and it's suicide amongst veterans," explains Nettesheim. "When I started Guitars For Vets it was 18 suicides per day, it's getting worse, but it's my belief we're making progress and we hear this through testimonials all the time, 'this guitar saved my life.' It's a great fit to be with the Gibson Foundation because they're about supporting and creating musicians. With over 400 volunteers and 110 chapters in



Patrick Nettesheim (Guitars For Vets), Jason Kimmons (Gibson), Peter Nugris (U.S. veteran), Sully Erna (Godsmack), Henry Thomas (U.S. veteran), and Brandon Branham (U.S. veteran).

43 states we show up to teach guitar and when vets graduate, they get a brand-new acoustic guitar."

"It's an honor to be a part of this presentation to our veterans here at the iconic Gibson Custom Shop," says Sully Erna of Godsmack. "Thanks to our veterans and everything they have done for our country."

"Gibson Gives is an opportunity to play it forward and this is what matters," adds James "JC" Curleigh, president and CEO of Gibson. "We are pleased to join Guitars For Vets, when veterans come home, we should have solutions for them and we have solutions through music."

# Orange Amplification Launches First Online Rock Guitar Courses

Orange Amplification has launched its Rock Guitar Courses, which enables students to take the first accredited online guitar exams in the world to grade 8.

The courses are split into three stages: Foundation, Intermediate, and Advanced, which are equivalent to grades 1 to 8. Lessons are fun to learn with downloadable course materials, offering new and returning guitarists the skills and knowledge necessary to pass a qualification. Players can start a free 30-day trial online.

Students can choose the way of studying that suits them best; on their own, with a teacher or via the website with guided video instructions. The easy to follow lessons can be accessed by either a monthly subscription to all three courses or a one-off payment

which gives entry to the preferred course.

The downloadable course materials and online lessons have been developed by a team of qualified guitarists and teachers. Included are a plethora of resources including audio backing tracks and tests specifically selected to reflect different music tastes and support varying skill levels.



All of the Orange Learn courses link into their respective online guitar exam provided by OnlineMusicExams and recognized by OFQUAL. Students will only need to take three exams to reach grade 8, giving them a huge saving in costs and time. Courses and exams can be taken anytime and from anywhere, further reducing costs and increasing their educational prospects.

## Yamaha Honors Music Educators with Prestigious Legacy in Education Award

Yamaha bestowed the company's prestigious Legacy in Education Award on Marc Dicciani and Tom Aungst at the annual Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC), held November 13-16 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Presented by John Wittmann, senior director, Artist Relations and Education, Yamaha, and Greg Crane, manager, Artist Relations, Yamaha Acoustic/DTX Drums, Yamaha, the award recognizes distinguished Yamaha Artists and music educators for their extraordinary service to, and impact on, the field of music education.

"Marc and Tom are more than deserving of this recognition for their unwavering dedication to music education," said Wittmann. "They are wonderful examples of leaders who dedicate their lives to teaching others, and we couldn't be happier to present them with this award for their service to the arts."

Marc Dicciani's contributions as an educator, drummer, clinician, and author have been impactful on the lives of countless percussion students and organizations. He has led a fruitful career as a professional drummer and has made



Greg Crane, Yamaha; Marc Dicciani, award recipient; Paul Winterhalter, Yamaha (accepting the award on Tom Aungst's behalf); John Wittmann, Yamaha.

concert appearances with a wide variety of artists. Currently, he is the dean of the College of Performing Arts at The University of The Arts (UArts) in Philadelphia, as well as a professor of drumset and music business.

As a teacher and mentor, Tom Aungst has dedicated countless hours toward the education and development of his students, colleagues and peers. Aungst has been involved in the Dartmouth, Massachusetts school system for the past 24 years and currently serves as the di-

rector of percussion at Dartmouth Public Schools. Under his direction, Dartmouth has participated in the WGI indoor percussion activity since 1998, capturing five World Class Percussion Championships in 1998, 1999, 2008, 2009, and 2014, and has consistently placed in the top three. Aungst is the program facilitator and battery arranger for The Cadets Drum & Bugle Corps, as well as a member of The Cadets, Drum Corps International and the WGI Hall of Fame. He joined the Yamaha artist roster in 2000.

## Auralex Acoustics Supports Music Scholarship at University of Cincinnati

Eric Smith, founder and president of Auralex Acoustics, Inc., recently offered support for the John Von Ohlen Scholarship Fund at the University of Cincinnati. Smith contributed a donation at a kick-off fundraiser held recently on the University of Cincinnati campus in honor of the late drummer John Von Ohlen. The concert and fundraiser featured the U of C Jazz Department



Steve Allee, Eric Smith and Dr. Scott Belck

Jazz Orchestra performing the music of Woody Herman, with whom Von Ohlen performed with for several years. The concert, directed by Dr. Scott Belck, also featured former Woody Herman trombonist John Fedchock.

Smith met personally with pianist Steve Allee (a frequent collaborator of Von Ohlen's) and Belck. Smith notes, "I had immense respect for John Von Ohlen as well as his partner in life and music, Mary Ellen Tanner. I cherish the memory of sitting at the side of the stage and hearing her singing standards years ago, alongside John on drums and Lee Stoller on piano. It was a treat for the ages. I am privileged to be able to contribute to the scholarship in honor of these individuals whose music had such an impact on me. It is extremely important to honor and encourage Von Ohlen's type of talent, and to keep this style of music alive for future generations of musicians."

## Armisen to Host the 35th Annual NAMM TEC Awards

The TEC Awards have announced actor, comedian, and musician Fred Armisen as host of the 35th Annual Technical Excellence and Creativity Awards (NAMM TEC Awards),



Fred Armisen

being held Saturday, January 18, 2020 in Anaheim, California. Nominees for the awards, which honor individuals, companies and technical innovations used in sound recordings, films, broadcast television, and video games, were recently announced in Nashville at Summer NAMM.

"I have really enjoyed attending NAMM in the past, and I am so happy to be a part of this upcoming convention," says Armisen. "Music means everything to me. I'm looking forward to being there and to getting to meet musicians and music fans."



## Knilling Expands U.S. Workshop

In the latest investment in one of its legacy brands, St. Louis Music has expanded, re-organized, and renovated their U.S. Knilling workshop, enabling accelerating production to meet rising demand while maintaining and refining the throughput and adjustment process.

“We turned a workshop with factory-level demand into a factory with a workshop’s attention to detail,” says SLM’s Chris Meikle, senior vice president of sales, marketing, and product. “The results have been fantastic. We have massively reduced lead times on stringed instruments while raising their quality and consistency.”

Created with the help of a dedicated design engineer, the new shop is designed to incorporate advanced CNC machining and other tools and protocols to customize and adjust stringed instrument outfits quickly, while also offering premium advanced setup and comprehensive choice of product specs.



## High Frequency Pumps Up Energy for Bronco with Chauvet DJ Fixtures

Mexican group Bronco recently played at the iconic music theatre, The Rave/Eagles Club in Milwaukee. Miguel Angel Pecina Torres, the band’s lighting designer, matched their sound with some searing, power-packed looks when the appeared recently at the club’s spacious (25,000 sq. ft.) Eagle Ballroom. Helping him in this endeavor was a rig anchored by Chauvet DJ fixtures supplied and installed by High Frequency Productions.

“Bronco’s music is really interesting,” said Juan Ocampo, owner of High Frequency Productions, who specified the fixtures for the show. “They blend a variety of traditional genres to create something completely unique. The music is bright, effervescent, and rhythmic, so the lighting needed to match. Miguel’s design style really complimented the band’s music. It was also in keeping with my own personal aesthetic, so working on this project was a lot of fun.”

To match the energy and intensity of Bronco’s performance, Ocampo placed 16 Intimidator Hybrid 140SR fixtures on the upstage and midstage truss, eight units on each. The fixtures’ crisp beams and seamless color mixing allowed Torres to throw electrifying hues across the stage.

Drawing on the fixtures’ ability to go from beam to spot to wash, Torres created an infinite variety of looks to highlight the performers. The Intimidator’s dual gobo wheel allowed him to add extra movement and depth to the design.

Torres gave the fence spanning the width of the stage behind the performers extra definition by placing 24 COLORstrips along its front, back and sides. This fence served as a dynamic design element during the show thanks to the chases and fades Torres created on the RGB linear fixtures.

In addition to its Chauvet DJ fixtures, Torres’ design featured 16 Rogue R2 Wash fixtures from Chauvet Professional that were also supplied by High Frequency Productions. Positioned eight upstage and eight mid-stage, these RGBW moving heads were used to support the overall look of the show with richly saturated color washes.

“Miguel’s lighting design was as big and bold as the band themselves,” said Ocampo. “His use of bright colors and beams, fast-paced movement, and lots of deeply saturated, electric hues showcased the brilliance of the performance, while also matching the complexity of the band’s sound. It was a really awesome show.”

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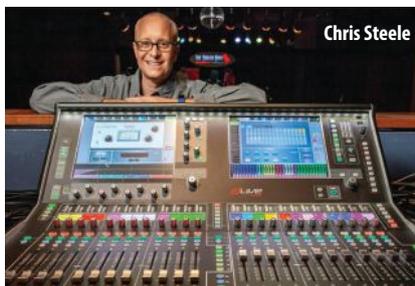
## Allen & Heath Energizes One of Denver's Prominent Concert Locations

The Soiled Dove Underground in Denver recently upgraded its sound with the addition of a dLive C3500 digital mixing system from Allen & Heath. Found in the heart of Denver's Lowry Field neighborhood, The Soiled Dove was built cabaret-style with a lofty stage and three levels of tiered seating. Widely known for its sonic and systems quality, the room features ample acoustical treatments.

"This environment was built properly," notes Chris Steele, the venue's production manager and audio engineer. "That fact allows me to focus on bringing what's happening onstage to the audience with every bit of the artist's true intent intact. I don't have to focus on problems of any kind like a harsh slapback that's ricocheting off the back wall."

Having served in his current capacity for over 18 years, Steele admits he was a digital hold-out for a long time running. "Even towards the end of the aughts I still wasn't convinced a digital console would offer me the performance I wanted," he says. "But everything has its expiration date ultimately, and the time came earlier this year to make the move."

Utilized in conjunction with a CDM48 MixRack, an Allen & Heath dLive C3500



Chris Steele

Surface was brought into The Dove following an extensive period of evaluation. "It's the perfect system for a room like this with pristine acoustics," Steele feels. "At 96kHz it has a very coherent sound—never 'wiggly' in the upper frequencies, it sums appropriately, and it has a number of features built-in that I would otherwise have to buy additional components to get. With this desk, I can configure my workflow in such a way that everything is on the surface, like my DEEP compression and effects. I like to keep things straightforward, but if I want to install an expansion card, that's easy enough without the use of any kind of external server rack."

"Adding the dLive C3500 system to all of this has been an energizing experience," Steele adds. "You can really hear the difference."

## On-Stage Creates Custom Stand Setup for Succar's Latin Grammy Performance

Peruvian-American percussionist and two-time 2019 Latin Grammy winner Tony Succar selected customized mic stands by On-Stage for his performance in the group opening number of the 2019 Latin Grammy Awards on November 14 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

Succar worked with On-Stage to create the completely custom setup, which featured two of On-Stage's MS9417 Mic Stands to go under his timbales, as well as two MSA9900 Overhead Mic Stands and two MSA9900 telescoping mic booms to reach over Succar as he played.

The On-Stage customized mic stands matched Succar's custom Timbales from Latin Percussion. With Succar shining during Latin music's biggest night, On-Stage wanted to reflect his hard work and attention to detail with a special look that kicked off the award festivities in style.

"On-Stage has been my No. 1 choice for stands for many years," Succar said. "The passion their team has for innovation and quality is what makes me really connect with the brand."

Broadcasted live on Univision, Succar took home two Latin Grammy awards, including "Best Salsa Album – *Mas De Mi*" and "Producer of the Year."

"Along with their stands, On-Stage's diverse line of products keeps growing, and they have the perfect fit for any type of pro-audio need," Succar said. "I'm proud to be part of the On-Stage family."



Succar and his custom setup

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## Production Light & Sound Goes Rogue with Chauvet Professional at Leeds Millennium Square

Leeds concert venue Millennium Square doesn't fit the typical image of a concert venue, but thanks to the foresight of the Leeds City council, this public space was fitted to accommodate open-air performances when it was created in 2000.

Production Light & Sound transformed this cleverly-designed venue into a lively rock concert setting that accommodated crowds 6,000 strong for a series of performances. Endowing the area's stage with the visual versatility necessary to support the diverse mix of artists appearing on it during the concert series was a flexible lighting rig that featured Chauvet Professional Rogue R1 FX-B fixtures.

"I chose the R1 FX-B for its sheer flexibility and huge creative potential," said Jason Salvin of Production Light & Sound. "Their continuous rotation effect opens the possibility of creating a wide range of distinctive looks. This was very helpful when we wanted to do things like underline the music of our early '80s shows with classic club and disco looks."

Salvin had eight Rogue R1 FX-B fixtures



vertically rigged on the upstage truss. With each fixture having five individually controlled LED heads, this created the appearance of 40 different moving units hitting the stage with light from multiple directions. This impression, along with the infinite pan and tilt rotation movement of the Rogue R1 FX-Bs, gave the design team the power to create an endless array of looks.

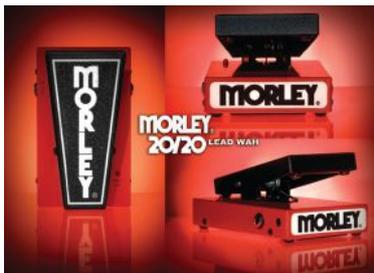
With the concerts taking place both during the day and at night, one of the biggest challenges faced by Salvin and his team was to guarantee high levels of visual energy during performances that took place in sunlight. The output of the RGBW Rogue units provided Salvin and his team with enough punch to deliver high impact shows all hours of the day.

## Morley Partners with Mogar Music as Master Distributor for France

Sound Enhancement LLC, manufacturer of Morley brand products, has announced their recent agreement with Mogar Music to serve as master distributor for France. The partnership aims to expand Morley's ability to service French dealers and tap into the excellent resources from a long-standing, leading music industry distributor.

Mogar Music began its business in 1987 following the 250 years history of Monzino family in the MI industry in Italy. In 2000 Mogar expanded its activity in France and Spain and in 2018 started the Business Alliance with Zoom Corporation to reinforce its long-term strategy to maintain his position as a major distribution solution for four countries in South Europe. Morley joins a growing portfolio of MI brands represented by Mogar Music including Zoom, Mark Bass, Samson, IK Multimedia, Gator, Mesa Boogie, Supro, Laney, Hartke, and many more.

For more information, contact Yann Bourdon, director of South Europe, at [yann.bourdon@mogarmusic.fr](mailto:yann.bourdon@mogarmusic.fr).



## Trade Regrets

**Ron Tunks**, longtime industry veteran and founder of RT Sales, a leading professional audio and M.I. manufacturer's representative firm, passed away on November 2, 2019. He was 70 years old.



Ron's friendly manner, easy-going personality, love of music and thorough knowledge of pro audio were ideal attributes for success when he founded RTS (Ron Tunk Sales) in 1979, and over the years, the firm continued to expand, now with offices in South Florida, Central Florida, Atlanta, Nashville, Charlotte, and Alabama – to serve manufacturers and integrators of professional audio, lighting, and video gear.

The consummate country gentleman, Ron Tunks had many friends and associates throughout the industry and will long be remembered.

On Monday, November 4 we received the following from NAMM's Dan Del Fiorentino:

*Sadly, **Bob Birmingham** passed away unexpectedly yesterday. He was 74 years old.*

*Bob teamed with his brother to purchase Steinway & Sons from CBS Musical Instruments in the early 1980s. The Birmingham*



*brothers were committed to restoring the high quality the piano maker had earned its reputation on, while focusing on serving its dealer base around the world. During the time he owned the company, Steinway introduced their Boston Piano series, which was created to assist the dealer by offering Steinway quality products for first time piano owners. In reflecting back on his years in the music industry, Robert pointed to the fact that he felt lucky to work with the people of the Steinway company and the many friends he made over the years.*

## ON THE MOVE

**DANSR, Inc.** has announced the promotion of **Seth Swartz** to vice president and controller. Swartz will manage the accounting department, human resource oversight, and information technology.



**Chauvet** has named highly-regarded lighting specialist **Gerrit Schottert** as its senior business development manager for the Netherlands. Operating out of the company's office in Belgium, Schottert will be responsible for the Chauvet Professional line.



Schottert will report to Steven Batslé, sales manager benelux for Chauvet, who said, "Gerrit is a tremendous addition to our team. He has a well-deserved reputation as a professional who knows products and is determined to get the job done right for his customers. We are looking forward to working with him."

**William Chan** has joined **QSC** as senior director, North Asia reporting to Markus Winkler, SVP Asia and EMEA. In this newly created role, Chan is responsible for sales and business operations in the North Asia region, including a focus on driving new revenue growth in Greater China and Japan for QSC Live Sound, Cinema, and Systems portfolios.



In addition, **Ron Marchant** has been promoted to senior director, sales and marketing EMEA, responsible for all QSC sales and marketing in EMEA and will report to Winkler.



**Andy Pearce** has also been promoted to senior director, Southeast Asia and Pacific, responsible for all QSC business sales and direct integrator business in the South Asia and Pacific region, also reporting to Winkler.



**Guitar Center** has appointed **Ravi Balwada** to the position senior vice president, chief technology officer. In his new posi-



tion, Balwada will be responsible for technology resources across the Guitar Center organization.

**Yamaha Corporation of America** has announced that **Dale Ramirez** has joined the company as the marketing specialist for its Winds & Strings department. He reports



directly to Brian Petterson, senior manager of Winds & Strings.

In his new role, Ramirez's core responsibilities include partnering with marketing managers to identify, develop, and execute marketing efforts that support their departmental goals, driving projects forward as a project manager on the team and planning tactical initiatives to market to target audiences.



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# D'Addario & Company's *Brian Vance*

By Christian Wissmuller

This June, D'Addario & Company, Inc. launched the XT line of strings with high carbon steel cores and advanced corrosion treatment, offering unparalleled durability, break resistance, and pitch stability. *MMR* recently spoke with Brian Vance, vice president, Fretted Strings & Accessories at D'Addario & Company, Inc. about the innovations behind these exciting strings, available for electric guitar, acoustic, classical, mandolin, and banjo.



## Can you discuss the genesis of D'Addario's XT Line?

D'Addario has been making EXP coated strings for nearly 20 years. While we have made significant improvements to our EXP products over the years and optimized the technology as far as the process would allow, we continued to explore alternate materials and equipment. If you have any understanding on how we function as a company, you'll know we are always looking for ways to improve and differentiate, so after exploring a number of alternative materials and processes, we developed a completely new coating technology that can be run in-line with our wire drawing machinery. D'Addario actually manufactures our own wire in our Farmingdale, New York facility.

By combining wire drawing and coating into one process, we not only improved the quality and consistency of the coated wire, but we now maintain full control over the process ensuring the utmost consistency. XT coating is thinner than EXP, which has tremendous benefits to the player in terms of delivering a natural tone and feel. The tone and feel of an EXP string was very close to an uncoated string, but XT strings sound virtually identical to an uncoated string. We can measure this scientifically through acoustic testing, and what we hear matches exactly what we see in those test results. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, this new in-line process allows for us to efficiently and effectively coat the plain steel wire, something that we are not able to do with our EXP coating technology. Lastly, the new XT coating process is environmentally friendly, which is important to us, so there are many advantages that this new technology has to offer.

So, the decision to migrate to a new technology was just the beginning. This created an opportunity for us to evaluate the entire string portfolio with a forward looking perspective. We decided to leverage the benefits of our strongest high-carbon steel (the same that's used in our NYXL strings) with the XT coating technology to deliver strings with the ultimate benefits in terms of string life, tuning stability and tone. I guess you could call XT a "super string" but NYXL still stands on its own given that it features a proprietary wrap wire that offers very distinct and advantageous tone for electric players. We also understand that there are uncoated and coated players, so now they have the choice of having a high performance string in coated and uncoated varieties.

## How did you go about testing materials and developing what would become the final XT product?

Testing a coating is tricky because some of it is quantitative and measurable and some parts are qualitative in terms of evaluating what



the human ear can perceive. We have an advanced R&D and testing lab here in Farmingdale where we can test the effectiveness of the coating as a corrosion inhibitor, measure the durability of the coating when being plucked or rubbed over time, and evaluate the effect of the coating on the string's harmonic content and decay characteristics, which relate directly to how bright the string sounds. Once we had the manufacturing technology figured out, and felt

confident in the technical performance of the strings, we conducted various rounds of player testing to get real world feedback. From there, we made refinements until we were confident enough to put the product into launch mode, which encompasses all of the elements of marketing and channel enablement, from packaging to content to advertising, et cetera.

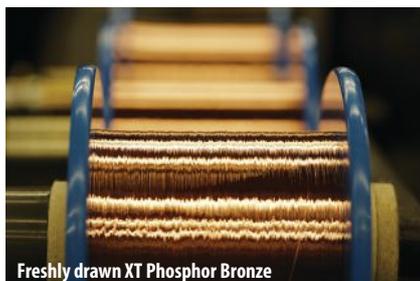
## In terms of production, did you have to acquire or develop any machinery or other gear to facilitate the new design?

Literally everything about XT is new, from the ground up. New materials, new machinery, new processes, new packaging, so yes, we designed some machines and made modifications to others, then adjusted our factory to accommodate all of the above. It was a pretty substantial project and commitment.

## Have you been noticing the increased price-point has been scaring off some players?

Premium priced strings aren't necessarily something new, but they wsomewhere between 10-40 percent of the market, depending on the string category and if you're looking at units or dollars. But, since the advent of coated strings in the late '90s, segments of the market have become comfortable paying more for advanced technology strings. Today, most brands now have some form of premium priced strings, but in order to be successful in premium strings long term, there has to be a value proposition. You might get a player to try them once, but if they don't realize the benefit, there is always plenty of value for the money in a standard string and they are likely to go back to what they were using before.

It's interesting, strings kind of buck the inflation trend. In broad terms, if you look at the price of milk or a gallon of gas 30 years ago, they were roughly one third of what they are today, meaning today's price is triple. A set of strings, however, are only slightly more expensive (maybe a dollar or two) than 20 or even 30 years ago. All the while, materials have gone up, labor has gone up, overhead has gone up, so companies have been forced to be more efficient and reduce costs, charge more and risk losing market share, take less profit - or a combination of all of those - or better yet, innovate and create more value for the customer. In order to survive, let alone thrive, you have to be continually investing in your business and future. It's a constant process.



Freshly drawn XT Phosphor Bronze

I would consider NYXL a success story for D'Addario. We completely re-engineered the electric guitar string from the ground up in terms of materials and process. As a result, from the market feedback and our sales, it seems that players appreciate the real benefits of a string that stays in tune better, holds its unique tone longer, and provides confidence that their strings aren't going to break in the heat of battle. From that standpoint, we're confident that charging a premium price is acceptable as long as there is fair value and a meaningful benefit. At the same time, the majority of players still choose to stick with "standard" strings, which today are made better than ever. The value proposition for a \$5.49 set of electric strings hard to beat.

If I had to summarize, I'd say that there is a growing market segment who is willing to spend more money and who will recognize and appreciate the benefits, but there remains a majority of players who are perfectly comfortable with and happy to use legacy products.

### What's been the reaction to XT Nickel Plated Strings – from both dealers and players?

So far, so good. While XT is available for acoustic, classical, mandolin, and banjo, the response from electric guitar and bass players, in particular, has been amazing. Given NYXL already has a lot of recognition and loyalty from electric players, there is a high level of curiosity and interest in XT electric. However, to be clear, XT is not a coated NYXL string. As mentioned, NYXL still has its own proprietary wrap wire, which delivers a very distinct, harmonically rich tone that is different than XT. The biggest advantage and differentiation with XT is the coated plain steels. There is a huge benefit in having the plain steels treated with a durable, imperceptible coating which will extend the life of the entire electric string set. Combine that with the tuning stability of our high carbon steel and you have a really unique product.

### How important are endorsing artist relationships to D'Addario? Have any players

### come on board as "official" XT endorsers?

Artists are always an important part of both product development and marketing. When you have the wide assortment of products we do it can be challenging to bring in a new product since so many players passionately love what they currently play. In the case of XT, we quickly on-boarded a lot of players across all instruments and genres.

### Any other developments in the world of electric guitar strings on the horizon that you'd like to share with our readers?

We're super pleased with XT as a product and with the adoption so far. We have plans to expand the XT line into other instruments, gauges and will be offering single strings sometime in 2020, so stay tuned for more on that. Out of the gate, XT promises to be another long term success, but you're only as good as your last hit, so we're keeping the fire stoked and have other new innovations in the works, as always.

### Expectations for the strings market segment in the coming months?

Overall, the string business is pretty solid and we expect to grow healthily next year, even if we didn't have new products to rely on. There are fluctuations in some export markets due to economic conditions and political environments, but overall strings are pretty stable and our segment doesn't have wide swings back and forth as the electric or acoustic instrument categories sometimes do. D'Addario strings are OEM for a lot of instrument brands, so we also have that foresight into what instrument makers are projecting for future demand of their guitars, which seems positive at this time. Between our branded business and OEM we're expecting to have a great year.

You mentioned the response from dealers to XT and I'd like to follow up on that. I can't say enough about the support that retailers have demonstrated for both NYXL and now for XT. D'Addario would like to take this opportunity to say "thank you" to every business owner, buyer, and salesperson who has supported us on our mission to reposition strings with new technologies and price points. We wouldn't be successful with these product lines without your support and it is our commitment to continue to provide the highest quality, most innovative strings that you can stock and recommend with confidence and pride. We realize a happy (not just satisfied) customer is the best thing both of us could plan and hope for, so thank you! 🙏

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27<sup>th</sup>

# Annual Dealers' Choice Awards

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

**M**MR's Dealers' Choice Awards (DCAs) are singular amongst the many end-of-year accolades bestowed upon MI suppliers by both consumer magazines and websites and trade organizations. While we're lucky here at *Musical Merchandise Review* to have on staff or within our circle of stringers and advisors a number of professional and semi-pro guitarists, bassists, recording engineers, lighting technicians, singers, orchestral players, and more, none of the winners outlined in this report before you were determined by us.

Others look to in-house or outside "experts" to select what instruments or product lines deserve praise, but that's not how we roll. This magazine is for and about musical instrument retailers and only they know what gear was helping them generate profits in the past year and turn customers into friends. Is it going to aid some MI dealer's bottom line if I volunteer what I think the coolest guitar out there is these days? Maybe, but it's more likely that learning what the majority of DCA voters



– retailers – say is tops in a given category might provide useful, actionable insight.

As with the past five years, 2019 saw more folks participating in both the nomination process and the actual voting than in the last calendar year. If you are reading this summary and wondering, "Well, why didn't I vote? Why didn't anyone tell me to vote?" – please pay close attention to our e-newsletters, website, and the actual magazine. We do try to make it pretty obvious when the DCA process gets off and running, starting in mid-summer. If you read *MMR*, but don't actually subscribe, please join us! Drop by [www.mmmagazine.com](http://www.mmmagazine.com)

and click the "Subscribe" button in the upper-left. You'll be qualified to vote in next year's Dealers' Choice Awards – and you'll also get industry leading news and insights throughout each issue.

To all of those who helped determine the nominations and who then voted for the ultimate winners: Thanks! Keep reading to learn about the 2019 DCA champs...

## PRODUCT OF THE YEAR: ALLEN & HEATH SQ SERIES



## ALLEN & HEATH

### Allen & Heath Limited

Last year, I wrote the following: "By refining and in many ways outright redefining compact digital mixers with their SQ Series, Allen & Heath has produced a line of product that clearly resonated with both end-users and retailers in 2018 – and likely will continue to."

Well, add "soothsayer" to my CV, because the SQ line continued to resonate to such a degree that Allen & Heath are walking away with their second consecutive "Product

of the Year" nod.

It's really no surprise that these mixers are still scoring points with customers and dealers. Loaded with features, user friendly, and beginning at absurdly reasonable price points given the performance capability, the SQ Series – which last year became the first ever mixing console to win this category in the history of the DCAs – is truly a special entry in the market. Congrats on back-to-back victories, Allen & Heath!

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## ACCESSORY LINE OF THE YEAR: D'ADDARIO

**D'Addario & Company**

There are lots of accessory suppliers out there to choose from – it's quite probably the most crowded DCA category – but few, if any, offer the breadth of offerings that D'Addario does. Everyone knows the brand for excellent fretted instrument strings (check out the *UpFront Q&A* on page 18 in this issue), but factor in Evans drumheads, Promark sticks, woodwinds accessories (Rico, Royal, Reserve), capos, picks, tuners, and much more and we're talking an absolute juggernaut and an "Accessory Line of the Year" champ that's going to be tough to knock out of the ring.



[daddario.com](http://daddario.com)

## ACOUSTIC GUITAR OF THE YEAR: YAMAHA TRANSACOUSTIC

**Yamaha Corporation of America**

With MSRPs beginning at just over \$900, the TransAcoustic line offers excellent, high-performing instruments at price-points that are within reach for nearly all. Superb build quality, impressive built-in effects, easy to use controls, and top-notch playability make these guitars stand out from the pack.

While TransAcoustics can be plugged in, the nifty feature that in part defines the TA is the "actuator" installed directly on the inner surface of the guitar back that vibrates in reaction to the strings' own vibration and generates genuine chorus and reverb sounds within the body.

Innovative, sturdy, aesthetically pleasing, and affordable = a win. Nice job Yamaha!

[usa.yamaha.com](http://usa.yamaha.com)

## ACOUSTIC PIANO LINE OF THE YEAR: YAMAHA



### Yamaha Corporation of America

The sheer volume of offerings makes it almost unfair that Yamaha is eligible in this category, but you can't fault a brand for covering all the bases – and I do mean *all* the bases.

Upright pianos in the low \$10,000ish range? Check!

Flagship, hand-crafted grand pianos pushing \$200,000 in price? Check! Industry standard instruments embraced and championed by educators, professionals, families, and casual performers? You bet!

This was a hard-fought category in 2019, but in the end Yamaha's robust lineup came out on top.

[usa.yamaha.com](http://usa.yamaha.com)

## AMPLIFIER OF THE YEAR: FENDER



The Fender logo, written in its signature script font with a registered trademark symbol.



### Fender Musical Instruments Corporation

If you're an electric guitar dork (guilty!), then you already know all the many, many classic amps that Fender has churned out over the decades: Princeton Reverb, Bassman, Hot Rod Deluxe, Twin Reverb, Custom Deluxe, et cetera – what's your favorite?

Whether a relative beginner or a platinum-selling rocker, odds are Fender makes an amp with the features you need at a price you can manage. Dealers appreciated the reputation, brand recognition, and healthy profit margins in the past 12 months, leading to FMIC once again reclaiming the title of "Amplifier of the Year."



[fender.com](http://fender.com)

**BAND & ORCHESTRA LINE OF THE YEAR: YAMAHA**



**Yamaha Corporation of America**

Yamaha is anomaly in the realm of the DCAs. While some suppliers are competitive in multiple categories (think brands likely to be in the running for the “Electric Guitar of the Year” and “Electric Bass of the Year” groups, or the “Home Digital” vs. “Pro Digital” Keyboard Line of the Year categories),

Yamaha is consistently in the running for essentially every trophy except Print Music, Accessories, and Lighting.

Band & Orchestra was one of the three wins for YCA in 2019 thanks to the same qualities that nabbed them victory in 2018: Innovative design, quality construction, and an impeccable reputation.

[usa.yamaha.com](http://usa.yamaha.com)

**DJ LINE OF THE YEAR: PIONEER DJ**



**Pioneer DJ Corporation**

With breakthroughs such as the XDJ-XZ, Pioneer DJ is raising the bar in this product category – and both retailers and customers took note.

While there is, of course, plenty of DJ gear from Pioneer DJ, let’s stick with the XDJ-XZ: a 4-channel system with 14 pro Beat FX and six Sound Color FX, trigger software-specific features using the 16 multicolored Performance Pads all within one sturdy unit. You just can’t beat that type of creative gear development – and in 2019, at least according to DCA voters, nobody did.



[pionerdj.com](http://pionerdj.com)



  
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## ELECTRIC BASS OF THE YEAR: FENDER VINTERA '60S MUSTANG BASS



Fender®

### Fender Musical Instruments Corporation

For something that could have been looked at cynically as a simple rebranding of an already existing line, the Vintera guitars and basses made quite the impression in the past year.

The Vintera '60s Mustang Bass features era-correct pickups, vintage colors, and the "vibe" and appeal of classic Fender basses. With a single split-coil pickup, 30" scale neck, offset body, and prices starting at around \$950, it's easy to see why bassists and dealers flocked to this gorgeous 4-string.



fender.com

## ELECTRIC GUITAR OF THE YEAR: PRS SILVER SKY



PRS PAUL REED SMITH GUITARS T.M.

### Paul Reed Smith Guitars

An axe borne out of a close collaboration between Paul Reed Smith and guitarist John Mayer, the PRS Silver Sky is a vintage inspired model that marries the best of the past with present-day innovation and resultant advantages.

The "inverted PRS headstock" shape helps maintain a consistent length of string behind the nut, which makes staying in tune more reliable; The steel tremolo is inspired by vintage design, but incorporates PRS's Gen III

knife-edge screws and trem arm; Silver Sky's molded metal jack-plate is curved specifically to make plugging and unplugging cables easy; the double-action truss rod is accessible from the front of the headstock... The list could go on for paragraphs, if not pages.

The thought, care, and craftsmanship that went into designing this guitar is virtually unparalleled in a mass-produced instrument and end-users and dealers noticed. Home run, PRS!

prsguitars.com

## HOME DIGITAL KEYBOARD OF THE YEAR: PRIVIA PX-S3000



# CASIO®



### Casio America, Inc.

When Casio “reimagines” one of their own products, they don’t hold back. Releasing the Privia PX-S3000 this year (as well as its sibling, the PX-S1000), this new keyboard from Casio brings players a chassis that is 42.7 percent smaller than previous models. The new set of keys is straight from the future; featuring not only a

new touch panel control surface, but also an app that allows you to control the device from a smartphone, this model has tech fans in mind. Add in Casio’s new Sound Source, which offers an authentic grand piano sound, and the Privia PX-S3000 is well-worth its considerable price tag. A “reimagined” gem from Casio, indeed.

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

## LIGHTING LINE OF THE YEAR: CHAUVET DJ



# CHAUVET®



### Chauvet DJ

Belgium, France, Zimbabwe: Was there a country – or continent, for that matter – that Chauvet DJ fixtures *didn't* travel to in 2019? Consistently one of the most relied-upon lines for lighting and stage effects the world over, Chauvet DJ products fueled the art realm this year,

and dealers took notice. From being mainstays in lighting rigs for tours traveling the world, to providing enticing visuals and backdrops for galleries, musicals, and clubs, Chauvet DJ remains one of the most ubiquitous brands on the list, and that likely won't be changing in the foreseeable future.

[chauvetdj.com](http://chauvetdj.com)

# THANK YOU

2019

**MMR**  
MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

**DEALERS' CHOICE  
AWARD**

**Product of the Year**

2018

**MMR**  
MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

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WWW.ALLEN-HEATH.COM

MICROPHONE LINE OF THE YEAR: SHURE



**SHURE**®



**Shure Incorporated**

You'd be hard-pressed to enter any show – whether it be a local gig or a major-production concert – and not see some Shure gear onstage or working magic backstage. There's good reason for their ironclad reputation, and a huge chunk of it comes from being a 94(!!) year-old company synonymous with quality and consistency. Add innovation to that list of descriptors, too

– just recently, Shure unveiled VPH, a long microphone handle made specifically for interview and reporting, and a new version of their MXA910 Ceiling Array Microphone, equipped with IntelliMix DSP. Without a doubt, this brand will easily cross the hundred-year milestone, thanks to the support and faith of dealers, musicians, and live production engineers everywhere.

[shure.com](http://shure.com)

PERCUSSION LINE OF THE YEAR: DW



**Drums**  
**DW**  
**Drum workshop**



**Drum Workshop, Inc.**

Founded in 1972, this Oxnard, California company hasn't stopped climbing the ladder of success since their modest beginnings in Santa Monica. Their largest accomplishment in recent history (besides their 47 years in the MI biz thus far), of course, was adding names like Latin Percussion, Gibraltar Hardware, and Gretsch Drums to the Drum Workshop brand family. As this year's DCA results show us, DW is called the "drummer's choice" for a reason.



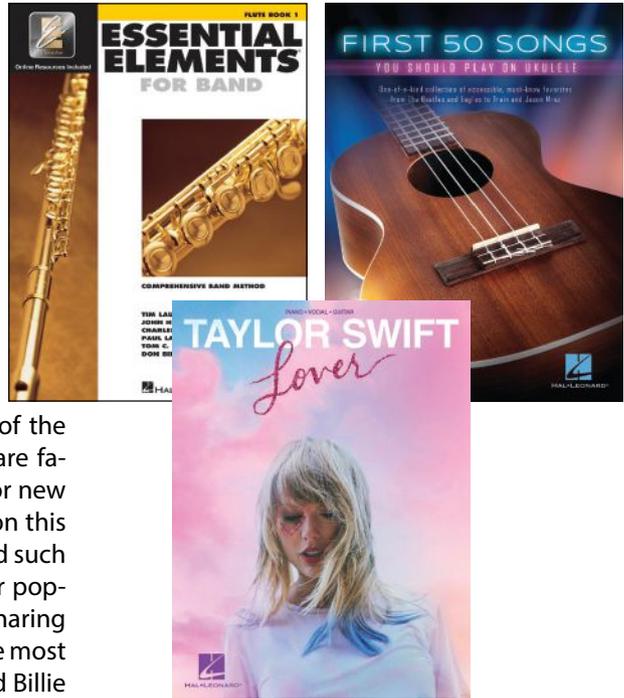
[dwdrums.com](http://dwdrums.com)

**PRINT MUSIC PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR: HAL LEONARD**



**Hal Leonard**

We say it every year, and this December issue of *MMR* is no different – Hal Leonard remains the only brand to take home the “Print Music Publisher of the Year” in the history of the Dealers Choice Awards – ever. Longtime readers no doubt are familiar with the brand’s long-running record with *MMR*, but for new subscribers, allow us to explain: not only has Hal Leonard won this award for all 27 years of the DCAs, but no other brand has held such a dominance in any category at all. It’s easy to see why their popularity remains at soaring heights – on top of their books sharing golden oldies tunes, they also offer songbooks for some of the most in-demand singers of 2019, like Lizzo, Taylor Swift, Khalid, and Billie Eilish. That’s certainly one way to stay with the trends.



[halleonard.com](http://halleonard.com)



**PRO DIGITAL KEYBOARD LINE OF THE YEAR: KAWAI MP SERIES**



**Kawai America Corporation**

This year, *MMR* readers cast their vote for a line that proudly hosts “the performer’s stage piano” and “the pianist stage piano.” Nabbing this DCA category for the second year in a row, the MP11SE and the MP7SE are models that players clearly can’t get enough of: boasting realistic sound, articulate control, and a variety of Virtual Technician sound editing parameters, the Kawai MP Series are the keyboards we see onstage over and over again, in every kind of setting.



[kawaius.com](http://kawaius.com)



## RECORDING LINE OF THE YEAR: PRESONUS



**PreSonus**

**PreSonus Audio Electronics, Inc.**

This was a particularly tight category in 2019, but PreSonus came out on top for yet another year. After praising their StudioLive Series III last year when they took home the trophy in the same category, it's clear that the StudioLive Series III – and other new releases, like the



PX-1 and PM-2 Recording Mics – are still in the minds of voters, players, and MI retailers alike. What's more, as of this past July, the StudioLive Series III includes PreSonus' entire Fat Channel Collection Volume 1 plug-in collection free with every StudioLive Series III S console and Series III rack mixer. Now *that's* how you craft a winning ticket.

[presonus.com](http://presonus.com)

 A woman with blonde hair is playing an acoustic guitar in a field of tall grass at sunset. She is wearing a grey t-shirt with a "FREEDOM GET TOGETHER" graphic and a colorful patterned shawl. A red Kyser capo is on the guitar neck.
 

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SOUND REINFORCEMENT LINE OF THE YEAR: QSC



QSC™



**QSC, LLC**

QSC understands that sound reinforcement isn't just about concert and club-thumping beats. Sure, their loudspeakers serve thousands – if not millions – of eager concertgoers in any given year, but the California-based company taps into the entire world of live sound and entertainment, not just the world of dancehalls. For ev-

ery venue that needs a new sound rig, there's a house of worship that needs one too, and for every DJ on the go, there's a presenter scrambling for an audio solution. Weddings, parties, corporate get-togethers that are actually cool – QSC is serious about all kinds of events, and that's why QSC takes home the DCA for "Sound Reinforcement Line of the Year" in 2019.

qsc.com

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# 50 Dealer/50 State Review & Forecast

## 2019 Shows Promise for the Coming Years of MI Sales...

By Victoria Wasylak & Denyce Nielsen



**ALABAMA**  
**T Shepard's Discount Music**  
**Huntsville**  
 Tom Shepard, Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** It was basically the same. My repair business might have been up a bit. I think the numbers are similar year-to-year for the last couple years.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** No, I've really been working on the repair side of business, as opposed to the retail side.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** I use social media a lot, and I've gotten great reactions from it. It's relatively inexpensive, if not free, other than the time you put into it.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** The VOX AC30S1 amplifier.



**ALASKA**  
**The Music Man**  
**Anchorage**  
 Al Green, Manager

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 isn't quite over yet, but I would say it's up just a little bit.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Ibanez, we took them on last year.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our most successful advertising is always The Book of Good Deals, it's a quarterly magazine.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** The Yamaha P-515 digital piano.



**ARIZONA**  
**Brindley's Music Center**  
**Chandler**  
 Bruce Brindley, Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** So far 2019 has not kept up with 2018 numbers. 2018 ended very strong, and that momentum carried into the first few months of 2019. Since then the business across the board has been struggling to match 2018 sales numbers.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** The strongest new line for us has been Tagima guitars and basses. The quality and value of the product was the perfect match to what our customers have come to expect from us. The Tagima line of instruments also seemed to compli-

ment the large array of Ibanez products our store has carried for over 40 years.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our marketing strategy includes an active social media (Facebook, Instagram) with information focusing on repairs, service, and lessons. As a result, we have seen significant increases in those areas. We have also used the local internet selling website Offerup to show our products and advertise all the services Brindley's provides. We have seen direct results from these two marketing strategies.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** The product of the year for us has been the Ibanez Promethean P20 20 watt bass amplifier.



**ARKANSAS**  
**Palmer Music Co.**  
**Conway**  
 Preston Palmer, Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** We are happy to say that business is way up in 2019, compared to 2018. This September and October have been the biggest retail months we have had since we opened in 2016.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We picked up Martin guitars this year. They have been flying off the shelf. Martin has proven to be a great company to work with! Kala is another that has been great for us!

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We really only do social media marketing, and we tend to focus on lessons, and entry level instruments. Creating campaigns around those areas has yielded positive results.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Surprisingly, the Boss Katana 50. Super cool amp, with super cool features, at a really great price point. Once we demo it to a customer, they fall in love!



**CALIFORNIA**  
**Tweed Hut Music**  
**Vacaville**  
 Matthew Taynton, Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 has so been a much better year than 2018 for us. And 2018 was better than 2017. We should be about 12-15 percent up. Hard to say due to the dip in sales caused by the fire and power outages.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Martin and PRS are both in their second year with us and we see growth in both lines.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our most successful strategy has been our consistent use of short product videos. We post on social media, new arrivals and special features... this sort of thing. It's nice to see the views and watches reported. And it's free.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Our product of the year would have to be the Yamaha Trans Acoustic line.



**COLORADO**  
**Rupps Drums**  
 Denver  
 Alex Simpson, Owner



Alex Simpson of Rupps Drums

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Gross sales are up roughly 15 percent for 2019, due in part to the positive improvements we made in 2018 regarding employee training, customer experience, E-commerce presence and community engagement.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We've had some success with the Meinl Sonic Energy line as well as high-end Sonor Drums (SQ1, Prolite, Vintage, SQ2).

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our marketing focus involves hosting as many local events as possible (drum clinics, private masterclasses, Denver Drum Society meetings, festival backlines, drum competitions and store sales) in order to engage and energize our community.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** The Roland TD-17KVX Electronic Kits have been a strong, consistent seller all year and sales are expected to increase during the holidays.



**CONNECTICUT**  
**Acoustic Music**  
 Guilford  
 Brian Wolfe, Sales Manager

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** I think 2019 is going to end up being a mirror of 2018 for the most part.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** No new brands, we have quite a few guitar dealerships already.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We used Re-verb and found it to be a great way to move used instruments.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Gibson Guitars, they are back in a big way for us.



**DELAWARE**  
**Accent Music**  
 Wilmington  
 Ronny DeNest, Assistant Manager

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** We're even.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our Facebook page.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** We do really



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**FLORIDA**  
**Blues Angel Music**  
**Pensacola**  
 Jim DeStafney, Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Blues Angel Music opened a second store in November of 2018. During the year, we saw modest growth in most of our retail business with the strongest retail increase in percussion. Long term rental of school band and orchestra instruments also saw a modest increase. Our audio, visual and lighting department, as well as our short-term rental department saw huge growth in 2019.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We started carrying Martin Guitars in 2019. Customers have had great interest in the line and we have seen solid sales.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our weekly free ukulele class is

a great draw and our strongest marketing strategy. The class is full of veterans and newcomers every week. It has been a big success in our second location and the biggest draw of repeat visitors by far. **What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Breedlove Guitars and ukuleles.



**GEORGIA**  
**Music Authority**  
**Cumming**  
 Melissa Loggins, Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 has, so far, been an amazing year for us. Student numbers and repairs are both up double digit percentages from 2018. This has increased our bottom line and has also increased our small good sales.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We haven't taken on new lines this year, but we have focused more on our selection of small goods. From keeping the ukulele wall stocked (we find

Ohana and Kala are both fabulous brands that do well for us) to avoiding products stocked by our nearest competitors, we try to give our customers an experience that isn't doubled somewhere else. We want them to feel special when they're at Music Authority.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our best marketing strategy has nothing to do with a piece of gear. It's a "PTO" style organization at Music Authority - the Music Authority Roadies. It gives parents a platform to be a part of our music program. They host special events, service projects, and appreciation gifts to our staff. The parents feel like part of the "Music Authority Family" and are more likely to refer their friends and neighbors. It's the most effective overall store marketing we do all year.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Takamine GX11.



**HAWAII**  
**Lahaina Music**  
**Lahaina**  
 Heidi Turner,  
 Sales Associate

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Right now we're up about three percent from last year.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** No specific brands, but we've been experimenting with different price points for ukuleles.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our YouTube tutorials from 2018 and 2019 have been our most successful.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** All-solid Hawaiian Koa Hawaii-made ukuleles. We can't keep them in stock.



**IDAHO**  
**Piano Gallery Music**  
**Superstore, Ammon**  
 Rulon Leman,  
 General Manager

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** I think all in all, it was a positive increase. There were some things that were down a little bit. A lot of the local string programs and school programs, they're struggling on the school side, so of course that affects us, but our band rental numbers were great, sales-wise.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past**



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**year?** We started carrying Schecter Guitars this year and I've had pretty good success with it.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We did these competitions, we called it a "share your talent" competition, and what we did is we would have an instrument up for grabs – a ukulele or a guitar – and we've had customers come in and play the instrument. Then we would take a video, and then we would put all the videos up on Facebook and have them share with their friends, or have their friends share it, and whichever video got the likes and shares won the instrument. On a day-to-day post we'd get a couple hundred impressions and a couple likes, but we were getting 40,000 to 50,000 impressions on the "share your talent" videos and hundreds upon hundreds of likes, comments, and shares.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** We usually sell acoustic to electric 10 to one, but the nicer Schecter Guitars, I usually sell them within a few weeks of getting them in stock.



Piano Gallery Music Superstore

good year for us. New school accounts more than made up for slightly lower numbers we saw at some of our existing accounts.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?**



The PM Music Center Staff

This year we started working with American Way Marketing, and we've been extremely happy. Great fill rates, great pricing, and they're just great people to work with!

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** This year we hosted many successful clinics, including our highest attended clinic ever, and their success was due to our multipronged marketing strategy - social media promotions, highly targeted email blasts, in-store signage, personal invitations, and connecting with local teacher organizations.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** I would have to say Yamaha intermediate and pro band instruments. We've been a big Yamaha store for a long time, but this year was a banner year for sales of Yamaha step-up band instruments from flutes to tubas.



**ILLINOIS**  
PM Music Center  
Aurora  
Eric Downs, Purchasing Manager

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 was a



**INDIANA**  
Maxwell's House of Music  
Jeffersonville  
Mike McAfee, Buyer



Mike McAfee of Maxwell's House of Music

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** I'm thrilled to say our 2019 has not just been better than 2018, but



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good enough that we're expanding for the second time in five years. Our focus of growing more students, closing more sales and doing more installations has paid off.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Fender's Tone Master line of amplifiers have dazzled everyone! We added the Washburn Bella Tono line of guitars and cannot keep them in. Our new Paul Reed Smith guitars and amps have moved well for us as have every Steinberg interface we carry.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Building our student count through after-school outreach, band building programs and free monthly concerts. We're approaching 500 individual students per week ranging in age from 7 to 70. The impact this focus has made on our success is massive.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** The Fender Tone Master amps are absolutely amazing and get our vote. If you haven't played on yet... do! A close second would be the upgraded Gretsch Electromatic series Jet guitars.

here is one thing. Following through and making the guest experience awesome, and ending with a sale is the rest of the job.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** We are privileged to carry so many great products...all having different strengths and niches for different types of clients. For our business, reducing everything down to just numbers, Yamaha B&O is absolutely #1.



**KANSAS**  
**Garten's Music & the Wichita Music Academy, Wichita**  
Cindy and Michael Houston, Owners

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** We saw a decline in all keyboard instrument lines but an increase in lessons as well as guitar and ukulele.

When Cindy's parents started our company 50 years ago, it was 100 percent electronic organ service. We have evolved over the years by adding retail and education. Today service is less than 1 percent of our income and, for the first time, education edged above retail by 2 percent.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Ortega ukuleles are new here. Sometimes ukuleles from some brands look quite similar to other brands; Ortega has managed to create some unique instruments that look great and sound great.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our 50th anniversary celebration in September was amazing! We promoted events on social media, sent press releases and invited dignitaries. Over the course of that week, we received a proclamation from our city council, a tribute from the Kansas Senate, held a ribbon cutting hosted by the Chamber of Commerce, were featured in an article in the daily paper, hosted a live, on-site broadcast by our local ABC TV affiliate, and had a big anniversary sale over the weekend. Lots of free publicity and exposure!

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Private music lessons. These are up 24 percent from last year.



Cindy and Michael Houston of Garten's Music



**IOWA**  
**Ray's Midbell Music**  
Sioux City  
Mike Guntren, President

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Although most areas are fairly similar from 2018 to 2019, we saw a small overall increase in 2019.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We're really having success with Cort guitars.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We believe that from the cleanliness of the restrooms, to the way guests are greeted, to advertising campaigns, to salespersonship, "it's all marketing." As for advertising mediums, we use social platforms, direct mail, and even a little TV, and in the end, email is still king. We've found email coupled with good salespersonship and communication within our team gives us the best results. This being said, there is no silver bullet. Getting them



Mike Guntren of Ray's Midbell Music



**KENTUCKY**  
**Willcutt Guitars**  
**Lexington**  
 James Adkins,  
 President

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** In 2019 we have seen almost 10 percent growth overall.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We just signed back on with Gibson. They are making incredible guitars and their offerings are exactly what the customers have been wanting.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Being more active on Instagram has definitely helped with marketing and reaching the right customers. **What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** We have seen a big increase in Fret Doctor sells this year. It is an incredible fingerboard conditioner.



**LOUISIANA**  
**Christy Music**  
**Slidell**  
 Sean Murphy, Sales  
 Associate

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** We've stayed kind of even so far. We're up some months, down others, so it kind of levels out.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Not really, we have increased a couple brands, dropped a couple brands. We haven't seen any significant change in our numbers, as far as that goes, we're just increasing the quality of the materials we're bringing in.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Word of mouth. We've been here for 41 years, so we get more out of word of mouth than we do any other way.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Tagima Guitars.



**MAINE**  
**Mainely Music**  
**Ellsworth**  
 Chris Jovanelli,  
 Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Sales were up. 2018 was up over 2017 too, it's been climbing steady for the last two and a half years. Even more so now that they tax the internet.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Devil Cat amplifiers.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Treat customers well.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Chris Mitchell electric guitars.



**MARYLAND**  
**Chuck Levin's**  
**Washington Music**  
**Center, Wheaton**  
 Adam Levin, Gen. Mgr.

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 was a strong year, despite its obstacles with tariffs, implementing out of state taxes and the like. It was a good year for gear.

**NS**  
 DESIGN

**GRACE CHATTO**  
 Band: Clean Bandit  
 Featured Video: Rockabye  
 Instrument: NS CR4 Cello

**sales@NEDSTEINBERGER.com**

Photo by Michelle Fackman

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** This year we really started rolling with eurorack modular synths. It has been a very fun and exciting new category. New brands that have shined this year are Victory Amps, Rampone and Cazzani Saxophones, and Dexibell keyboards.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Focusing even more on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube and creating engaging, informative and fun content. The level of engagement we see and the response we get, both locally and customers from elsewhere, has been incredibly positive.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** The Fender Acoustisonic Tele was a fun one – people didn't really know what to think when they saw it, but once people got hands on it they could see the massive creative potential. Others that are definitely worth noting: Yamaha MODX and Roland Fantom were both incredible releases that did extremely well out of the gate. BOSS SY-1, KORG Minilogue XD, QSC KS118, Allen and Heath SQ, RODE Rodecaster Pro, Roland TD17-KVX all had great roll outs and have been strong sellers all year.



**MASSACHUSETTS**  
**University Music**  
 Lowell  
 Steve Bears, Combo Manager

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** I believe it was up very slightly.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** There really hasn't been to many changes as far as bringing new brands in, we've been pretty stable.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Most of our marketing we keep extremely local. It's a lot of things like dealing with charities, and we just did a raffle for breast cancer, we raffled off a couple of musical instruments. We support the local baseball teams – people come in here and we give them free tickets to the game. We do a lot of that kind of stuff, very "close-to-home" things, because that's where 90 percent of our business is. We did just start this year selling on Reverb. It's an outlet for stuff that we don't move that easily in the store, but there's a market for in the wider world.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Cannonball saxophones.



**MICHIGAN**  
**B's Music Shop**  
 Mt. Pleasant  
 Brian Hansen, Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 has been a slower year for us in terms of sales. We are still performing strongly, but mid-year we began to show smaller sales that previous years. We are working hard to change that for our 2020 predictions!

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We've been picking up much more smaller pedal companies. We have a large pedal selection and going into companies like Mattoverse, Deep Space Devices, Alexander, RaingerFx, et cetera has really allowed us to have some truly unique things in the market. This industry is so saturated with "me too" products that it's fun to show off things that customers won't stumble upon online or at other stores.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We have really leaned harder into Instagram and showing off the parade of things that come through here. For us, nothing beats direct social interaction with our clients.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** We have really had success with Reverend Guitars this year. They always seem to just be the guitar people pick when they pull the trigger.



**MINNESOTA**  
**The Music Mart**  
 Mankato  
 Joe Meidl, President

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** It's up tremendously, but I think it's a little due to adding locations and buying other locations. In the last three years, I've added two locations, so it's been very good. Up 20 to 30 percent.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Currently in one of my newer locations, I took on Taylor Guitars.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Going online with everything. A combination of online [sales] with our regulars in the school music world.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Snark tuners. When people buy a guitar, they buy a Snark.

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**MISSISSIPPI**  
**Mississippi Music**  
**Flowood, Meridian, Biloxi, Hattiesburg**  
 Rosi K. Johnson, President/CEO

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Business was up.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Franklin Straps.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Social Media videos.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Roland/ Boss Katana Amplifier KTN-50.



**MISSOURI**  
**Will West Music & Sound**  
**Jefferson City**  
 Will West, Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2018 and 2019 have been similar from a dollar standpoint.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We reauthorized with Gibson after several years layoff and they have been well received.



**MONTANA**  
**Music Villa**  
**Bozeman**  
 Paul Decker, Owner



Music Villa's Paul Decker

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Looking to be about 12 percent up for the year.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Breedlove guitars and Reverend guitars.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Continuing to remodel.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Bose S-1, Gibson J-45.



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## 50 Dealer/50 State

44

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**NEBRASKA**  
**CGS Music**  
**Lincoln**  
Bob Popek,  
Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 was very good. I know a lot of dealers are losing sales to the internet, but because we do a lot of repairs and restoration, we don't have that problem.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We do sell instruments, but most of our business is repairs and restoration, so no, no new lines or products.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our marketing strategy is all word of mouth.



**NEVADA**  
**Absolute Music**  
**Reno**  
Steve Gibson,  
Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 has been a little strange for Absolute Music. While we are on track to exceed 2018 in gross receipts, new rentals (which are our bread and butter) are down almost ten percent. We believe we got fewer new rentals this year because our shopping center has been under major construction for the last 4 to 5 months. The construction is almost done now, thankfully, but it has been pretty hard on us. There were many times that the store looked closed because it was so torn up out front. We knew going in, that the construction was going to hurt, so we worked really hard to make sure people knew we were here for them. In the end, I'm almost surprised that we only lost as much as we did. And in the end, our total sales numbers are up because we worked hard and forced ourselves out of our comfort zones. We were able to get through this difficult transition and found some amazing new opportunities along the way.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We added the Buffet Crampon line back to our offering this year. We let that line go years ago, but are very happy



Steve Gibson of Absolute Music

to have it back in our lineup. They have really solid brands with great reputations. On the guitar side of our business, we added Alvarez guitars, and this has been a great addition that has single-handedly doubled sales in that department.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our most successful marketing happens when we are out of the store where our customers are. Absolute Music has a display set up at as many concerts, festivals, and competitions as possible. We offer free emergency instrument repair and have a selection of instruments and accessories to show off and sell. We pay for the opportunity to advertise in the printed programs at these events, and we're even the title sponsor for a few of them. Being out and about at these events has been very good for our business. We physically go to where our customers are. Today's consumers spend a lot of time on the internet; trying to meet our customers on the web is far more difficult, there are too many distractions there.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** This is a hard question to answer with one singular product. On the accessory side of the business, we are constantly pleased with D'Addario and their expanding line of Reserve mouthpieces has been a consistent best seller for us. On the instrument side of the business, Yamaha products never cease to amaze me. If I have to choose just one, I'll go with their new Mariachi trumpet because the excitement it has drummed up in our store has been pretty amazing. The only products that should get more praise from us are all the Hohner Kazoos and Trophy Slide Whistles we sell at our booths while we are out at those concerts, festivals, and competitions I was talking about before.



**NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
**Gary's Guitars**  
**Portsmouth**  
Marc McElroy,  
Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** We managed to increase retail sales in 2019. Overall,



Gary's Guitars' owner Marc McElroy

foot traffic is down, but decreasing opportunities in the online sales has convinced us to emphasize our brick-and-mortar status.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Just some traditional medium size makers. Results have been good but nothing amazing.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our most successful marketing strategy is to concentrate in the social media realm for marketing.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Our product of the year, based on sales, would be the Fishman Loudbox Mini. It's an easy up sell, and in all forms of amplification small is the new big. Therefore, we're going to concentrate on small amplifiers in general.



**NEW JERSEY**  
The Music Shop  
Boonton  
David Scott, Director of Sales



**The Music Shop**

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 has been a great year for The Music Shop. We are continuing to grow and are always expanding the products and services we offer.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Our new and exciting product this year is the ZOE clarinet by Buffet. It is a professional model, designed for a younger player looking for an upgrade. The bore is slightly smaller, which allows for students to play more freely while staying in tune.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our most successful marketing strategy in 2019 has been listening to our customers. Sometimes it's better to be reactive than proactive. Rather than bombarding our customers with offers and promotions, we have focused more on receiving feedback and implementing changes based on that feedback. After all, our customers are the most important part of our business.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** We don't have a true "product of the year" as our business is quite diversified, but we have seen growth in our printed music sales. We have a huge selection of sheet music, and we will special order anything we don't carry.



**NEW MEXICO**  
Musicality  
Albuquerque  
Michael Keith, Owner



**Michael Keith of Musicality**

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Musicality is entering our second year of business, and 2019 sales are up from 2018. We're hitting our goal of a 25 percent growth.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We've added Ohana and Diamond Head ukuleles, and Washburn Guitars. We're a music, arts, band and orchestra instrument rental affiliate dealer, so we're able to add products and lines through their music instrument sales depart-

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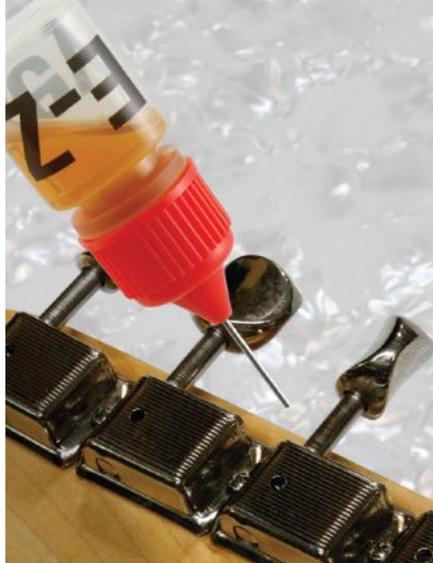


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ment easily. We've expanded our print music and combo instrument departments over the last three months, which has been driving our back-to-school sales.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We employ direct mail, social media, Amazon, and Google advertising. We've had the best luck using Google and Facebook advertising. While Amazon is a very competitive marketplace, we've seen increases over 25 percent in the last year.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Our "product of the year" for 2019 is ukuleles.



**NEW YORK**  
**Mike Risko Music**  
Ossining  
Mike Risko,  
Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?**

In 2019 we implemented more technology in our lesson program. Through the use of live video lessons, we are able to have a much greater reach teaching student from other states, as well as having teachers working from across the country. The live video lessons have been really exciting. We are able to record the lesson and examples played by the teacher, as well as write out assignments, and send that email along to the students for further review.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** This year we started working with Alvarez Yairi Series, and they make great guitars at all price points. They also offer many body shapes and sizes of guitars, which is a great because guitar is one of the most popular instruments to study at our school. The guitars start at \$170 and go up to \$2699. They are easy to play, set up well from the factory, and sound great.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our most successful marketing strategy for 2019 was hold community events at our space. We have in store clinics and concerts with artists from the manufacturers that we deal with, pet parades, fireman's parade watching party for our community, PTA shopping events, ukulele group jam, and more.



Mike Risko Music owner  
Mike Risko



**NORTH CAROLINA**  
**Tempo Music**  
Hendersonville  
Michael Hall,  
Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Better.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** No.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Social media, paying more attention to online presence and website.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Without a doubt ukuleles, can't keep them on the shelves.



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
**Flatland Guitar and Lutherie**  
Fargo  
Brett Marcuson, Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** We've seen growth throughout the store. We opened 2014 and have been growing every year. 2019 has been better than previous years with additions of new product lines and increase in new customers.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We try to expand and stay current on the brands we currently deal; Taylor, Yamaha, PRS have all seen higher sales. We added FMIC brands like Gretsch, Jackson, and Charvel in late 2018/early 2019 have been doing very well for us.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our most successful marketing strategy would be simply having the gear our customers want, and giving them a selection of other products to choose from. Combined with competitive prices and above and beyond customer service, customers keep coming back and new customers walk through our door.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Paul Reed Smith Silver Sky.



**OHIO**  
**A Max Music Ltd**  
Akron  
Julie Ross, Manager/  
Director of Music

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** We noticed an uptick in business that started the last part of 2018 and has kept on going strong in 2019.

2019 has been very busy. The customers keep coming in and buying. We rarely see slow days anymore.

We have a lot of repeat customers, but we also keep getting lots of new customers all the time. I've noticed that customers are splurging on purchases. There is also a trend with older adults either wanting to play an instrument or getting back into playing. Things have gone so good this year we were able to expand our stores square footage. We tore down a wall, raised a ceiling, and made our store bigger. It has been an exciting year. We are one of the few full-line music stores still around. We carry pianos, guitars, amps, drums, school band and orchestra, recording, sound reinforcement, and everything in between. We try to cater to all their musical needs under one roof. We are all things music. We are the old fashion brick and mortar music store whose family history in the music business dates back to the 1940s. Our store was so packed with merchandise, you almost had to walk sideways, so we had no choice but to expand.

The expansion has been well worth it. We are able to display the instruments a lot better and the customers love the extra space. Even though the store is larger, we try to utilize every square inch of our floor space. We built snare racks to the ceiling, installed a guitar rack on the ceiling, and put storage with an access handle underneath our window stages. All I can say is business is on an upswing, so take advantage of this economic wave.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We've taken on several new lines this year, EVH guitars, Nord keyboards, Tagima guitars and Låg guitars. I have always been a Van Halen fan and so are many of our customers. So far, the customers really like the new guitars, and they notice things are happening at our store. Nord has also been popular with churches and professional musicians. Tagima has reasonably priced guitars made in Brazil. Everyone is impressed with the quality. But the Låg guitar line is probably the best hit with the customers, featuring the first smart guitar.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Probably the most successful marketing strategy for 2019 is an event we participate in what's called the "guitar fest." The guitar fest is a guitar show is at the summit county fairgrounds. It features local and out of town music stores, guitar builders, manufacturers, and collectors. It's everything guitar and a celebration of it. It promotes guitars, guitar playing, and collectibles. Local and famous clinicians participate in the event. It's a great opportunity to showcase new products, get new customers, and catch up with some customers you haven't seen in a while.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** The product of the year is the Låg Hyvibe smart acoustic electric guitar. The guitar features a built-in multi-effects processor with reverb, delay, and a looper with a recorder. It's easy to use. You just record your rhythm loop and play along with it. It also has built-in Bluetooth. The way the guitar is engineered it acts like a speaker, but there is no built-in speaker. Sometimes we just record a loop and let the guitar play by itself with no one around. When the customers come in, they at first can't figure out where the guitar playing is coming from. Then we show them how the guitar is playing by itself with the built-in looper. The customers just freak out over it. The guitar is truly amazing. People just love new and different innovations.



A Max Music



**OKLAHOMA**  
Edmond Music  
Edmond

Scott Starns, General Manager

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** So far, our gross sales are up about 20 percent this year.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We have continued to maintain the same strong lines we have carried in the past. We have added Genzler Amps and increased the presence of Taylor Guitars as well.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We have begun to have a social media footprint in 2019. We feature one of our talented employees each Friday in a "Friday Feature." In addition, we have started a campaign titled "Inspiration Can Happen Anywhere" where we showcase an instrument at a local business.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Our product of the year has been Steinway Grand Pianos. We had another university gain the status of an "All Steinway School" and have continued to grow our Steinway product line.





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**OREGON**  
**Five Star Guitars**  
**Beaverton**  
 Geoff Metts, CMO

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Q1 and Q2 were strong and met our growth projections. Q3, however, has exceeded any expectations we could have hoped for. We are hoping to ride that momentum through Q4 and go into 2020 bigger and better than ever.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** In 2019, we've added ESP, Gibson, Epiphone, and Suhr. In addition, we added more local manufacturers, including Benson Amps and Divine Noise cables. Each brand was chosen to complement our existing inventory and have met or exceeded our projections. We look forward to growing in 2020 with each of our new vendors.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We've had a lot of success partnering with our vendors on in-store experiences e.g., clinics, artist appearances, etcetera. Our lesson program continues to grow, bolstered in part by our series of student concerts throughout the year.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** We have been really impressed with the Lu'au ukuleles from Breedlove. They look great, sound great, and are a favorite of our customers and staff alike.



**PENNSYLVANIA**  
**Progressive Music, McKeesport**  
 Mark Despotakis,  
 Director of Market Development



Progressive Music's Mark Despotakis

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Things are about the same. We're solidly in the school music market and things have remained steady.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We've begun to offer some Hunter Musical instruments to our customers. While they're not a significant part of our sales, we've been happy with the product and the price point they offer.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We've started more outreach in the community by getting involved in more instrument petting zoos that are part of community events.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** We continue to have success with anything we purchase from Maple Leaf Strings. We have worked with them for years and have yet to have any problem with any instrument they've sold. That's pretty rare in the orchestral string instrument world.



**RHODE ISLAND**  
**Empire Guitars**  
**Providence**  
 Mike Samos, Manager

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** In 2019 we saw continued, steady growth for both in store and online sales.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Yamaha's Red Label guitars and the Hudson Electronics Broadcast are new hits around the shop.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our marketing remains primarily social media, also sponsoring local events and organizations and supporting the local music community.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Chase Bliss Mood.



**SOUTH CAROLINA**  
**Fox Music**  
**North Charleston**  
 Joseph Fox, Vice President



Joseph Fox of Fox Music on the news

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 was a banner year for Fox Music House. Not only did we exceed sales goals, but we expanded to a new 22,000 square-foot showroom, largest in the southeast, with eight lesson studios and a full-service center. Furthermore, we are just about to open a second location in Columbia as our satellite expansion store.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** As Yamaha's oldest piano dealer, we have continued to excel with their line of new innovative instruments. We were awarded the Institutional Solutions Group dealership for South Carolina and have worked closely with our prime market, schools and churches, to bring them the best in piano performance. New for 2019, we took on the Seiler line. A high-quality piano made by Samick from one of the oldest German heritage manufacturers. This has opened up a whole new arena of sound for our customer's ears.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We have continued to use what has always been paramount to our success, community engagement. We believe in cause marketing - it's the root of all we do. Every effort to bring more people into music, expose all ages to the benefits, and give them the opportunity to play. In our larger space, we are now able to host monthly events. Partnering with local organization has not only increased their awareness and raised funds, but helps those with musical interest find us too. At our most recent Jazz Series show, we had over 80 attendees, raised \$400.00 for Jazzscape Jr Jazz Foundation. Everyone got to enjoy some incredible music and one happy customer now has a new Yamaha Grand piano.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Product of the year is hands down the Yamaha CSP Clavinova Smart Pianist.



**SOUTH DAKOTA**  
**Haggerty's**  
**Musicworks, Rapid City**  
 Marcus Lavake, Co-Owner



Marcus Lavake of Haggerty's Musicworks

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 so far has continued to be on par with 2018. Although we are more profitable, because of Operational changes. The upswing we have had in on-Line sales has served to counter any slight decline in the local market.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We brought Gibson back this year because of the change in the company, and we have had a positive response from the community. It is exciting to bring this legacy grand back to our store. We have also Added Clavinova Pianos in a dedicated showroom, to create a great buying experience. A few other brands we have added that have done well are JHS, Alexander, and Diamond pedals, as well as Luxtone Guitars.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** The most successful marketing strategy continues to be making every effort in sales

training, in-store environment, and service to provide an amazing customer service experience. Whether online or in person, the continuous push to bring professionalism, inspiration, and excitement for music to our customer base proves to pay off.

**What is your “product of the year” for 2019?** For us “product of the year” means new products that have been released this year that have made a significant difference in the market. The Taylor Grand Pacific certainly takes the award by sheer sales volume, and the Katana Amplifier Series by Boss continues to amaze me.



**TENNESSEE**  
**Fanny's House of Music**  
**Nashville**  
 Pamela Cole, Co-owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Sales were up slightly. Our location in the Five Points neighborhood of East Nashville has helped with the slow months, as tourists enjoy coming in and browsing our selection of new and used instruments as well as vintage clothes.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Our sales of Danelectro and Eastwood instruments have increased. We like to carry unusual models customers may see online, but want to actually play before they buy like the Eastwood Warren Ellis line of tenors and such. Customers love their unique, throwback designs with the reliability of modern construction.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We are so excited to have wrapped Fanny's van, “Vanny,” with our beautiful mural designed by Nashville artist Scott Guion. Guion designed the artwork on our T-shirts, and we love seeing artists like Melissa Etheridge and Flight of the Conchords representing Fanny's on Instagram. We were also honored to have been mentioned in an NPR piece about the amazing Sister Rosetta Tharpe, a rock and roll foremother by whom we are very inspired.

**What is your “product of the year” for 2019?** Our “product of the year” for 2019 has to be baritone guitars. We try to keep several baritones in stock all the time so customers know they can come to Fanny's and try one out. We're starting to like baritone guitars more than regular guitars. That may be due in part to the owners of Fanny's House of Music being bass players.



**TEXAS**  
**Music Go Round**  
**Fort Worth**  
 David Boswell, Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 is up over 2018.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Pig Hog cables.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Google.

**What is your “product of the year” for 2019?** SIT strings.



**UTAH**  
**Provo**  
**Bill Harris Music**  
 Ford Harris, Manager

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** 2019 compared about the same for us as to 2018. I would say Q1 was better this year than last, but last year's Q2 was easier to swallow compared to this year. Q3 and Q4 are where we really expect to do a large percentage of our annual sales. So, we are on par I would say, comparatively speaking.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Towards the end of 2018 we added Tagima and Palatino fully and we haven't looked back since. Both companies offer some of the best bang for your buck in terms of quality for price and have really done well for us in our marketplace.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Our back to school sales always does really well. We are doing a clearance sale right now that has really helped as well for both new and used inventory. The Christmas sale or holiday sales usually are the best though.

**What is your “product of the year” for 2019?** If it's specifically one type instrument, that would be acoustic guitar or acoustic ukulele. If it is for accessories, I would have to say cables or strings - Tour Tough does well for us in cables, S.I.T., DR, and Cleartone have done really well for us string wise. VHT came out with an 80 watt stereo guitar amp that has received a lot of positive customer feedback.



**VERMONT**  
**Burlington**  
**Randolin Music**  
 Nowa Crosby, Owner,  
 and Luthier



Nowa Crosby of Randolin Music

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Well, you probably don't want to hear this, but drastically down, by as much as 30 percent. Some of it is due to the national economy and some to local circumstances. I'm hoping to turn the last three months around with a new website, trying to draw in new business, and expanding on the web.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We took on the Alvarez line a few months ago and are having some success with it, though our Recording King and Loar line has been doing best for us.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Using Facebook more has added to our market and bringing back the Canadian market. We're running a fall and maybe a winter special for Quebec, doing dollar for dollar, though at the moment, I can't say how successful it is, as it's just starting.

**What is your “product of the year” for 2019?** That might be the Goldtone Little Gem, acrylic, colored banjo ukuleles. Very popular with adults and parents looking for a banjo for their kid.





**VIRGINIA**  
**Stacy's Music Shop**  
**Charlottesville**  
 Shep Stacy, Owner



Stacy's Music Staff

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** So far, we are going toe to toe with 2018 in sales. However, we have seen a significant increase in electric guitar sales compared to last year. This is making up for a slight decrease in acoustic instruments. We will celebrate 75 years in business next year and have seen this trend many times.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We have done very well with the Focusrite Scarlett USB recording interfaces, as well as Novation midi controllers. Because of the small margins, it's something we have shied away from in the past, but I'm glad that we now have them in stock.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We only advertised out lessons and performance programs this year. And because of that, we have seen a large shift in traffic as well as a nice increase in private lessons.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Our product of the year is our Highway to Rock performance program. It's has outsold all other products we offer. Kids really want to get on stage and play. Being able to mentor kids in a band setting and then take them to a local club to perform is a wonderful thing. It's good for the store and even better for our community.



**WASHINGTON**  
**Ted Brown Music**  
**Tacoma**  
 Whitney Brown Grisaffi, President

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** Our fiscal year ends in December, but so far 2019 sales are tracking about five percent ahead of 2018. On a separate note, I'm happy to say our school rental numbers continue to grow incrementally over previous years as well.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We took on Hercules DJ as a new line this year, and it has been doing well for us.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Our most successful marketing strategy was increasing the number of students taking lessons at Ted Brown Music. It was successful enough to earn us the NAMM Top 100 Award for best marketing and sales promotion. We'll be sharing more details on this in the Idea Center at Winter NAMM.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** It's too hard to pick just one category, so I have three products we'd like to share as product of the year:

Kala KA-15 ukuleles - we've sold hundreds of these and expect to sell more for the holidays. Yamaha CP88 keyboard - it's the right product at the right time. Sebastian London and Paris violins - a good product at a good price.



**WEST VIRGINIA**  
**Bandland**  
**Clarksburg**  
 Evan Jones, Owner



Bandland's Evan Jones

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** It looks like our B&O rentals for 2019 will be up about 8 percent over last year. 2018 was the only year that rentals were slightly down, otherwise we

have seen steady growth over the last 10 years.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Amati strings and Amahi ukuleles have been excellent additions for us. Several of the lines Hal Leonard has taken on (outside of print) have also been a nice surprise.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** It would have to be student trombones from Conn-Selmer. Trombone rentals have been crazy popular over the last few years.



**WISCONSIN**  
**Heid Music, Appleton**  
 Alyssa Retza, Marketing and  
 Communications Manager



Heid Music

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** There are peaks and valleys every year, and the comparison of year-over-year varies by department. We've seen notable growth in 2019 within the band, orchestra, and the digital piano realms. The moral of the story is patience - this is a marathon, not a sprint.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** Ohana is a ukulele brand that we've added, and we've started to see traction. We've also introduced the Bravo and Q Series line of instruments from Eastman for intermediate and professional band, and the response has been positive. The Fender Tone Master Series of amps is also something that was new to us, and we sold out in about a week.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** Most of our success stems from a giving mindset. When you're generous with others, they're often generous with you. For example, Music in our Schools Month during March has been a massive success, and we've been able to work with several schools to keep music programs healthy. Through this, we introduced a large social media campaign, complete with prizes. We worked with vendors to gather prizes and keep the musical spirit alive. We were also able to raise thousands of dollars back toward schools working through growth and development.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** There are many pieces to the musical puzzle, so the product of the year varies by department. That said, we must give a nod to a few. For band, product of the year would be the Shires Q Trumpet. The Yamaha P515 has also been a great product in our line of pianos and keyboards. The overall crowd pleasers are ukuleles, and we continue to diversify our portfolio and support the engagement with events, group lessons, and community programming.



**WYOMING**  
**Fremont Music**  
**Lander**  
 Sean Robert Francis, Owner

**How did 2019 compare to 2018 for your business?** The summer was great, but the fall has slowed down a bit. Last year, we moved to a better, more visible location, which helped a lot.

**Are there any new lines or brands you've taken on with success in the past year?** We were getting a lot of requests from customers for Earthquake pedals, so we decided to order them and they've been doing well.

**Most successful marketing strategy in 2019?** We've been using social media more than we have in the past, and it's definitely helping. We've been selling quite a bit on Reverb, mostly small stuff that's been sitting around for a while, and that's been good for us.

**What is your "product of the year" for 2019?** Gretsch ukuleles.

# 38<sup>th</sup> Annual America's Top Music Chains

<b>PO</b>	Piano/Organ
<b>P</b>	Piano
<b>DP</b>	Digital Piano
<b>BO</b>	Band & Orchestra
<b>PC</b>	Percussion
<b>FA</b>	Fretted Instruments/ Amplification
<b>SR</b>	Sound Reinforcement/ Recording Equipment
<b>EK</b>	Electronic Keyboard
<b>PM</b>	Print Music
<b>DJ</b>	DJ Equipment
<b>LT</b>	Lighting
<b>IN</b>	Installation

As the dealers represented in this report are privately held, the data being presented in "America's Top Chains" was supplied by the companies, themselves. In other instances, MMR made estimates based on data available to our research team.

### Guitar Center

PO, P, DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT, IN, PM  
(Including Music & Arts)  
Total Units 524  
Opened '19 31  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A, but often estimated to be in excess of \$2 billion.  
5795 Lindero Canyon Rd., Westlake Village, Calif. 91362  
(818) 735-8800  
media@guitarcenter.com  
www.guitarcenter.com  
CEO: Ron Japinga

### Sam Ash Music Corp.

DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT, PM  
Total Units 47  
Opened '19 1  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
278 Duffy Drive, Hicksville, N.Y. 11802  
(516) 932-6400  
sammy@samash.com  
www.samash.com  
CEO: Richard Ash

### Music Go Round

DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT  
Total Units 37  
Opened '19 4

Closed '19 1  
Volume (est. '19) \$35 MM  
605 Hwy 169N #400, Minneapolis, Minn. 55441  
(763) 520-8500  
tkletti@musicgoround.com  
www.musicgoround.com  
Brand Director: Tim Kletti

### Schmitt Music Co.

P, DP, SR, EK, PC, BO, FA, PM  
Total Units 14  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
Butler Square, 2400 Freeway Blvd., Brooklyn Center, Minn. 55430  
(763) 566-4560  
tom.schmitt@schmittmusic.com  
www.schmittmusic.com  
CEO: Tom Schmitt

### J.W. Pepper & Son, Inc.

PM  
Total Units 13  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
191 Sheree Blvd., Exton, Pa. 19341  
(610) 648-0500  
lpaynter@jwpepper.com  
www.jwpepper.com  
CEO: Glenn Burtch

### Steinway Hall

P  
Total Units 12  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 1  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
1133 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036  
(212) 246-1100  
showrooms@steinway.com  
www.steinway.com  
CEO: Ron Losby

### Fletcher Music Centers

PO  
Total Units 9  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 4  
Volume (est. '19) \$7.5 MM  
3966 Airway Circle, Clearwater, Fla. 33762  
(727) 571-1088  
Jriley@fletchermusic.com  
www.fletchermusic.com  
CEO: John K. Riley

### Brook Mays/H&H Music

BO, PC  
Total Units 9

Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) \$20 MM+  
8605 Carpenter Frwy., Dallas, Texas 75229  
(214) 905-8614  
billeveritt@brookmays.com  
www.brookmays.com  
CEO: Bill Everitt

### Piano Distributors

P, DP  
Total Units 9  
Opened '19 1  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) \$10.5 MM  
1475 12th St. E., Palmetto, Fla. 34221  
(941) 729-5047  
fharvey@pianodistributors.com  
www.pianodistributors.com  
CEO: Sandy Boyce

### Eckroth Music Co.

P, DP, BO, FA, SR, PC, PM  
Total Units 9  
Opened '19 2  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) \$14.5 MM  
1655 N. Grandview Lane, 102, Bismarck, N.D. 58503  
(701) 223-5320  
jeff@eckroth.com  
www.eckroth.com  
CEO: Jeffrey Eckroth

### Quinlan & Fabish Music

BO, PM  
Total Units 8  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
6827 High Grove Blvd., Burr Ridge, Ill. 60527  
(630) 654-4111  
gqjr@qandf.com  
www.qandf.com  
CEO: George Quinlan, Jr.

### Menchey Music Service

P, DP, BO, FA, EK, PC, PM  
Total Units 8  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
PO Box 474, 9 Barnhart Drive, Hanover, Pa. 17331  
(717) 637-2185  
jmenchey@menchey.com  
www.mencheymusic.com  
President: Joel Menchey

**Palen Music Center** PC, FA, SR, EK, PM  
 Total Units 8  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 1560 E. Raynell Pl., Springfield, Mo. 65804  
 (417) 882-7000  
 www.palenmusic.com  
 CEO: Brett Palen

**George's Music Stores** DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT, PM  
 Total Units 7  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 650 W. Swedesford Rd., Berwyn, Pa. 19312  
 (610) 993-3110  
 www.georgesmusic.com  
 CEO: George Hines

**Marshall Music Co.** PO, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT, PM  
 Total Units 7  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 3240 E. Saginaw St., Lansing, Mich. 48912  
 (517) 337-9700  
 info@marshallmusic.com  
 www.marshallmusic.com  
 CEO: Dan Marshall

**West Music Co.** P, DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, IN, PM  
 Total Units 7  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) \$46 MM  
 1212 5th Street, Coralville, Iowa 52241  
 (319) 351-2000  
 service@westmusic.com  
 www.westmusic.com  
 CEO: Robin Walenta

**Bertrand's Music** DP, BO, FA, EK, PM  
 Total Units 7  
 Opened '19 2  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 9906 Carmel Mountain Rd., San Diego, Calif. 92129  
 (888) 780-1812  
 www.bertrandmusic.com  
 CEO: John Bertrand, Sr.

**Jacobs Music** P, DP  
 Total Units 7  
 Opened '19 1  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 1718 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19103  
 (215) 568-7800  
 chris@jacobsmusiccompany.com  
 www.jacobsmusic.com  
 President: Chris Rinaldi

**Kennelly Keys** DP, PC, BO, FA, SR, EK, PM  
 Total Units 6  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 4918 196th St. SW, Lynwood, Wash. 98036  
 (425) 771-7020  
 info@kennellykeysmusic.com  
 www.kennellykeysmusic.com  
 CEO: William J. Kennelly

**Nick Rail Music** DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, PM  
 Total Units 6  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) \$10 MM  
 2801 De La Vina St., Santa Barbara, Calif. 93105  
 (805) 569-5353  
 laura@nickrailmusic.com  
 www.nickrailmusic.com  
 CEO: Nick Rail

**Ted Brown Music Co.** DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT IN, PM  
 Total Units 6  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) \$18 MM  
 6228 Tacoma Mall Blvd., Tacoma, Wash. 98409  
 (253) 272-3211  
 stephanie@tedbrownmusic.com  
 www.tedbrownmusic.com  
 CEO: Whitney Grisaffi

**Saied Music** PO, DP, BO, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, LT, PM  
 Total Units 6  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 3259 S. Yale Ave., Tulsa, Okla. 74135  
 (918) 742-5541  
 info@saiedmusic.com  
 www.saiedmusic.com  
 CEO: Bob Saied

**Frank Rieman Music, Inc.** P, DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, IN, PM  
 Total Units 6  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) \$10 MM  
 4420 E. Broadway, Des Moines, Iowa 50317  
 (515) 262-0365  
 davek@riemans.com  
 www.riemansmusic.com  
 CEO: Pam Donahue

**Keyboard Concepts** P, DP, PM  
 Total Units 6  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 5539 Van Nuys Blvd., Sherman Oaks, Calif.

91041  
 (818) 787-0201  
 Dennis.Hagerty@keyboardconcepts.com  
 www.keyboardconcepts.com  
 CEO: Dennis Hagerty

**Rettig Music** BO, PM  
 Total Units 6  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 6323 Sawmill Rd., Dublin, Ohio 43017  
 (614) 792-2100  
 www.rettigmusic.com

**White House of Music** DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, PM  
 Total Units 6  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 2101 Springdale Rd., Waukesha, Wis. 53186  
 (262) 798-9700  
 chris@whitehouseofmusic.com  
 www.whitehouseofmusic.com  
 CEO: Christopher White

**Music Exchange** PO, P, DP  
 Total Units 5  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 1501 N. Main St., Walnut Creek, Calif. 95696  
 (925) 933-6310  
 www.muex.com

**Ken Stanton Music** DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT, PM  
 Total Units 5  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 119 Cobb Pkwy. N., Ste. A, Marietta, Ga. 30062  
 (770) 427-2491  
 kenstantonmusic@kenstanton.com  
 www.kenstanton.com  
 CEO: Kenny Stanton

**Heid Music** P, DP, BO, FA, EK, PC, PM  
 Total Units 5  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 308 E. College Ave., Appleton, Wis. 54911  
 (920) 734-1969  
 todd.heid@heidmusic.com  
 www.heidmusic.com  
 CEO: Todd Heid

**Springfield Music** DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, PM  
 Total Units 5  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) 7.3 MM  
 1902 E. Meadowmere, Springfield, Mo.

65804  
(417) 832-1665  
amanda@springfield-music.com  
www.springfieldmusic.com  
President: Donovan Bankhead

**Willis Music Co.**

P, DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, LT, PM

Total Units 5  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) \$7.5 MM  
7380 Industrial Road, Florence, Ky. 41042  
(859) 283-2050  
paulf@willismusic.com  
www.willismusic.com  
CEO: Kevin Cranley

**Portland Music Co.**

DP, BO, PC, FA, SR, EK, PM

Total Units 5  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
16610 SE McLoughlin Blvd., Milwaukie, Ore.  
97267  
(503) 226-3719  
mtaylor@spiritone.com  
www.portlandmusiccompany.com  
CEO: Mark Taylor

**Tarpley Music Co.**

P, DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT, IN, PM

Total Units 5  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) \$10 MM  
2420 Commerce, Amarillo, Texas 79109  
(806) 355-0795  
john@tarpleymusic.com  
www.tarpleymusic.com  
CEOs: David & John Tarpley

**Collins Music Center**

PO, P, DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT, IN, PM

Total Units 4  
Opened '19 1  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
706 W. Jackson, El Campo, Texas 77437  
(979) 543-2928  
randy@collinsmusiccenter.com  
www.collinsmusiccenter.com  
CEO: Randy Collins

**Robert M. Sides Family Music Centers**

PO, P, DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, IN, PM

Total Units 4  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 1  
Volume (est. '19) \$9 MM  
201 Mullberry St., Williamsport, Pa. 17701  
(570) 326-2094  
psides@rmsides.com  
www.rmsides.com  
CEO: Peter Sides

**C&M Music Center**

DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT, IN, PM

Total Units 4  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
2515 Williams Blvd., Kenner, La. 70062  
(504) 468-8688  
cnail4cmmusic@yahoo.com  
www.candmmusic.com  
CEO: Chris Nail & Melvin Volz, Jr.

**Dietze Music House**

P, DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, PM

Total Units 4  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) \$8.2 MM  
5555 S. 48th St., Lincoln, Neb. 68516  
(402) 476-9723  
tpratt@dietzemusic.com  
www.dietzemusic.com  
CEO: Tim Pratt

**Portman's Music**

BO, PC, FA, SR, EK, PM

Total Units 4  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
7650 Abercorn St., Savannah, Ga. 31406  
(912) 354-1500  
www.portmansmusic.com  
CEO: Jerry Portman

**C.A. House Music**

P, DP, BO, FA, EK, PC, PM

Total Units 4  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
3700 Cavalier Cir., Parkersburg, W. Va. 26104  
(304) 422-4676  
www.cahousemusic.com  
General Manager: Steve Ceo

**Mississippi Music**

PO, DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT, IN, PM

Total Units 4  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) \$8.7 MM  
PO Box 1705, Hattiesburg, Miss. 39403-1705  
(601) 544-5828  
rosij@missmusic.com  
www.mississippimusic.com  
CEO: Rosi K. Johnson

**Evola Music Center**

PO, P, DP, BO, PM

Total Units 4  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
2184 S. Telegraph Rd., Bloomfield Hills,  
Mich. 48302  
(248) 334-0566  
www.evola.com  
CEO: Jim Evola

**The Clavier Group, Steinway Hall**

P

Total Units 4  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
5301 N. Central Expressway, Dallas, Texas  
75205  
(214) 526-1853  
showrooms@steinwaypianos.com  
www.steinwaypianos.com  
CEO: Danny Saliba

**N-Tune Music & Sound**

P, DP, BO, FA, EK, PC, IN, PM

Total Units 4  
Opened '19 0  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) \$7 MM  
1141 E. 42nd St., Odessa, Texas 79762  
(432) 362-1164 tjones@ntunemusic.com  
www.ntunemusic.com  
CEO: Tim Jones

**Instrumental Music**

BO, PC, FA, SR, EK, PM, LT

Total Units 4  
Opened '19 1  
Closed '19 0  
Volume (est. '19) N/A  
1501 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand  
Oaks, Calif. 91362

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(805) 496-3774  
 bryan@instmusic.com  
 www.instrumentalmusic.com  
 President: Bryan McCann

**Williamson Music 1st** BO, PC, FA  
 Total Units 4  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 701 E. Plano Parkway, Ste. 100, Plano, Texas 75074  
 (972) 516-1331  
 www.wm1st.com  
 CEO: Brian Henderson

**Jackson's Music** P, DP, BO, FA, PC, EK, SR  
 Total Units 4  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 1409 S. Stratford Rd., Winston-Salem, N.C. 27103  
 (336) 760-9635  
 www.jacksonsmusic.com  
 CEO: Douglas J. Dryden

**Piano Gallery** PO, P, DP, EK, PM  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 3  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 5478 South Green Street, Murray, Utah 84123  
 (801) 266-9550  
 info@pianogallery.com  
 www.pianogallery.com  
 CEO: Stan Beagley

**Piano & Organ Center** PO, P, DP, EK, PM  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 1  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 102 Lawrence Rd. E, North Syracuse, N.Y. 13212  
 (315) 454-3823  
 www.pianoandorgancenter.com  
 President: David Constantino

**Henderson Music Co.** P, DP  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 1  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 8860 U.S. 42, Florence, Ky. 41042  
 (859) 431-2111  
 www.hendersonmusic.com

**Hermes Music** BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT, IN  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 830 N. Cage Blvd., Pharr, Texas 78577  
 (956) 904-4400

greg@hermes-music.com  
 www.hermes-music.com  
 CEO: Alberto Kreimerman

**Griggs Music** BO, PC, FA, SR, PM  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 3849 N. Brady St., Davenport, Iowa 52806  
 (563) 391-9000  
 school@griggsmusic.com  
 www.griggsmusic.com  
 CEO: Steve Judge

**Playground Music Center** BO, P, DP, BO, PC, FA, SR, EK  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 429 Mary Esther Cut-Off NW, Fort Walton Beach, Fla. 32548  
 (850) 243-2514  
 www.playgroundmusiccenter.com

**Larry's Music Center** FA  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 302 E Liberty St., Wooster, Ohio 44691  
 (330) 262-8855  
 www.larrysmusiccenter.com

**Gadsden Music** BO, PM  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 607 Broad Street, PO Box 132, Gadsden, Ala. 35901  
 (800) 264-7228  
 www.gadsdenmusic.com

**Alto Music** DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT, IN  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 1  
 Volume (est. '19) \$50 MM  
 180 Carpenter Ave., Middletown, N.Y. 10940  
 (845) 692-6922  
 sales@altomusic.com  
 www.altomusic.com  
 CEO: Jon Haber

**Riverton Music, Inc.** DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, DJ, LT, IN, PM  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 7742 S Campus View Dr., Ste. B-110, West Jordan, Utah 84120  
 (801) 969-4358  
 leifn@rivertonmusic.com

www.rivertonmusic.com  
 CEO: Kevin Rindlisbacher

**Pecknel Music Co.** DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, IN, PM  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 1  
 Closed '19 1  
 Volume (est. '19) \$5.2 MM  
 1312 N. Pleasantburg Dr., Greenville, S.C. 29607  
 (864) 244-7881  
 jmanriquez@pecknelmusic.com  
 www.pecknelmusic.com  
 CEO: Jeremiah Manriquez

**Dunkley Music** P, DP  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 3410 Eagle Rd., Ste. 150, Meridian, Idaho 83646  
 (208) 342-5549  
 info@dunkleymusic.com  
 www.dunkleymusic.com  
 CEO: Mark Dunkley

**Meyer Music** P, DP, BO, PM  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) N/A  
 1512 W. Highway 40, Blue Springs, Mo. 64015  
 (816) 228-5656  
 bettymeyer@meyermusic.com  
 www.meyermusic.com  
 CEOs: Ted Meyer, Betty Meyer

**Kessler & Sons Music, Inc.** BO  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) \$4.2MM  
 3047 E. Charleston Blvd. #C, Las Vegas, Nev. 89104  
 (702) 385-2263  
 music@kessler.com  
 www.kesslermusic.com  
 CEO: Charles Kessler

**Art's Music Shop, Inc.** DP, BO, FA, SR, EK, PC, IN, PM  
 Total Units 3  
 Opened '19 0  
 Closed '19 0  
 Volume (est. '19) \$9.5 MM  
 3030 East Blvd., Montgomery, Ala. 36116  
 (334) 271-2787  
 paulf@artsmusicshop.com  
 www.artsmusicshop.com  
 CEO: Paul Freehling



# 'The Book of Dreams'

## The Ad that Made Everyone Start Talking



By Menzie Pittman

**I**'m assuming that by now everyone in the music business has seen *the Argos Ad*: "The Book of Dreams."

In full disclosure, I know very little about Argos other than they are a British catalog company. But I'm not here to write specifically about Argos – I am here to shout out that I am a fan of the team behind the brilliant Argos Christmas ad.

Their holiday clip features a dad and daughter playing a drum set duet, and if you happen to be the one person on the planet who missed seeing it, I wholeheartedly recommend you find it on YouTube ASAP and enjoy this masterful commercial. It is well worth your time.

**So, what makes this ad head and shoulders above most ads you will see over the holidays? In a word - EVERYTHING.**

This commercial may be the best creative tool produced by a retailer in decades. I believe it helps all music retailers as well as Argos. So, let's review some of the video's highlights, shall we?

First is the element of surprise. The dad finds the Argos catalog in which his daughter has circled a red heart around a drum set she wants for Christmas. He begins to ponder and tap...

**The first win for the ad:** It recognizes girl drummers which immediately indicates that the advertiser is up to speed with the times. Argos uses Nandi Bushell to play the role of the young female drummer. In real life Nandi is a rising young musician who deserves a ton of credit for how well she pulls off her role in this ad.

**The second win for the ad:** It uses a legitimate young musician: Nandi (age 9), who was expertly rehearsed for the video shoot by Brad Webb. Anytime our industry shows the exceptional gifts that music affords a young person, it is a win. Again, Argos has done the music industry a huge favor by doing so.

**The third win for the ad:** It recognizes the joy of family. That is always a positive.

Argos and its creative agency, the &Partnership, came up with the idea of "dream fulfillment." They returned to promoting the Argos catalog (which they had not done in a decade) with the flavor of nostalgia and – it works! They renamed the catalog "The Book of Dreams," yet another smart touch in connecting the ad with the viewers' hearts.

The ad starts when the dad, played by drummer Omar Abidi, sees his daughter's note in the catalog. He begins reminiscing about playing drums and as he does, magic begins to happen all around him. The '80s tune, "Don't You (Forget about Me)" by Simple Minds pops up on TV, and dad begins to play along on the catalog drum set that magically appears.

The key word here is "magic." The Argos creative team captures every detail of magic while dad plays this little tiny kid-kit with Zeppelin-esque sound effects. Sequenced lights pop on and cabinets turn into amps as the kitchen explodes into a huge stage. With every bigger drum lick, the kit magically expands. The magic of music continues to be the theme.

The lighting effects and the synchronicity of sounds, aligned with the visuals, are perfect. The details in the video are

mind-boggling. There's even a pick scrape when the daughter slides down the banister to join the dad as a second kit magically appears out of thin air.

There are so many subtleties throughout this brilliant commercial, even down to a teddy bear that crowd surfs. It is completely inspiring. The ad gives you the feeling of the '60s boom that the music industry enjoyed. I personally found that encouraging. Inspiration, emotion, and family are all elements that have waned as of late, but this commercial is all about everything good from the good old days. That's why it works. It highlights everything good about family connection, spontaneity, passion, and fun.

**“This commercial is a win across the board for Argos, the music industry, female musicians, young musicians, and families.”**

**So, how can we use this tool in our own businesses?**

First, you can talk about it. If you have a family as a customer, share it with them. Our families love when I share unique tidbits that I have discovered, especially ones that I think they might personally enjoy.

So, find a tidbit in the video that *you* think is cool; along with that, talk about Nandi and how inspiring it is to witness such a talented young musician having such early career success.

Post the advertisement on your social media page and show your customers that you are moved by how cool this ad is with its reconnection to families loving music.

It's also a chance to show appreciation when you give Argos and their creative team (the&Partnership) full credit as you talk to your customers and others about the creativity behind this ad.

**In closing...**

I talk a lot with my customers about dads and daughters and drums and the importance of sharing the love of music as a family tradition. This commercial is a win across the board for Argos, the music industry, female musicians, young musicians, and families.

Thank you, Argos, for the early Christmas gift: The ad that made everyone start talking. 🎁

*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.*

## Accessories

### Whirlwind's Line Balancer/Splitter

The Line Balancer/Splitter balances and isolates a single line level signal or lets you send a line level signal to two destinations with transformer balancing and isolation for one or both of the outputs. The balancing provides superior noise rejection when you have equipment with unbalanced outputs that need to feed equipment with balanced inputs. The transformer isolation helps eliminate unwanted hum and buzz caused by power line and grounding issues. Both a female XLR and a 1/4" TRS jack are provided for the input signal. Male XLR connectors are used for the output signals. Operating Level: Input: -10dBm to +26dBm; Output: -10dBm to +26dBm (ISO mode), -16dBm to +20dBm (SPLIT mode); Frequency Response: 20Hz-20kHz ±1dB



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

### Ultimate Reed Sculpting Tool from RS Berkeley

The Ultimate from RS Berkeley is a reed-friendly tool that allows you to sculpt and balance your reeds for maximum vibration and performance. A shaped curved blade allows the ultimate access to the fine-tuning of your reed, and the wood handle comfortably fits in palm of your hand.



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

### Adam Hall's MICRO 2 Series Cable Protectors

The new MICRO 2 series cable protectors from Adam Hall provide space for two cable runs and ensures even greater protection for people and cables with its newly developed 3-D LaserGrip surface. The MICRO 2 Cable protectors don't only stand out thanks to their environmentally sustainability but feature a reengineered, ergonomic design. Built to withstand up to two tons per 7.8 × 7.8 inches, their two 1.4 × 1.2-inch cable runs protect power cables and water hoses from external influences. A maximum level of grip and slip resistance is guaranteed by the innovative LaserGrip surface, which features a special ergonomic design and surface structure to reduce the risk of an entire cable protector line accidentally moving out of place.



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

### Godlyke's Side Step Pedal

Godlyke's new TWA SS-01 Side Step Universal Tap-tempo LFO pedal is a variable-state, tap-tempo LFO that can be used to control practically any device with an expression input and/or +5V control voltage source. Just connect the SS-01 to the slave pedal and tap to create unique new sounds and effects. The Side Step LFO rate can be controlled via tap tempo, onboard rate pot, or an external expression pedal. The SS-01 features eight different waveform options for its onboard LFO, which are selectable via rotary switch.



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

## Print & Digital

### The Drummer's Fake Book from Hal Leonard

Destined to become the drummer's best friend, *The Drummer's Fake Book* from Hal Leonard provides a virtual mental warehouse of songs that drummers need to know. With over 250 songs, *The Drummer's Fake Book* features easy-to-use drum charts with kit legends and lyric cues, making it simple for drummers to learn tons of new songs in a quick amount of time. The book also boasts songs from a large variety of genre and artists, giving players a well-rounded lineup of songs to add to their repertoire. \$29.99.



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

## Amplification

### Mojotone's BlackOut British Amp

The Mojotone BlackOut British is modified with a high-gain lead channel with 3-knob EQ, vintage clean channel, and master volume control. Mojotone handwires these amps at their shop in Burgaw, North Carolina, using Mojo Dijon capacitors, Heyboer power and output transformers, carbon-composition resistors, and Alpha potentiometers. All of this comes packed into a finger-jointed 3/4" solid pine 1X12 cabinet covered in a "BlackOut Tweed" finish and loaded with a Mojotone British Series BV30.



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

## Fretted

### Session HT Models from Godin Guitars

Godin Guitars' new Session HT guitar joins the company's high-quality solid-body lineup. Complete with a hardtail bridge for increased sustain and tuning stability, an optimized finish for enhanced tonal deflection, and a H-S-S pickup configuration, this new model also comes with a silver leaf body, maple neck, Indian laurel fretboard, and is available in these finish options: matte black, trans cream, and bourbon burst. \$599 MAP.



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

## Accessories

### V6 Vocal Processor from Zoom

The V6 Vocal Processor is packed with professional vocal effects and preloaded patches, a built-in looper, and a new Formant Pedal. The V6 can be used right out of the box or provide infinite customized sound creation. Divided into three distinct effect sections and laid-out ergonomically on two tiers, the V6 makes changing your vocals as easy as tapping your foot. The Voice section features 12 voice effects ranging from Unison to Octave Up/Down to Vocoder and includes a Pitch Correct effect that is popular in today's EDM sound. The Harmony section adds up to two backing vocals.



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

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RS Berkeley

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# MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW



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Photograph by Melanie Futorian

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

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## MMR

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# AdvertiserIndex

COMPANY	PAGE	WEB
Adam Hall GmbH	17	<a href="http://adamhall.com">adamhall.com</a>
Allen & Heath	30, 31	<a href="http://allen-heath.com">allen-heath.com</a>
Allparts Music Corp.	46	<a href="http://allparts.com">allparts.com</a>
Amahi Ukuleles	5	<a href="http://amahiukeles.com">amahiukeles.com</a>
American Recorder Technologies	13	<a href="http://americanrecorder.com">americanrecorder.com</a>
American Way Marketing LLC	16	<a href="http://americanwaymktg.com">americanwaymktg.com</a>
Armadillo Enterprise/Dean Guitars	9	<a href="http://armadilloent.com">armadilloent.com</a>
Big Bends LLC	38	<a href="http://bigbends.com">bigbends.com</a>
Black Diamond Strings	17, 42	<a href="http://blackdiamondstrings.com">blackdiamondstrings.com</a>
Bourns, Inc.	6	<a href="http://bourns.com">bourns.com</a>
Breezy Ridge Instruments	46	<a href="http://jpstrings.com">jpstrings.com</a>
CE Distribution	C3	<a href="http://cedist.com">cedist.com</a>
Chauvet	C1	<a href="http://chauvetdj.com">chauvetdj.com</a>
Connolly Music Company	39	<a href="http://connollymusic.com">connollymusic.com</a>
Dava Company	46	<a href="http://davapick.com">davapick.com</a>
Framus & Warwick GmbH	11	<a href="http://rockboard.net">rockboard.net</a>
Fender Musical Instruments	1, 23	<a href="http://fender.com">fender.com</a>
Ferree's Tools	37	<a href="http://ferreestoolsinc.com">ferreestoolsinc.com</a>
Dava Company	46	<a href="http://davapick.com">davapick.com</a>
Gear-Up Products	53	<a href="http://gluboot.com">gluboot.com</a>
Hunter Music Instrument Inc.	13	<a href="http://huntermusical.com">huntermusical.com</a>
IK Multimedia	43	<a href="http://ikmultimedia.com">ikmultimedia.com</a>
J.J. Babbitt Co. Inc.	10	<a href="http://jbbabbitt.com">jbbabbitt.com</a>
Kyser Musical Products Inc.	34	<a href="http://kysemusical.com">kysemusical.com</a>
Lee Oskar Harmonicas	40	<a href="http://leoskar.com">leoskar.com</a>
Lyon & Healy	27	<a href="http://lyonhealy.com">lyonhealy.com</a>
Maloney StageGear Covers	19	<a href="http://maloneystagegearcovers.com">maloneystagegearcovers.com</a>
NAMM	2, 3	<a href="http://namm.org">namm.org</a>
NS Design	41	<a href="http://thinkns.com">thinkns.com</a>
Pearl River	7	<a href="http://pearlriver.com">pearlriver.com</a>
QRS Music Technologies Inc.	12	<a href="http://qrsmusic.com">qrsmusic.com</a>
Rovner Products	47	<a href="http://rovnerproducts.com">rovnerproducts.com</a>
TASCAM / Part of Gibson Pro	45	<a href="http://tascam.com">tascam.com</a>
WD Music Products Inc.	4	<a href="http://wdmusic.com">wdmusic.com</a>
Whirlwind Music Inc.	C2	<a href="http://whirlwindusa.com">whirlwindusa.com</a>
Wittner GmbH & Co. KG	35	<a href="http://wittner-gmbh.de">wittner-gmbh.de</a>
Zoom North America	C4	<a href="http://zoom-na.com">zoom-na.com</a>

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By Dan **Daley**

# It's a Jungle Out There, and Amazon Owns it

**C**ompetition from online sales is arguably the single greatest challenge that MI retail (hell, all retail) has faced this century. Music stores have battled back, mainly by adding shopping options through their own websites, and in some cases creating white-label portals through websites like Reverb.com and eBay. But Amazon looms above them all, ubiquitous and inescapable.

Amazon has spooked the largest of the MI giants. For instance, ahead of this year's Prime Day – Amazon's annual 36-hour sale for its Prime-club customers – Guitar Center announced its own sales spectacular, offering up to a 30 percent discount on selected products. The company opened its New York flagship location in Manhattan in 2014 in part to fight Amazon's growing hegemony of the retail space.

Lionel Garcia used to be a DJ, and spent time in an executive role at Tigerdirect, the remnants of once-mighty brick-and-mortar chains Circuit City and CompUSA turned into an online electronics retailer, so he's familiar with both retail and online worlds, as well as music on a professional level. He's using that accumulated wisdom as president of Channel Bakers, which describes itself as the first Amazon-focused advertising agency. And it's from that perch that he says MI retail can find its way through an Amazonian universe.

Unlike a traditional advertising shop, Channel Bakers guides its clients, which have included Samsung, Logitech, and Calvin Klein, through the alternate universe that is Amazon. Garcia's primary expertise is focused on how brands navigate Amazon – not an easy proposition, considering Amazon's propensity for giving preference to its own brands or those of certain other companies, in a kind of retail payola. However, he says that retailers often view Amazon as an existential threat instead of looking for the opportunities in between the cracks. For instance, while MI stores and Amazon (and other online retailers) may advertise and sell (directly or indirectly) a fairly wide range of MI products, the MI shops will often have access to a much deeper tranche of niche products. By definition, Amazon, like other online retailers, has to present a broad face to consumers.

However, the algorithms that steer buyers once they're on the website don't always have their best interests in mind, seeking instead to emphasize certain product and brands over others. That's not inherently evil; it's just the Darwinian nature of the internet. The clerks who guide customers in the store, on the other hand, are guided by a slightly older English thinker's philosophy: Adam Smith, who saw more nuanced market dynamics. The higher level of customer engagement in the store plus the potential for a much wider and deeper array of relevant products is MI retail's secret weapon, says Garcia.

**“The ultimate revenge might be how MI retail can use Amazon as its own online portal.”**

“The retailer is the one who can see the gaps in brand and product assortments,” he explains. “Even Amazon can't carry everything, and its algorithms can't understand the customer the way a store can.”

The ultimate revenge might be how MI retail can use Amazon as its own online portal. In many ways it's not unlike something like Reverb.com, but the waters there are much deeper, and the focus of consumers will be far broader. It might be a better place to sell “baby's first guitar” than, say, a Dumble Overdrive Special, and you're also walking on Amazon's turf, one they know far better than anyone how to traverse. So when you “look for the gaps,” as Garcia puts it, you're ironically treading on firmer ground. “That's where the leverage is.”

Playing house with Amazon isn't for everyone, but it will likely become more common in time. That's why Garcia walked the aisle of the Summer NAMM Show in Nashville in July (where he says Amazon also had a spectral presence), and why Channel Bakers is taking a booth at the Winter NAMM Show in January. “We're looking to engage with MI retail in general,” he says. MI retailers, then, ought to be looking for more online strategies, as well. 



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