

# MMR

## MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

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## The Digital Stage Piano Market



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# C O N T E N T S

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MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

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# Bending the Curve Upwards

*"Once a fixture in the American home, pianos are easy to find for cheap these days and those who own them are having trouble finding people take them off their hands."*

So began a July 29, 2018 article in *The Portsmouth Herald* which I held onto after running into the newspaper during a beach-trip up to New Hampshire last summer. The content of the rest of the article was likely predictable to many *MMR* readers. Acoustic pianos – uprights, mostly, but even baby grands – are increasingly "persona non grata" in American homes. Craigslist listings in most of the U.S. are littered with pianos posted in the "free" sections. As I type this, the Boston-area CL listings have 19 working (and in some cases quite lovely) acoustic pianos just waiting to be picked up for the asking price of \$0.00 and plenty more quality instruments to be had for \$100 or less. Statista, a German-based portal for statistics based on data collected by opinion and research institutes, reports that there were 95,518 sales of acoustic pianos in 2005 – a number that had dwindled to just 31,530 by 2017.

Though exact estimates vary depending on the source, most market analysts agree that the global *digital* piano market, on the other hand, was valued at around \$700 million in 2018 and will grow by six to eight percent in the coming years to reach \$1.1 (ish) billion by 2025.

Of course, a key word in the above assessment is "global." Just because digital piano sales are booming in, say, Shanghai, doesn't mean that every keyboard dealer in Peoria is raking it in. However, also according to Statista, sales of digital pianos in the U.S. (the subject of both this month's Roundtable feature and dealer survey) have been steadily increasing since 2010, reaching over 161,000 unit sales in 2017. And things may be in for a boost – particularly in the realm of digital *stage* pianos (see

page 24).

When asked about "digital stage piano" sales in 2019 for this issue's cover story, Yamaha Corporation of America's Nate Tschetter had this to say: "Yamaha, a major manufacturer, is in the midst of a product transition... We expect that when the dust settles, not only Yamaha but the market in general will see renewed interest in this category, and that will bend the curve upward for stage pianos."

And it's worth noting that the other participants in our April 2019 Roundtable on the subject of digital stage pianos – all major players in the market as well – were uniformly positive in their assessment of this segment's vibrancy: "Increasing demand... Year over year, we are seeing an uptick in both unit sales and total dollars within the category... We're definitely seeing an increase overall compared to a year ago."

As someone who has reported on the piano and keyboard market – both acoustic and digital – in *MMR's* annual "keyboard issues" for lo these many years, it's encouraging that the past few trips around the sun have yielded far more upbeat feedback than a decade or so ago.

Acoustic vendors and dealers in many parts of America may still be facing an uphill climb, but if Korg's James Sajeve is any type of prognosticator, those darker days may be well in the rear-view for digital keyboard sales: "We see this segment as poised for continued growth in both the near and long term."



by Christian Wissmuller

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# Industry News

## Hartley and Mary Peavey Honored with 2019 Mississippi Governor's Arts Award

Hartley and Mary Peavey have been named as 2019 recipients of the Governor's Choice Award in the Mississippi Arts Commission's annual Governor's Arts Awards. With this award, Governor Phil Bryant recognized not only the Peavey family's dedication to music as an art, but also the Peavey organization's continued appreciation for and gratitude towards musicians and local communities in Mississippi.

Established in 1988, the Governor's Arts Awards are presented to individuals and organizations to recognize outstanding work in the artistic disciplines as well as arts-based community development and arts patronage. Recipients are not required to be Mississippi residents, but they must have significant ties to the state through some years of residency. Notable past recipients include John Grisham, B.B. King, Bo Diddley, Morgan Freeman, and Malaco Records.

Courtland Gray, COO of Peavey Electronics, congratulated the Peaveys on their honor, saying, "Hartley and Mary are active supporters and advocates of arts education, donating time and resources to ensure children have opportunities to learn in and through the arts. All of us here at Peavey are proud to see them recognized with this well-deserved award."



Courtland Gray, Mary Peavey, and Hartley Peavey

➤ Industry News

➤ Supplier Scene

➤ MMR Global

➤ People on the Move

## NAMM's Top 100 Dealer Awards Accepting Submissions

NAMM welcomes its global retail members to be recognized for retail excellence as part of the organization's annual Top 100 Dealer Awards. Now in its ninth year and held during the Summer NAMM Show (July 18-20) in Nashville, the annual awards honor retailers who have demonstrated a commitment to best-practices, creativity, and innovation in music products retail. The submission process opened on Friday, March 15 to current NAMM retail members and will close on Friday, April 5.

"NAMM retail members are at the forefront of creating more music makers and in my opinion, are the heartbeat of our industry in communities around the world," said Joe Lamond, NAMM president and CEO. "We look forward to an exciting evening in Nashville to honor and celebrate the Top 100 Dealers and to learn the secrets of how they are adapting to the changing retail environment and succeeding in the marketplace."

Three new submission categories will join the Top 100 Awards: the "Innovation Award," "Best Community Retail Store," and the "Top 100 Customers' Choice Award." At the announcement of the Top 100 nominees in May, the category of the "Customers' Choice Award," will open and offer the Top 100 honorees a chance to engage their audiences to vote online for their favorite retail store. Other categories include "Best Customer Service,"



"Best Store Design;" "Best Marketing and Sales Promotion;" "Best Online Engagement;" and the "Music Makes a Difference Award." All submissions will be evaluated for effectiveness in marketing, customer engagement and innovation in retail by a panel of independent judges.

The list of Top 100 Dealer nominees will be announced at the end of May with the "Best of," "Customers' Choice," and "Dealer of the Year" awards to be announced during the Top 100 Dealer Awards gala on Friday, July 19 at the Summer NAMM Show.

The 2019 Summer NAMM Show returns to Nashville's Music City Center July 18-20 and will bring together thousands of buyers, exhibitors and music industry professionals to preview the latest music products, gain valuable insights through a robust professional development program and network with peers. Registration for Summer NAMM opens in April at NAMM.org.

For additional information about the Top 100 Awards, visit: [www.namm.org/summer/2019/top-dealer-awards](http://www.namm.org/summer/2019/top-dealer-awards)

## Factory Raid in China Results in Seizure of Counterfeit Shure, Sennheiser, Yamaha, and Harman Audio Products



Counterfeit Yamaha amplifier

Shure Incorporated has announced that a police raid on a factory in China manufacturing counterfeit products, En-

ping Soundpu Electronics Equipment (also doing business as Voxpu Electronics Equipment), was conducted in October 2018.

The successful onsite enforcement action was initiated by Shure and accomplished with close cooperation and assistance from the Enping Public Security Bureau (PSB) and the Enping Administration of Industry and Commerce (AIC). The

see *FACTORY RAID* page 8

# ENLIGHTENMENT

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## Factory Raid

continued from page 6

targeted factory is a repeat offender and known counterfeiter to the Enping enforcement authorities. Soundpu was fined in August 2018 by the Enping AIC after counterfeit Shure wireless microphones were found at Soundpu's factory premises during a routine market investigation carried out in April 2018.

In addition to Shure, other leading audio companies were impacted by the counterfeiting operation, including Sennheiser, Yamaha, and Harman. Among the goods seized were wireless microphones and receivers, consoles, amplifiers, and processors. Shure has taken steps to initiate a criminal prosecution against the owner and managers of Soundpu, given its continued counterfeiting activities and blatant disregard for intellectual property rights.

Sennheiser, Yamaha, and Harman will be assisting Shure with the forthcoming criminal prosecution of Soundpu.

## 35th NAMM TEC Awards Announces Call for Entries

Fresh off a multitude of pro audio product debuts, new innovations and a celebration of technical and creative achievements, the NAMM TEC Awards council has announced a call for entries to be honored at The 35<sup>th</sup> annual NAMM TEC Awards. Companies are encouraged to enter their products and/or projects in one of 23 Technical Achievement and eight Creative Achievement categories to be considered for recognition at [www.tecawards.org/call-for-entries](http://www.tecawards.org/call-for-entries)

Entries will be reviewed by a group of industry experts from all facets of the pro audio and sound production industries to create the final slate of nominees. Final nominees are those products and projects that, in the opinion of the nominating panel, represent superior accomplishment in their respective fields. The nominees for all NAMM TEC Award categories will be announced at a special event at the 2019 Summer NAMM Show in Nashville, Tennessee.

The NAMM TEC Awards will return to The 2020 NAMM Show on Saturday, January 18 in the Hilton Anaheim Pacific Ballroom. Nominees and their colleagues and friends are invited to attend a networking happy hour, dinner, great entertainment and the celebration of the NAMM TEC Awards winners. Ticket sales for the annual event will open in September.



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# Reisman Family Announces The Liz Reisman Fund for School Music Education

The NAMM Foundation and the Reisman Family have announced a fund in honor of NAMM board member, music education advocate, and industry leader, Liz Reisman; she was 55 when she passed away 30 months after being diagnosed with brain cancer.

Reisman was the owner of Creative Music Center in Monroe, Connecticut and a passionate supporter of music education on a local and national level, advancing music-making opportunities for all school-aged children. To continue her work, and honor her memory for genera-

tions to come, the Reisman family is creating a new fund: The Liz Reisman Fund for School Music Education. This donation, together with others made in Liz's name, now and in the future, will support NAMM Foundation grants that impact school music education and help more people experience the joys of making music.

"Liz was beyond passionate about the influence music can and should have on our youth," said her husband Mike Reisman. "She was brought up with a flute in her hands and in many ways defined by her myriad experiences in schools, camps and community organizations dedicated to music education. One of her greatest joys was to watch the smiles of children brimming with new found self-esteem via music."

The Fund was announced at the Meeting of the Members at The 2019 NAMM Show. NAMM chair Robin Walenta said, "For those of us who knew Liz, we know the strong belief she held in the power of music education. This donation, together with others made in Liz's name, now and in the future, will support NAMM Foundation grants that impact school music education and help more people experience the joys of making music."

Since its inception in 1994, The NAMM Foundation has donated more than \$16 million in support to domestic and international music education programs, scientific research, advocacy and public service programs related to music making. The grants are funded in part by donations from NAMM and its 10,400 member companies worldwide.

Industry members who would like to honor the life and legacy of Liz Reisman may find additional information or make a donation on The NAMM Foundation website: [www.nammfoundation.org/donate](http://www.nammfoundation.org/donate)



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# Allen & Heath Brings the Music at SXSW 2019

From bar band performances to the “hot-ticket” sets, Allen & Heath was once again all over this year’s South by Southwest Music and Media Conference (SXSW) in Austin, Texas.

Everywhere you looked, mixers from across the whole range were in attendance, from ZED, Qu, and SQ mixers in lively bars, through to the flagship digital dLive system, powering events like Billie Eilish’s pre-supernova set at the Uber Eats House and the eclectic new music British Music Embassy (BME) showcase.

“Time and time again, visiting engineers are blown away by how quickly they can get up-and-running on a dLive and have the confidence to deliver the set,” comments Léon Phillips, Allen & Heath’s live sound & touring manager. “In a high-pressure environment with serious technical requirements, it’s a testament to dLive’s slick workflow that engineers can walk up and mix with just a few minutes’ orientation.”

Jeff Hawley, marketing manager at Allen & Heath USA, adds: “One of the missions of SXSW is to present a forum for performers to achieve their artistic goals. It was awesome to be a part of

that journey as musicians, lecturers and audio engineers all did their thing utilizing Allen & Heath on stages and events of all sizes. I was particularly excited to see every one of our product lines in use across the festival, from compact analogue mixers up through our flagship dLive range.”



## Zach Myers at Bill’s Music

Hard rock guitarist and Paul Reed Smith signature artist, Zach Myers recently visited Bill’s Music in Catonsville, Maryland.



Brian Higgins, Zach Myers, and Tracey Higgins-Kern

Over 50 enthusiastic fans lined up at the family owned music store to meet and greet with Myers, several of which even purchased a PRS SE Zach Myers Semi-Hollow body guitar so that they could have it signed at the event. Though Myers would play a show later that evening with his band Shinedown, he happily stayed until the very last autograph was signed.

Store managers (and siblings) Brian and Tracey (pictured) described Myers as “gracious, down to earth, and fun to be around.” This was Myers’ second visit to Bill’s Music.

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# Supplier Scene

## GC and The D'Addario Foundation Raise Money for International Women's Day 2019

On Friday, March 8, Guitar Center (GC) and The D'Addario Foundation teamed up for International Women's Day to raise money for the Music Education for Girl's Initiative. This initiative was created to help change this gender imbalance by providing the resources and guidance girls need to study music.

Fifty percent of the proceeds from all D'Addario products sold at Guitar Center and on guitarcenter.com were donated to the D'Addario Foundation. Paired with individual donations received, a grand total of over \$45,000 was raised to dedicate toward this initiative.

This new funding will go toward a number of opportunities for young women the D'Addario Foundation supports, including free instrument instruction, college scholarships, and all-female programming.

"The D'Addario Foundation is incredibly appreciative of the positive response and support for this initiative," says Suzanne D'Addario Brouder, director of The D'Addario Foundation. "We are thrilled to continue to build on this valuable partnership with Guitar Center to collectively further efforts to support and encourage more young women in music. Together we can continue to make a meaningful difference."



# Glenn Ottenbacher Reflects Spirit Of Hmong Band With CHAUVET Professional Rogue Fixtures

Glenn Ottenbacher, lighting designer and owner of AGS Event Productions, couldn't understand many of the words Sudden Rush was singing when the rock band performed before a sold-out crowd at the Muse Event Center, but he felt the passion of the Hmong quintet's music, which was honed by centuries of diaspora, struggle, and an unrelenting drive to overcome adversity.

Performing in their native language, the Vancouver, British Columbia-based group connected to the appreciative crowd, most of whom were part of Hmong families that fled to the U.S. in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and related conflicts in Southeast Asia. Ottenbacher had no trouble reflecting their performance in light with a compact, versatile rig anchored by CHAUVET Professional Rogue fixtures.

Helping Ottenbacher reflect the mood of the band's performance were the eight Rogue R2 Wash fixtures he flew over mid-stage.

"There was a very close connection between Sudden Rush and the Hmong audience," he said. "We wanted to support this sense of intimacy by washing the band and the crowd in the same warm, inviting colors. The color mixing of the Rogues gave us the flexibility to keep the show varied by introducing different colors, all while staying in the same warm family."

Also adding variety to the show were the four Rogue R1 FX-B fixtures in Ottenbacher's rig. He positioned these units on downstage truss and flew them about 2' higher than his wash fixtures. Having the linear Rogue FX-B positioned above the wash units allowed him to draw more attention to the eye-candy looks created with that fixture's five independently controlled moving heads. The height differential also added a sense of depth to the venue's relatively small stage.



Sudden Rush performs at the Muse Event Center

"I like to include the FX-B in my rigs, because it gives me so many different design options," said Ottenbacher. "Going beyond Sudden Rush's strong cultural identity, they are also a very good and versatile band. It was important to have a lightshow that could keep up with their musical diversity. Not having a lot of fixtures in my rig, I needed some that were very flexible in terms of what they could do, so the FX-B made a lot of sense."

To add punch to his lightshow, Ottenbacher flew eight Legend 230SR Beams on two rows of upstage truss. The 230-watt moving fixtures were used for specials on individual band members, as well as for crossing patterns on stage and aerial effects.

# Dios

## SERIES SNARES



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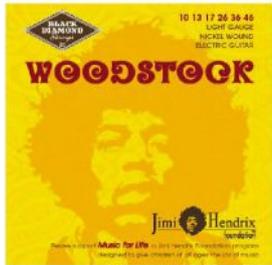
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# Black Diamond Strings Partners with the Jimi Hendrix Foundation



Black Diamond Strings has announced their partnership with The James Marshall Hendrix Foundation, a 501(c)3 not for profit also known as the Jimi Hendrix Foundation.

In honor of the love and giving spirit of Jimi Hendrix, the Foundation works to improve the quality of life for children to inspire creativity in music, arts, and sciences. The partnership with Black Diamond Strings will allow the Jimi Hendrix Foundation to showcase its Music for Life program.

Music for Life was established to provide children and young adults with musical instruments and instruction without the worry of cost. Each string set represents one of Jimi's iconic performances: The Monterey Pop Festival, Royal Albert Hall, and Woodstock.

"After conducting an extensive search to find a company to partner with for the betterment of community through music, we certainly feel we have found that with the Jimi Hendrix Foundation. Many of our key dealers and distributors have committed to participate

which will dramatically enhance our reach for success," says Greg Sfarzo, CEO of Black Diamond Strings and Sfarzo Guitar String Company LLC.

# PRS Guitars Names Carl Langevin as Brand Ambassador for Canada



Carl Langevin

PRS Guitars has announced that Carl Langevin is now brand ambassador to Canada. In this new position, Langevin will be responsible for working with PRS and its retailers to grow the brand in Canada through education, training, marketing support, events, and more. He will report directly to Jim Cullen, PRS Guitars director of sales.

"I am quite excited to have someone as talented as Carl on the team to execute the strategic growth we know is possible in Canada. Carl is a sales enthusiast and an active guitar player. He has been in the music industry for 27 years and working with musical instrument manufacturers for twelve. His experience has helped him to become a skilled product specialist and sales manager, which will assist PRS and our retailers in the achievement our combined goals," said Cullen.

Langevin previously worked as National Guitar, Amps, and FX sales specialist for Roland/BOSS's FX and Amp Division for over seven years, and as the sales representative for Godin in Quebec and West Canada before being promoted to North American sales manager.

"As the Brand Ambassador for Canada, it is an honor to get to work along such a prestigious company as PRS Guitars. The quality of PRS guitars, the attention to detail, and the company's culture is beyond compare. Paul's vision of the guitar reaches straight to my head and my heart, and when I play a PRS, I can understand just how much care is put into each instrument. I'm looking forward to being in the field and working with PRS retailers to bring that experience to more guitar players," said Langevin.

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## CORRECTION

In the March 2019 issue of *MMR*, our story on CE Distribution incorrectly stated that the company makes Sozo capacitors. To clarify, CE Distribution makes the CE manufacturing capacitors, not Sozo capacitors.

## Doug Wimbish Pays Special Visit to Spector's Woodstock Shop

Doug Wimbish recently stopped by Spector's USA workshop located in Woodstock, New York for some in-depth upkeep on his beloved NS-2 and NS-5 Spector basses. Having used them almost exclusively since the 1980's, Wimbish visits the Spector workshop occasionally to have longtime Spector technician Jimmy Epard provide some much-needed maintenance. Doug's relentless touring and recording schedule is tough on his instruments, so these basses require a special level of care that only Spector can provide.

"The process of caring for Doug's basses is extreme, and definitely beyond what is considered normal maintenance. Doug's expressive playing style causes these instruments to wear in very unique ways, which results in some in-depth repairs. Preserving these basses is truly an

art and a process that reveals the integrity of Spector's iconic design," says John Stippell, product manager of Spector Basses.

To date, Spector has two Doug Wimbish Signature Models, one in the USA Series that is made in Woodstock, and another in the Euro Series that is built in the Czech Republic.



Doug Wimbish with Stu Spector

.....

## Music Nomad Launches 'Guitar Care Month' for May



Music Nomad has introduced "All May Long Guitar Care Month," an international marketing plan to promote May as the official month to maintain, enhance and educate musicians on the care of their guitars.

"This is an opportunity for our dealer network to band together to promote their service business by offering specials and discounts on re-strings, setups and repairs," says Rand Rognlien, Music Nomad founder.

Music Nomad is supporting dealers by sending in store posters promoting "All May Long" to those that opt-in, a free bottle of polish to use on the bench with qualifying orders, along with online social media marketing and other vehicles to create awareness to both dealers and consumers.

"So many guitars and basses go un-serviced and could look, sound and play better. We want this campaign to help musicians get their gear serviced by their local store that may pass on discounts and specials to them," Rognlien adds. "It's a win-win for everyone."



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**MMR GLOBAL**



by **Ronnie Dungan**

**Pressure Drop**

This month the industry heads off to Musikmesse in Frankfurt again (as will *MMR*) and we get a chance to take a barometer reading of the state of the European MI industry.

Last year's outing to Frankfurt was a bit of an eye-opener, revealing a drastically diminished musical instrument element to the event. It seemed like the industry had turned its back on the show, with once busy and noisy halls replaced by walled off sections to make empty halls seem more full. It felt like a show in its death throes and it was hard to imagine it regaining any kind of traction that would bring back the exhibitors.

But it won't be for the want of trying. The show's organizers have worked hard to add new elements to the show, including a direct sell element, vintage guitar exhibition, new networking area, DJ event, and even a big name guest in Gregory Porter to close proceedings.

Will it be enough to rejuvenate the show and bring back key exhibitors? It may be that the industry is simply no longer robust enough to sustain a show of the scale and ambition of Musikmesse. The back-to-basics approach managed to placate some exhibitors who were seeking a straightforward forum for business meetings, but not others looking for a product and branding showcase.

The organizers have tried hard to find a balance that works for the industry as a whole, but the deeper malaise is caused by a sector facing challenges on so many levels.

No one does trade shows better than the Germans and the hope is that this year's Musikmesse will offer some signs of recovery. Chances are that the barometer reading will, however, reflect an industry under real pressure.

**New European For Distributor Phil Jones Bass**

Phil Jones Bass (PJB) has announced the appointment of W-Distribution, a division of Warwick, as PJB's European distributor, starting June 1.

"We are excited to have Warwick join the PJB family," said Phil Jones; "We are thrilled to have such a highly respected partner such as Hans Peter Wilfer, and are confident that their involvement will boost PJB's brand awareness and growth in the European market."

W-Distribution was founded by Hans Peter Wilfer in 1982 and specializes in guitar and related brands. The Headquarters is based in Markneukirchen, Germany and supplies over 740 Dealers directly in North Europe, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Benelux, Czech/Slovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Baltics.



"We are honored and proud to take over the exclusive Distribution for Phil Jones from our side and we believe it is a perfect match for our Dealers and us," stated Hans Peter Wilfer.

Established in 2002, PJB and Airpulse Guitar Amps are divisions of Phil Jones American Acoustic Development. PJB specializes in the latest technology in the design of compact bass amps and loudspeakers that achieve highest in fidelity and volume. Phil Jones owns several patents for loudspeaker technology.

**Music Junkie Closes**



Leicester store Music Junkie has shut its doors after its parent company, Blackberry Music, went into liquidation.

The shop sold guitars and drums, along with music technology and DJ equipment.

Joe Sadler, from liquidator Elwell Watchorn & Saxton, confirmed: "The company [Blackberry Music Ltd] has ceased to trade and its convening a meeting for the company to go into insolvent liquidation. In this hiatus period, what we're trying to do is support the staff and advise them of their rights, and deal with suppliers. The big reason why the company will be proceeding to liquidation is because the shop had big competition from some online business.

The director was always very concerned about the overheads and paying staff, whereas online businesses can do that cheaper – and while they did have very good products, they just couldn't compete. It's just a sign of the times unfortunately."

**Pearl Takes on Sabian Europe**

Pearl Music Europe has taken over UK distribution of Sabian cymbals and Gon Bops percussion from Westside Distribution with immediate effect.

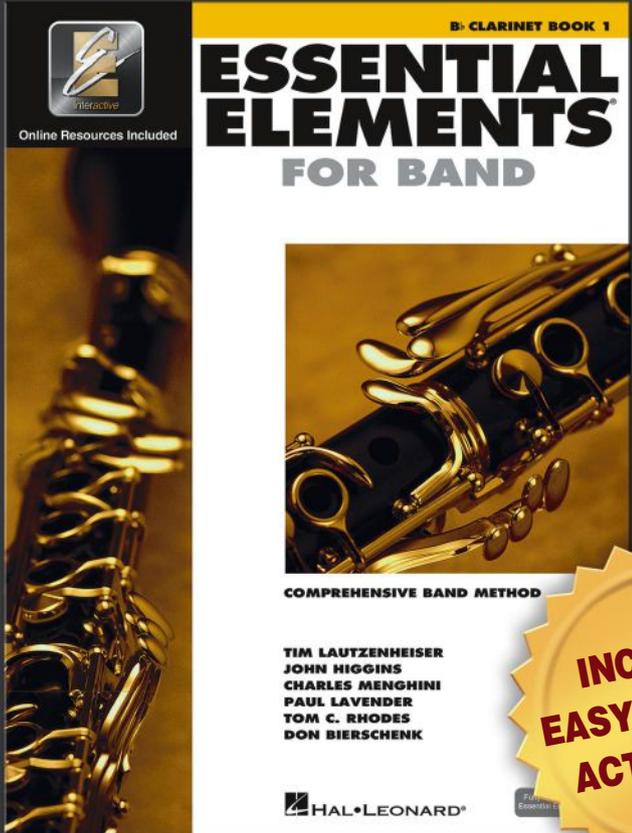
Westside managing director, Phil Hay, said: "I would like to thank Andy Zildjian for entrusting the Sabian brand to Westside during our tenure and we wish the entire team at Sabian every success for the future. In addition I would also like to thank our network of Sabian dealers for their loyal support over the years."

Sabian CEO, Andy Zildjian said: "Westside has been a tremendous partner and steward of the Sabian brand in the UK. We sincerely appreciate all they have done for Sabian and Gon Bops over the last 10 years and wish them the very best moving forward"

"We are honored to have such a well-organized and effective organization as PME to distribute Sabian and Gon Bops in the UK They are already our distribution partner in several other European markets and adding the UK to this will certainly strengthen our overall position in this very important market," added Sabian VP of International Sales, Peter Stairs.

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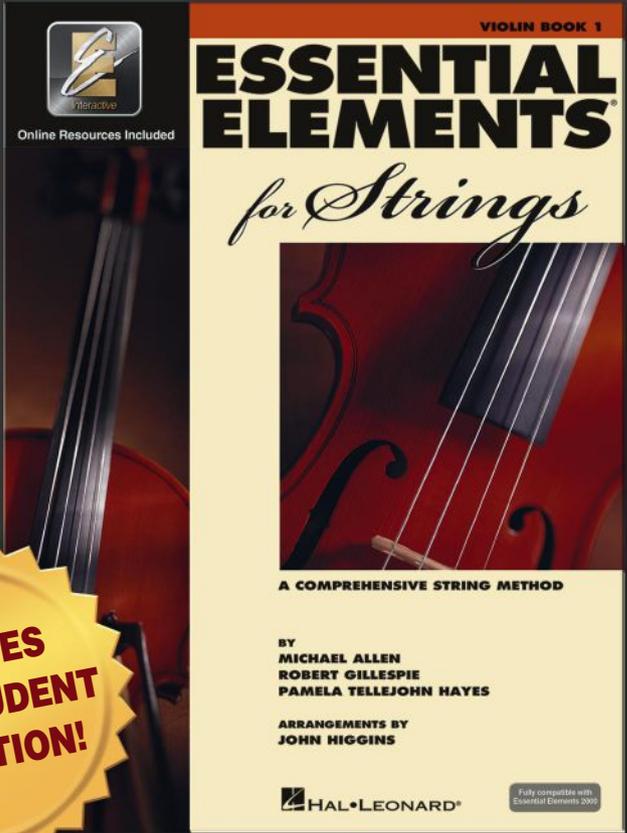


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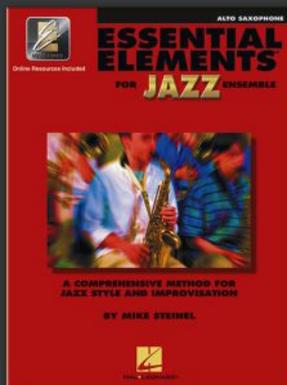
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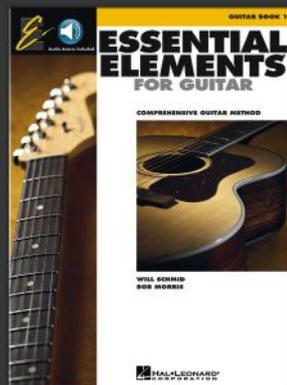
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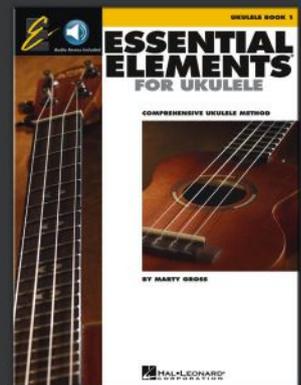
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## Middle East Deal for QSC



QSC has announced GSL Professional will begin distributing QSC Systems and Live Sound portfolios in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) region, including Iraq, from July.

"As QSC continues to expand the Q-SYS Ecosystem and Live Sound portfolio and focus on specific vertical markets, we look forward to working with GSL Professional to provide new and existing customers the service

and support needed in order to accelerate growth in the region," said Ron Marchant, senior director sales management, QSC EMEASA. "We want to thank our existing distribution partners SGTC Professional (Systems) and PAXT Ltd (Live Sound) for helping establish QSC as a globally recognized leader in audio, video & control solutions for business partners and end users alike."

"QSC has a very impressive line of solutions that are dedicated to enhancing the end user experience with sophisticated digital audio, video and control platforms for a diverse range of applications," said Adrian Curtis, managing director, GSL Professional. "As QSC continues to become a force in the market, GSL is the ideal partner to provide the technical expertise and design consult to ensure customers understand the breadth of the QSC portfolio while helping them deliver real business outcomes."

## New Warwick Limited Editions

Warwick has launched two new limited edition basses for 2019.

The Masterbuilt LTD 2019 model is a very distinctive Corvette \$\$ NT, which can be ordered as 4 or 5 string bass.

The eye catcher of the Corvette \$\$ Neckthrough LTD 2019 Masterbuilt is a top and matching headstock from Californian Buckeyeburl, with natural satin / multicolor chrome acrylic finish.

The body is made of Swamp Ash – with matching wooden electronic compartment cover – and the machine knobs are also made of wood. The maple neck with ekanga veneer stripes meets the body in a hidden neck through construction, the tigerstripe ebony fretboard features 24 jumbo bronze frets, Yin Yang fretboard inlays and illuminated side dots. The Warwick Corvette \$\$ Neckthrough LTD 2019 Masterbuilt is manufactured at the custom shop in Markneukirchen, Germany.

Two passive MEC MM-Style humbuckers with metal housings work together with an active Warwick 2-way electronics, rechargeable lithium battery and controls for volume, balance, treble & bass as well as two 3-way mini-switches for the two humbuckers (in series / parallel / single coil). It comes with a handmade genuine leather bag by RockBag, and an individually issued certificate of authenticity. Warwick founder Hans-Peter Wilfer personally signs each instrument.

Also in 2019 the Masterbuilt Corvette \$\$ LTD model will be accompanied by a "Made in Germany" Teambuilt Pro Series bass.

The Corvette \$\$ Bolt-on LTD 2019 Teambuilt will be available as a 4 or 5 string bass. The body is also made of swamp ash, with a spectacular textured Californian Buckeye burl-top with natural satin / multicolor chrome acrylic finish. The 3-piece maple neck with ekanga veneer stripes is bolt on; it carries a tigerstripe ebony fingerboard and is equipped with 24 jumbo frets and illuminated side dots.



## New DJ Event at Musikmesse

Musikmesse and Prolight + Sound are joining forces with the organizers of the Sample Music Festival for the first time to bring together top brands, such as Akai, Denon DJ, RANE, Ortofon, and Mixars in a special area of "Saal Europa" (Hall 4.0).

Other companies, including Ableton and Native Instruments, will show their latest products within the framework of workshops and product demonstrations. Well-known artists from the electronic music scene, among them Beat Matazz, Clockwerk, and S-Trix, will give visitors the chance to look over their shoulder at workshops and showcases. The official main sponsor of the Sample Music Festival Area is Schenker Technologies.

Launched in 2015, the Sample Music Festival is the world's first education music festival for DJing, turntablism and controllerism – a platform for expert knowledge, discussions and high-grade live presentations. With a specialized version of their program and numerous supporters from the industry, the brains behind the festival will be represented in Frankfurt from April 2 to 5, 2019.

"The new Sample Music Festival Area makes Musikmesse and Prolight + Sound an even more powerful magnet for DJs and everyone interested in innovative music-production tools. We are delighted that the people behind the festival have joined forces with us to raise this subject to a new



level at our trade-fair duo in Frankfurt am Main," said Michael Biber, group show director of the "Entertainment, Media & Creative Industries" Business Unit of Messe Frankfurt Exhibition.

"The turntable or MIDI controller is for many lovers of electronic music what the guitar or drums is for rock musicians. With a high-grade program, we want to draw attention to modern methods of making music, such as finger drumming, live sampling and live looping – and see Musikmesse and Prolight + Sound as an outstanding setting for inspiring a broad audience for these subjects," says Alexander Sonnenfeld, organizer of the Sample Music Festival.

The Sample Music Festival Area will also present a networking event of the DJcity online portal from 3p.m. to 6p.m. on April 3. The program includes a panel discussion with DJ Kitsune and showcases by Ray-D. Additionally, there will be a scratch session with the Mannheim-based "Scratch Buffet" from 4p.m. to 6p.m. on April 5.

## ON THE MOVE

**Tom Sumner**, president of **Yamaha Corporation of America (YCA)**, has been appointed as an operating officer of YCA parent company Yamaha Corporation, effective April 1, 2019. This is the first time that the world's largest musical instrument manufacturer, based in Hamamatsu, Japan, has named an American-born executive to its roster of ten operating officers.



Sumner will continue in his role as YCA president; he will be one of four new operating officers slated to succeed four who are stepping down as of April 1. Among the departing officers is Hitoshi Fukutome, Mr. Sumner's predecessor as YCA president.

Sumner's new role is the latest in his 31-year career with Yamaha. As president of YCA, he leads Yamaha operations in the United States and oversees the Americas. He has played a central role in making Yamaha more customer-focused, brought a marketing discipline to the company, and worked to streamline operations and eliminate internal conflicts and redundancies.

"I am honored and grateful at the opportunity to help shape the evolution of Yamaha as part of the company's panel of operating officers in Japan," Mr. Sumner said. "I look forward to working with our international team to help build an even better future for our customers, our dealers, our employees and our brand."

**Alteros**, an Audio-Technica company, announces the appointment of **Jonathan Novick** to the position director of sales & marketing.



The announcement was made by Jackie Green, Alteros president/CTO. In his new role, Novick will be responsible for managing and directing sales and marketing activities on behalf of Alteros, reporting directly to Jackie Green.

**The ADJ Group of Companies** is pleased to announce the recruitment of **Laurent Paulussen** as the new director of finance for the company's European division. With a strong background in both finance and strategic leadership, Paulussen will become an integral part of ADJ Europe's management team and help the business to continue its growth in this important region.



Paulussen will be based from ADJ's European headquarters in Kerkrade, the Netherlands, and will assume overall financial control over the company's European division as well as working alongside the existing management team on future strategic development.

**Antari Lighting and Effects USA** is expanding its team by hiring lighting industry veteran **Jonathan Hoglin** as the new Logistical Manager.



In his new role Hoglin will be responsible for overseeing internal operation such as fluid production, warehouse logistics, and act as trade show co-ordinator.

**Gibson Brands** has announced the hiring of **Mark Agnesi** for the newly created position of director of brand experience. In this new role, Agnesi will take responsibility for re-imagining and implementing creative ways of delivering the Gibson experience to

the brand's extended fan base of guitar enthusiasts. He will join the Gibson team in their Nashville-based headquarters and will report to Gibson's chief merchant officer, Cesar Gueikian.



"I am excited to bring Mark on-board at such a pivotal stage for Gibson," says Cesar. "He is the perfect fit to help us turn our vision into a reality and I can't wait to see what Mark will bring to our team, our brands and our business".

**Yamaha Guitar Group, Inc.** has announced the forthcoming appointment of **Joe Bentivegna** to president of the Calabasas-based company. In his new role, Bentivegna, currently the organization's chief operating officer, will assume leadership of Yamaha Guitar Group and its responsibilities in managing three of the guitar and bass industry's leading brands: Yamaha guitars, Line 6, and Ampeg.

Bentivegna joined Line 6 ten years ago, and as COO he has been overseeing and building teams that manage the company's product development, supply chain, IT, logistics, and customer support functions. He has been vital in leading the company through its continued growth and transition into a member of the Yamaha family. Previously he served a 16-year tenure at digital media powerhouse Avid, where he was chief operating officer for the Video Division.

"I'm thrilled to be passing the torch to someone who appreciates the company's culture and our customers so much, and is such a great fit for the role," remarked Marcus Ryle, current president of Yamaha Guitar Group and co-founder of Line 6.

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# Gibson's Cesar Gueikian Sheds Light on Changes Afoot at the Iconic Company

by Christian **Wissmuller**

**I**n late October of last year, after a long period of what appeared to be dark days for Gibson Brands (culminating with the company filing for bankruptcy in the Spring of 2018 and then going through a complete corporate restructuring), it was announced that a new leadership team was officially in place. Alongside new CEO and former president of Levi Strauss James "JC" Curleigh is Cesar Gueikian as CMO, Christian Schmitz as CPO, Kim Mattoon as CFO, and Nat Zilkha as chair of Gibson's board of directors.

*MMR* recently chatted with Gueikian about the many significant changes over at the legendary guitar brand, new initiatives to work more efficiently with MI dealers, and the importance of playing to your strengths.

**All right, so first and foremost, can you just briefly talk about how you landed at Gibson and where you were previously?**

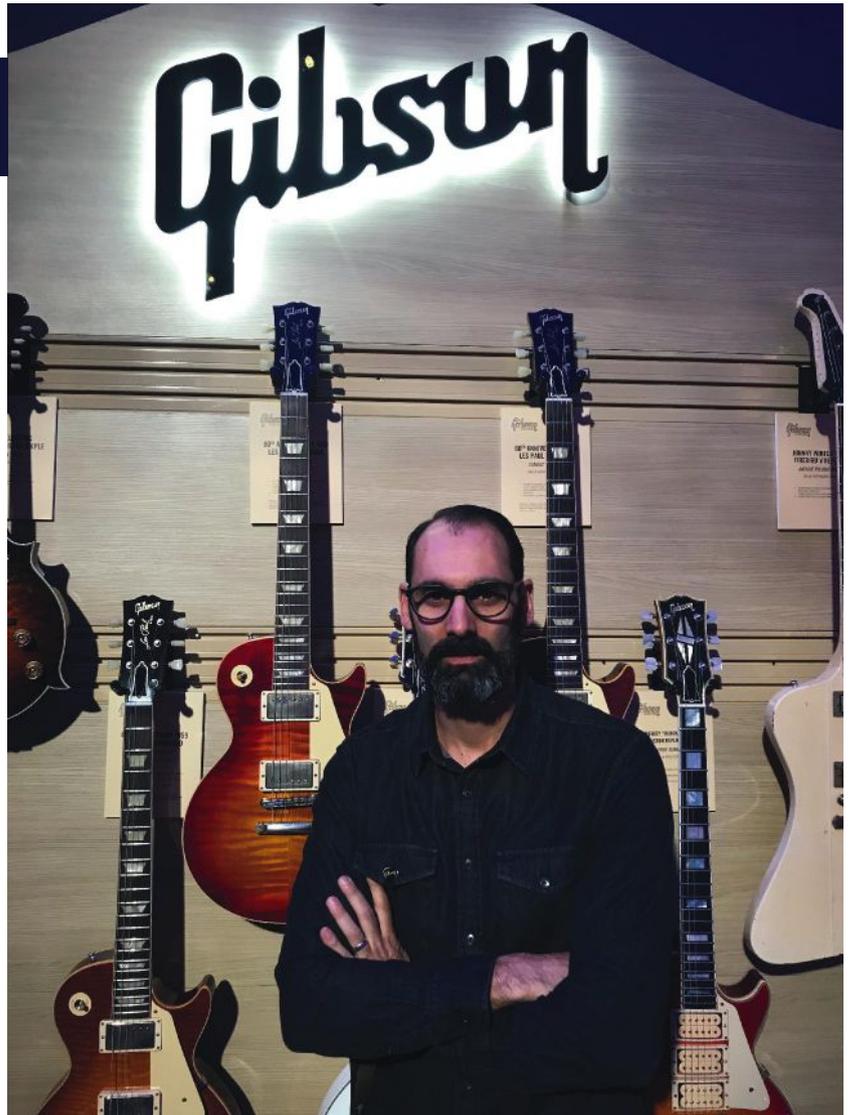
Yeah. So I've been in the private-equity business for 20 years, buying and restructuring, fixing companies that were in trouble. And my sort of road to Gibson is I've known the company and I've known the prior ownership for maybe about 10 years.

**Did you work with them or you just knew of them or...?**

Just out of passion for the brand. I'm a player. I'm a collector. I've got about 80 guitars or

**“So we're setting new commercial conditions which are really meant to create better conditions for the success of our dealers, which means better success for Gibson as a company.”**

so, 60 of which are Gibsons. I've helped the prior owners just because I love Gibson.



**Got it.**

And so, when I saw them making some of the decisions that they made – primarily around the businesses they acquired – issuing debt, and then some of the problems really started coming through and materializing and showing a little bit of distress on the bonds, I started buying them. Then I brought a friend of mine in who's at a firm called KKR. He's our Board chairman now, Nat Zilkha. He and I played in a band together, and we're business guys, so we've been doing deals like this, where we buy companies and fix them together. Anyway, the short version is we ended up acquiring control of the debt. And when the prior owners were unable to refinance that and pay us back, you know, we ended up owning the company.

**Okay, that makes sense. And that's kind of, I think, what many understood. But for our readers, for MI dealers, what should they know? What are the key three or four bullet-points that they should know about the new and upcoming model lines? What changes at the company are going to impact a potential business partnership?**

Well, the first thing I would say is that you can't make product decisions just to make product decisions. It has to serve a purpose. And our objective is to look to learn from 125 years of really owning, you know, the share of sound across music genres, and looking into the future and asking ourselves, "What do we need to do? What kind of conditions do we need to set up the company to own the share of sound for the next 125 years?" And then, once you know where you're going, then we go down to the level of, "Okay, what is it that we're making?" Right? So it's protecting our core, which is guitars, right, and really getting rid of anything that were distractions.

So I think a lot of people have been asking us – whether it's JC or myself: do we still own Philips, do we still own Pioneer, do we still own Onkyo and TEAC? And all of that's gone. We are a guitar maker. That's what we're showing everybody here.

**That's the thing that was just confounding for me in previous years, where it was just, like, who wouldn't want to be one of the two most iconic electric guitar brands? Why is that not enough? Why do you also have to be a consumer electronics brand and all the rest? Like, who cares?**

Yeah, exactly. So if our quest is to own the share of sound for the next 125 years and we want to do it by protecting our core, then that means looking at our portfolio of guitars and saying we want to be the most relevant, played, and loved musical instruments company in the world. Relevant, played, and loved.

**As far as game plans go, it's simple, but those are often the best game plans – the ones that are not these 220-page manifestos.**

And so then the line serves that purpose. We're leveraging our iconic past and bringing those classics back that everybody loves, which are so much a part of our DNA, and then learning from that and evolving it into the future with our portfolio of contemporary guitars.

**There are a lot of people I talk to who love Gibson instruments and who were once Gibson dealers and had stopped – maybe because of the minimum order requirements, or the culture at the company, or whatever other reasons. What prior demands on the part of Gibson, or other sorts of things that MI retailers maybe felt were unreasonable are being addressed?**

That's a very good question. What we're doing – and it's something that we've discussed with all of our dealer base at NAMM – is moving away from that. So we're setting new commercial conditions which are really meant to create

**“A lot of people have been asking us – whether it's JC or myself: do we still own Philips, do we still own Pioneer, do we still own Onkyo and TEAC? And all of that's gone. We are a guitar maker. That's what we're showing everybody here.”**

better conditions for the success of our dealers, which means better success for Gibson as a company.

**At points in the past decade-plus, it almost seemed like there was an antagonistic relationship between Gibson and...**

There was.

**Just from a fundamental standpoint, conceptually, who does that benefit? It doesn't benefit the dealers or the brand.**

No, that is just partnership relationship 101. That's not rocket science. And so that's an easy fix. So our contracts have changed. We have a brand new way of doing business. It's made it a lot easier to do business with us.

**Are you reaching out to former dealers to say, “Hey, you know, there's a new sheriff in town and things are going to operate differently around here?”**

Absolutely. And there are new ways of doing business with us. But a lot of those dealers are wanting to come back, and we want to bring them back.

**That's fantastic.**

And they're all centered primarily around creating a modern relationship where we not only allow them to promote that they are a Gibson dealer on their website – we encourage that, we promote that, we give them the information. We give them the style guide. We feed them all the photographs of the entire line. We feed them the entire spec sheets. They will be able to download all of that from one place. Our contracts are going to be online for an online signature. The application process is going to be done online. There's no more reauthorization.

**That all seems like good, common-sense practices. The things that'll help them succeed ultimately help you succeed.**

Exactly. 



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## Note From Causby The Recognition Your Store and Team Deserve

**In July, we celebrate the ninth annual NAMM Top 100 Dealer Awards. The stores comprising the Top 100 keep raising the bar of retail creativity, excellence and results. I have personally learned much about this industry through the stories crafted and shared by our Top 100 nominees and winners.**

My favorite part of this special event is that it's made up of all types of retail operations, spanning one-store enterprises, all the way to large multi-chain businesses operating throughout the world. Regardless of your store's size or location, we know you're serving your community in an exceptional way, and we want to recognize that. The Top 100 program is your chance to shine. It provides a unique opportunity to connect with your team to review the past year's business growth. The program is also an opportunity to showcase to the world how you're bringing music into more people's lives.

Each year, we review the Awards program to ensure we are representing all the impactful changes occurring in our industry. And through this process, we developed three new categories to reflect the evolving state of retail: Best Community Retail Store, Innovation Award and the People's Choice.

First, in my tenure at NAMM, I have learned just how passionate our retail members are for their community. I don't believe they get enough recognition for this meaningful contribution to music and the lives they are changing in the process. That is why we created the new award category, Best Community Retail Store.

Next, retail continues to change and evolve. This leads us to a basic question: How do you build an innovative plan to successfully adjust with the times? I am seeing so many of our members adapt their business models and create meaningful points of difference for their stores. And this mold-breaking innovation deserves to be recognized, so this year, we are introducing the Innovation Award.

Finally, nearly all our members say they would not be where they are today without the support and contributions of their customers, their vendors and their communities. Also new this year is the People's Choice Award. So if you're in the 2019 Top 100, you will have the opportunity to engage your customer and support base to have them vote on your store for the People's Choice Award.

At the end of May, we will announce our Top 100 Dealer list and then open up the voting process for the People's Choice award. This is an excellent opportunity for a social and community campaign to get your customers involved in your success.

Summer is just around the corner. Come July, we will be in Nashville celebrating the success, the courage and the aspiration of our Top 100 Dealers. Eight category winners and the Dealer of the Year will be announced at the can't-miss ceremony, July 19, 2019. All are welcome to attend and celebrate with their peers, not to mention benefit from all of the best practices and ideas shared to elevate your operations.

I'm proud to say that this is one of my favorite events because the exceptional program is dedicated to our members and embodies the true spirit of our association, a community committed to your success. I can't wait to celebrate your unique accomplishments.

See you in Nashville!

**Causby Challacombe, CAE** • NAMM Director, Membership

NAMM Chair Robin Walenta presents Lee Anderton of Anderton's Music Co. with the 2018 Dealer of the Year Award.



## Q&A

Andertons Music Co., based in Guildford, England, was awarded our 2018 Dealer of the Year. I recently spoke with Lee Anderton about his Top 100 experience:

**Q:** *How has winning NAMM Dealer of the Year impacted your store?*

**Lee Anderton:** We got some great local and trade press around the award, bringing international attention to our store. Our staff also felt a real sense of pride by earning this distinction.

**Q:** *What would you tell your fellow retail members from around the world on why they should enter their store in the Top 100 Dealer Awards?*

**Lee Anderton:** We've entered the Top 100 Awards for the last 3–4 years, and I know my marketing team always enjoy putting the pitch together. It often reminds them of all the great things we have done throughout the year. Being recognized by a prestigious organization like NAMM not only empowers your staff but is also an important part of building your retail brand up and will give you a competitive edge over other music retailers.

Watch Lee's hilarious Top 100 video at [namm.org/andertons](http://namm.org/andertons).

Visit [namm.org/top100](http://namm.org/top100) to learn more including:

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# All the World's a Stage

## The Digital Stage Piano Market

by Christian **Wissmuller**

**S**tage digital pianos differ from home digital consoles or portable digital keyboards – as you'd likely expect. Aside from differences in construction and appearance, these instruments need to provide the features that gigging players depend upon on-stage: additional editing functionality, real-time control, connectivity options, multiple zones, and an expanded library of sounds, among other things.

We recently touched base with six of the brands that define this market segment to learn about what developments are driving sales of stage pianos, what savvy MI retailers are doing to connect with customers and move units, and what's on the horizon in the coming months.

### For your brand, what are some current "hot" sellers in the stage digital piano realm?

**Mike Martin:** The hottest seller is the recently introduced Privia PX-S1000. Coming off its introduction at the Winter NAMM Show, pre-orders for this product have been stellar. This product is set to become our number-one product in the category thanks to its new sounds, style, and incredibly slim size.

**James Sajeve:** Korg has a number of entries in this segment and each really brings something different to the table. Among our hottest are Grandstage, SV-1, and D1. Grandstage incorporates our best action, along with sounds and engines from our Kronos Workstation, in a product with a very live-ready layout. Our long-running SV-1 Stage Vintage continues to perform very well also, thanks to its standout design, excellent sounds, and clear "left to right" sound editing layout. Finally, our newest entry, the D1, has been quickly increasing momentum since its launch mid-last year, and features the sounds and action from our Japanese-made LP-380 home digital in a super-slim body with a very straightforward interface.

**Nate Tschetter:** We just launched the new CP73 and CP88 stage pianos at Winter NAMM and they're hitting the stores in March, 2019. We've totally revamped the sound, touch and design of our stage pianos with this new line; they drew a lot of crowds at NAMM and the feedback was extraordinary. We

expect the new CPs to jump out as major competitors when they land on shelves.

**Duane McDonald:** The RD-2000 is Roland's most popular stage piano and is one of the top-performing products for our company.

**Alan Palmer:** Our ES8 remains a favorite among pros and home hobbyists alike. It has an excellent key action, a self-contained sound system that's self-sufficient for a small gig, like a restaurant – or smaller choir rehearsal – yet it's only around 45 pounds, so it's easy for one person to move. The MP11SE also remains a solid seller. With its wooden key hammer action, the same Grand Feel key action that has been used in our top of the line console digital pianos, there is really nothing else like it in the stage piano realm.

**Antonio Ferranti:** Dexibell's current best-seller is the VIVO S7 Stage Piano, winner of numerous industry awards for stage piano of the year for its best-in-class tone, touch, and technology. At NAMM 2019, Dexibell announced the release of our VIVO S7 Pro Stage Piano (88-keys) as well as our VIVO S3 Pro Stage Piano (73-keys). Our new stage pianos include numerous premium hardware and software upgrades designed for the performing musician.

“This is a broad segment because so many people have aspirations to be doing more with their music.”



Mike Martin, General Manager of Marketing, Electronic Musical Instruments, Casio America, Inc.





“The most effective method that dialed-in dealers use is simply to position these products as great pro gigging solutions, however possible. In-store, have these products in the synth area, as opposed to with or near home digitals or portables.”



James Sajeve, Director of Music Technology Brands, Korg USA, Inc.

#### Are these types of consoles selling more, less, or level when compared to spring of 2018?

**JS:** Year over year, we are seeing an uptick in both unit sales and total dollars within the category. For us, it's going in a very good direction.

**AF:** More – much more. Since our launch in North America, Dexibell sales have increased exponentially and consistently. In the first six weeks of 2019, Dexibell had already outsold the first quarter of 2018. So, as awareness of our best-in-class, handmade in Italy digital pianos, organs, and keyboards increases, our sales increase as well.

**DM:** Sales of Roland's stage pianos have been consistently solid and we see demand increasing in this category.

**AP:** Sales have been steady for us and, in particular, the MP models are steady sellers year in, year out.

**NT:** Hard to say because Yamaha, a major manufacturer, is in the midst of a product transition, which always affects the market behavior of that product's category. At the same time, given the considerable buzz at NAMM and lots of positive comments – people were literally lining up to get in to play a CP73 or CP88! – we expect that when the dust settles, not only Yamaha but the market in general will see renewed interest in this category, and that will bend the curve upward for stage pianos.

**MM:** We're definitely seeing an increase overall compared to a year ago. Products like our PX-160 have been doing well thanks to some special offers we've had for our dealers this year. Our upper-end stage pianos like the PX-5S and PX-560 are still strong and steady sellers.

#### For dealers who are perhaps a little fuzzy on the distinction, what makes stage digital pianos different from home or studio digital pianos?

**NT:** Always a good question. Stage pianos tend to have features that solve the problems of people playing gigs: for example, aluminum construction for durability, balanced outputs for better noise resistance and direct hands-on control. They also tend not to have built-in speakers (although we do have a stage piano that does, the CP300) or things like built-in rhythms and metronomes. With stage pianos, the expectation is that it will be connected to some sort of speaker system, whether studio monitors in a recording situation or a PA in a live situation.

**DM:** The biggest distinction, aside from appearance, is that the stage piano often serves as the control hub for a live keyboard rig or studio control room. As such, it features things like multiple zones and external control options. It also has to cover many styles and musical genres and will typically offer many sounds beyond a few piano variations.

**AP:** The main differences are the cabinet design, features and portability. Stage digital pianos are designed to be more mobile than the typical home console pianos. They do not have

furniture style cabinets, and usually have more sounds, real time control, and connectivity options than digital pianos intended for home use.

Kawai offers two types of portable stage pianos in our lineup, the ES series and the MP series. The ES8 and ES110 models have excellent weighted hammer key actions, built-in speakers and optional matching stands which makes them suitable for both stage and home use. They have simplified user interfaces that are aimed at players who mainly play the internal sounds and do not need a wide range of features or extensive connectivity and real time control options. The MP11SE and MP7SE models do not have built-in speakers and are geared toward the more serious professional player with excellent weighted hammer key actions, a good selection of high quality piano and other sounds, expanded real time control capabilities and flexible audio and MIDI connectivity. In addition to great inter-

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Nate Tschetter, Product Marketing Manager,  
Synthesizers, Yamaha Corporation of America

“Stage pianos tend to have features that solve the problems of people playing gigs: for example, aluminum construction for durability, balanced outputs for better noise resistance and direct hands-on control.”



nal sounds both the MP11SE and MP7SE are powerful 4-zone MIDI controllers for DAW and VI instrument users so they are well suited for both stage and studio use.

**MM:** Our new products like the Privia PX-S1000 and PX-S3000 blur the lines between products that are fit for home and home studio and those that are fit for the stage. The incredible design of PX-S series make them a very elegant addition to the home, but their portability and performance features make them ideal for the stage. They're the slimmest form factor in the world for a digital piano and they weigh under 25 pounds, so they're ideal for the gigging musician.

**AF:** Stage pianos are designed for the musician who is working with live stage or studio amplification, and who needs quick access to real-time controls over their sound. You'll often see that stage pianos have additional onboard buttons, knobs, mixers, and dials so that a musician can make edits or changes to their sound on the fly, which is especially useful for quickly changing from soloing to blending in with the mix of a band or ensemble, as well as getting the sound right for a working venue, be it a coffeehouse, a church, a recording studio, an outdoor venue, or a stadium – anywhere you find your stage.

**JS:** By our definition, it's an instrument that combines a pro action and a solid sound palate with a way of selecting and often visualizing those sounds "at the speed of live." The vast majority of the functions are accessible on the front panel, or in some cases totally on-panel, with no screens/menus. It's all to provide the instantaneousness many players want in a live setting. We also lay out many of our interfaces to correlate with how sounds would be set up. Case in point, the SV-1 panel begins on the left with the PRE section – EQ, preamp controls, and so on – and ends off on the right side with things like master effects for the finishing touches. Each parameter knob also lights up to show its position. It's as if you can "see" the sound going through its signal path as you pan across the panel. On Grandstage there are, uniquely, two dedicated sound select knobs and accompanying OLED screens, so that you can literally see a split as it correlates to the keyboard, with nothing more than a quick glance. With both models, favorites buttons are right in the middle so that they are accessible to either available hand.

**Who are the primary end-users for these types of digital pianos and what have you observed successful retailers doing to connect with those consumers?**

**AP:** The key end-users for our stage pianos are typically piano-focused players who place a high priority on a digital piano with the most authentic piano touch and tone which is a strength of our entire digital piano lineup. Successful online retailers utilize social media and their websites to demonstrate our digital instruments with videos and great reviews etc. which customers can use to research their purchases. Successful brick and mortar retailers, in addition to providing good content through social media and their websites to create interest in our products and their stores, also stock the stage pianos so customers who want to play before they buy or customers who want to buy today and not wait for online shipping have those options.

**AF:** The end-users for digital stage pianos are working musicians. In any given month a working musician will find themselves performing at numerous and diverse live entertainment gigs: weddings, church, night clubs, restaurants, and the list goes on. What's more, they will be working with a variety of ensembles and in various performance venues. They need a versatile instrument that gives them professional quality tone, and real-time controls over their performance – and with do-it-yourself portability that empowers the musician and keyboardist to say yes to as many opportunities as possible. As keyboardists, most of us are our own musician, manager, roadie, and sound engineer – and we need gear that is as powerful as it is portable.

**DM:** Because they combine high-quality piano sounds and actions with a wide variety of additional sounds and control features, stage pianos are very popular within the worship community. Successful dealers are creating accessory bundles specifically for houses of worship and using targeted marketing campaigns to reach them.

**JS:** The most effective method that dialed-in dealers use is simply to position these products as great pro gigging solutions, however possible. In-store, have these products in the synth area, as opposed to with or near home digitals or portables. Showing them on solid, portable one or two-tier stands and connected to a dedicated keyboard amps also helps clearly communicates their purpose, and creates the opportunity for add-on sales as well. On-



“There has been a definite trend toward incorporating software, such as Apple MainStage, into live keyboard rigs.”



Duane McDonald, Roland Corporation U.S.,  
Product Strategy Manager, Keyboards & Synthesizers

line, supporting the live positioning with bundles or add-on suggestions that speak to the live players works well – things like stands, hard-shell cases and gig bags, expression pedals, and so on.

**NT:** We think there are two kinds of customers for CP73 and CP88, and retailers benefit from keeping them both in mind. The CP73 is for the gigging keyboardist because it has 73-key, weighted and balanced (all the keys are the same weight) action. This makes it compact and lightweight when moving from gig to gig and gives the player an action suited to playing a variety of instruments, from electric piano to acoustic piano to strings and other keyboard instruments.

The CP88 is for the discerning pianist and features an 88-key, natural wood, triple sensor (for faster repeated notes), graded (lower keys have a heavier weight than the higher keys) action with synthetic ebony and ivory key tops. This gives a very realistic acoustic piano-focused experience when playing.

**MM:** This is a broad segment because so many people have aspirations to be doing more with their music. The needs are actually similar from beginners to professionals. Instruments need to inspire customers to play but also provide the flexibility to meet the demands of live performance. The touch of our new smart scaled hammer action and our new piano sounds engage the customers who play them; also having the connectivity and flexibility for stage gives them the confidence to pursue their musical dreams.



“Stage pianos are increasingly being used as controllers for DAW and VI software, so providing excellent connectivity and controller functionality is becoming more important.”

Alan Palmer, Digital Piano Product Manager, Kawai America Corporation

**Any significant trends with respect to stage digital pianos that you’ve been noticing?**

**MM:** Portability is what our customers have been demanding. Our Privia PX-S digital pianos finally give keyboard players the flexibility that guitarists have always enjoyed, to simply pick up their instrument and play it anywhere. Add the fact these can run on batteries you can grab the piano and be playing music with your friends in an instant. Connectivity with apps is also a category trend and that is why we’ve included a free app called “Chordana Play for Piano,” which helps beginners to learn to play and allows professionals to customize their piano experience.

**AF:** The trend is [towards] portability and versatility. So much is expected of today’s keyboard player. We must be our own keyboardist, manager, roadie, technician, and sound engineer. We keyboardists make our living by saying “yes” to as many gigs as possible. That means we find ourselves both soloing and blending in with the mix of a band or ensemble, as well as getting the sound right for diverse working venues, be it a coffee-house, a church, a recording studio, an outdoor venue, or a stadium – we find our stage everywhere. So with this in mind, we have to have a digital stage keyboard or rig that is powerful, and highly portable. Part of Dexibell’s popularity has been the power and versatility of our technology and high-definition sound, which replaces the need for additional software and hardware, combined with the lightness and portability of our keyboards. This is the spirit behind our revolutionary VIVO S1 Stage Piano (68-keys with optional AA-battery power in an aluminum chassis) and backpack carrying case. The full power of Dexibell VIVO Stage Pianos in under 20 lbs. Even more-so our VIVO SX7 Sound Module – all the power of Dexibell stage pianos in a compact module that weighs less than five pounds. From our workshop and factory in Italy, we have launched a new renaissance of

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Antonio Ferranti, President,  
Dexibell North America

“Stage pianos are designed for the musician who is working with live stage or studio amplification, and who needs quick access to real-time controls over their sound.”



keyboard tone, touch, technology, and design.

**DM:** There has been a definite trend toward incorporating software, such as Apple MainStage, into live keyboard rigs. A stage piano such as the RD-2000 offers the ability to do that simply, using a single USB cable. This allows the artist to customize their sound using software instruments together with the onboard sounds, that also serve as a safety net should they experience any computer-related problems in a live situation.

**AP:** Stage pianos are increasingly being used as controllers for DAW and VI software, so providing excellent connectivity and controller functionality is becoming more important. At the lower price points, light weight and compact cabinet design is increasingly a priority for customers.

**NT:** Ease of use and intuitive user interface are key. With the CP73/88, the direct hands-on control really brings a lot of creative interactivity and invites the user to explore the sound. I think dealers will appreciate how easy CP is to use. With everything brought out to the front panel, it becomes easier to take customers through the instrument and getting their creative juices flowing.

**Expectations for this market segment in the coming months?**

**AP:** Growth. Through social media and platforms like YouTube people are increasingly exposed to music ranging from a person playing music in his home to professional artist videos, not to mention online lessons etc. which is creating renewed interest in playing music if only casually for fun. Many of these emerging users want portability but also want a high quality instrument (not a toy) and a stage piano is often the perfect instrument for them.

**JS:** We see this segment as poised for continued growth in both the near and long term. Digital Stage Pianos are a fantastic

instruments for so many live, studio, and in-home applications; everything from intimate solo performances to pro-level tours; not to mention a lot of ideality for students and teachers. And with price points and ranging from around \$300 up through \$4,500, the category offers considerable options to a very wide group of players.

**NT:** This market favors “newness,” and any time a cool new product hits shelves it gives a shot in the arm to both the brand and the product category more generally. Based on the enthusiasm that has greeted the CP73 and CP88 thus far, in coming months we anticipate a surge of renewed interest in Yamaha stage pianos that will bring similar interest in stage pianos generally along with it.

**MM:** We’re expecting a great year on top of what is a very solid category. The new Privia PX-S series and the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our first Privia already gives us reason to celebrate.

**DM:** As we enter into the prime live touring season, I expect you will continue to see stage pianos at the heart of keyboard rigs for many popular artists. Dealers that sell to backline companies will want to make sure they are well stocked on popular models like the RD-2000 to support these tours.

**AF:** Sales expectations for Dexibell in the near term are continued exponential growth. With the recent release of our flagship digital stage piano, the VIVO S9 Pro Stage Piano with its motorized drawbar faders, world-class piano and organ sound engines, hybrid wooden keys with aftertouch, backlit led controls for enhanced performance visuals, Bluetooth technology, and handmade craftsmanship – as well as the upcoming release of our VIVO S7 Pro and VIVO S3 Pro stage pianos – which join our VIVO S1 Portable Stage Piano and VIVO SX7 Sound Module, the future is very bright for Dexibell. 

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# Digital Piano Accessories on an Even Keel

by Christian Wissmuller

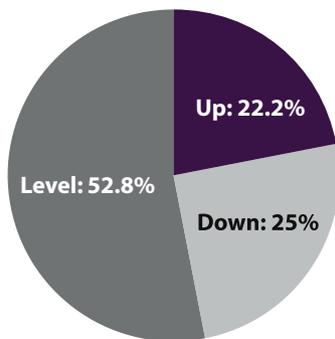
**W**ith 75 percent of participants in this month's dealer poll (sent out to over 200 retailers) reporting that sales of digital piano accessories are either up or level when compared to this time last year, you might walk away with the notion that this segment of MI is stable, consistent.

What's *not* consistent lies in the specifics and the trends observed by these dealers – which no doubt comes down to the geographic locations and economic/cultural conditions of individual stores. Mike Guillot of Mississippi Music, Inc. (Flowood,

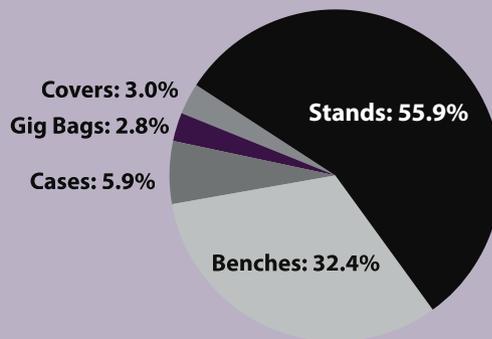
Mississippi) is observing, "Increased sales of portable digital pianos resulting in the sales of more accessories, cases, stands, and benches." Jason Olah of Fitchburg, Wisconsin's Ward-Brodt Music, offers counterpoint: "We have seen an increase in the interest, and sales, for console style digital pianos over more portable units that go on x-style stands."

Shared concerns do exist across most of our respondents to this survey: online competition, "packaged" gear that eats into accessory sales, and decreased MAP pricing.

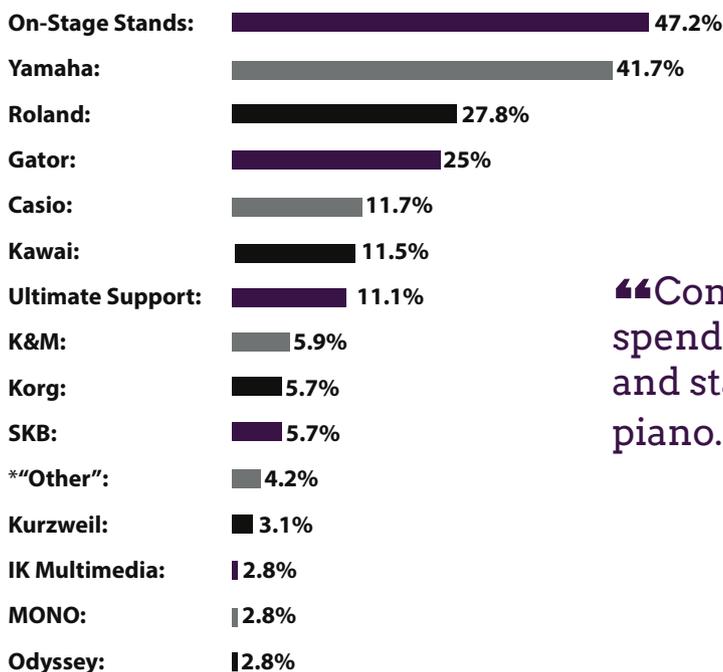
**So far in 2019, sales of digital piano accessories (specifically – covers, gig bags, cases, benches, and stands) for your store are...**



**Within the larger "digital piano accessories" category, what do you sell most of, in terms of volume?**



**What brands of these types of accessories are selling best for your store?**



**“Consumers are more than willing to spend extra money on a nicer bench and stand with their portable digital piano.”**

– Chris Teesdale,  
Willis Music Company

\*("Other" brands mentioned most frequently were, in order: Stag, Hamilton, and PL Jansen)

## Have you been noticing any trends when it comes to this market segment – either on the consumer or the supplier side?

"Increased sales of portable digital pianos resulting in the sales of more accessories, cases, stands, and benches"

Mike Guillot  
Mississippi Music, Inc.  
Flowood, Mississippi

"We have seen an increase in the interest, and sales, for console style digital pianos over more portable units that go on x-style stands."

Jason Olah  
Ward-Brodts Music  
Fitchburg, Wisconsin

"I have been seeing a lot more packages from the suppliers being advertised and offered. Even more than holiday time, the increased attachment has been a good benefit to the consumer. So selling more as packages is good but it has taken away from the individual items sold on the accessory side."

Bradley Wittmer  
Brighton Music Center  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

"Piano customers continue to gravitate to the traditional padded and artist benches, while digital manufacturers seem

to echo these sentiments with nicer benches for their new products. People like the look and feel of quality, regardless of the price point."

Keith Pendergraft  
Hopper Piano and Organ  
Raleigh, North Carolina

"Consumers are more than willing to spend extra money on a nicer bench and stand with their portable digital piano."

Chris Teesdale  
Willis Music Company  
Lexington, Kentucky

"Less options in stands and cases from most vendors. I believe many end-users are buying online so they're not even walking through our doors."

Darrin Wittkopp  
Music City Spokane  
Spokane, Washington

"MAP pricing keeps getting lower and lower."

Don Middleton  
Don's Music Land, Ltd.  
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# Book 'Em!

The Bookracks in MI Retail are the Face of a Powerful Engine for Wider Sales By Dan Daley

**T**he death of print, like that famous premature obituary that Mark Twain once joked about, has been greatly exaggerated. The collapse of iconic marquee brands, like Borders Books and Books-A-Million, in the last decade or so have masked a more important sustainability in books as products. In fact, between 2009 and 2015, more than 570 independent bookstores opened in the U.S., bringing the total to more than 2,200, about a 35-percent jump after more than a decade of decline.

One place where printed matter remains robust is in MI retail, where racks have remained steady or have become more crowded with titles, although those titles are increasingly connected to web- and cloud-based content.

"What we've realized is that everyone wants to learn differently," says Jeff Schroedl, executive vice president at Hal Leonard, MI's largest book publisher. "Some customers want conventional books, some want online instruction, some with more text than video, some with more video than text, or no text at all. As a result, we have to offer more options for them."

Publishers agree that the book trade is important for MI retailers. "Books build skills, and as musicians become more proficient, they come back and buy more and better instruments," says Schroedl. However, the traditional business model also requires that retailers buy the books they display, which can be burdensome. "Regular bookstores operate on a returnable goods basis, meaning they can send back what they don't sell; MI retail doesn't operate on that basis," explains Mike Lawson, one of the founders of ArtistPro and MixBooks (and currently the editor of MMR sister publication *School Band & Orchestra*). "That's a peculiarity that goes back to the days when people would buy sheet music, copy it, and then return it." Lawson says that means that individual stores must carefully tailor their inventories to their particular mix of customers, who have become savvier buyers in recent years, thanks to all of the content available on the internet. Adds Schroedl, "It also means that we have to provide a very wide range of content."

The use of online links has changed the instructional process;

using internet portals allows publishers to keep more consumers within their own ecosystems, as more individual instructors and teachers go online themselves, building brands as they go. But the shift to online connections has also provided some advantage to traditional book publishers, who are now able to move away from the CDs and DVDs that as recently as five years ago had become part of a standard multimedia package for instructional publishing. Even though CD manufacturing had shifted from the industrial-replication manufacturing model of the 1980s and '90s to a tabletop duplication model in the aughts, the discs still had a base cost and added to shipping weight, as well as requiring inserts for the books they accompanied.

Schroedl says Hal Leonard discontinued the use of CDs about five years ago, instead now using a unique code printed at the beginning of each book that lets users access one of two dozen or so instructional portals it operates. But it also underscores how publishing has to try to address the many individual interests – between musical instruments and pro audio sectors – at as wide range of skill levels as possible. The strategy now, says Schroedl, is to create content centrally and focus the complexity on the access parts.

Not that content isn't complicated. Schroedl says the company has to constantly look to create more value for users, which includes more frequent updating of songbooks, to reflect popular music's own increased diffusiveness. Popular songs drive half of the entire publishing business, he says; last year's biggest titles came from the film "The Greatest Showman," which joined new and perennial titles from Disney and Broadway. The base of the publishing pyramid is also widening, as entry-level customers look for instructional content on instruments like the ukulele, or for bluegrass banjo techniques. Other newer wrinkles include providing music tracks in the form of stems, allowing students to turn on and off entire sections of tracks, such as drums or guitars, so they can fill in those gaps themselves.

That same blended-media approach is being applied to pro audio publishing. It

**“Books build skills, and as musicians become more proficient, they come back and buy more and better instruments.”**



Jeff Schroedl,  
executive vice president  
Hal Leonard

had to, says Schroedl, because music technology changes on an almost monthly basis. To buttress that, Hal Leonard last year acquired Groove3, a leading website specializing in music technology tutorial videos, and then developed a dealer program around it that encourages subscription sales to the website's pro-audio tutorials.

Trends within MI also can lead to new publishing categories. For instance, Hal Leonard has recently been publishing titles focused on stomp boxes and last year issued its first looper-pedal songbook.

## Two Main Players

The sum of several years of consolidation, the MI publishing universe has been bifurcated into two major players: Hal Leonard, which had diversified its focus across a wide range of MI-related interests, and Alfred Music, which, according to Alex Ordoñez, Alfred Music's vice president of sales & marketing, about five years ago refocused its strategy on education and music educators, after experimenting with titles in related areas such as pro audio. "We tried to be all things for all people, but it didn't work, mainly because our brand is so strongly associated with education," he explains. "So we decided to realign ourselves with that perception."

(Hal Leonard in December sold over 3,000 of its trade imprints and titles, mostly in areas such as classical and opera, and theater and cinema, as well as technical titles around performing arts, to educational publisher Rowman & Littlefield for a reported \$4 million. Jeff Schroedl told *MMR* that the deal doesn't change Hal Leonard's commitment to publishing. "We will be publishing less pure trade books, [such as] biographies, but not stopping in that area altogether, either," he says.)

Alfred Music remains dedicated to print, Ordoñez emphasizes, but is increasingly linking that to digital resources, something he says is supported by access to music-technology portal MakeMusic, owned by Peaksware Holdings, LLC, which acquired Alfred Music

in April, 2016. MakeMusic, which markets products such as music notation software Finale and interactive accompaniment library SmartMusic, share a practice-heavy philosophy with Peaksware's other portfolio partners, which focus on athletic training. The common element, says Ordoñez, is access to expert instruction and guidance. That strategy of interactive learning – the company asserts it now has access to one million students and 20,000 teachers through MakeMusic – is combined with a continued aggressive acquisition that now sees over 150,000 active titles in its inventory.

One of the ways that's translated into support for MI retail is an on-site print-on-demand service that lets retailers quickly fill orders for specific instrument parts for band, orchestra and choral arrangements.

"The demand is still strong but we're seeing the ways customers consume educational material is changing," he says. "Print isn't going away, but digital is going to play an ever-larger role in education. So the synergy in the Peaksware acquisition is significant. We can provide the expert guidance that students need to learn and progress. MI retail is the portal for the books, which become the portal to the larger online learning experience."

## Retail Perspective

Aaron Dunn is category manager for general accessories and media at MI's largest brick-and-mortar retailer, Guitar Center, and it's an apt title. "Books are accessories," just as picks and strings and sticks and cases are, he says. "And musicians need books at every level, from just starting out learning an instrument to as they progress through different levels, to learn theory and new techniques. They don't outgrow books."

Dunn says demand for categories of books have remained fairly constant, with instructional titles leading and followed by songbooks. "The chords don't change but the music does," he says, underscoring the predictable annual churn in the latter and the stability of the former. In fact, he says, instructional books are often the only alternative for customers who cannot afford or don't have time for lessons. And even in the online era, physical books as portals to online education websites means that publishing products will remain a staple of GC's 291 stores, he says, the largest of which position relevant titles near different instrument sections of the stores – guitar books with guitars and pro-audio titles with software and technology – while their smaller stores will group racks in a central location, like most other retailers.

Ink and paper will continue to have an impact on MI retail, both as an educational resource for customers at all skill levels, and as an aspirational and even inspirational locus in a store. Expect to see more signature-type books, using celebrity authors and live appearances to stimulate sales – Schroedl notes that drummer Gregg Bissonette has recently done new videos and live workshops for Hal Leonard – as well as more interaction between print and online content. But browsing the bookshelves of MI retail will continue to be an available passion for customers, because as with any bookstore, you never know what you'll find. 



**Aaron Dunn,**  
category manager for  
general accessories and  
media, Guitar Center



**Alex Ordoñez,**  
vice president of sales &  
marketing, Alfred Music

## DIY Publishing

Some authors have gone the DIY publishing route, and it's remarkable to the extent that their narratives parallel those of the indie musicians they're often writing for. Bobby Owsinski's pro audio textbooks were published by a number of major trade publishers over the last 20 years, most notably his *Handbook* series – *The Mixing Engineer's Handbook*, and others aimed at recording and mastering engineering aspirants, which were under the Mix Books imprint. But as those publishers were acquired by larger ones, many of his seminal titles were no longer being carried by them.

That compelled Owsinski to enter the DIY publishing universe, and like music artists who've opted to forgo record labels and market their music themselves, he's found that social media and the internet have given him enough reach to make up for the loss of conventional publishers, making perhaps less revenue overall from his titles but keeping all of it, which is actually a net increase. "I use my online education courses and blogs to promote the books, and vice versa," he says.

It's also a lot of work – he'll write two blog posts day on average, in addition to developing new titles. Not having access to the MI retail ecosystem is an issue, but not a fatal one by any means, he says. "[There] now seems to have fewer SKUs than ever for titles," he says. "And that makes it harder to get into stores. So I was really pushed into the [DIY] market. It's not easy, but it's working."

**Y**ou could call DANSR the gateway to good wind instrument playing. Between the four business partners, the Illinois-based company has ties to Jones Double Reeds, Denis Wick, and Vandoren, working with each brand on their mouthpieces and navigating the trends and what consumers need – even to the point of helping launch Vandoren’s JUNO beginner reeds for clarinet and saxophone in 2013.

“I’ve longed for Vandoren-made, entry-level reeds for a very long time,” shared DANSR president Michael Skinner. “It was a big deal when we were able to deliver it!”

The launch perfectly represents DANSR’s role with the brands, offering their services as the “eyes and ears” of the market segment, and it’s that very kind of attention that pushed the company through tough economic times circa 2008. Founded in 2004, DANSR gears up for their 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, also preparing for the launch of their new counter cubes, rotating POP displays that can feature reeds on a limited amount of counter space.

President and partner Michael Skinner recently reflected on the company’s milestones with *MMR* – read on to learn more about how DANSR weathered the recession of 2008, mouthpiece trends, and the company’s plans for the upcoming year.

### Starting with the basics – can you tell me a brief history of DANSR? What were some major milestones for the company?

Bill Gray, Greg Grieme, and I founded DANSR in 2004 as a result of the D’Addario purchase of Rico reeds. We added Denis Wick products in 2006 and purchased Jones Double Reeds in 2011 and at that point added our fourth partner, Gary Winder. As far as other milestones, we’re blessed to work with incredible companies who manufacture some of the best products on the market. We try every day to bring their message of quality and integrity to the dealers and consumers who rely on these products to make a living.

### What kind of musical background do you, yourself, have?

I have a bachelor’s degree in music education from Berklee College of Music in 2004



All four DANSR partners: Bill Gray, Michael Skinner, Gary Winder, and Greg Grieme

## DANSR’s Michael Skinner Celebrates 15 Years

By Victoria Wasylak



All of the products that have been released since DANSR was founded

and a master’s in composition from the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida. I have taught all levels of music and played professionally in New York for 10 years. In those 10 years, I’ve played pretty much every style of music in pretty much every context.

### What kind of work, feedback, and research do you do in a typical day?

In my 15th year, I’m really overseeing the young and very talented staff we have in place. My focus is on the marketing and new product area while Gary Winder, our executive vice president of sales and marketing, oversees the sales area for the company. Every day is different in this business, as most people will tell you. One day you’re researching and testing prototypes and the next day you’re designing communication materials for that product’s roll-out. It changes based on the needs of our customers and they cycle of the year.

### As the “eyes and ears” of your partners in the market, how specifically do you craft feedback for both Vandoren and Denis Wick? Does your relationship with Denis Wick differ from your relationship with Vandoren?

Communication is a very important item with any company. Both Gary and I speak frequently with Bernard Van Doren, the president of Vandoren, and Emmanuel Tonnelier, the general manager on all things Vandoren. It could be discussions of new products for the market to any type of conversation on production techniques, time lines, marketing concepts – all of the above. Gary has monthly meetings with the Denis Wick staff that cover pretty much the same areas. Our meetings with Jones Double Reeds are weekly. We have accomplished a great deal in retooling Jones. I have to say, we’ve done some revolutionary things with production. Jake Swartz, our general manager, has totally changed the definition of “manufactured oboe or bassoon reed.” It’s both amazing and gratifying to see what we’re doing with Jones.

### What trends have you noticed in the reed/mouthpiece/ligature markets recently? What are your expectations for 2019?

That’s kind of a difficult question

“I’ve longed for Vandoren-made, entry-level reeds for a very long time. It was a big deal when we were able to deliver it!”

— Michael Skinner



The DANSR Warehouse Staff

and reeds have a lot to do with where you live. We’ve seen a desire for darker sounding mouthpieces in certain parts of the country, while in other regions musicians are asking for something with a little more edge. That’s why the Vandoren mouthpiece line is so large. We’re filling the needs of as many musicians as we can. Our job will be to continue to innovate with products we see as important to service the needs of the market.

**In your press release about your anniversary, you mention “weathering the storm” of the 2008 recession. What did you folks do as a company to get by during that time? What was that like?**

As with every company in the music industry, 2008 was a big challenge. In difficult times like 2008, it is important to have the very best partners in the business. With them, you can work on a strategy to weather the storm, which is what we did. We are also fortunate to be in the education industry which, unlike the combo business, is a little more insulated from the severe circumstances we experienced in 2008. Still, it was challenging. I’m proud to say we made it through without laying off anyone on our staff.

**Thus far, what has been the most challenging part of your time at DANSR? What about the most rewarding?**

2008 was certainly the most challenging. I am blessed to be part a very strong partner group. In that partner group, we have a former banker, a former music store owner, a highly experienced big corporation thinker, and a musician/teacher. The combined experience between the four of us provides a great

sounding board for ideas and a way to develop strategy after seeing whatever issue we’re confronting from all directions. We’ve had many rewarding experiences with Vandoren and Denis Wick as partners. For me, I think the launch of JUNO reeds in 2013 was the biggest.

**The VandoJam is still going strong – what can you tell our readers about the significance of that annual NAMM event?**

The VandoJam started in Paris almost 20 years ago. It still takes place monthly at the famous Sunset Club in Paris. When

we started DANSR, we loved the idea of doing a jam on the same evening every month in New York, which is what we did. When the NAMM Show was in Austin, we started the VandoJam at NAMM at a small club and it was a huge success. We had many musicians, but more importantly we had a lot of dealers at the jam enjoying the music. It was such a great hang that we knew we had to continue. For many of us old musicians, jam sessions were where we learned the music and connected with fellow musicians. It’s no different now at the VandoJam. It’s a place at the NAMM Show where every year you can hear the best jazz of the show plus indulge yourself in one of the best dealer reunions of the week.

**Do you have any other plans or news for 2019 you’d like to share with our readers?**

Probably the biggest thing for us in 2019 is the launch of our new counter cubes. These POP devices are compact and can sit on a counter without hogging too much space. It can be outfitted with JUNO reeds or traditional reeds. Our three cards fit nicely on the display which makes quick impulse busy very easy. We realize that counter space is at a premium in stores, but this cube can be highly profitable for its footprint. 

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# Refining Your Vision to Fit Today's Marketplace

By Menzie Pittman

**T**his year my business, Contemporary Music Center, has achieved a milestone. We turned 30 years old. It seems like yesterday that I opened the doors to CMC. Looking back, I realize so much has transpired since that day. What better time to look at the idea of vision in business than when you reach a major milestone?

## The Business You Formed Yesterday is Most Likely Not the Business You Have Today

When I opened CMC, I took over the space of a music store that had been in that location for five years. While that business struggled on many fronts, the music education facet was strong. My plan was to be different, to be better, and to grow. We were new, and we were excited to make a go of it, but every project is exciting in the beginning. The success of any business sustaining for decades is in the maintenance of the initial vision and sustaining that energy, never shying away from the responsibility of new ways and fresh, creative thinking.

## What Remains the Same After Thirty Years?

Over three decades, three things in my business remain original: one phenomenal guitar teacher, the idea that quality matters, and me. Everything else has gone through some form of evolution. I bring this up to make a point. You have two choices in business: you can grow and move forward, or you can stand still and get run over. Everything else is a detail. Let's put this in perspective. The world wide web's birthday was August 6, 1991. CMC opened in 1989. You could certainly call that a moment of disruption. Think about it for a minute. You can only conclude one thing, and that is that the only reality is change. That is the constant.

## Change Helps You Keep Your Vision Fresh

I think every business owner, manager, or business leader would agree that change has one redeeming and unique quality: it forces you to grow, and it brings you the opportunity to reinvent yourself. To some that might seem daunting or frustrating, but the music business is generally made up of very creative personalities. And to a creative person, the connection between "challenge" and "change" is very similar to that between "air" and "breathing."

Change or disruption forces you to look at the way you have historically done things and the current way you manage and conduct the details of your daily operations. If change is the only constant, being set in your ways won't serve you well for very long.

A major key (no pun intended) to survival is realizing that conditions and business environments are fickle. I often think of the statement, "Let the market settle the argument." Those words are true whether we embrace them or not. The market always settles the argument. We don't have to like the changes or

agree with them, but denying them is a fool's errand. You don't have to look very far in the world of music business to find models that have forced change. We probably would all agree that Reverb, Sweetwater, and Carter Guitars took bold directions in providing solutions for customers – solutions that made customers change their buying habits.

## Refining Your Vision

When I teach music, I have a mantra I use with students: study the greats. I believe it holds true in music, and I believe it holds true in business. But I also believe you must study yourself. Complacency is the enemy of creative thinking. We must face the truth that we must continually redefine ourselves, our vision, and our business.

Technologies help us work more efficiently, but they are also a trip-wire for new complexities. Some owners love pencil and paper, but anyone you hire in his or her 20s or 30s may not relate to your communication tools of choice. You have no other options than to continue learning, updating, and refining ways of communicating, marketing, organizing, and operating. What does the ad say? "This is not your father's Oldsmobile." We are only moving faster – exponentially faster. If that's the case, why then is "retro" so embraced? The answer is simple. We live in a world of opposites. We can never forget that music is also a history course, and this truth gives us additional tiers of opportunity in products, design, ambience, and in philosophy. However, you still need technology to move at today's speed of business.

## In Closing

When it comes to refreshing and refining your model, reflect on your beginning, then examine your current status, accept what has worked, but more importantly, admit what has failed. Tune your core beliefs, stand by your principals, honor your values, and enjoy refining your business creation to fit today's needs. If you embrace this simple understanding, we will raise a glass and toast to each other in another 30 years! PHOTOGRAPH BY [unreadable]



*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.*



# Innovation!

Eight Steps to Better Understanding and Addressing Customers' Needs

By Jaimie Blackman

Innovation is important, for it can help a business remain relevant in changing markets by creating new products and services.

In my April 2018 *MMR* column titled, "Measuring Customer Perceptions," I introduced a great innovation tool called Net Promoter Score tool.

Net Promoter Score is a free tool and depends on asking one simple question to customers: How likely are you, on a scale of 0 to 10 to recommend this product or service to a colleague or friend? The higher the number, the better. Zoho.com offers a free version for your website. The Net Promoter score is a great tool to promote innovation.

Of course, music retailers can always buy the latest in AI and VR technology. But for those who don't have a chest filled with cash to purchase innovation technology, I cherry-picked one great idea published in the *Harvard Business Review* which can help you improve your bottom line by creating a culture of innovation.

*Job Mapping*, by Bettencourt and Ulwick is an innovation tool/idea designed to uncover an unlimited set of opportunities for growth. *Job Mapping* approaches a customer's purchase as a specific job to get done. For example, when I purchased my MIDI guitar controller, it took months of research. The perceptive retailer wants a complete view off all my pain-points which becomes a petri dish for innovation.

According to the authors, "job mapping" is an eight-step process. Each step can provide ideas for a customized service offering.

**Define:** What aspects of getting the job done must the customer define up front in order to proceed? I needed to assess the names of the items I needed to get the job done. For example, I had a hard time defining that I needed stand-alone plugins and plugins which could be used with the midi guitar controller software. Initially, I was unable to define what I needed. In this step, the retailer can look for ways to help customers understand their objectives, and streamline resource planning for the customer.

**Locate:** What items must the customer locate to do the job? For example, for my MIDI guitar controller, I needed to research the market choices, the sounds I wanted, an audio system, a microphone I needed, an extended USB adapter, and a recording device.

**Prepare:** How must the customer prepare the environment to get the job done? I must have re-arranged my home studio six times until I found the right setup. This included having to figure out what I could actually fit in my space. For example, I needed quality, yet very small, studio monitors. At this stage, MI retailers could consider ways to make setup less difficult. Perhaps a scheme like what Home Depot uses

to see what a new kitchen would look like in an individual's own space.

**Confirm:** Once preparation is complete, what does the customer need to verify before proceeding with the job to ensure its successful execution? For example, for me it was about the length of the cables, a proper stand to hold my gear during large performance, and figuring out if my Mac had enough available memory. My goal was to try to nail it in one order, which turned out to be impossible. A year later, I'm still ordering stuff.

**Execute:** What must customers do to execute the job successfully? My pain point was the fear of a glitch in front of an audience. Here innovating companies can apply their technological know-how to provide customers with real-time feedback or to automatically correct execution problems.

**Monitor:** What does the customer need to monitor to ensure that the job is successfully executed? For example, I discovered a glitch in the software I had been using and needed to monitor this and create a work-around in my process, so the music didn't stop. Here's an innovation example from Nike. A sensor placed in Nike shoes communicates with an iPhone being worn by the runner, providing ongoing audio feedback about time, distance, pace, and calories burned.

**Modify:** What might the customer need to alter for the job to be completed successfully? If there are changes which create problems, your customer may need help with updates, adjustments, or maintenance. Companies can help by offering ways to get execution back on track when there are problems.

**Troubleshoot:** What problems must the customer figure out to perform the job? Customers need resources and tools. Perhaps the retailer can help.

In the 1980s I asked to a true innovator and pioneer of electronic music, Bob Moog, how he came up with his synthesizer idea. He told me that musicians complained about the quantity of equipment they had to take to their gig to create synthesizer sounds. He smiled and said, "I miniaturized the setup so it could all fit neatly into a suitcase." That's the key to successful innovation. If it's so simple to understand, after you see it, you're thinking.... Why didn't I think of that? 

*Jaimie Blackman – a former music educator & retailer– is a financial advisor and succession planner. Blackman helps music retailers accelerate business value now through team building, coaching, and mentoring. Blackman is a frequent speaker at NAMM's Idea Center. Visit [jaimieblackman.com](http://jaimieblackman.com) to preview his value-creation tools and to subscribe to Unlocking the Wealth newsletter and webinars. If you have ideas for a future column, email Jaimie at [jb@jaimieblackman.com](mailto:jb@jaimieblackman.com)*

## ACCESSORIES

### Canadian Flag Capos From Kyser

Kyser has partnered with B&J Music, launching the Kyser Canadian Flag Quick-Change Capo for 6 string acoustic guitars. The capo design that musicians all over the world depend on is now available in a beautiful finish featuring the red and white maple leaf design of the Canadian flag. MSRP: \$24.95



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

### Music Nomad's GRIP Puller

The GRIP Puller from Music Nomad allows you to easily pull bridge pins. Simply slide under the pin to GRIP and pull straight up. Alternately, use a rocking motion to roll back and lift the pin. The ergonomic, rubber lined comfort grip design has no moving parts and is a one-handed operation. Metal-free construction with a rubber exterior makes it safe on delicate wood and all bridge pin types used on acoustic guitars. \$7.99-\$8.99



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

### Thunderdrive Deluxe LTD From MOD Kits DIY

The Thunderdrive Deluxe LTD from MOD Kits DIY is an overdrive pedal kit that provides a strong clean signal boost in the early gain settings and smooth distortion at maximum gain settings. Adjusting output and distortion controls provides a wide variety of tones despite its simple construction. It can overdrive the preamp section of your guitar amp or add its own layer of distortion at lower volume. This LTD version is equipped with a three-position diode selector switch offering more settings and tones. The top position is the classic silicon clipping diodes used in the original Thunderdrive Deluxe. The middle position produces the lifted diode "turbo" sound from the Deluxe model. The bottom position is a new setting limited to the LTD version using germanium diodes for a warm vintage distortion.



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

### Whirlwind's Catdusa CT-F and CT-M

The Catdusa CT-F and CT-M from Whirlwind are the latest additions to the Catdusa family. Like other Catdusa products, they use Ethernet Cat cable to transmit four channels of analog audio. Both have a Neutrik etherCON connector broken out to four XLRs on 18-inch tails. They are wired with 110-ohm cable to maintain AES and DMX performance when using shielded Cat cable. The CT-F has four female XLRs, while the CT-M terminates to four male XLRs. They can be used together to create a simple 4-channel fan to fan snake, or combined with other Catdusa pieces to create a flexible and comprehensive stage sub snake system.



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

## CASES & STANDS

### Coffin's Agony Series Cases

Coffin's Agony series gig bags for electric guitar and bass deliver convenient, lightweight protection in a dark, sleek profile. A durable, element-resistant fabric exterior is emblazoned with signature Coffin diamond stitching, and a crimson interior is backed by ample 20mm padding that will help shield your instruments. Finished with ergonomically devised back-pack straps, these gig bags feature a 1-year warranty, with three available sizes (standard electric, standard bass, and extreme).



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

### The Gig Cube From Pearl

The black body of the Gig Cube is constructed from Asiatic Pine and features a padded surface for your bass drum pedal to strike, a red snare tray with two sets of fixed snares, and a red accessory drawer for your brushes, rods, and shakers. The padded bass surface produces a controlled bass tone and includes a pedal attachment that allows you to securely position your pedal. The snare tray pulls out in the direction of the player providing a textured playing surface ideal for brushes or rods. The accessory drawer pulls out from the side of the Gig Cube and provides storage for your brushes and percussion accessories. Measures 14" wide, 14" deep, and 24" tall.



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

**FRETTED**

**Warwick's Newest RockBass**

The Idolmaker Bass is now available as a RockBass (right-handed instrument) in both 4 and 5 string. The body of this sleek Idolmaker bass is made of mahogany; the bolt-on 3-stripe laminated maple neck with Ekanga veneer stripes carries a Wenge fingerboard with 20 nickel silver jumbo frets and "Just a Nut III" Tedur saddle. Two MEC vintage soapbar single coil pickups work together with active RockBass 2-band electronics and controls for volume, balance, treble, and bass. A push/pull function on the volume control deactivates/activates the active electronics. Further features of the RockBass Idolmaker include Warwick machines, two-piece Warwick bridge, Warwick RED strings, Warwick security locks, and chrome hardware. The RockBass Idolmaker Bass is available in Black High Polish Finish, Burgundy Blackburst Finish, or Vintage Sunburst Transparent High Polish Finish.



[www.warwick.de](http://www.warwick.de)

**Added Colors From Reverend Guitars**

Reverend Guitars has released new colors on three signature models for 2019: The Reverend Reeves Gabrels Signature Dirtbike, the Reverend Mike Watt Signature Wattplower, and the Reverend Billy Corgan Signature. Each year, Reverend Guitars changes the color on the Dirtbike to match the vintage Schwinn Stingrays that inspired the guitar. 2019's color is Tangerine, like the Schwinn color Radiant Coppertone. The Wattplower got a color and styling update for 2019 for a modern and bold look. The new colors are Metallic Root Beer, Metallic Watt Yellow, and Superior Blue – all three colors feature white pickup covers and white pickguards. The Reverend Billy Corgan Signature is now available in Satin Midnight Black and Satin Deep Sea Blue Burst (pictured) – a color previously on the Reverend Billy Corgan Signature Terz.



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

**BAND & ORCHESTRA**

**Powell Sonaré PS-905 Professional Flute**

Buffet Crampon USA and Verne Q. Powell flutes' new Powell Sonaré PS-905 professional flute represents the first instrument in the Powell Sonaré line to be classified as a professional-level flute. Like the other Powell Sonaré flutes, the PS-905 is hand-finished at the Powell factory in Maynard, Massachusetts and features a sterling silver hand cut Powell Signature II, K Style headjoint with an Aurumite 9K lip plate and crown, sterling silver body, Aurumite 9K barrel (hand-finished at Powell), nickel silver with sterling silver plating mechanism, French open hole design, pointed arms, white gold springs, and a French case with leather cover. Additional options include a low B foot, offset G, C# trill, and split E.



[www.experience.buffetcrampon.com](http://www.experience.buffetcrampon.com)

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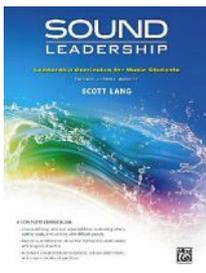
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## PRINT & DIGITAL

### Sound Leadership, Leadership Training Curriculum for Music Students from Alfred Music

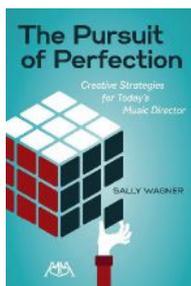
*Sound Leadership, Leadership Training Curriculum for Music Students* is a must-have for any music ensemble seeking to establish and grow their student leadership program. This innovative method provides everything one needs to teach, select, train, and evaluate student leaders. It guides the reader to think through real problems to create real solutions through activities like filling out personal and team assessments, goal-setting worksheets, and more. The opportunities for discussion will allow students to learn and take ownership of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as allow the instructor to assess their leadership team. Price: \$12.99.



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

### Meredith Music's *The Pursuit of Perfection: Creative Strategies for Today's Music Directors*

Meredith Music's *The Pursuit of Perfection: Creative Strategies for Today's Music Directors* by Sally Wagner is a nuts-and-bolts collection of essential concepts for successful ensemble directors. The book's multiple sections focus on musical excellence, professional excellence, auditioning, domestic and international travel, and inspirational quotes. The author addresses a wide variety of topics including: ensemble balance, commissioning, preventing teacher burn-out, breathing and tone production, and organization.



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

### Drumming Outside the Box by Joel Rothman

*Drumming Outside The Box* contains material that extends the bounds of drumming for jazz and rock playing. *Drumming Outside the Box* represents a sea change in the way jazz and rock time is usually played. Instead of simply keeping a steady beat there's a constant interplay between the cymbal and snare that brings a totally new sound and feel to the time.



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

## DRUMS & PERCUSSION

### Remo's New Colortone Drumhead Styles

Remo has expanded their line of Colortone Drumheads to include Pink and Purple, featuring proprietary Skyn-deep Imaging Technology for a stunning visual appeal with powerful projection, tone and durability. Colortone drumheads are offered in Powerstroke 77 snare, Emperor, and Powerstroke 3 Bass.



The Powerstroke 77 Colortone snare Drumheads are constructed with 2-ply of high-strength Mylar film with an added 5-mil Controlled Sound Dot on top and a 7-mil dampening underlay ring for a powerful, focused attack. Available in sizes 13" and 14."

The Emperor Colortone Drumheads are constructed with 2-ply of high-strength Mylar film. Available in sizes 8" through 18." The Powerstroke 3 Bass drumheads are constructed with a single-ply 10-mil high-strength Mylar film combined with a 10-mil underlay dampening ring. Available in sizes 18" through 26."

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

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### IK Multimedia's iRig Micro Amp

IK Multimedia's iRig Micro Amp is a battery-powered, ultra-compact combo amplifier with three on-board analog channels, plus a high-quality digital interface for direct connection to iPhone, iPad, Mac and PC.



iRig Micro Amp also offers powerful sound that rivals larger amps, plus the ability to connect to external cabinets for even more volume. Three analog channels - clean, drive and lead - deliver a full palette of sounds with a distinctive character, created by the same tone gurus behind IK's award-winning AmpliTube software. On board are bass, mid, treble and gain controls to cover a wide range of tones. iRig Micro Amp offers 15W power (7.5W when running on batteries), and combined with its 4" custom-voiced speaker, pumps out surprising volume at half the size of similarly-powered amps. When additional volume or a bigger speaker is needed, iRig Micro Amp also offers a 4Ω cabinet output to keep up with a full drum kit for band practice. Weighing only 2.6 lbs. (1.2 kg), iRig Micro Amp is one of the most compact amps in its power range.

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

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By Dan Daley

# Endorsements Will be Getting Harder to Get and Vet

**W**hen celebrities, athletes, and CEOs cross the line into bad behavior, they risk losing a lot of things, not the least of which are product and brand endorsements. And those numbers are massive: celebrity endorsement deals worth as much as \$50-60 million a year are not unusual – that’s about what George Clooney was earning for his association with Nespresso and Nicole Kidman for promoting Chanel No. 5, according to a Fisher Funds analysis in 2016. And the terms of those endorsements keep getting longer. For instance, NBA star LeBron James’ \$60-million-a-year deal with Nike is a *lifetime* arrangement.

So when these kinds of deals go south, they can take a lot of lucre with them. Going south is what plenty of them have been doing, in fashion, music, finance, and politics. The paradox is that the power of the right connection between celebrity and brand can be as beneficial as a soured connection can be toxic. The recent fall from grace by Ryan Adams, for a number of asserted #MeToo-related transgressions but most notably for exchanging sexually explicit images with

a teenager, provides the MI business with an interesting case study. Adams is inarguably a brilliant songwriter and interpreter of others – his cover, song for song, of Taylor Swift’s entire 1989 LP, was as much homage as it was snark. On the other hand, Adams is widely regarded as an asshole, volatile and self-absorbed even for a music star, having mixed it up on Twitter and elsewhere with the likes of Father John Misty, the Strokes, and Chelsea Clinton, among others.

So it might not have been all that surprising when Benson Amps and JHS Pedals both abruptly canceled their endorsement deals with Adams, with Benson shelving plans for a signature guitar amplifier and JHS discontinuing his signature pedal, adding that it would rebrand its current inventory of it, “with a portion of the sale going towards the fight against sexual abuse and misconduct.”

The power of the endorsement is undeniable: many customers will buy products based solely on the use of them by artists they respect, admire, and wish to emulate. And ironically, no small part of that power can be derived from the very same bad be-

havior that propelled some stars to the top in the first place – there was the 2005 Supernova Sheraton Epiphone made for Noel Gallagher, known as much for his epic feuds with brother Liam as the music they made as Oasis. Musicians, like all artists, are equal parts brilliance and idiocy, and that chemical balance (or imbalance) is part of what makes them attractive as product icons. But they can backfire big-time: has Nike ever really recovered from Lance Armstrong? How about Subway and Jared?

The question becomes, then, in an era of heightened scrutiny of everyone and anyone, how to better manage the entire endorsement process. We’ve already seen MI stores eschew traditional guitar-art posters of god-like string slingers surrounded by adoring (and apparently available) nymphets. But it’s unreasonable to expect the MI retail community to constantly monitor the social-media and/or indict-

“Musicians, like all artists, are equal parts brilliance and idiocy, and that chemical balance (or imbalance) is part of what makes them attractive as product icons. But they can backfire big-time.”

ment status of most artist endorsers. The situations change far faster than the posters can be printed, and there are way too many endorsers to keep track of. Instead, the endorsement process will have to become slower and more deliberate. Not to suggest that it’s overly fast at the moment – it takes a while to develop signature products – but with more products than ever before needing differentiation, there are far more closets for errant skeletons to fall out of.

What offers some additional hope is that we now have an entire universe of people – women, members of the LGBTQ community, and others who have moved from the margins to the mainstream – who have become viable as endorsement icons. Manufacturers will have to choose even more carefully as they consider candidates from this larger pool, but it’s also a way to emphasize a brand’s willingness to take chances of another kind.

Broadening the range of what constitutes a useful endorsement could help navigate what has become a difficult cultural landscape, but it might be a very necessary one, because the next Page Six disaster is always just a day away. 

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