



MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW



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A man wearing a black cowboy hat and a blue and white striped shirt is playing an acoustic guitar. He has a prosthetic left arm, which is a white, cylindrical device with a yellow tip. He is looking down at the guitar with a focused expression. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor setting with green plants.

THE MAN WHO WENT TO HELL, *and came out singing.*



JAKE WAS A GUITAR PLAYER. BUT THE DAY A CHEMICAL EXPLOSION TOOK HIS RIGHT ARM, PEOPLE STOPPED SEEING JAKE, THE GUITAR PLAYER, AND STARTED SEEING JAKE, THE GUY WHO LOST HIS ARM. THE PROBLEM WAS, THAT WASN'T THE JAKE HE WANTED TO BE. SO, HE MADE THE DECISION TO FIGHT FOR HIS IDENTITY—A BATTLE AGAINST STEREOTYPES, PREJUDICE AND WORST OF ALL, PITY. IT WAS AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK, BUT SOMEHOW, HE LEARNED TO PLAY ALL OVER AGAIN IN A WAY THAT COULD ONLY BE DONE WITH A SPECIAL PROSTHESIS—AND HE DIDN'T STOP THERE. EVENTUALLY HE GOT ENOUGH COURAGE TO GET BACK ON STAGE, WHERE AUDIENCES SAW SOMETHING JAKE WASN'T SURE THEY'D EVER SEE AGAIN. JAKE, THE GUITAR PLAYER. IT'S A STORY THAT INSPIRES US, AND SERVES AS A REMINDER THAT THE WORLD NEEDS MORE PEOPLE LIKE JAKE. FOR MORE ABOUT JAKE AND OTHER STORIES OF PEOPLE WITH THE COURAGE TO STEP FORWARD, *visit taylorguitars.com*

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C O N T E N T S

MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

Vol.173

No. 04

APRIL
2014

"Messe is great in that true quality time can be spent with the U.S. dealers who do attend."

– Paul Youngblood, Roland



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Numbers were slightly down at this year's Frankfurt show, but attendees still had plenty of business to conduct. Find a wide variety of viewpoints in our conference wrap-up.

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No segment of the market is more impacted by sustainability issues than the guitar market. This year, we check in with a few manufacturers pioneering a number of different environmental strategies.

34 10 Ways to Make Your Retail Business More Eco-Friendly

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The respected company makes some personnel changes and a major distribution adjustment.

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This Illinois music shop offers several lessons after a big move to a new location.

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Seeing Green

We revisit the environmental/sustainability movement this issue, but I've got a different kind of green on my mind, and I can't help wonder if some are seeing it when it really isn't there.

Gordy Wilcher, owner of Owensboro Music Center, recently wrote on his Facebook page that he will stop carrying Fender in his store after a four-decade partnership because of its recent decision to sell direct. "Fender's new strategy seems [to be aimed at] making it difficult for small stores like mine to continue to support and sell Fender products," he wrote. "I only remind the powers that be that it's all these locally owned stores that worked hard to build the Fender brand."

Servco, whose primary business is car dealerships, and TPG, a large private equity investment firm, own the majority of Fender stock. Their decision is no doubt based on growing the wonderful brand and increasing profits. I wish them well, as at the end of the day we all want more players and more successful companies. But I can't help notice a pattern. The corporate types who have been successful in other areas seem to look at our business and think, "Ah! I can monetize that!"

The corporate types who have been successful in other areas seem to look at our business and think, "Ah! I can monetize that!"

When CBS bought Fender in the 1970s it almost destroyed the company. When former Office Depot president Mark Begelman launched MARS, he failed to get the kind of big ROI he had hoped, and the failure hurt a lot of MI suppliers. More recently, Best Buy looked at the MI industry and saw that it could jump in and replace its dying DVD/CD segment with a musical instrument department featuring \$5,000 guitars. That didn't work so well either, and now they are back to selling just a few guitar packs and keyboards.

Will the Servco/TPG narrative be more successful? It won't be easy, especially if more independent dealers follow Wilcher's lead.

Here's what I think: It really helps to live this business to understand it. And if you live it, if you understand it, you know it's unlikely you'll ever get Donald Trump-rich in it. And that's okay, because if you're smart, hard working, and a little lucky, you can still make a decent or even a good living in the MI world. For sure you'll work with amazing people, and at the end of the day, if you've done your job, somebody out there is making music. That last part is priceless.

For nearly 10 years I've written the "At a Glance" feature, where I interview a music store owner and have some fun doing it. One of the questions I always pose is, "True or False: You can be happy and rich in the music instrument business." You know what the most common reply has been? "It depends on your definition of rich."

I've written a lot about change and the need to embrace it, and some of that was inspired by the many changes MMR has embraced in the last year. Here's one more: This is my last issue with MMR. I'll be returning to focus on the other side of Timeless Communications magazines, PLSN, FOH, and Stage Directions, and the Parnelli Awards, in addition to exploring some other possibilities and projects. You will see me around! MMR



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Harlem Explosion Claims Absolute Piano

The enormous explosion that rocked Harlem on Wednesday, March 12 originated in the store of New York's Absolute Piano, according to a report from *The NY Daily News*. The store's owner since 2005, Kaoru Muramatsu, is reported to own the building as well, which was destroyed in the explosion along with the Spanish Christian Church next door. Approximately 15 apartment units were also housed in the buildings. At least seven people were killed and over 60 were injured in the explosion and subsequent five-alarm fire.

Absolute Piano employee Colin Patterson survived the explosion. He lived in an apartment behind the store and was awake watching television when the blast occurred at approximately 9:30 am. He told the *Daily News* that "there was a massive explosion and before you know it the building was on top of me. I didn't know what happened." The story continues:

The blast sent pianos up into the air and onto their sides. There was a "massive amount of debris" but Patterson survived.

"I was in a miraculous cocoon," he said.

The pianos were toppled everywhere.

"For me to get out I had to go around them," Patterson said. "I was digging. Everything was in slow motion."

After Wednesday, the business could not be reached. Muramatsu has owned the property since 2008, when it was transferred to her as part of a divorce settlement with her ex-husband, Carl Demler (owner of Beethoven Pianos, on W. 58th Street). Officials are investigating the cause of the explosion, though it's suspected to be a gas leak.

Hal Leonard to Distribute Sony Pro Audio

Hal Leonard Corporation has announced a new deal with the Sony Pro Audio division to distribute its DWZ digital wireless systems to U.S. retailers who reach the music instrument, school, and church markets.



Sony Pro Audio offers a wide range of audio solutions for the music industry. Their products include digital wireless mics for vocals and guitar systems, handheld recorders, and their industry-standard line of headphones. Hal Leonard will initially distribute the new DWZ line of wireless systems.

Hal Leonard senior sales & marketing

manager Brad Smith says, "Sony has dominated the broadcast industry and now is bringing that expertise and technology to the music products channel. We are excited to work closely with them to offer dealers these top-quality product lines."

Jeanne Lewis, marketing manager for pro audio at Sony, says, "Hal Leonard is able to reach those accounts and players that we want to reach. Their explosive growth into tech distribution is great timing for Sony, since we've recently developed new products that fit that customer profile well. We look forward to expanding our product selection through Hal Leonard as we get up and running."

2014 NAMM D.C. Fly-In

NAMM members prepare to hit Washington D.C., making case for comprehensive school music education programs. Leaders of the music product industry, celebrity artists, and other



The 2013 Fly-In team.

industry influencers join together encouraging congressional leaders to support music education for all children. Registration is now open to current NAMM Members for the annual D.C. Fly-In, May 19-21, 2014.

"Encouraging more young people to play music benefits the entire industry and reaching out through the education system is the most important way to reach tens of millions of students," said Joe Lamond, president and CEO of NAMM. "Going to D.C. to lobby our elected officials and policy makers is the privilege and responsibility we all share living in a democratic society. NAMM Members who have participated come away with a profound sense of accomplishment and appreciation for the opportunity to have their voice heard."

The D.C. Fly-In coincides with school budget season, when schools and districts decide where to allocate annual resources. Music education programs are frequently among the first to be adversely affected

when schools are faced with budget shortfalls. Yet research and educators alike assert that music education contributes to student's overall success in school and life.

The advocacy effort kicks off on Monday with a day of service at D.C.'s Savoy Elementary School, which is part of the President's Committee and Arts and Humanities (PCAH) Turnaround Arts initiative. Turnaround Arts is an effort to infuse the nation's lowest performing elementary schools with arts programs, including music. NAMM members will bring musical instruments to the school for a day of making music.

Tuesday's advocacy training at the Kennedy Center will apprise NAMM delegates of current issues facing public school music programs. That evening at the Library of Congress NAMM honors Turnaround Arts at an exclusive dinner. On Wednesday, advocacy kicks into high gear as NAMM members head to Capitol Hill to advocate directly to Members of Congress. NAMM delegates will stress the significance and legislation necessary to ensure that every child has access to comprehensive music education.



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GC / Ares Takeover Reduces Debt by \$500m

Affiliates of the Private Equity Group of Ares Management recently exchanged a portion of their holdings of Guitar Center's debt into preferred stock and assumed a controlling interest in the company. Bain Capital retained partial ownership of the company, along with representation on the Board of Directors.

As a result of these transactions, Guitar Center representatives say that the com-

pany's total debt has been reduced by approximately \$500 million and annual cash interest expense has been reduced by over \$70 million. The company says that the improved financial position of the company will enable Guitar Center's management team to further invest in its people, store base, and brands to accelerate growth.

Concurrently with the partial debt-to-equity exchange, Guitar Center completed a refinancing of its remaining indebtedness with proceeds from new senior secured notes, senior unsecured notes, and a new revolving credit facility. Aside from carrying a lower interest burden, the company's new debt structure provides for substantially more flexibility and improved credit terms over the next five years.

"This new capital structure is the culmination of a lot of hard work over the last year," said GC CEO Mike Pratt. "Further, it marks a significant moment for Guitar Center as we strengthen our company and welcome Ares Management and its retail expertise alongside that of Bain Capital."

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Dealer Inquiries Invited!

RPMDA 2014

The Retail Print Music Dealers Association (RPMDA) will host its annual conference April 30 - May 3 in Dallas. The conference, a diverse collection of retailers in charge of print specialty stores and print departments along with reps from the industry's leading music publishers and retail services, offers members of this active segment of the market a chance to learn new tricks and socialize.



This year's conference updates the usual program by offering new "track" schedules, allowing attendees to select specific weekend-long groups of sessions targeted for the novice print music employees, the print buyers or managers, and the owners or general managers. Larger group sessions include "Salesperson's Guide to Consumer Print Music" and "Branding U: Stand Out in a Crowded Market Place."

printmusic.org

Magnatone Expands, Hires Stan Morgan as GM

A funny thing happened to Stan Morgan on the way to retirement from St. Louis Music.

"It was weeks before the NAMM Show, and I called and asked him to come work with us," says Magnatone president Ted Kornblum.

"Ted and I worked together at St. Louis Music when his father Gene owned it, and then we worked for LOUD for a while, so we have a history," Morgan explains. "I had planned to retire, but this sounded like fun." (Morgan worked for Guitar Center after LOUD, before rejoining St. Louis Music when Mark Ragin bought it from LOUD in 2008.)

Magnatone has also added Chuck Phillips as a sales rep to a team that includes Obeid Khan, engineer, and Dave Hinson, sales manager.

Kornblum graduated from college and worked in the industry outside SLM before eventually joining the family business. There he was involved in product development and artist relations on the combo



Some of the Magnatone team – Ted Kornblum, Chuck Phillips, Stan Morgan, Diane Villani, and Obeid Khan.

products like Ampeg, Crate, and Alvarez (he got the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir to endorse the guitars).

He says the whole time he was at SLM, he always had a desire to strike out on his own from the company his grandfather founded in 1922.

The Magnatone story begins the following decade, and the amps made by them would be distributed by SLM. Known as a high-end boutique amp for the discriminating guitarist, it's claim to fame was to be the first and only amp to feature pitch-shifting stereo vibrato.

One day he was flipping through the old

catalogs and spotted a Magnatone flyer. "I was curious to see if this company was still in business, and much to my delight, the company had been out of business since 1969 and the trademark had been abandoned! It was almost too good to be true." He secured ownership of the brand, but kept it a secret for years.

When Kornblum quit LOUD, he knew it was time to start Magnatone. "But just because I owned the brand, it did not guarantee success," he says. "Who better to help me with this than the great talent pool of engineers that helped my father bring Ampeg back from the dead?" Many in the shop are SLM alumni, including Khan and Phillips.

It took a few years to debut Magnatone because Kornblum wanted to bring a whole line out at once. The nine models offered today are all made by hand in St. Louis. With the current sales team headed by Morgan, they are growing their high-end boutique dealer base. Currently more than 50 percent of their sales come from overseas, Kornblum says.



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E.K. Blessing Announces New Initiatives

E.K. Blessing is expanding its product line and introducing a unique dealer service program, while shifting some production to established manufacturing partners. The result of this strategic shift in production is a reduction in Blessing's Elkhart work force. The company will con-

tinue to operate its Elkhart facility with a primary focus on design, sales, and distribution functions.

According to president Steven Wasser, *We will continue to design great instruments in conjunction with partners like Cliff Blackburn and Fred Powell. These instru-*



ments will be produced using some of our patented designs and proprietary technology. The source of production for these instruments will be a combination of our own Elkhart plant along with well-established partnerships we have with instrument producers located in Germany, Asia, and the USA. This approach to manufacturing is designed to produce the highest possible quality at very competitive prices.

Blessing's Sonaré Pro Brass division has just introduced the new Sonaré 812 C trumpet to a very receptive market. The entire trumpet section of a major symphony orchestra in California has placed an order for this new instrument, which includes Sonaré's patented MicroLok adjustable valve guide and a new, specially designed Fred Powell leadpipe. Blessing has also been asked to design and produce a line of professional trumpets and trombones for a major retailer which will incorporate some additional proprietary designs.

In an industry where dealers are historically asked by their suppliers to place large master orders, Blessing has observed a shift in the ordering pattern. Steve Allen, Blessing's sales manager, explained:

We've noticed an increase in last minute orders with a requirement for quick delivery. Yet, in a technological world where people are accustomed to shopping on the internet and buying with the click of a mouse, the wind instrument industry seems tied to the last century. Blessing is now offering the same on-line ease of ordering and rapid shipment to its dealers that characterizes much of the on-line retail industry. Our new e-commerce program for dealers – "Brass Expedited Express" or the BEE program – puts our stock online, accepts an online PO, and guarantees shipment within 48 hours or the shipping is free.

Blessing has been known for producing brass instruments since 1906. The strategic initiatives now being implemented are intended to assure that the enterprise will continue strong for the next 108 years with Elkhart, Indiana as its base of operations.

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"THE CLASSICS"

Korg USA Key Note Awards

Korg USA has announced the winners of its 2013 Korg USA Key Note Awards. As part of the company's ongoing commitment to encourage and support its dealer network, this annual distinction formally recognizes retailers who have excelled in various categories and have demonstrated their commitment to Korg USA's brands.

The Korg USA Key Note Awards were presented at the 2014 Winter NAMM Show to top dealers in four categories. The winners are as follows:

- **BEST NEW DEALER: Sonic Sense, Colo.**
- **DEALER OF THE YEAR: Ken Stanton Music, Ga.**
- **COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE** [two winners]:
Sweetwater Sound, Inc., Ind.
Kraft Music, Wis.

Korg USA national sales manager, AJ Reitz, stated, "Korg USA is proud to recognize our retailers who have exemplified excellence as well as shown exceptional loyalty to Korg USA's brands and products. These awards are not only significant for the recipients but also important to Korg USA, as our company continually strives to return the same support and commitment our dealers demonstrate to Korg USA every day."



Korg USA announces Ken Stanton Music as Dealer of the Year 2013.

2014 NAMM Top 100 Dealer Awards

Music-products industry retailers take center stage as NAMM presents the Top 100 Dealer Awards July 18 at Summer NAMM in Nashville. The 2014 "Dealer of the Year" will be chosen from among the Top 100.

NAMM's Top 100 Dealer Awards was created to spotlight the industry's very best music product retailers and share their stores' strategies for success.

Businesses are currently vying for Top 100 status and are evaluated for innovative methods, resourceful approaches, and effective implementation of retail best practices. A panel of anonymous industry judges will score each entry to determine the category winners and Dealer of the Year. During the July 18 awards, excellence in eight divisions will be recognized from among the Top 100 Dealers. Categories include Best Exterior Presentation, Best Merchandising Display, Best Marketing and Sales Promotion, Best Online Presentation, SupportMusic Advocacy, Music Makes a Difference, Best Emerging Dealer "Rookie of the Year," and Best Special Event.

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Tech 21 Celebrates 25 Years



Launched in midtown Manhattan in 1989, Tech 21 was never part of Andrew Barta's plans. Now, 25 years later, Barta admits that he had no thoughts of starting his own company, let alone becoming a manufacturer. His dream, like so many in this business, was to be a rock star. While performing most nights, Andrew earned his living repairing, modifying, and customizing amplifiers during the day. Andrew was an avid tinkerer, and would build or modify various distortion and effect pedals in his spare time. Over the course of 10-plus years, Andrew worked on developing a pedal he simply wanted for his own personal use.

The small black box remained nameless for two years, while Andrew attempted to sell his technology to some of the major manufacturers. But they weren't able to foresee the potential and how much impact it would eventually have. Unable to abandon his idea, Andrew had to set out on his own. With the help and

advice of Dale Krevens, vice president of Tech 21, the SansAmp was named and Tech 21 was formed. Although this kind of product had never before existed, it took a surprisingly short amount of time to gain acceptance from players.

Tech 21 pioneered the direct recording movement and created an entirely new category of signal processing. The SansAmp tube amplifier emulator was the first device to enable musicians to consistently dial in tones and patch them directly to a studio mixer or stage PA without searching for hours and hours to find that elusive "sweet spot." Instead, the 100 percent analog SansAmp delivered all of its sounds from a pocket-sized pedal.

Today, Tech 21 offers a full line of SansAmps, as well as effects and amplifiers. The goal is to make player-friendly, truly useful, flexible, multi-functional, roadworthy, workhorse products. Many of their products have changed little, or not at all, and are still in production today, including the

original SansAmp Classic ('89), SansAmp Bass DI/Bass Driver DI ('92), SansAmp GT2 ('93), SansAmp PSA ('93), MIDI Mouse footcontroller ('95), Trademark 60 combo guitar amp ('96), SansAmp RBI ('01), and SansAmp RPM ('04).

CORRECTION

In the March 2014 issue of *MMR*, within the Survey of the Ukulele Market, the caption for the graphic at the top of page 34 incorrectly identifies the Kohala brand as "Kohana."

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Trade Regrets

BR Wexler, president of Wexler Music Company, a leading manufacturer of symphonic batons, passed away on March 21.

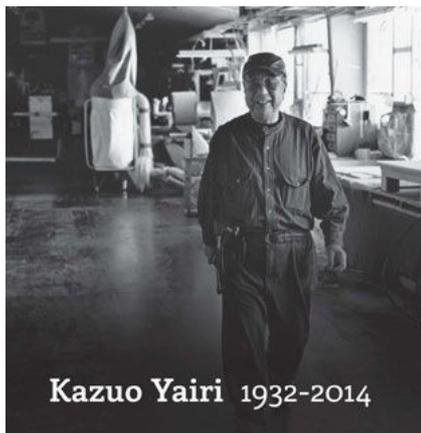
Established by Wexler's father, David Wexler, Wexler Music Company pioneered the music store counter catalog and gained great respect for its fair business

practices. David Wexler was also a noted educator who wrote often about the business and issues facing the industry.

BR's articles have appeared in the pages of *Music Merchandise Review* and we will miss his valued contributions.

According to NAMM's Dan Del Fioren-

tino, BR's wife, Loretta, provided the details that BR passed away in Arizona, their home for the last 15 years, but that he was buried in his hometown of Chicago on Thursday March 27. Cards can be sent to her at 5232 E. Calle DeLas Estrellas, Cave Creek, Ariz. 85331



Master Luthier **Kazuo Yairi** passed away in his hometown of Kani, Japan on March 5.

As owner and president of the Yairi Guitar Company, Yairi helped change the landscape of acoustic guitar manufacturing and distribution. His company was one of the first to export professional acoustic guitars to the United States, and became the main manufacturer of Alvarez and Alvarez-Yairi guitars, owned and distributed worldwide by St. Louis Music.

Mr. Yairi and former owner of St. Louis Music Gene Kornblum forged a close business relationship from the late 1960s that

saw them build Alvarez and Yairi into globally recognized brands. Through his passion and commitment, Kazuo Yairi became one of the most innovative and highly regarded master luthiers of modern times.

"All of us at Alvarez are all greatly saddened by this loss," says Chris Meikle, senior VP at St. Louis Music and head of Alvarez development. "Mr. Yairi is one of the reasons Alvarez exists and irreplaceable because of his wonderful personality. His work will continue, and will continue in the way he would want, by building guitars without compromise to quality, and with a dedication to innovation."

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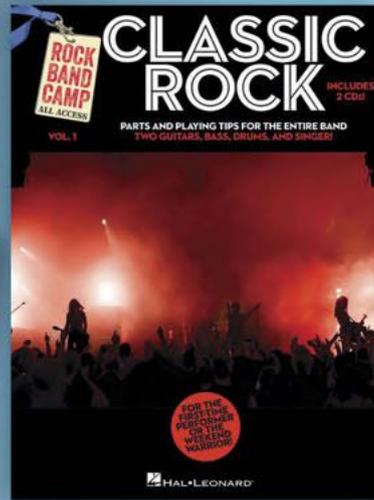
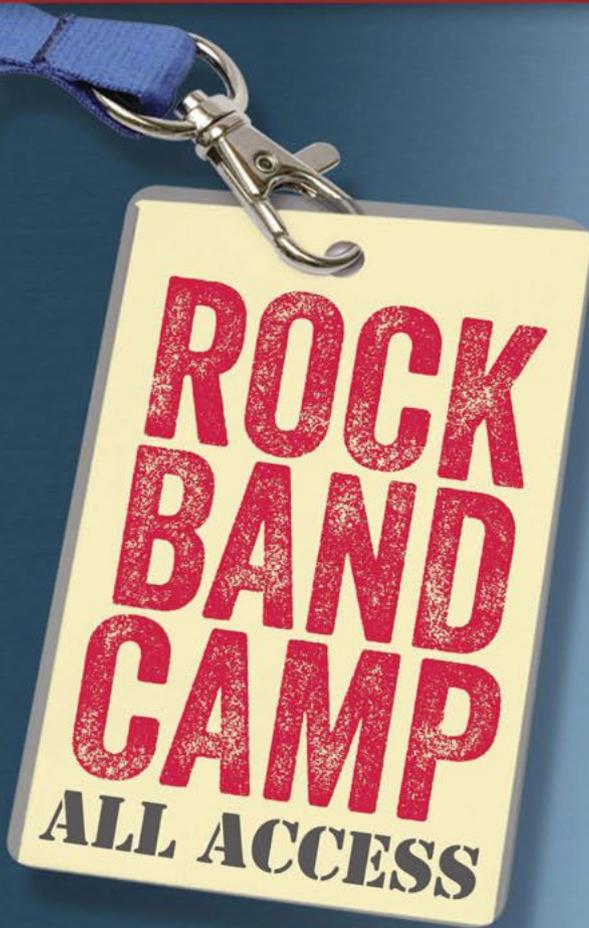
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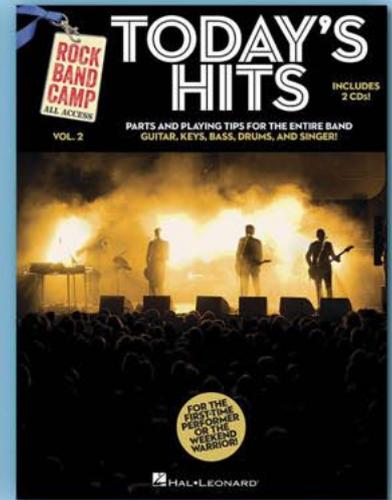
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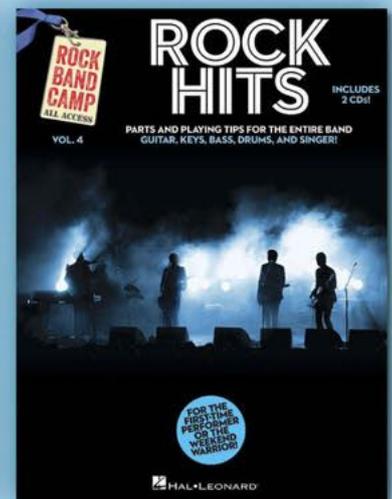
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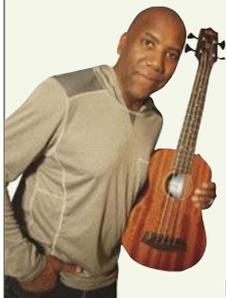
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Supplier Scene

Kala Welcomes Nathan East and Nik West

■ Kala Brand Music Co. has added Nathan East and Nik West to the company's roster of U-Bass™ artists. East is the longtime bassist for Eric Clapton and founding member of the group Fourplay. West is a solo artist as well as a backup bassist for artists including Dave Stewart and Prince.

East recently recorded a track on Clapton's newest album, a JJ Cale tribute album, featuring his all-solid mahogany four-string U-Bass. West



Nathan East

appears with her five-string USA Solid Body U-Bass in Dave Stewart's "Every Single Night" video. Both bassists appear together in a new "East West" ad for Kala.

kalabrand.com

Aronoff Joins Evans Drumheads

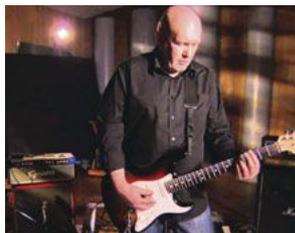
■ Evans has signed one of the world's most influential and in-demand drummers, Kenny Aronoff. Aronoff plays Evans G12 Tom Heads in the studio and G2 Coated Tom Heads live, EQ4 Clear Bass Batter Heads, and the new Evans Heavyweight Snare Heads. He is also a proponent of Pure-sound's Custom Pro Snare Wires and Planet Waves cables.

In 1980, Kenny Aronoff joined the John Mellencamp band, recording 10 albums and touring with Mellencamp for over a 17-year period. His innovative style and solid backbeat became the driving force behind Mellencamp's long run of hit records in the '80s and '90s. Today, he's played on hundreds of records, including 30 Grammy-nominated works.

evansdrumheads.com



TC Group Appoints New Senior Clinician



■ TC Group Americas has recently appointed Russell Gray as senior clinician – guitar and bass, for the MI market. Russell Gray is an accomplished Toronto based guitar player currently performing with Classic Albums Live, a concert series that tours theatres across North America recreating classic rock albums, note for note, cut for cut.

Before his new post as senior clinician, Russell was TC's North American product specialist. He has demonstrated the newest pedals and products at NAMM, coordinated artist appearances at the TC booth, conducted clinics with U.S. music store managers, and produced and appeared in a series of instructional videos for TC featuring his personal presets.

Gray will be offering clinics and demonstrations for key dealers as well as providing support for TC Electronic products in the guitar and bass range. He will also be called on for his technical expertise and support in the realm of product development.

tcelectronic.com

Dean Markley Welcomes Forman to Artist Roster



Bruce Forman

■ Dean Markley has added jazz guitarist and USC instructor Bruce Forman to their artist roster. As a seasoned jazz player, Dean Markley USA looks to Forman to help further expand the company's market share and help raise Bruce's visibility in the world of guitar and entertainment.

Bruce Forman has been an important part of the international jazz scene for more than three decades. He has been featured as leader as well as sideman at many of the most prestigious festivals and concert venues throughout the world. His numerous recording and performing credits include the likes of Bobby Hutcherson, Ray Brown, Freddie Hubbard, Joe Henderson, Barney Kessel, Roger Kellaway, Richie Cole, and countless others. His guitar work is featured throughout Clint Eastwood's Academy Award winning film, *Million Dollar Baby*, Oscar-nominated *Flags of Our Fathers*, and *Hereafter*. Forman is also a distinguished music educator, leading workshops and master classes throughout the world. Forman is currently using Dean Markley's Helix line.

bruceforman.com and deanmarkley.com

Warwick Receives MIPA Award

■ Warwick's LWA 1000 was picked by more than 100 international music magazines as the best product of the year in the bass amplification category at this year's Musikmesse in Frankfurt, Germany.

The MIPA (Musikmesse International Press Award) is recognized as the "Grammy Award" of the MI and Pro Audio industry worldwide. Jonas Hellborg, head of design at Warwick Amplification and world-renowned bass artist, accepted the award on behalf of Warwick Germany during the ceremony in Frankfurt.

warwick.de





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The Band Perry Tour Equipped with Radial Engineering



Jon Garber

FOH engineer Jon Garber says his recent assignment to The Band Perry's first ever world tour has been a pleasure after leaving his nine-year stint with Rascal Flatts. "The Band Perry are perfectionists, which I love," he says. "Both the Perrys and Flatts put on a high impact show."

Garber is now set to tour over 170 shows per with The Band Perry. "The main challenge I have right now is that we are on a different PA every night," he says. "So making it consistent night after night is what I strive for. For me new gear is something I really take my time to research"

For his current setup, Garber is using Radial J48 DI boxes, the Radial Reamp JCR, and the JCR Isolation transformers.

"The Radial J48 is by far the best sounding DI box out there," he says. "It has super low harmonic distortion, and produces a lot more clean headroom. This is particularly important when you plug in a high gain instrument."

"We also use the Radial Reamp JCR in a really cool way: We take the output from the wireless system into the stage amps and then into Petersen tuners so that the artists can check their tuning at all times. The signal sounds as if you are connected to a 15-foot cable. And because of the JCR Isolation transformers, we can lift the ground and eliminate all of the hum and buzz problems that cause havoc in the past!" Garber also uses ProD8s (eight channel rack mount DI) on their Pro Tools system, JDI Duplexes (stereo DI) on all the keyboards, and a JDX (guitar amp DI) on electric: "We know that Radial will work every time."

radialeng.com

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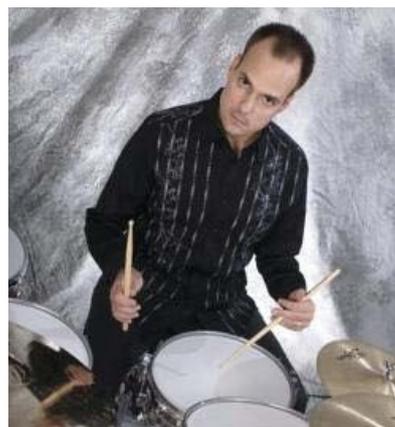
Supplier Scene

Mapex Welcomes Fidyk

■ The Mapex Drum Company recently welcomed Steve Fidyk as an endorsing artist and clinician. Known for his touch, versatility, and musical approach, jazz drummer Steve Fidyk has earned national and international acclaim as an artist, author and columnist.

A longtime student of jazz drumming legend Joe Morello, Fidyk is dedicated and committed to education. Fidyk currently serves on the jazz studies faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia and as a consultant for Jazz at Lincoln Center's Essentially Ellington Program. He has also authored several drum method books and DVDs for Mel Bay and Alfred Publications.

Steve has chosen the award winning Mapex Saturn IV MH Exotic kit with the



Black Panther Brass Cat Snare Drum as his voice from classic to modern jazz, from the band stage to clinic stage, and for his *Modern Drummer* online video instructional series

usa.mapexdrums.com

RapcoHorizon On Jay-Z Tour

■ As the instrument and speaker cable of choice for Jay-Z's *Magna Carta Holy Tour*, which supports the award-winning rapper's first new album in four years, the

custom instrument and speaker cables are road ready and tour tough, employing the most rugged constructions without sacrificing sound quality. The custom cables created by the company for the tour include runs as long as 50 to 100 feet in order to not only reach across the stage, but also above.

As an avid RapcoHorizon enthusiast that has used the company's cables on tour with a variety of artists, such as Selena Gomez, Foreigner, and Buckcherry, bass and guitar tech Aaron Srybnik is also impressed with the customer service that he is afforded. In the case of the Jay-Z tour, his custom cables were completed on short notice after the audio rigs were moved from the ground to the air.

rapcohorizon.com



RapcoHorizon cables were custom fitted to accommodate intricate rigs, some of which are on 28-foot-high risers.

As all RapcoHorizon cables are designed for the working musician, the

D'Addario Welcomes Sara Watkins

D'Addario recently added solo artist and Nickel Creek fiddle player Sara Watkins to its artist roster.

Watkins plays medium tension Helicore violin strings, and says: "I've tried fiddle strings made by other companies, but the reason I play D'Addario is the consistency of tone." Watkins spent nearly two decades as a singer and fiddle player for the Grammy Award-winning, bluegrass-folk hybrid Nickel Creek, a trio with which she'd started performing when she was eight years old, alongside her guitarist brother Sean and mandolinist Chris Thile. After two

formative years on the road fronting her own band, making stops at such events as the Telluride Bluegrass Festival, the Newport Folk Festival, and Glasgow's Celtic Connection along the way, Watkins returned to Los Angeles to record her second Nonesuch disc.

"D'Addario is honored to have Sara join our roster of discriminating string players," says Tom Spaulding, D'Addario's Nashville Artist Relations Rep. "Our medium tension Helicore strings will be onstage and in the studio with Sara and Nickel Creek."

daddario.com

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ON THE MOVE

St. Louis Music has appointed **Craig Denny** and **Patrick Stevenson** to new positions in the company. Patrick Stevenson will become senior vice president of sales, while Craig Denny will take the position of vice president of band.



"It is with great excitement that I am able to announce these promotions," says SLM CEO Mark Ragin. "Patrick will be managing our inside and outside sales team, as well as the major national accounts, and Craig will be responsible for all aspects of the band division."

Stevenson has an extensive background in the industry, with expertise that ranges from design and brand management to sales and advertising programs. As senior vice president, he will be personally visiting key dealers and travelling with the outside sales team, a face-to-face approach that will shift business to more profitable products and customers.

Denny, himself a virtuoso musician, has been with St. Louis Music since 2010, and is an established educator, manager, and professional. As VP of band, he will be enhancing the Zonda and P. Mauriat brands and adding exciting new instruments and accessories to the many lines under his care.

The Music Group recently announced the appointment of **Barry Mitchell** as the new VP of customer management, Prosumer Division for the Americas. Barry will be responsible for propelling the Music Group's groundbreaking prosumer products to the position of market leader by leveraging his extensive market knowledge, along with sales and customer support resources.



Mitchell brings more than 20 years of experience in music and consumer electronics, having held leadership roles in sales strategy and management, product development and lifecycle management, brand strategy, visual merchandising, and pricing strategy. Most recently, Mitchell

was the director of merchandise (guitar accessories) for Guitar Center, Inc., where he drove the largest top and bottom-line revenue-contributing categories to record levels – for both the company's brick and mortar and online businesses.

The **PRS Guitars** acoustic department, now in its fifth year, has officially aligned more directly with the company's Private Stock program.



Paul Miles and Michael Byle.

The PRS acoustic team, a small group of nine people, continues to largely hand-craft instruments at exclusive numbers under the company's Private Stock brand. Accordingly, **Paul Miles**, 23 year PRS veteran and director of Private Stock, has expanded his responsibilities beyond the Private Stock electric team and the PRS Tech Center to include the management of PRS acoustic production.

In concert with Miles, PRS's acoustic department will continue to be guided by senior acoustic luthier **Michael Byle**. Byle has been with PRS Guitars for 15 years and will now have increased latitude to explore innovative manufacturing processes, handpick material selections, and lead the team's continual training efforts.

In his expanded role, Miles will continue to report directly to PRS managing general partner, Paul Reed Smith, with Byle reporting to Miles as senior acoustic luthier.

Ashly Audio has appointed industry veteran **Mike van der Logt** of 4M4You,



Jon Paul Boucher, Ashly Audio COO; Mike van der Logt, Ashly Audio EMEA sales manager; Mark Wentling, Ashly Audio CEO.

to serve as its sales manager for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA). Van der Logt has over 25 years of experience in the industry providing product and relationship advice to pro audio manufacturers. Based in the Netherlands, he is well suited to serve EMEA customers. On behalf of Ashly, van der Logt will travel the region to strengthen and expand business with existing distributors, and develop new relationships to sustain and build sales momentum.

Because he's based in the Netherlands, van der Logt is in the right time zone to speak with EMEA customers, while still having good overlap with the Americas and Asia.

Harman Professional has appointed **Noel Larson** to the role of director of marketing for its Signal Processing Business Unit.



In this role, Larson will be responsible for marketing and product roadmaps for the BSS Audio, dbx, Lexicon and DigiTech brands. He will report to TJ Smith, senior director, Harman Signal Processing Business Unit.

Most recently, Larson served as market manager, Portable PA, Tour, and Recording for Harman Signal Processing. In this role he managed product development, market strategy, and social media for the dbx and Lexicon brands. He also previously held the position of director of business development for Musician's Friend, a major online retailer and subsidiary of Guitar Center.

Harman has also appointed **Jay Woolley** to the role of director of marketing communications for its Amplifier and Signal Processing Business Units. In this role, Woolley will drive marketing communications strategy for Harman's Crown Audio, BSS Audio, dbx, Lexicon, and DigiTech brands. He will now report to Marc Kellom, senior director of marketing and engineering for Harman's Amplifier Business Unit.



Most recently, Woolley served as director of marketing, Harman Signal Processing, and oversaw marketing for the related brands. Woolley has previously held senior marketing and brand management positions at Control4, provider of automation to homes and businesses, iBAHN, IP-based entertainment and information services for the hospitality market, as well as Wasatch Advisors, a mutual fund and asset management company.



Musikmesse and Prolight + Sound 2014

By Christian Wissmuller

With over 110,000 visitors and 2,242 exhibiting companies from 57 nations, it's unquestionable that the annual Musikmesse gathering in Frankfurt – held this year from March 12-15 – remains a key event for many in the MI trade.

That said, numbers were down somewhat from last year (2,285 exhibitors and a record-setting 113,000 attendees) and many we spoke with commented on a perceived “slower pace” at the 2014 Musikmesse. “The show itself seemed much smaller to me,” notes Andy Morris of Dream Cymbals. “More than anything, I noticed that the abundance of very small independent suppliers, manufacturers, and inventors is gone, just as it is at NAMM. I always looked forward to those odd, quirky, single-item booths or small mom-and-pop manufacturers because they inspired me with new ways

“The spirit was great, but the stature of the show seems to be in slight decline.”

– Neil Larrivee, Vic Firth

of thinking and some really cool products, even if they sometimes were less marketable. It seems Messe, like the NAMM Show, has lost the bulk of these exhibitors. Why remains a mystery.”

Roland's Paul Youngblood adds, “It seemed like there were less new product introductions overall at Musikmesse this year than in previous years, at least in the markets specific to Roland and BOSS.”

“At Vic Firth, we feel that the spirit was great but that the stature of the show seems to be in slight decline,” observes Neil Larrivee. “However, we look forward to great results moving forward.”

Quality Over Numbers

Much like some of the feedback *MMR* received after Summer NAMM 2013, many were reporting a greater degree of *quality* (that word came up a lot) interactions at this year's Frankfurt show – in part due to the less frenzied, packed nature of the convention.

“We significantly exceeded the number of dealer appointments

from last year with the quality of those meets resulting in meaningful growth to our business compared to last year,” says Hal Leonard's Mark Mumford. “Our emphasis was on creating direct partnerships with music retailers, which includes customizing our service and product range to suit their needs, both in terms of their physical and online store environments.”

“Messe is great in that true quality time can be spent with the U.S. dealers who do attend,” adds Youngblood. Detlef Braun, member of the Board of Management of Messe Frankfurt asserts, “This year's Musikmesse and Prolight + Sound were characterized by a high visitor standard and a willingness to place orders.”

Others pointed to the pure “fun factor” of the show, which unlike NAMM isn't primarily limited to industry attendees. “It's just good to get to meet and talk with so many actual players,” says Martin Guitars' Chris Martin. “I have a fun time here, plus it reminds me of things I may have forgotten.” Like what? Some profound understanding of what it means to conduct business, to play music, to be a better person? “No – like accordions!” Martin says with a laugh. “They're huge here and it's great to see that.” Also of enjoyment to many visitors from the U.S.: the comparatively balmy temperatures in Frankfurt. “Our whole yard back home is covered in snow, so it's been nice to be here,” says Harvey Levy of the 18 degree celsius (“64-ish” fahrenheit) weather at Musikmesse. “Business has been good at the show, too!”

Product Trends

Even factoring in that some felt product introductions were down at this year's gathering when compared to previous shows, there were nonetheless a good number of debuts. Our increasing reliance on, and fondness for, products that allow for “mobility” is clearly gaining ground in the musical instrument and event industries. Like at NAMM, smartphones and tablets were being used at a number of exhibitor booths as electronic sound generators or control tools for hardware. Over on the Prolight + Sound side of things, creative water and fire elements are being used more and more to

create impressive effects. The trend towards LED lighting also continues. Additionally, Prolight + Sound clearly showed the growing significance of networking and systems integration in the field of event technology.

A Rebounding European Economy

Messe Frankfurt reports that, "In general, Musikmesse exhibitors rate the current economic situation in the sector as better than a year ago: 73 percent consider the economic situation to be satisfactory to good."

The assessment of suppliers we spoke with mirrors that sentiment. Courtland Gray of Peavey says, "The European market is dealing with similar issues to the U.S. market and I have seen some trends in the industry starting there before taking hold in the States. I think the market in Europe will rebound sooner than the U.S."

"It is impossible to imagine a more positive NAMM and American market than we all experienced in Anaheim in January, so comparing that to Musikmesse is a high bar," says Bedell Guitars' Tom Bedell. "But It feels like the European downturn has bottomed out and the market is coming back. Several of our distributors are increasing their orders for Breedlove and Bedell following the show."

"Both markets [U.S. and Europe] are poised in a positive direction and we are well prepared for this positive trend," adds Larrivee.

"The EU market seems to be somewhat more diverse than North America," observes Morris. "The dealers are less about 'I need it tomorrow' and the street prices trend higher than in the U.S. My sense is that the EU customer is concerned about quality over price. We have seen slow, steady growth there as the EU recovers from its financial woes and expect to see growth continue there."

Mumford also spoke of the differences between the American and U.S. markets, saying, "We approach the European MI market in a more 'country-by-country' way. Language and currency differentiates the U.S. from the European MI markets the most, together with understanding differences in music education systems and local market trends... So the European MI has seen ups and downs as a result."

Daniel Knöll, director of the Society of Music Merchants e. V. (SOMM), drew an overall positive conclusion from this year's gathering: "This year's Musikmesse was once again the venue for national and international business and left no doubt that it is the marketplace and showroom for the musical-instrument business and music aficionados. We anticipate that the market will develop positively in the first half of the year and can, therefore, look back at a successful fair in a positive frame of mind."

The 2015 Musikmesse and Prolight + Sound will be held in Frankfurt from April 15 to 18.



1. Noel Larson, Harman market manager-recording, discussed the newly released dbx PA2 Loudspeaker Management System with Auto EQ and enhanced AFS capability. 2. German pop-punkers Trust in Random perform at The Agora Stage, sponsored by Peavey, MediaMatrix, and Crest Audio. 3. Not a sight you're likely to run into too often at NAMM: The public (including lots of kids!) are welcome at Musikmesse. 4. Levy's Leathers' Harvey and Nikki Levy. 5. Bob Taylor of Taylor Guitars. 6. Neil Larrivee of Vic Firth. 7. Kala Brand Music Co.'s Rick Carlson. 8. Janet and Greg Deering of Deering Banjo Company. 9. Gary Girouard of Physis Piano performs a demonstration. 10. D'Addario's Brandon Medici. 11. QSC's Phil Sanchez. 12. Janet and Greg Deering of Deering Banjo Company. 13. Chris Martin of CF Martin & Co.



14. Adam Place of nu desine. 15. Andy Morris of Dream Cymbals. 16x. Michel Lâg-Chavria of Lâg Guitars. 17. Peavey's Courtland Gray. 18. Chen Hailun of Hailun Piano. 19. Tom Bedell of Bedell Guitars. 20. PRS Guitars' Paul Reed Smith with MMR's Christian Wissmuller. 21. Julie Pfouts and Tim Pfouts of S.I.T. Strings. 22. Julia Bug and Jorma Winkler of Imua Ukulele. 23. The director and VP of Musikmesse presented a cake to representatives of Trace Acoustic and Peavey Electronics commemorating the two companies' 25th appearance at the annual gathering in Frankfurt, Germany. Pictured are (from left to right): Paul Stevens of Trace Acoustic; Clive Roberts of Peavey Europe; Musikmesse VP Cordelia von Gymnich; and Musikmesse director Wolfgang Lücke.

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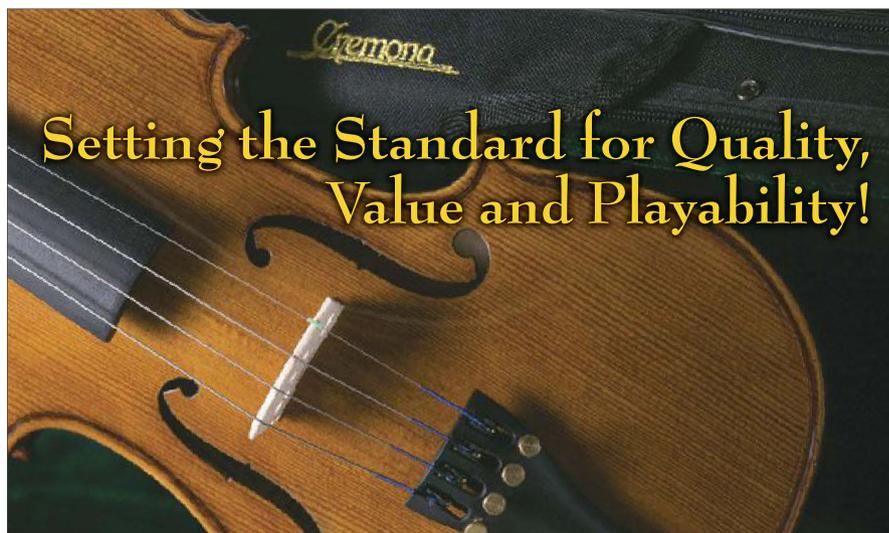


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24. Mikhail Ioffe and Simona Ioffe of Mi-Si Electronics. **25.** Tom Tedesco and Jim Henessy of On-Stage Stands. **26.** The Fishman team: Burr Johnson, Rayne Marden, Steve Fairclough, and Paul Gallo. **27.** The Saga booth offered some down-home Americana to the attendees in Frankfurt. **28.** Breezy Ridge Instruments: Todd Newman, Mary Faith Rhoads-Lewis, and Chris Kerker. **29.** Andreas Schertel of Harmona Akkordeon and Berthold Neidhardt of German American Trading present the new Harmona Diatonic Model 571.



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The Big Green Picture

Manufacturers throughout the industry are finding room for environmental improvement

When judging a product as sustainable or not at first glance, it's easy to wonder about a few obvious characteristics. Is it recyclable? Was it built using endangered wood? But there's plenty more to this whole "eco-friendly" thing than what's sitting on the shelf. While guitar companies have come under pressure to better vet their building materials, many suppliers in the rest of the MI industry have been busy looking for other ways to clean up their operations.

By Matt **Parish**

DREAM CYMBALS: Having a Meltdown

"Eco-friendly" is "business-friendly" for us," says Dream Cymbals president Andy Morris. Beyond a groundbreaking recycling program (more on that later), Dream maintains a sleek manufacturing and distribution process that saves energy whenever possible. At the factory, a new electric oven has been tested to ensure that it can match the characteristics for cymbals made using a coal/wood oven. The electric oven reduces Dream's carbon footprint and increased efficiency and capacity by a factor of three. Dream also continues to resist lacquering its cymbals, citing the chemicals' toxicity.



A recent product of the Dream Cymbals reFX program, the Crop Circle.

But the centerpiece might be Dream's recycling program - which buys back old cymbals from customers. Once those cymbals are sorted and fully broken down, the resulting products from the material are reFX cymbals.

"This spring, we processed over 6,000 pounds of recycled cymbals in North America," says Morris. "We tried accepting *any* cymbal for a while, feeling we could make reFX Crop Circles sonically out of even brass cymbals." They quickly changed course, realizing some materials were too cheap or contaminated to use.

"We have fine tuned the program to where we feel it works very well in North America," he says. "Yes, even better than expected."

Morris says there's a bonus for dealers involved in the program. "Dealers really understand the value of becoming a Dream recycling destination. It's another tool that sets not only Dream dealers apart, but brick and mortar apart from online sellers."

PEARL: Maximizing Materials

The interesting thing about these sorts of holistic approaches to getting the most out of each company's workflow is that, on the surface, they might not even appear explicitly "green." They just seem like a streamlined way to do things. Seiji Suzuki, who is on Pearl's board of directors, says that Pearl has also put significant efforts into improving

its packing materials while reducing the amount of resources needed to achieve safe transport of its products, including coming up with new schemes of achieving "box integrity" while avoiding Styrofoam whenever possible.

Suzuki says that the company has also made strides to limit the use of harmful chemicals like formaldehyde, which is used in glue for wood veneers. "By reducing the amount used, we are reducing the impact and providing safer products," he says. All of Pearl wood products are California Air Resource Board (CARB) Compliant.

YAMAHA: Environmentally Advanced

Yamaha's factory in Xiaonshan, China (which makes wind and percussion instruments, along with acoustic drum sets) recently received recognition from the Xiaoshan Economic Technology Development Zone based on the reduction of polluted material and adaptation to emissions standards for water and energy. The group designated Yamaha as an "environmentally advanced" company in 2012 and 2013.



The water recycling plant at Yamaha's Xiaonshan factory.

According to Yamaha, the Xiaonshan factory filters all of its wastewater into pure H₂O, 95 percent of which is recycled back to the factory. They also cut overall solid waste from 879 tons in 2011 to 475 tons in 2012.

The factory also received an ISO14001 compliance rating from the International Standards Organization's stringent environmental protocols. Additionally, over 90 percent of the factory's wastewater is reused in manufacturing processes.

This past January, the city of Hamamatsu (which is home to Yamaha's world headquarters) gave the company S-Class certification (the highest level of certification) in the "Eco-Friendly Business Category" of its "Hamamatsu City New Energy/Energy Conservation Top Runner Certification Program." Yamaha received recognition for actions such as the installation of a solar power generation system at company headquarters, a cogeneration facility at its Tenryu factory, the creation of green curtains and installation of energy-saving equipment at each

office, and encouraging employees and their families to engage in environmentally-related activities.

Furthermore, Dave Jewell, marketing communications manager [at YCA] says that Yamaha Corp. of America has followed Yamaha Corp. of Japan's lead in its pursuit of a sustainable packaging policy. "Our external packaging is made from cardboard with a high recycled content to reduce the demand for new wood-based products," he says. "In addition, a significant portion of the internal packaging for our product is made from molded pulp or corrugated (cardboard), both of which are 100 percent biodegradable. This dramatically reduces the amount of packing that ends up in landfills, such as Styrofoam (EPS)."

WI DIGITAL : Complete Package

"Whether you call it green, eco-friendly, or sustainable packaging, companies are looking for more ways than ever to go green with their packaging for very good reasons," says Pierre Abboud, chief operating and technology officer at Wi Digital System. "We believe companies that highlight their environmental status to consumers, can boost sales, product reputation, and most importantly enhance the bottom line in many ways."



Wi Digital Systems have engineered a highly efficient system of recyclable packaging.

For their part, Wi Digital has focused on a thorough green design of all packaging materials of its wireless systems (including digital transmitter/receivers, headsets, mics, and accessories). "We have streamlined the size of our retail boxes by reducing the amount of corrugated cardboard and eliminating excess packaging, foam blocks and shrink wrap around the product from our packaging," says Abboud. The packaging instead takes the form of durable, versatile, reusable carrying cases that are easy to recycle.

The packaging works for the bottom line in a number of ways, including reducing costs of creating the packaging, decreasing the weight and size of products to reduce transportation costs, and making it easier to unpack/repack products with less wasted materials. It doesn't hurt that the unique packaging design makes for what Abboud calls an "eye-catching, fantastic out-of-box first impression."

SABIAN: Cymbals Get a Second Life

Sabian has circumvented a typical source of waste – piles of promotional cymbals – by figuring out a way to repurpose old cymbals with a simple but exclusive finishing process. They call it the SR-2 series. "We send a lot of artists our cymbals for tours or marketing events," says marketing manager Luis Cardoso. "Rather than completely melt them down and deal with all the energy that entails, we have a refurbishing process that involves an exclusive finishing and we sell them for a reduced price. They look and feel different than any cymbal we produce." What this basical-



Sabian works to recycle all leftover materials, including shavings.

ly results in items like top B-20 bronze cymbals going to customers at greatly reduced prices. Cardoso says attentive customers will be able to identify models as, say, an HH-X just by its sound. The program began in 2007 and has recently expanded to include orchestral cymbals.

All that on top of a long-established culture of environmental consciousness at the company's factory in New Brunswick, Canada.

"We do the standard things that everybody tries to do," says Cardoso. "We recycle everything. Making cymbals, you're using copper and tannin. There's not many other ways to make them. So where can we go?" The company recycles metal created in most cymbal-making steps as well as cymbals that don't pass quality tests. Water used in the factory is filtered and reused. They always seek to print catalogs with FSC-approved printing firms, and heat from the factory's cymbal ovens is used to heat the buildings during the winter, among several other green policies in place.

VIC FIRTH: The Top-to-Bottom Approach

Back in 1992, when the environmental movement was comparatively fringe, Vic Firth was already looking at ways to ease the burden on the planet. A move as simple as packaging paired sticks in paper "matchbox" sleeves, which the company pioneered in 1992,



Sticks finishing up at the Vic Firth factory.

now eliminates millions of plastic bags from landfills every year. Today, those recyclable sleeves are even more green than ever, printed using wind power at an FSC-certified supplier with vegetable-based ink.

"I imagine Vic's environmental focus has inspired other companies to look at ways that they can improve their processes, too. And that's a good thing for everyone," says Rob Grad, who handles PR for Vic Firth.

At Vic Firth's Newport, Maine facility, many of the company's processes have been altered to maximize efficiency and eliminate waste whenever possible. Water used during grinding operations is recycled, while leftover sawdust is sent to a power plant for fuel. Warm air from the mill is later returned to the building for heat.

"The grinding operation uses 10,000 gallons of water per hour and we re-use it and filter out the suspended solids 10 times per day (roughly every other hour)," says David Crocker, director of operations. "We run 20 hours per day, so the process uses 200,000 gallons of water per day." Without the filter-and-reuse scheme, the company would be consuming 200,000 gallons per day. As it is, they're only going through 8,000 gallons a day.

Further, fuel for the factory is created from scrap parts and dry sawdust from the turning operation. The boiler is used to generate steam that heats the building in winter and drives the kiln drying operation. Those kilns also now include energy efficient motors and vents thanks to a grant from the State of Maine. Smaller sawdust particles which are too fine to use in the boiler are formed into briquettes that are then sold to other mills.

Currently, changes made to the clear finish on Vic sticks have eliminated all materials listed by the EPA as Hazardous Air Pollutants.

In 2008, Vic Firth Inc. received the Maine Wood Product Association's Pine Tree Award based on the company's continued growth and diversification.

Grad notes that there are financial benefits to all of this. "When energy can be reused in the factory, that's less energy that you're taking from the grid," he says. "Vic Firth has always had the long-term vision in mind. If we destroy where we are, we can't be in business 30 years from now." **MIMR**



Note From Joe

Defining the “End Zone” for the Industry

The line from *Alice in Wonderland*, “if you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there,” is a powerful testament to what can happen if

you don’t have clear goals. This makes me wonder if there’s an overarching goal for the industry—or are we all working toward a different “end zone”? The recent NAMM Show highlighted the fact that our industry continues its rapid transformation with breakthroughs in both manufacturing and retailing. Yet, industry leaders still struggle with the pace of change, and newcomers with no historical baggage of “the good old days” are taking the business in entirely new directions. And while our best and brightest debated the future of the industry at the show, how would they define success anyway?

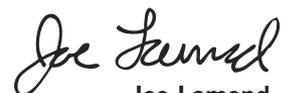
Some NAMM Members might gauge success in terms of sales growth, expanding distribution, increasing market share or introducing innovative products. Others might see it in terms of contributing to their communities, providing quality jobs for their families and employees, or finding a buyer for their store so they can retire. All worthwhile goals for any business. However, may I suggest that, in addition to our individual and company goals, there might be another definition of the “end zone” for our industry?

A few thoughts on what we mean by this term. Admittedly, I like football, and often use the “end zone” analogy here at the office and with the NAMM Board of Directors. They’re probably sick of hearing it, but football makes a great goal-setting model. It’s easy to understand the target: it’s the wide-open space at the end of the field marked by a huge goalpost. Even better, there are yard-markers all the way showing you and everyone on your team exactly how you’re doing on reaching the goal. Here at NAMM, we have a great strategic plan with clearly set goals for each of our five objectives. At any given time, we can tell exactly where we are in our fiscal year’s plan and what we need to do to complete the mission. The result is a Board of Directors and staff that have clarity and focus, essential ingredients for success.

Perhaps the “end zone” of all our collective efforts is simply a *bigger industry*. Growth would ultimately benefit most segments and likely create new ones as well. Growth is essential and, if we can all agree that getting more of the population to play music is the industry’s “end zone,” then many of the other partisan issues become less important. If our goal is to get more people playing, do we necessarily care what instruments they play, what kind of music they play, where they play, how proficient they are, or how old they are? Probably not. If we all want a *bigger* industry, then the “end zone” is more people playing and engaged in music—regardless of the what, where, how and when!

I believe we all have a role to play in growing the industry. Taking good care of current music makers is paramount, as is creating innovative products that people want to buy. Generating increased demand by convincing those who don’t currently play to give it a try is something everyone can participate in too. This is at the core of NAMM’s Vision, Mission and Objectives. Your association is investing in innovative programs to create new music makers, leading the lobbying efforts to strengthen and expand music education, and driving research and public relations campaigns to convince the general public that playing music makes you smarter, healthier and happier. Our vision is simple: a world in which the joy of making music is a precious element of daily living for everyone.

Fulfilling this vision will be an epic challenge for the industry, but the thing about having clear targets is that they *make doing what we need to do easier*. With a unified definition of the “end zone” (a bigger industry) and “yard-markers” (increased sales) to measure our progress, our industry can change its trajectory to accomplish these goals and create a larger industry for all.



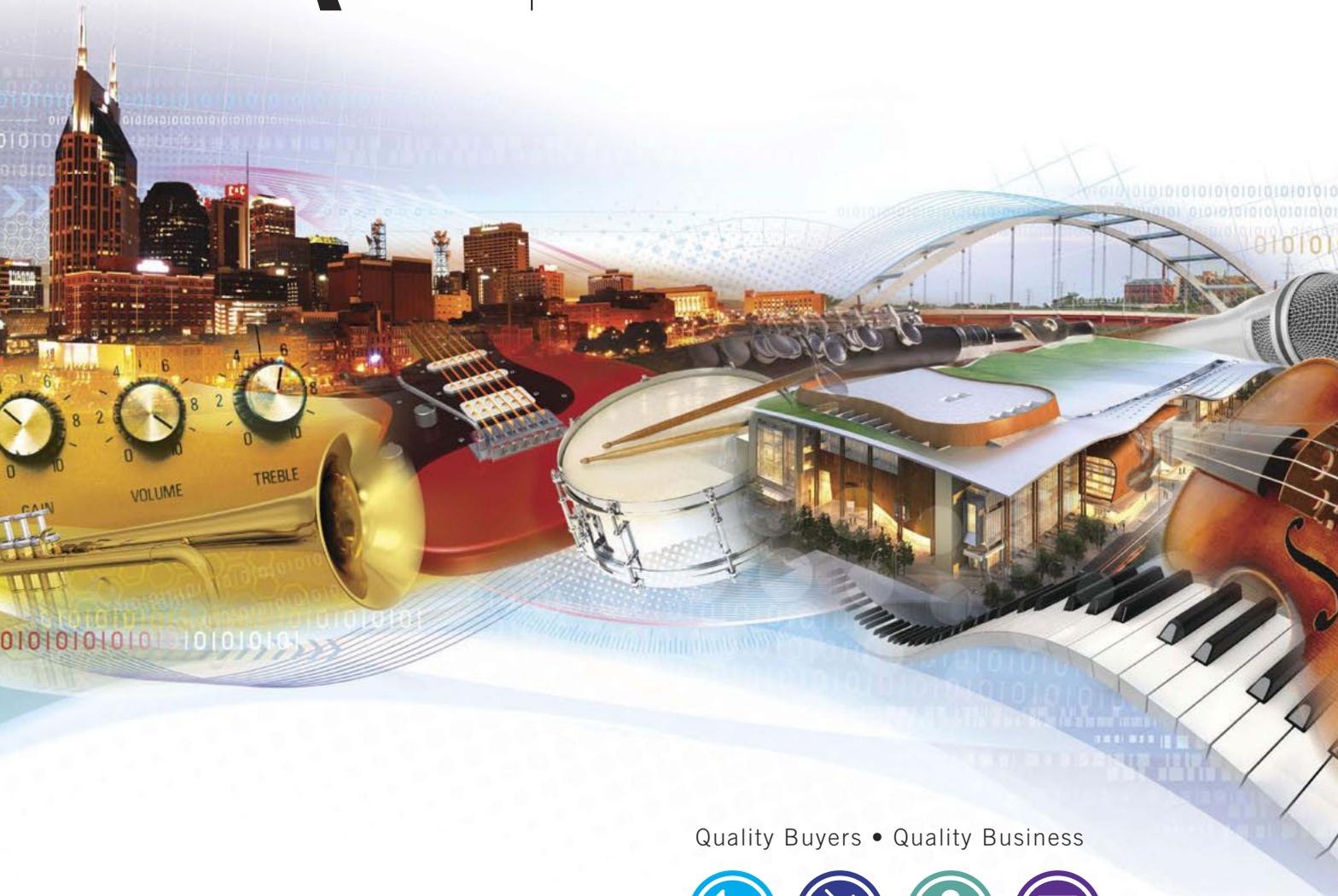
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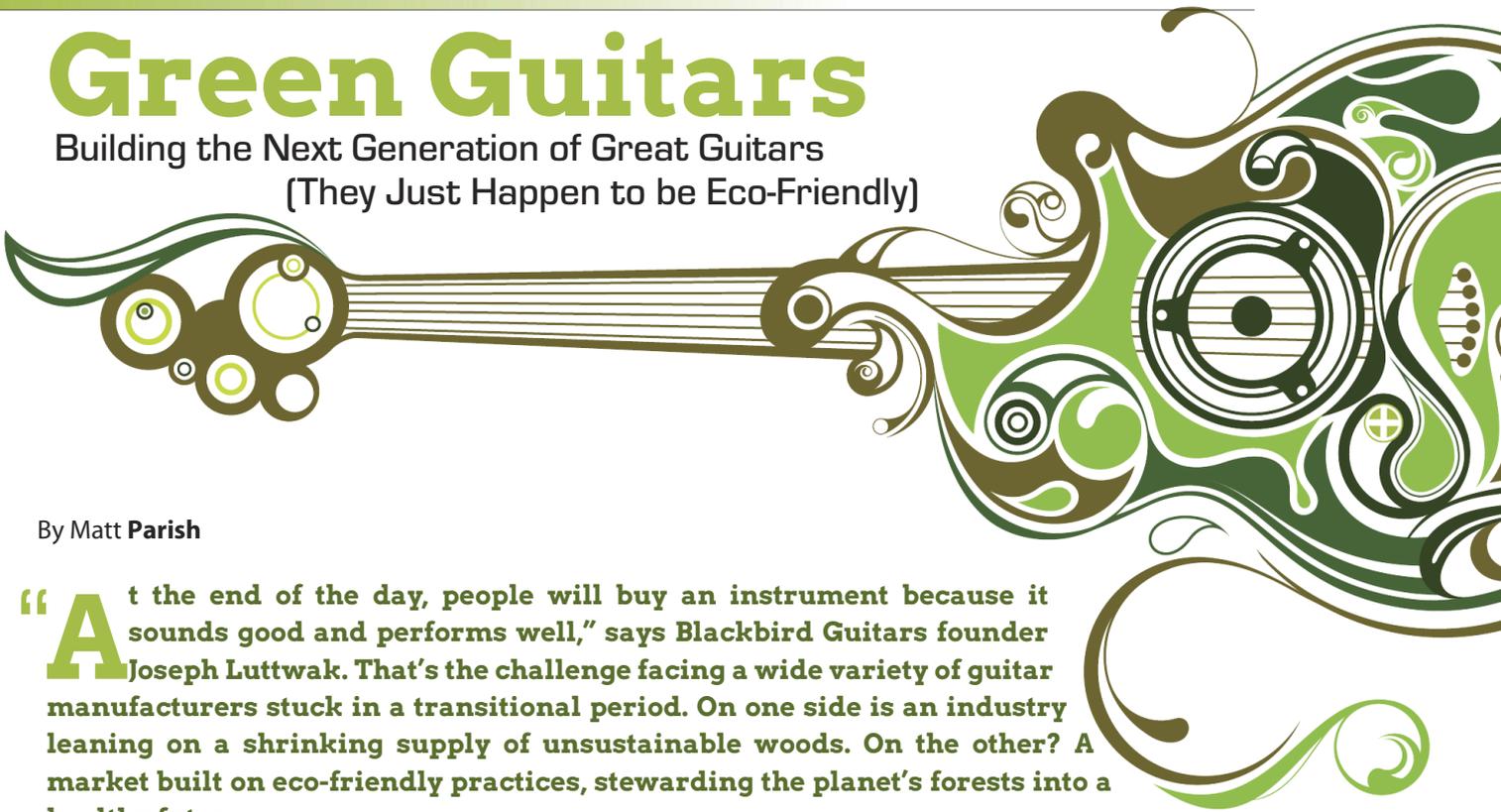
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Green Guitars

Building the Next Generation of Great Guitars
(They Just Happen to be Eco-Friendly)



By Matt Parish

“At the end of the day, people will buy an instrument because it sounds good and performs well,” says Blackbird Guitars founder Joseph Luttwak. That’s the challenge facing a wide variety of guitar manufacturers stuck in a transitional period. On one side is an industry leaning on a shrinking supply of unsustainable woods. On the other? A market built on eco-friendly practices, stewarding the planet’s forests into a healthy future.

Some manufacturers are finding that playing to customers’ best “green” intentions isn’t often the best sell.

Luttwak is a diehard environmentalist, doing post-grad work in eco-design at San Francisco State. But as “green” guitars look to turn the corner on the market, his approach is to hook customers on quality instruments first. “My whole philosophy around environmental product design is that it has to be a tertiary aspect to why someone would want to adopt this product.”

An ever-increasing environmental awareness throughout the world has dramatically changed every sector of retail. Often targeted by activists for its high public profile and dependence on rare tonewoods, the guitar market has had to adapt perhaps more than any other. Key figures at leading manufacturers have responded enthusiastically over the last decade, though, diving headfirst into new initiatives that involve both evolving tonewood certification standards and a variety of new hybrid building materials.

The Forest Stewardship Council is a 20-year-old organization that has become very important to guitar manufacturers, offering an intensive yet valuable certification for products that have been sustainably sourced. Manufacturers who’ve made progress with FSC-certified instruments include Martin, Taylor, Bedell, Walden, Gibson, Fender, and more. Taylor, in fact, was presented by Secretary of State John Kerry with a 2014 Award for Corporate Excellence from the



The Blackbird El Capitan guitar made of Blackbird’s specially engineered ‘Ekoa’ material.



Mi-Si’s Acoustic Trio Uke pickup, which uses no battery.

State Department for its role in “fundamentally changing the entire ebony trade.”

Meanwhile, the number of manufacturers using new types of hybrid building materials – carbon fibers and forms of plastic, for the most part – is increasing. Peavey’s 2010 purchase of Composite Acoustics brought hybrid materials to the forefront, boasting a volume and durability unseen in typical tonewoods. Other brands like Flaxwood continue to innovate new composite materials made from natural items like recycled spruce wood.

Journey Instruments, a maker of collapsible guitars designed for easy storage in airline overhead bins, grew out of founder of Rob Bailey’s Convergent Sourcing company. “The main reasons we started making these guitars were stability and eco-friendliness,” he says. “First of all I don’t want to mess with the changes that different climates cause in the guitar. And secondly, carbon fiber supply is really stable right now.” Bailey points to several value adds that his instrument offers beyond its turn away from woods, including its uniquely simple method of unfolding the neck from the instrument and its structural stability when compared to woods.

“I think, to some degree, consumers are very pragmatic. In some ways, ‘renewable’ and ‘green’ is nice, but price drives it.” With the synergy between the guitars’ features, though, he’s hoping to attract a legitimately excited customer base.

“ My whole philosophy around environmental product design is that it has to be a tertiary aspect to why someone would want to adopt this product. ”
 – Joseph Luttwak, Blackbird Guitars

In that same boat is Mi-Si Electronics, the Massachusetts-based pickup company that grew out of a desire to simply build the most efficient products possible. Co-founder Mikhail Ioffe says the team's work led to the use of a superconductor, negating the use for a battery and resulting in the most eco-friendly guitar pickup possible.

“In general, it just goes with our philosophy, which is basically to have no extra frills in the design and simple circuits,” says Ioffe. “The result is less ‘stuff’ – less wires, less PC boards, less plastic, less components. Batteries are no good for

But Friedman notes that the environmental concerns are far from the only trait that customers are excited about. “We believe we are receiving positive feedback due to the unique nature of the product,” he says. “From the creative spin on a timeless instrument, the design, its unique twangy sound, down to the use of unconventional materials. We've also developed a product that is affordable, making the line very attractive to direct customers and retailers.”

Those aspects go back to Luttwak's insistence that a product's performance will continue to govern its success, regardless of its ideological merits. His Blackbird guitars, which he began manufacturing in 2006 out of carbon fiber, recently welcomed the addition of a new material called “Ekoa,” which is a newer type of organic composite that Blackbird was able to engineer to emulate the sounds of sought-after vintage tonewoods.



Journey Instruments' "The Overhead," a carbon fiber travel guitar.



Bohemian Guitars' Boho oil can guitar.

the environment. That's obvious. So we're eliminating them.”

Avoiding wasting batteries is a moral choice in the United States, but in Europe there are even tighter rules about disposing of them, for which Mi-Si offers a critical solution. “Our products help musicians and manufacturers comply with those regulations,” says Ioffe. “It becomes a matter of convenience for that market.”

Mi-Si has developed several products including ukulele and acoustic guitar pickups, as well as preamps and control modules for those products since their founding in 2005. They've made waves for their eco-friendliness, but also the simple, effective quality of their pickups (manufacturers from Martin and Blackbird to Rees Harps have been installing Mi-Si equipment on their products).

Of course, there are lower-tech ways to build a green guitar. Take Bohemian Guitars, whose new “Boho” model guitars jumped off an idea based in South Africa – guitars made out of old oil cans. Co-founder Mark Friedman says the eco-friendly angle is a major part of the company's marketing push and it certainly seems to have legs, yielding a ton of coverage at NAMM 2014 alone.

Luttwak is betting on his Ekoa material being useful across several industries, not just the MI market. Along with Blackbird, he's started a new company called Lingrove to offer the material to a diverse clientele (his own design background includes everything from laptops to Ferraris). For MI, he points to a dwindling supply of tonewoods as a wake-up call for anyone expecting the market to stay the same forever.

Everyone making eco-friendly guitar products agrees that the landscape will eventually have no choice but to change. But a gridlock of perception and marketing might need to be broken first. Guitar suppliers have often acted as eager suppliers to customer addicts, Luttwak says, dressing up advertising and promo language to feature items like “rare tonewoods” and “difficult to obtain ebony.”

“They use that for marketing and so that becomes the thing that people want,” he says. “That is not okay – that's the disease.”

Rather than cry foul, though, Luttwak and many of the rest of the market's new innovators remain confident in keeping the battle on terms of product performance.

“To break the vicious cycle, you have to offer greater benefits.”

10 Ways to Make Your Store More Eco-Friendly

by Matt Parish

Hopefully by now you've got your recycling program figured out. What next? In retail, as in any other part of life, it's a lot easier to call for everyone else to change than it is to change yourself. But every store owner in the country can make a significant difference in the world with a few changes made right in his or her own shop. As a recent MIT study found, only nine percent of small businesses have so far embraced sustainability as a core value, citing challenges like landlords and budgets. But an environmentally-minded initiative doesn't need to break the bank.

A righteous bid to help out with mother nature? Sure. But there's also plenty of business sense in these simple tips.



1. Energy-efficient lighting. This one's a no-brainer and something that homeowners have been figuring out for years. Trade in those incandescent or old fluorescent light bulbs for LED or CFL lights and your shop immediately cuts down on waste and increases its energy efficiency.



2. Ditch harsh cleaning supplies. There are plenty of natural or non-toxic products to find next time you're restocking your supply closet, and homemade water-and-vinegar combinations are simple alternatives.



3. Lots of plants. Don't skimp on plant life in your shop if you can help it - our green friends help a lot to improve air quality.



4. Hold the plastic bags and receipts. As more communities begin to place bans on them, the era of plastic bags may be nearing its end. Offer paper or recycled bags instead, and consider making your receipts optional. Emailing receipts is more and more common (especially with mobile-friendly POS systems) and it allows you to add new addresses to future marketing efforts.



5. Recycle Ink Cartridges. Ink cartridges are relatively nasty little gadgets, environmentally-speaking. Learn about your manufacturer's recycling program - many have rebates or other incentives that you can use against future supplies.



6. Used fixtures. One of our favorite retailers, Drum Center of Portsmouth, managed impressive displays using existing racks (check out their gigantic wall of snare drums) and by repurposing discarded doors as shelving units elsewhere in the shop. Resourceful retailers save a lot of money this way and also hit a recycling home run.



7. About that POS... Old-school point-of-sale machines can be huge gobblers of electricity, so it might make sense to switch to more efficient smartphone or tablet-based systems like Square. Reps can ring up customers anywhere in the store without being plugged into the wall all day long.



8. Lighting Timers. Unoccupied office space or bathrooms are slow but steady parasites on electricity when they stay lit all day long. A simple timer ensures that doesn't happen.



9. Solar Energy. This one actually requires a serious investment, but consultants and contractors are becoming more accessible all the time. Twin Town Guitars in Minneapolis installed a roof-full of solar panels in 2012 and hasn't looked back.



10. Get funded. While you're at it, check out grant opportunities: energy-reduction grants are available for businesses through the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Energy, and more sources that are just a web search away. Many local government programs and energy companies would be thrilled to see hometown small businesses adopting conservative energy measures.



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Hamilton Stands Expands, Takes Over Own Distribution

KMC/Fender's Bob Jespersen Joins Company

By Kevin M. Mitchell

Hamilton Stands entered its 131st year in business this year with an eye towards the future and a blueprint for big changes. President Bill Carpenter brought their distribution in-house, brought in KMC/Fender veteran Bob Jespersen as director of sales and marketing, and appointed NAMM veteran Judy Dodds as manager of inside sales and customer service. Debuting at the NAMM Show in January were a dozen new products that include further expansion in the MI combo segment. It all adds up to one of the most interesting years for the stand maker since Carpenter acquired the iconic company in 2006.



Bob Jespersen

A Historic Departure

"Throughout its 131 years, Hamilton has relied mostly on wholesale distributors to deliver its products to market," Carpenter says. Then in 2009, they partnered with DANSR as their master distributor. In 2012, they expanded the master distribution model to include St. Louis Music. "Acknowledging changes in the distribution of stands and accessories in our industry, we decided in 2014 to move away from the master distribution model and once again sell our products directly to the wholesalers who have supported Hamilton over many years."

With the ever-changing marketplace, Carpenter decided that with their emphasis on building a viable "asked for" brand, Hamilton would do best to partner with some retailers directly. "These will be a group of dealers who are uniquely positioned to promote the Hamilton brand."

The advantages of these changes include being closer to their distributors and retailers, and keeping up with the ever-changing times. "The move to a master distributor in 2009 was done for good business reasons. But since then the market has changed and the time is right for a more direct method to market. Additionally, the flattening of our distribution channel provides us the opportunity to add value by reducing prices on certain key products while increasing some MSRP levels closer to the market."

And since all those stands and accessories need to be kept somewhere, Hamilton now has a fulfillment center in Indianapolis. "It is a modern facility with state-of-the-art order processing technology. The center also includes a national freight company, which can provide cost benefits to our dealers as well as efficient movement of some orders. We will, of course, use customer-specified carriers when asked, but the Less Than Truckload rates we are able to negotiate are often lower."

Also, plans for another warehouse in the West are on the drawing boards.

Jespersen, Dodds Join

Carpenter says that as he was planning to change their method to market, he knew he had to bring in someone of stature and experience to be responsible for the day-to-day marketing and sales. Jespersen is now responsible for setting sales prices and policies and is the "daily face of Hamilton." He's also managing the traditional and digital components of their marketing.

"Bob has great industry experience in both retail and wholesale," Carpenter says. "In his 30-plus years at KMC, he's earned great skills in marketing and sales. Also during that time, he's built lasting relationships."

"I'm thrilled to be working for Bill and the entire Hamilton Stands family," says Jespersen. "Hamilton has played a supportive role in my entire music performance and sales careers – my first music, guitar, and trumpet stands were Hamiltons! Now after getting reacquainted with the portfolio of useful support solutions, previewing new products, meeting principal business partners, and adopting our vision for the future, I feel truly honored to be a part of the next 131 years of Hamilton history."

Dodds also joins Hamilton as manager of customer service and sales.

"Judy is an industry professional and probably knows more dealers than anyone," Carpenter says, noting that she spent more than 20 years working for NAMM. Dodds will be responsible for inside sales and customer service tasks. "She will be the voice of Hamilton and assure timely processing of customer orders and questions."

Carpenter pledges to continue to offer a broad portfolio of products, including more than just music stands. "Many of our products are unique to us so they are less likely to be shopped against a competitor. Additionally, many of our products were specifically designed to address musicians' needs or the shortcomings they experience using other products."

Otherwise he plans to continue putting his experience in product design to good use. "Since



Judy Dodds



Bill Carpenter

“Many of our products were specifically designed to address musicians’ needs or the shortcomings they experience using other products.”

acquiring Hamilton, I’ve put an increasing emphasis on my role in design, and am pleased with recent additions to our line,” he says. At NAMM, they introduced 12 new products. Of note was the first auto-lock guitar stand with width-adjustable arms, the KB3800G Ultra-Lock.

“We also introduced a new small platform guitar stand, the KB3500G. Based on a modified A-frame, the stand will fold to easily fit into a gig bag. Borrowing a page from our history, we are calling this the ‘Super Guitar Stand,’ which was used 40 years ago for our KB37, a predecessor to today’s cradle guitar stand.” Other NAMM introductions included the E-Trigger mic stand; a lightweight professional DJ laptop stand; and a phone holder that attaches to most any stand.

Since 2006, Carpenter has moved Hamilton increasingly into the combo segment. “We’ve not been a stranger to the category, of course, as we’ve been selling capos since the early 1900s, guitar stands since the 1920s, and speaker and mic stands since the 1960s,” he notes. “But we see ourselves growing our presence in this segment.”

In 2012, they introduced the StagePRO series. “In time, the line will be developed to include a broader range of in-house designed and outside purchased products. It is my intent to keep the StagePRO brand focused on the value proposition of quality products, intended for durable service, and priced competitively to the market.” **MMR**



The Hamilton KB3800G



The Hamilton KB38



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MI Case Study: Transforming Your Store

Mojo's Music's New Store Offers Chance at a Reset

By Kevin M. Mitchell

Bob Moggio can't be accused of moving his retail store because he no longer cared for the neighborhood. After all, he only moved it right next door.

In the college town of Edwardsville, Ill. (pop. 25,000), Moggio has had Mojo's Music at the same address on Main Street for 13 years. "What happened was the lease was over in October [of 2013], and I was paying more than I wanted to pay," he says. Enter serendipity: The men's clothing store next door was closing and the 1938 building it was in was put on the market. The two neighbors wrote out the contract themselves, and the building was sold "as is."

Financially, there were significant advantages to the move. Moggio's mortgage became less than he was paying in rent, plus he was able to rent the upstairs out to a recording studio owner making it even more financially appealing. But anyone who has ever bought an old house will be sympathetic to this: despite his best planning, it was a lot of work to remake the old building into something that would fit his need, and of course it all cost more than he expected it to.

Mojo's has embraced the "boutique" moniker and electric guitars featured are not the common axes found elsewhere: Duesenberg, Suhr, and Heritage guitars. Alongside of these are Ernie Ball, Ibanez, G&L, ESP/Ltd., and Rickenbacker. Many of those makers' basses are there, too, plus Lakland. The store is a draw for the discriminating player and their ability to present well carries over to their website, which at this point is about 50 percent of his business, he says.

The new space has allowed Moggio to improve on how his accessories are displayed. There's a nice wall of strings, and there are two guitar strap stands from Levy's Leathers and Henry Heller right near the register. Then there are the pedals: In addition to the

accessible Boss pedal display, there are Pigtronix, Vox, Wampler, Fulltone, Way Huge, Z-Vex, and MXR pedals available, all of which reinforce that hip boutique vibe. Of course there's the Kala Ukulele display tree there now, too.

Also there are now two guitar workstations behind the counter. Three nice lesson rooms keep traffic coming in.

The Physical

Moggio laughs when he's told the new store is bigger. "It's almost identical in square feet to the old one, but it just feels so much bigger," he says. "It's bigger at the front, the aisles are wider, and the ceiling is taller – it's a nice effect."

His attitude on remaking the store in his vision began with the rallying cry of "everything must go!" He pulled down all the walls revealing the original brick that, which he instantly saw as an attractive place to hang his Martin, Taylor, Seagull, and Alvarez guitars. There are a couple of Peavey Composite Acoustics included in that acoustic mix as well.

All the plumbing had to go. All the lighting, too.

He worked closely with the city getting permits and jumping through whatever hoops they asked of him. "There was so much I didn't know I had to do, like the need to get an asbestos report." Luckily the building was free of that toxic material.

Then there were the upgrades to code. As is the case in many communities everywhere, if he didn't touch *anything*, it *all* would have been pretty much grandfathered in. Of course doing that was never considered (um, there was *one* electrical outlet in the entire building).

There were some trade offs he had to compensate for. He traded in a usable basement where he could store instruments



Walking in the front door, visitors are greeted by acoustic guitars on the left ...



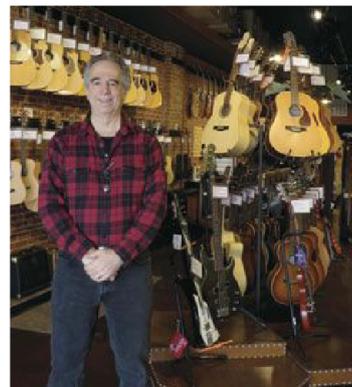
... and electrics and amps on the right.



The move has allowed Mojo's Music to display more pedals.



With new trussing and quality LED parCans hung, the new store has a better visual appeal.



Bob Maggio of Mojo's Music.

and cases in for a basement he couldn't trust with a bag of picks. His solution was to build shelving high above his guitars on the floor that was suitable for storing cases without taking away from the overall clean, visual look he was going for.

To keep those nice boutique amps of his from getting those dreaded "foot scuff" marks, he put in a two-inch high riser along one side and got them off the floor. Now his Aguilar, Magnatone, Rivera, Huges & Kettner, Traynor, Peavey, Budda, and Orange amps are better displayed.

The Wow Factor

The extreme makeover has led to lower energy bills, too. There's an all-new furnace and LED lighting that are much more efficient. He took advantage of the extra ceiling space and put in a truss,

hanging some Leviton LED Par Cans up to better highlight his guitars. He says he chose Leviton pars because he didn't want to "buy the cheap Chinese ones," but wanted quality ones that would last for a long time instead.

"We didn't skimp on anything. There are no low-end fixtures. And we could have bought laminated flooring or tile or carpeting, but I laid in this real wood floor myself."

The store's success is no doubt due to the strong vision of what this next chapter of Mojo's Music was going to be. And that had more to do than just the financial advantage to owning versus renting. It was a chance to hit the reset button, and in that process a few things got purposely left behind.

"This was an opportunity for me to just

focus on guitars, amps, and effects, plus everything fretted," he explains. After years of sliding sales in his drums and P.A. products, his vision included leaving all that behind. Also jettisoned were any of the little bits of B&O rentals he had dabbled in.

"I had a vision of what I wanted this to be, and it is all pretty much here," he said. "I'm still not completely happy with the window display, but otherwise, I'm really pleased how it turned out. When people walk in, they go, 'Wow.'" **MMR**

Moving That Store: Do's and Don'ts

Bob Maggio of Mojo's Music spent two months moving from a building he rented to one he bought. Asked to reflect after the dust settled, here are some of his post-move thoughts:

- Don't try to subcontract it all yourself. "Try to have one company oversee the entire operation."
- Do your homework. Talk to as many inspectors as possible, and talk to other retailers about their experiences. Also thoroughly vet any contractors.
- Don't throw that old anything away – instead of some of the old displays and knick-knacks going in the trash, Maggio was able to sell a lot of them to an antique dealer.
- Do look at the city inspectors as partners and not foes. "When I was upfront with them about everything I needed, they were very helpful."
- Don't get yourself in a situation where you're tearing out something you put in because it's not Americans with Disability Act (ADA) approved. That counter, that bathroom door – everything needs to be compliant. Make sure you're aware of all the rules.
- Do consider unique options in keeping the cost down – like bartering a few instruments to a certain guitar-playing carpenter.
- Don't skimp on interior design. For example, that cheap light fixture that fizzles out quickly will cause more headaches and end up costing more than getting a light that is dependable.
- Do take the opportunity to re-evaluate your product mix, and take advantage of the move to reinvent or at least refine your operation. Then hit that reset button.

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School Rentals

The Current State of a Longtime Go-to Market for MI

By Christian Wissmuller

The business of supplying rental instruments to school-aged children or entire school districts has long been the bread and butter of many in the MI trade. Constricting music program budgets and changing expectations (and demands) of customers used to the convenience of commerce in the digital age is changing the face of school instrument rentals – though many key factors remain constant.

This month, *MMR* checked in with three major players in this field to get their take on school rental business in 2014...



Will Simmonds, president, Harmony Music

MMR: In what ways has school rental business changed in the past decade?

Will Simmonds: I think what continues to surprise me is how consistently unchanged the rental business is when compared to other industries. The instruments have not changed, technology such as bar coding or online rentals has not made much of a dent in the overall market, and the number of kids signing up/renting/exchanging/returning is exactly the same as a decade ago. Given the environment of non-disruption, music stores can focus on customer service and band director relations in order to gain market share or increase profitability.



David Benedetto, president, NEMC

David Benedetto: Changes over the past decade have included everything from the product, its pricing, and how it is delivered. The flood of inexpensive product has put downward pressure on pricing while the advances of the Internet require faster methods of delivery. Social media provides new ways of communicating with our customers that didn't exist 10 years ago.



Matt Griffith, director of sales, Music & Arts

Matt Griffith: Certainly, the increasing number of school music programs that have been cut or reduced has been one of the biggest changes in the past decade. As a result, successful school music dealers have increased their investment in student recruitment and retention. Private and charter schools have flourished in recent years, and the rental business in these schools is following suit. There has also been a noticeable increase in string programs in many areas of the country.

MMR: How do you go about establishing and nurturing relationships with area schools and music instructors?

MG: It takes time to build strong relationships – they do not happen overnight. Music educators and their programs deserve a high level of service. All Music & Arts educational representatives aspire to be a true partner with the programs they serve. During their regularly scheduled school visits, they offer vast product knowledge, they anticipate the program's needs, are heavily involved in all recruitment events, and are ready to react quickly for any emergencies. Often, they will bring their horn and sit in on a jazz band rehearsal or perform quick repairs on the spot just before a concert. They make the effort to know all the school administrators and front office staff. Simply put, our ed rep's goal is to not be viewed as merely reliable or dependable, but indispensable in the eyes of the schools and music teachers they serve. As many educators often remark, "We consider our Music & Arts ed rep as a member of our staff!"

WS: When you consider that the average music store owner contacts their local band director once or twice and usually right as the school year begins, it's not too difficult to improve upon that. We work with the band directors on a full year basis with the idea of "how can we make their lives better? Can we pick up that tuba and drop it off at the other school so they don't have to do it? Let's help you recruit next year's starting band program." We'll write a personal note and mail it with an article we saw about music education. Do this 50 times per year and the music store owner that writes a quick email in the middle of September asking to be included in the rental process doesn't stand a chance. And that's the same owner that blames the band director, the school, the economy, or the weather for the reason their rental numbers keep declining.

“I think what continues to surprise me is how consistently unchanged the rental business is when compared to other industries.”

– Will Simmonds, Harmony Music

DB: The school music market continues to be driven for the most part at the local level. Strengthening relationships with teachers and schools is done throughout the year. Finding out from the band director "how can we help" or "what can we do to make your job easier" are questions that guide us in being more effective.

MMR: What trends have you been noticing with respect to instrument rentals? What are your expectations for the coming years?

DB: With so many changes to the school day – more class periods, block scheduling, subject requirements, increased testing – music programs need to be flexible to work within this evolving structure. This means rental programs have to adjust accordingly so that they continue to meet expectations from the teachers and students.

The school music market continues to be resilient despite all the economic gyrations. Awareness on the importance and benefit of music education continues to grow and this means that music education will remain in our schools. This doesn't mean our work is done, but it shows that we are moving in a positive direction. But after all, music education is worth it.

WS: The trend that has my attention is the disparity between instrument costs and their rental rates. Each year the handful of leading instrument manufacturers raise their prices and this compounds on itself. So a clarinet that was \$170 a decade ago is now \$250 or \$300. But the rental rates have not moved up at the same rate. If you sit down and do the math, it's very difficult to make money if you were to exclusively purchase new instruments from a leading manufacturer each year and rent them out at the local competing rental rate. You quickly realize that you must purchase and mix in either lower tiered instruments (lower quality) or used instruments. Something has to eventually give. Either manufacturers reach a point where they can no longer sell thru at a certain price point (for example, a student model clarinet now costs \$800

with a retail price of \$2,000) or rental rates must move upwards in order to maintain a business model that works.

MG: Today, consumers want more convenience and more options. Many customers can now execute their rental agreement online, and take advantage of several delivery or pick-up options. Some have looked to sources other than their local school music dealer for instrument rentals and purchases. While teachers remain committed to quality instrument rental brands

“ The school music market continues to be resilient despite all the economic gyrations.”

– David Benedetto, NEMC

for their programs, we are seeing an increase in overall brand flexibility. They are more willing to accept multiple brands from their school music dealer, knowing that those brands will be well maintained and serviced. In the coming years, I do expect more consumers to rent their instrument online. Social media will become more prominent in communicating instrument rental details. More will likely consider an online instrument purchase rather than a rental through their local school music dealer. However, I also expect that educators will look to educate more parents about the benefits of renting or purchasing through their school music dealer, as they know that is in the best interests of their program and their students. **MMR**

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MI Store Lighting Know-How: Part I

Creating effective lighting strategies to help move product

by Pete Miller



INTRODUCTION

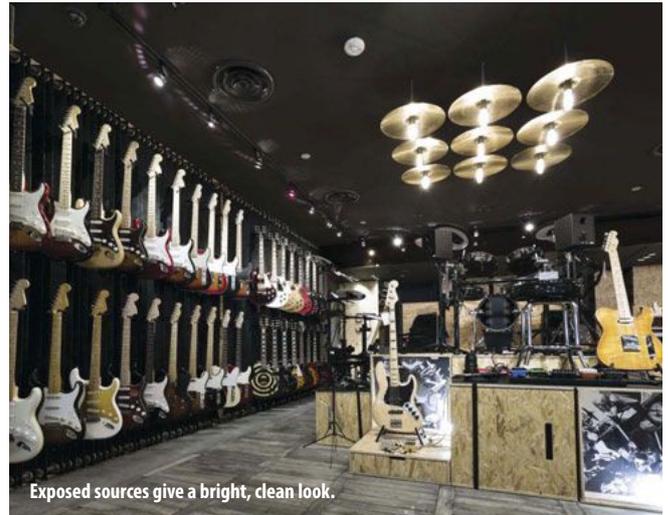
The selection of the right lighting can be a major contribution to retail sales. Lighting can establish a store's image, lead customers inside, focus their attention, make the products attractive and visible, and in general encourage purchasing. "Energy Effective" lighting provides all these benefits for the lowest life-cycle cost, while saving energy, operating costs, and maintenance. This guide shows you how it is done, with sample layouts and specifications that are energy effective, and energy code compliant.

Retail lighting must have good color, contrast and balance between lighted surfaces. Other qualities are listed in the chart below. There is no single formula for all retail lighting. A professional lighting designer or retail designer may be able to create successful designs while breaking all the rules suggested here. However, this guide is intended to provide sound advice and simple techniques for consistently successful and "energy effective" retail lighting.



LIGHTING LAYOUTS

These layouts are intended for independent MI retail establishments between 500 and 1,000 square feet in size, and for three different types of stores: **Basic** retail lighting systems are appropriate for high activity, self-service retailing such as mass merchandising and discount stores. Shelves are generally tall and dense. Bright surfaces, exposed sources, and industrial luminaires are an important part of the approach, communicating the image



of "maximum value" to customers. **Higher-end** retailing requires lower ambient levels and more accent lighting to create contrast and drama. These stores have a more relaxed level of customer activity with more personalized sales assistance. The majority of stores fall in between these categories, requiring more ambient lighting than exclusive shops, with fewer accent lights. We call this category an **intermediate** retail store.

MUSIC STORE LIGHTING ELEMENTS



AMBIENT LIGHTING

General, uniform lighting using light fixtures that distribute the light widely, directly or indirectly. Ambient lighting enables the customer to see and examine the merchandise, and the sales staff to complete the sale and perform their other duties.

ACCENT LIGHTING

Spotlighting used to provide higher levels of light in a focused pattern to accentuate selected objects in relation to their surroundings. Accent lighting establishes the importance of certain objects through the use of contrast, and highlights the form, structure, texture, or color of the merchandise.

PERIMETER LIGHTING AND VALANCE LIGHTING

Lighting the vertical surfaces. Asymmetrical light fixtures can direct light on tall vertical shelving and displays, typically located at the perimeter of the merchandise area. Valance lighting allows the source to be quite close to the merchandise area. Valance lighting allows the source to be quite close to the merchandise, providing a shield or "valance" to conceal the light sources from the view of the customer. Valances are often built into the wall, shelving unit or gondola. Although primarily intended to provide light down on the merchandise, they also can be designed to light up on signage or provide indirect ambient lighting for the space.

SHELF LIGHTING AND CASE LIGHTING

Small or miniature light sources located very close to the objects being displayed, shielded from the customer's views. This lighting must be carefully selected for the particular application to avoid accidental contact with hot lamps and to prevent damaging instruments and other merchandise with too much ultra-violet radiation or heat.

LIGHTING SCHEDULE

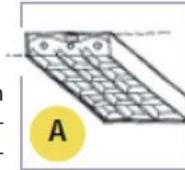
These specifications include lighting fixtures that will ensure a balance of performance, flexibility, energy-savings and maintenance at a cost-effective price. Many standard products will meet these specifications.

AMBIENT LUMINAIRES

A. 2' x 4' PARABOLIC TROFFER, THREE-LAMP

LAMPS: (3) 32W T8, 835 COLOR

DESCRIPTION: Recessed fluorescent with white baked enamel interior reflector, parabolic louvers that are white-painted or semi-specular anodized aluminum, minimum 2-3/4" deep, with 18 cells; Three-lamp electronic instant-start ballast, 91 nominal input watts; 71% minimum fixture efficiency.



B. 2' x 2' PARABOLIC TROFFER, TWO-LAMP

LAMPS: (2) 31W T8 U-TUBE, 6" Leg spacing. 835 color for intermediate retail, 830 color for high-end shops.

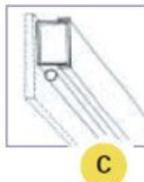
DESCRIPTION: Recessed Fluorescent troffer with white baked enamel interior reflector and parabolic louvers that are painted white or semi-specular anodized aluminum; minimum 2-3/4" deep; with nice cells; Two-lamp electronic instant start ballast; 61 nominal input watts; 65% minimum fixture efficiency.



C. VALANCE: SIDE-SOCKET FLUORESCENT CHANNEL

LAMPS: (1) 32W T8, 835 color in intermediate retail, 830 color in higher-end shops.

DESCRIPTION: Standard fluorescent industrial strip with single lamp mounted on side; Nominal 8'-0" housing with two lamps in-line; Two-lamp electronic instant start ballast, 61 nominal input watts; Tandem wire and use four-lamp ballasts where possible.



D. SMALL DECORATIVE PENDANT BOWL

LAMPS: (4) 13W TT, 830 color

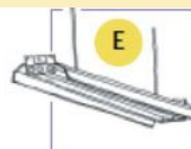
DESCRIPTION: 20" to 24" diameter bowl with frosted, patterned, or colored glass or acrylic; Provides image and brightness to space, and may light ceiling.



E. 2-LAMP FLUORESCENT INDUSTRIAL WITH REFLECTOR. PENDANT OR SURFACE MOUNTED

LAMPS: (2) 32W T8, 841 color for basic retail, 835 color for intermediate retail.

DESCRIPTION: Pendant or surface mounted fluorescent luminaire in modules of 8'-0" (4 lams per 8'-0"); White baked enamel finish; Minimum 90% downlight; 95% minimum fixture efficiency; Four-



lamp electronic instant start ballast, 110 nominal input watts; Surface mount to low ceilings (8'-6" or less) or pendant mount at 18" above highest product shelf.

ACCENT LUMINAIRES

M1. MR-16 SPOT LIGHT

LAMPS: 50W MR-16 Narrow Spot

DESCRIPTION: Requires low voltage electronic transformer; Mount to J-box, canopy, mono-track or pendant, as required by application; Use narrowest beam spread for the most impact.



M2. HALOGEN PAR20 LAMP SPOT LIGHT

LAMPS: 50W PAR20 Spot

DESCRIPTION: Alternative to M1; No transformer required; Mount to J-box, canopy, mono-track or pendant, as required by application; Use narrowest beam spread for the most impact.



M3. HALOGEN PAR30 OR PAR38 SPOT LIGHT

LAMP OPTIONS: 50W PAR30 Spot or Q90 PAR38 Spot

DESCRIPTION: Alternative to M1 or M2; Larger size lamp and softer beam spread; Choose PAR30 or PAR38 fixture to fit lamp size; Mount to J-box, canopy, mono-track or pendant, as required by application; Use narrowest beam spread for the most impact; Reduce quantity of 90-Watt lamps.



N. RECESSED MR-16 ADJUSTABLE ANGLE ACCENT LIGHT

LAMPS: 50W MR-16 Narrow Spot

DESCRIPTION: Recessed housing with nominal 5" diameter aperture; 35-degree tilt or more; Specular or semi-specular clear cone; Integral low-voltage transformer.



Pete Miller is a leader in the lighting industry with over 30 years of industry experience. He is both a Lighting Certified Professional (LC) and a Certified Document Technologist (CDT) from the Construction Specifications Institute.

Through his career, Miller has been involved with the design of over 600 on-time store openings and is quickly adding to this total everyday. Pete Miller specializes in retail lighting, the logistics of national store rollouts, and the architectural interface for store planning, construction, and purchasing. He is a valued retail lighting resource for leading retail architects from North America, South America, and Europe.

Miller is also in regular consultation with store planners, construction managers, and procurement professionals for fortune 500 retailers.

Look for Part II of 'MI Store Lighting Know-How' in the May 2014 issue of MMR.

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New Products

Kanile'a KTSP Ukulele

The Tenor size of the KSTP is considered the modern day standard for the travelling professional musician, and this instrument features an ebony fretboard, bridge, and headstock face place combo. Other features on this ukulele include a Premium Select Curly Koa Body, Traditional Slotted Headstock, Chrome Slotted Tuners, and Genuine Hawaiian (Kailua) Sand Position Markers and Logo. Retail: \$1,972.



kanileaukulele.com

Acoustic Science Treated Guitar Strings



Acoustic Science Premium Treated Guitar Strings use a nanotechnology approach which extends the string life and reduces break-in time. The Ionic Vapor Process uses high-energy plasma with proprietary polymer compound to treat the surface. This makes the strings resistant to fingerprints, grime, and corrosion, without sacrificing tone or sound quality. They are made in the U.S.A. and come in 80/20 Bronze, Light Phosphor, X-Light Phosphor, and X-Light Treated.

acoustic-science.com

FRETTED

Korg Rimpitch Acoustic Guitar Tuner

The Rimpitch is a unique tuner that attaches to the sound hole of an acoustic guitar. It provides an incredibly convenient viewing angle, since its tuning meter appears within the player's natural line of sight when looking down at their guitar. The Rimpitch features a high-visibility LED and a Piezo pickup that rapidly detects sound from the body of the guitar. It fits a variety of six-string acoustic guitars with a rubber clip that secures it to the sound hole. Retail: \$24.99.



korg.com

Maxon Fuzz Elements

Maxon's Fuzz Elements are seven new models designed to reproduce the classic and unique sounds of vintage fuzz pedals. Using modern software technology, Maxon has modeled and mapped the vintage elements of effects units, reproducing them using advanced analog circuitry that is both accurate and stable. Each Fuzz Elements



model features a compact diecast enclosure, LED status indicator, easy-access battery door, and true bypass switching.

Models include Air (Univox Super Fuzz-style), Earth ("Ram's Head" style), Ether (parametric tone FE10 style), Fire (Roland Bee Baa style), Water (parametric tone/FEA10 style), Wind (Vox Tonebender style), and Void (Ampex Scrambler style). Retail: \$189.

maxonfx.com

On-Stage Classical Capo

The GA300 Classical Capo features an elongated handle that fits comfortably in the player's hand. The quick-squeeze trigger design allows players to simply squeeze and remove instantly. The GA300 is constructed from zinc alloy and sports a scratch-resistant anodized finish. Silicone padding offers true string fretting. Retail: \$23.99.



onstagestands.com

PRO AUDIO

WindTech SM-4 and SM4CM Shock Mounts

The SM-4 and the SM-4CM use Rubber "O" Rings for the microphone suspension and include a locking knob for microphone positioning. Both models are designed to fit most cylindrical style Condenser or short Shotgun style microphones from 19 mm (.75") to 31 mm (1.25"). The SM-4 offers a standard 5/8"-27 female metal thread while the SM-4CM includes adapters to mount on any standard Camera Hot or Cold Shoe mount.



olsenaudio.com

Shure Fitness, Performance, and Lavalier Condenser Microphones

The SM31FH Fitness Headset Condenser Microphone is designed for fitness instructors and the SM35 Performance Headset Condenser Microphone is for live sound applications. Shure has also unveiled the PGA31 Headset Condenser Microphone and the Centraverve™ Lavalier (CVL) Condenser Microphone, which are ideal for presentation applications.



The SM35 Performance Headset Microphone is appropriate for any size stage and is offered for use with the BLX Wireless System, GLX-D Digital Wireless System, and ULX-D® Digital Wireless System. The SM-31FH is a wearable cardioid condenser microphone that features hydrophobic fabric, a material that repels moisture to protect and shield the microphone cartridge from corrosion caused by sweat. Retail: \$99 (PGA 31: \$39).

shure.com

Cerwin-Vegas P-Series P1000X

Featuring many of the same controls as its predecessor, the P1000X Powered Loudspeaker is a two-way, bi-amped, full-range bass-reflex speaker that employs a 10" inch woofer and high-frequency compression driver. Powered by a custom 1500W Class-D amp, the P1000X has a proprietary hemi-conical horn that provides enhanced sound clarity over an even and wide coverage area. A built-in mixer with multiple channels and I/O connections allows for simple and fast setup. Also included are enhanced EQ, VEGA BASS boost and high-pass filter controls.



cerwin-vega.com

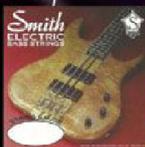
Radial StageBug SB-48

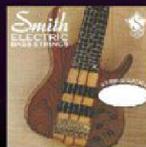
The SB-48 Power Bar is a two-channel device with XLR inputs and outputs. Power is derived from an external 15VDC supply using a non-radiating switcher to generate 48 volts. When active, an easy to see LED indicator illuminates to let you know the SB-48 is ready for use. Users can also change the output voltage from 48 volts to 12 volts. Made from 16-gauge steel and finished in baked enamel. Retail: \$100.

radialeng.com

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CASES AND BAGS

Grundorf G-GSC and PRO-GSC Guitar Stand Cases

Both new cases from Grundorf hold as many as six guitars when open, yet they are compact and easy to transport and store. The new Grundorf G-GSC guitar case features a vintage vinyl finish while the PRO-GSC employs aluminum extrusion edge protection and a durable, impact resistant laminated finish that is resistant to scratches, weather, and other variables that flight cases typically encounter. As a secure means of storing as many as six guitars, both models utilize a leather strap with a snap to hold one's valuable instruments securely in place. Retail: \$349.95 (G-GSC), \$429.95 (PRO-GSC).



grundorf.com

PRINT

Sunburst: How the Gibson Les Paul Standard Became a Legendary Guitar

Sunburst is the latest book in author Tony Bacon's best-selling guitar series, with a thoroughly researched story partnered by a gallery of full-color pictures of great guitars, rare memorabilia, and famous Burst players – from Keith Richards to Joe Bonamassa and Jeff Beck to Billy Gibbons. Its reference section reveals production details and dating clues for this most enigmatic and revered instrument. Retail: \$29.99.

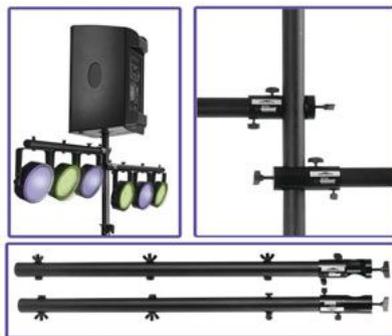


backbeatbooks.com

LIGHTING AND DJ

OnStage Stands U-Mount Lighting Arms

The LSA7700P u-mount elliptical enveloping clamp design can be moved freely up, down, and around the stand quickly and securely. Without obstructive bracing, more fixtures can be mounted in limitless configurations. This also means fixtures can remain clamped during transport. Compatible with 1-1/2" and 1-3/8" poles, its elliptical design ensures round-to-round contact, spreading force evenly around the stand's primary pole.



onstagestands.com

Chauvet EZpin IRC

The EZPin™ IRC is a battery-powered pin spot with optional remote control designed to easily pin spot centerpieces or any other focal point at any without worrying about power draw or the availability of electric outlets.

The fixture's magnetic base makes it possible to affix the pin spot to most metal surfaces without using clamps. The EZpin IRC also has unique scissor clip with an eye loop that allows the fixture to be attached to drop ceiling supports without requiring time-consuming cabling. Retail: \$399.



chauvetlighting.com

Harman Martin Professional M6

Incorporating the latest available technologies with an industrial multi-core processor, solid-state drives and custom-designed high-brightness touch screens, the M6 is capable of delivering up to 64 DMX universes directly from the console's network ports without using costly external processors. With advanced features like a LiveBlender™ T-Bar, FastDial™ rotary encoders, Paired Playback buttons and BriteTouch™ display, the M6 is Martin's most advanced console design ever. It offers a total of 44 playbacks, including dual Main Go sections, 10 motorized faders and 12 additional faders, as well as a total of 17 encoders for parameter access.



martin.com

BAND AND ORCHESTRA

Cremona Electric Violin

The Cremona SV-180E Solid-body Electric Violin eliminates feedback troubles experienced when standard pickups are installed on traditional acoustic violins. A multi-featured onboard Piezo pickup system with rosewood bridge powers this violin. Also included: a shaped, lightweight rigid foam case and serviceable bow is supplied as well as a cable, small headphone set, and rosin. All fittings are made of ebony and shaped to traditional dimensions.



sagamusic.com

Odyssey Brass-wind Range

The Odyssey Premiere Series has been expanded to include the OBS800 E \flat Baritone Saxophone, OFG1300SG Flugel Horn, OCR1000 E \flat Soprano Cornet and the OTR1250 D/E \flat Trumpet, providing even more options for intermediate to advanced players. There is also the new OFL300C Curved Head Flute, which features a closed key, offset G design and includes additional straight headjoint with silver plated nickel tube and French keywork.

jhs.co.uk

PERCUSSION

SJC Maple/Metal/Maple Snare:

SJC recently introduced these 8x14" shells, which utilize 1.5" Maple, 5" Flat black steel, and then 1.5" more of Maple, with tube lugs and diecast hoops. The snare features significant attack and body while the maple edges help with the body and snare response. The steel middle section adds a lot of high end projection.



sjcdrums.com

Pearl FFS Free-Floating Snare Drums

Pearl's new Task-Specific Free Floating Snare Drums are offered in a 14" width by 3.5", 5", 6.5", and 8" depth, each made utilizing specific shell materials to optimize each drum's sonority with respect to depth. The Task-Specific 14x3.5 Piccolo Free Floaters feature 1.2 mm Stainless Steel or 6 ply Birch, both known for their brightness, which complement the bright, penetrating sound of piccolo snares. 14"x5" Free Floaters feature 1.5 mm Brass or 6 ply Maple shells known for their smooth and even frequency distribution. 14"x6.5" Free Floating Snare Drums are equipped with



1.2mm Phosphor Bronze or 6 ply Maple with an inner ply of African Mahogany. The 14"x8" Free Floater features a 1.2 mm Seamless Aluminum shell with strong lows, smooth mids, and sweet highs.

All drums are equipped with Die-Cast hoops, free floating lugs, chrome hardware, Coated Ambassador batter head and Pearl's new SR-160F strainer. Retail: \$765 - \$1,030.

PearlDrum.com

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Upgrade Your Earnings

Searching for alternative revenue streams?
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Since the dawn of music stores, one of the most reliable truths has been that instruments will need to be repaired. Whether customers bought them at your store or anywhere else in the country, a retailer with a prepared repair program is always poised to earn extra revenue from musicians' aging products.

But even smarter dealers will find ways to step up those efforts, turning routine repairs into easy upgrades.

Gil Griffith, co-founder and vice president of GearUp Products, had an epiphany one day while waiting at a New Jersey neighborhood car wash. "Here was this whole line of people waiting around at the car wash, and right across the street is a guy with an auto body repair shop," says Griffith. "He set up right there on the sidewalk with a special on dents and dings for anyone getting their car washed," he said. "It wasn't the most involved work, but you know he raked it in that day."

He realized his own suite of guitar finish repair products (GluBoost, Fill n'Finish, and MasterGlu) could have a similar application in music instrument repair shops. Is a customer bringing in a guitar for a setup or new pickups, for example? Let them know you can take care of those scratches and blemishes too.

"This extra little repair is just a process of filling, finishing, sanding, and polishing that users can master with some practice that makes this product work." Griffith says he's even bravely volunteered his own guitar for demonstration dings.

The bottom line? Easy fixes like GluBoost and Fill n'Finish make for serious ROI. "You can get our accelerator and glue is \$30, which should get you around 100 repairs," says Griffith. "At around \$20 per repair, that's a really good return on investment."

Larry Fitzgerald is one for expanding repair operations. A veteran of the great Rudy's Music in Manhattan, where he worked with John Suhr, Fitzgerald has run the shop at the Sam Ash Music location in Huntington (Long Island) for 17 years.

"We do everything from simple guitar work to really high-end restoration stuff," he says. There's always room for a modest upsell, though. "It depends on your clientele – obviously, you've got to

know your clientele. I have a lot of guys, especially in times like these past winter months, who come in with a lot of cracks."

Fitzgerald says the product works well as a quick alternative to a lacquer finish. "GluBoost can do it in a much shorter time. GluBoost really comes in handy in a case where I've already closed a sealed the crack and now I can actually seal the top to match the finish, which is hard with, like, Taylor guitars or vintage guitars made with a UV or any kind of satin acrylic.

"I'm just now discovering a lot of the applications that it has – it has more than what they're talking about. You could probably finish someone's neck with this if you wanted to. I'm talking maybe an hour. If that was nitro, you'd start it and tell your customer they'd see it in three months."

Fitzgerald does warn that it's not an instant fix – anyone using the product should have a certain skill level. But once you're confident with the product, it's a significant path to quicker fixes.

Fitzgerald also points to improved electronics upgrades as a source of simple upgraded repairs. In particular, he mentions the Seymour Duncan Triple Shot mounting ring, which offers a simple install to upgrade guitars with a passive/active switch. The product circumvents the need for more invasive work that would typically have been needed, such as installing push-pull pots or switches onto the guitar.

"It can be done pretty quickly by an entry-level tech and you can make some money on it," he says.

Finally, Fitzgerald has found a consistent crowd pleaser in intonation-correcting nut replacements such as those from Earvana and Buzz Feiten. "That's one that's kind of an upsell but is also a genuine improvement on most instruments, especially Gibsons," he says with a good natured laugh. "I love Gibsons, but chances are these things are a major improvement on yours."

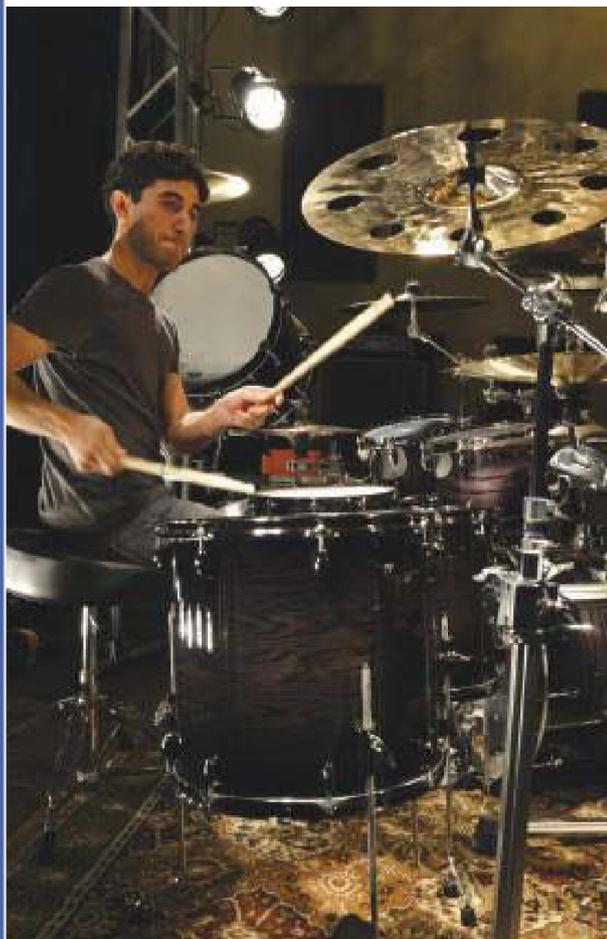
Whether it's simple intonation correction or a cosmetic fix-up, the strategy is often the same – put your service in front of customers in need. The trick is finding them when they need it. Griffith puts it simply: "One thing you need as an entrepreneur is imagination." **MMA**



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Product Spotlight

Roland AIRA Line of Synth Instruments

With roots in the very origins of electronic music, Roland's new AIRA line is designed to meet the evolving needs of modern electronic musicians while offering throwback functionality inspired by classic equipment like the TR-808 and the TB-303.

U.S. director of channel management Robin Kelly says Roland engineers were thrilled at the chance to replicate those vintage electronic tones. A technology called Analog Circuit Behavior (ACB) allows these tools to model functionality down to the old machines' component level. "This means that not just every circuit, potentiometer, etc. is modeled but also the interaction between these components," says Kelly. "Which gives the unique sound and character of each instrument."

The first four products introduced in the AIRA series are the TR-8 Rhythm Performer, TB-3 Touch Bassline, VT-3 Voice Transformer, and SYSTEM-1 PLUG-OUT Synthesizer.



The TR-8 melds the legendary sound and vibe of the TR-808 and TR-909 with new features and functions. An '80s staple, the TR-808 and TR-909 produced some of the most influential drum sounds in modern music. The TR-8 adds new sound-tweaking capabilities and performance functions.

Based on the influential TB-303, the TB-3 Touch Bassline is a performance-ready bass synthesizer with authentic sound and intuitive controls engineered to play, including a pressure-sensitive touch pad that makes both playing and programming a total joy.

The VT-3 Voice Transformer is designed to smoothly alter Pitch and Formant and can introduce Vocoder, Synth, lo-fi and other heavily processed vocal sounds into studio tracks and live performances with little hassle.

The SYSTEM-1 PLUG-OUT Synthesizer harnesses the character associated with Roland synthesizers for years and adds innovative design with performance-ready controls, quality construction, and a wide array of lights, knobs and sliders. PLUG-OUT technology means the SYSTEM-1 can control – and even host – software recreations of classic Roland synthesizers.

"One of the driving forces behind the development of AIRA was to put the sounds back in the hands of musicians," says Kelly. "This means hands-on live performance and control, with a focus of every parameter being on the top level and no need for multiple button pushes."

The product's looks are likely to turn as many heads as their vintage sounds. "The tabletop designs are not just visually appealing – they were built for the road, with metal tops and solid color throughout the product," says Kelly. "For example, if you were to cut the green bezel of the instruments in half you would see a solid green color all the way through; this makes surviving the rigors of the road much easier."

RolandUS.com/AIRA

Bedell 'Summer of Love' Dreadnaught

Few figures in the guitar industry have been as involved in exploring issues of sustainability and the legality of existing rare tonewoods as Tom Bedell. His Bedell Guitars has made major strides in working out processes to ethically source tonewoods and build guitars in the spirit of the great instruments of early folk and rock 'n' roll scenes.

The super limited edition 'Summer of Love' dreadnaught guitar (limited to 12 copies) is maybe the company's most potent symbol of this effort. As the company says, "During the summer of '67, if you could've had any guitar, it would've been an Adirondack/Brazilian dreadnaught." This guitar features Brazilian sidewood and an Adirondack Spruce top with a Honduran mahogany neck.

Bedell secured a large collection of Brazilian rosewood that had been imported into Spain over 50 years ago. This collection at Bedell is now the largest collection of legally harvested and preserved Brazilian rosewood in existence today. It has been naturally dried and aged in a carefully controlled climate, making it some of the finest tonewood around. All Bedell Brazilian rosewood is legally documented and available to be exported throughout all CITES nations.

Which brings us to Tom Bedell's personal attempt to show the world how to navigate the recently updated travel regulations imposed on these types of tonewoods. On the occasion of this year's Musikmesse show in Frankfurt, Germany in March, Bedell packed up a Summer of Love and all of its required paperwork and headed to the airport.

"The bottom line is that if this wood was in Europe before 1992, it can legally be brought back into Europe," says Bedell. "So we applied for a permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service and got that, then we went to the Dept. of Agriculture and got their endorsement, and then when I got to Germany I cleared customs. When I went home I went through Spain and they stamped it and made it back to the United States."

Though he arrived home in one piece, Bedell says there's room for improvement. "To be candid, the process at the FWS is just being developed," he says. "I'm going to take my team back to Washington D.C. in May and we're going to work with the FWS to help them understand how to work with musicians and the guitar industry to make it a smoother process. It's just a new thing that people need to get used to." Bedell also led a workshop at Musikmesse to help explain the technicalities of traveling with different restricted woods.

The very theme of the Summer of Love guitar itself dates back to what could be seen as the beginning of the modern approach to endangered tree species. "In the late 1960s is when Brazil outlawed the exportation of Brazilian trees," says Bedell.

"Also, the Summer of Love was the beginning of rock 'n' roll as a voice to express social change that we still enjoy today. The most sought-after guitar back then was the Brazilian rosewood Spruce dreadnaught, and that's what this is."



bedellguitars.com

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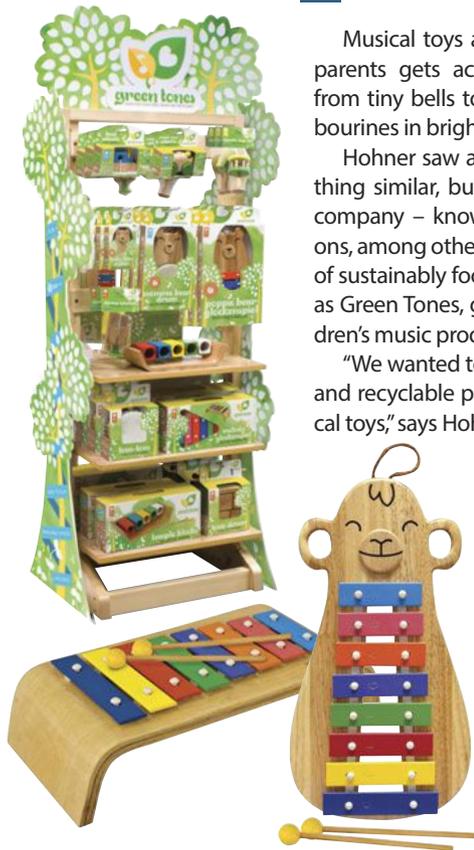


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Hohner Green Tones



Musical toys are one of the first things any new parents gets acquainted with. There's everything from tiny bells to tot-sized pianos and stuffed tambourines in bright colors, tough to break, and plastic.

Hohner saw an opening in the market for something similar, but upscale. The musical accessories company – known for its harmonicas and accordions, among other instruments – released its own line of sustainably focused toys last year. The line, known as Green Tones, goes a long way toward taking children's music products up a notch.

"We wanted to go upscale with sustainable wood and recyclable packaging to make this line of musical toys," says Hohner director of marketing and sales Scott Emmerman. "It's a step up from the molded plastic stuff.

The line is extensive and includes products for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Options included "Endangered Animal Shakers" (12+ months), a triangle castanet (24+ months), and a beginner drum set (3+ years). There are over 20 products in all, and they all boast environmentally minded construction. All instruments are made with either a chemical-free Rubberwood

or Mangowood, built with non-toxic glue and water-based VOC-free paint (meaning all products are safe for children's mouths).

Hohner says they've placed a substantial focus on young children's development, which can be substantially aided by musical engagement. The company claims that the toys promote imagination, creativity, self-expression, and confidence as well as the development of motor skills, sensory processing, and a sense of rhythm.

To further highlight the company's environmental efforts, they've joined an organization of 1,200 companies called "1% for the Planet" who donate one percent of their sales to dedicated environmental organizations.

Emmerman says the toys sell in different markets, including the specialty toy channel and larger chains. "We also sell through MI stores too, though," he says. "We have a great POP that we put up for free, and it's been really successful."

"People think, 'I don't have young children coming into the store.' But if you have lessons, you have parents dropping kids off at the store and lots of those kids have younger siblings. That's a significant way to appeal – it's not their typical customer who might be coming in to buy a Strat, but it's someone who's out there."

gogreentones.com



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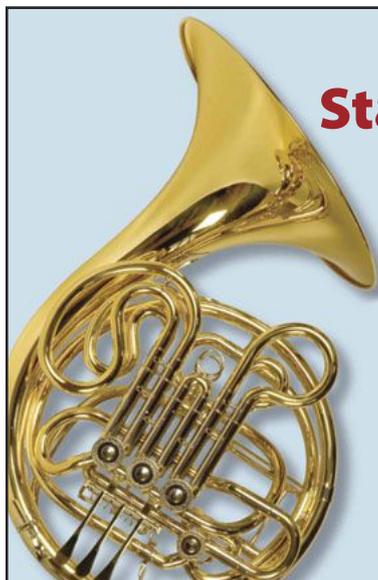
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The Tao of McRib

"Roland, the Japanese firm that designed the [TB-303], has spent three decades pretty much ignoring the calls for a proper reissue of this simple little instrument," writes Jasper Hamill in a recent Tech article for *Forbes* regarding the sort-of reissue of Roland's TB-303 synthesizer in the form of the Aira TB-3 (see *MMR's* Product Spotlight of the Aira line on page 52 of this issue). The article goes on to discuss the evolution of the instrument's cult status since its discontinuation only a few years after initial introduction in 1982 and also wonders if Roland waited too long for the 303's reboot.

Time will tell the fate of the Aira TB-3, but certain larger topics and lessons pertaining to the notion of success via cultivating a "cult product" or special event are interesting to contemplate, both for MI retailers and suppliers.

Consider McDonald's barbecue "pork" (that's a topic for

Drummers Unite; Tuesdays are the guitar clubs; Wednesdays – which are our most popular of the week – are the OMN's or Open Mic Nights; Thursdays are our Keyboard nights; and Sunday is the Sam Ash Jazz Brunch for horn players."

Of course, "special events" don't just happen. In addition to (hopefully) coming up with a good concept, the successful birth of a happening that resonates with the community depends on careful preparation. "Planning is the key to success for everyone involved," Cranley continues. "One piece of advice is to find a dedicated partner for those areas where you don't have the muscle."

Collaborating with other area establishments creates a more inclusive vibe to a given day's gathering and may result in unexpected sales or relationships. Offering more than just "stuff for sale" also invites greater participation.

“Customers have so many choices today and we feel we need to provide something extra to win them over. Special events can be that edge.” – Kevin Cranley, Willis Music

another forum) sandwich, the McRib. First introduced to menus in 1982 and subsequently – and repeatedly – removed, the marketing of the item became a blueprint for successfully building customer fervor.

"While McDonald's playing hard-to-get with the McRib certainly baffles most customers, from a business perspective, it has proven to be a wildly effective marketing strategy," noted *Inc.* magazine's Nicole Carter in a 2011 feature. "The McRib's marketing strategy bundles the appeal of exclusivity, scarcity, and seasonality into one savory package. And it's become a strategy so successful that McDonald's is making the promotion perennial."

How is this relevant to MI? Well, there are, of course, plenty of examples of instruments that have eventually been re-issued or revisited after gaining post-non-production notoriety, with varied results.

MXR and Ibanez make waves by reissuing their old pedals, Ludwig's Black Beauty has been re-released at least twice that I'm aware of, Ampeg periodically trots out this year's version of the Dan Armstrong guitar, the Rhodes and B3 organs have both had successful re-launches – the list (as I'm sure anyone reading this knows) is pretty much endless. In most instances, the renewed availability of a beloved, classic instrument results – at least momentarily – in buzz for the overall brand.

And how might retailers capitalize on this here-now/today-but-not-for-long marketing approach? "We believe in doing regular events *and* the occasional 'special event,'" says Willis Music Company's Kevin Cranley. "Customers have so many choices today and we feel we need to provide something extra to win them over. Special events can be that edge."

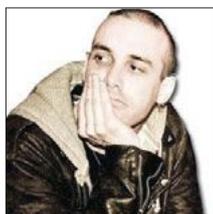
"We are always running events whenever possible," offers Sammy Ash of Sam Ash Music Corp. "Weekly, we have something happening almost every night: Mondays are

Whether it's entertainment, free food, a "drum-off" competition, celebrity appearances, or all of the above and more, those are the types of things that create truly memorable events – and new customers. If your performance stage for "Big Super-Fun Day" or your guitar demo tent (or whatever it may be) is set up across from the food stand outside a family of four's favorite Mexican restaurant, it's entirely likely one of those kids or parents will feel comfortable enough to walk over and check out what you're up to.

"The main trick is for the location to want to do an event and take ownership of it," Ash says. "Most of our suppliers are generous for contributing small and sometimes large items for these types of events. We donate generously to community groups that support music with many gift certificates. That gets very grateful customers coming back in the store with big smiles."

It's unlikely that many out there are reading this and saying to themselves, "A special event – that's something I've never heard of or considered before!" But, however much this concept may be old-hat to retailers, not many – certainly not all – really make the effort to commit to the undertaking. It takes hard work, planning, and may not always pay off as you'd hope, but when it does, the rewards are long lasting and significant.

If your operation *does* take the effort to launch and sustain special looked-forward-to events in the community, my hat's off to you. If you *don't*, why not give it a shot? While you consider it, I'll be eagerly awaiting the next limited-time run of the McRib.

By Christian
Wissmuller

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