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C O N T E N T S

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Teaching Critical Thinking via Metal?



by Christian Wissmuller

In this issue, we devote a sizable chunk of real estate to examining the current fretted market for instruments and gear aimed toward the hard rock and heavy metal enthusiast – what purchasing trends are emerging in 2016, how best to sell to this type of consumer, what products are really moving off the shelves, et cetera.

While both my own commentary and that of some of the industry experts we spoke with argues that metalheads shouldn't all be categorized as thuggish brutes (as Nick Bowcott of Marshall points out, these players come from "all walks-of-life and all ages – from 11 years old to 65 years young; and from ditch-diggers to doctors, dentists and CEOs") none of us made the leap that Rodney Schmalz, assistant professor in the department of psychology at McMaster University in Edmonton, Alberta has.

In a recently published article in the journal, *Frontiers in Psychology*, Schmalz argues that heavy metal music can promote scientific thinking.

An example he puts forth is the famous 1990 Judas Priest trial during which the band was ultimately found to be not liable for the deaths of two young men who cited Priest's music as the reason they had killed themselves. "The case can lead to an interesting class discussion on how extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence," he writes. "The claim that a backwards, subliminal message can lead someone to take their own life is an extraordinary claim. Students can be challenged to describe how they would experimentally test the impact of subliminal messages on behavior, followed by a class dis-

cussion of how the actual research was conducted in the field. This is an engaging example to help students better understand variable manipulation, demand characteristics, and issues of generalizability. At least in the case of subliminal messages, students will learn that music does not lead to problematic or harmful behavior."

Schmalz additionally points out that research has demonstrated that "people who were fans of heavy metal music in adolescence fared better in many aspects of their adult lives than people who were not fans."

How about that?

Potentially a solid source of income for your MI retail operation *and* a useful teaching tool!

In this month's installment of 'The Good Fight,' Mary Luehrsen urges taking advantage of the passage of the Every Students Succeeds Act, noting that "Now is the time to plant the seeds of expansion and development for music education programs in all school districts across the country."

Maybe part of that expansion and development should include incorporating some hard rock in the curriculum. I'm not even sort of kidding – I know I and my friends would've been a lot more excited about attending music class if metal had been in the lesson-plan. Just something to consider.

Rock on.

Christian Wissmuller
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degradation to the instrument's tone. Signals pass through the MultiSelector PRO transparently, with no coloration and the digitally controlled optical switching is completely silent. We've also included a Tuner output on the front and rear. All three non-active inputs are routed to the tuner outputs so a guitar tech can tune any instrument in a non active channel without unplugging it.



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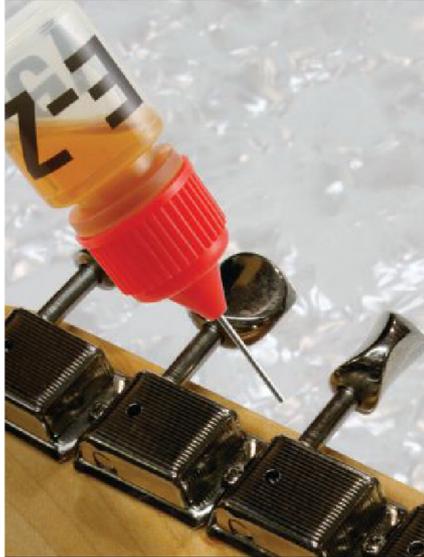


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Upfront

Industry News

- Industry News
- Supplier Scene
- People on the Move

SABIAN Announces Expanded Partnership with SLM

SABIAN has announced that St. Louis Music (SLM) expanded their offerings to include Band and Orchestral instruments and accessories, as of February 1st, 2016.

According to SABIAN president, Andy Zildjian, "By expanding our partnership with St. Louis Music and giving them access to our complete catalogue, it brings our Band and Orchestral Division in line with our overall market strategy, and provides retailers with an option when ordering SABIAN instruments and accessories.

"We are excited to add SABIAN Band and Orchestral instruments and accessories to our product line," says Robert E. Lee, senior vice president of Sales at St. Louis Music. "SLM will enhance the direct sales efforts of the SABIAN sales team in the U.S. by focusing on our vast retailer network and our strong ties to the educational market."



Fishman Celebrates 35th Anniversary

Pickup and preamp specialist Fishman is celebrating 35 years in business, and has a number of promos and giveaways lined up throughout the year to mark the occasion.

To coincide with the milestone, it has also updated and re-launched- its website – www.fishman.com – with fresh content such as video tutorials, artist information, downloadable tech and specification for every product, and up-to-date news and information on the company and its products.

"Our new website offers a better user experience all around for consumers and dealers," said director of marketing, Chris DeMaria. "The new design aligns perfectly with Fishman's 'Inspired Performance Technology' branding. The integration of

FISHMAN



our social media feed and video content is a huge step in tying all of our marketing communications together."

"When I started out, I was just looking for a better solution to amplify my bass," said founder and president, Larry Fishman. "From there things really took off and we went from Fishman Transducers, to Fishman Acoustic Amplification, and now it's Fishman Inspired Performance Technology."

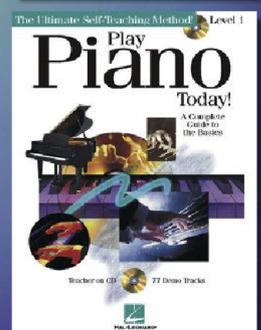
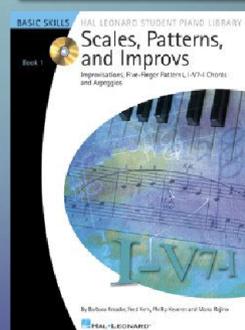
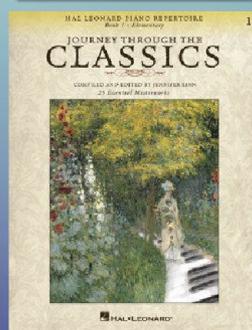
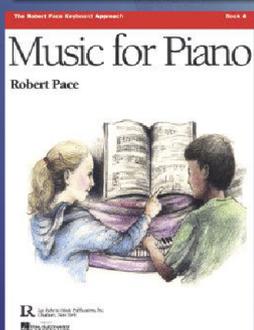
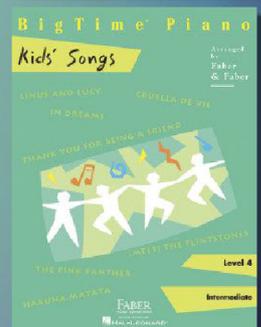
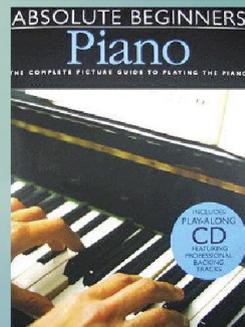
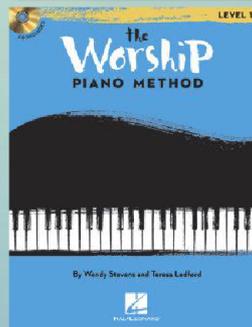
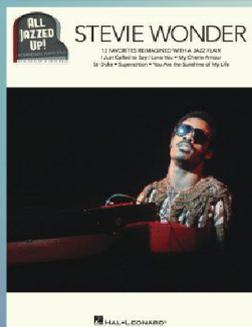
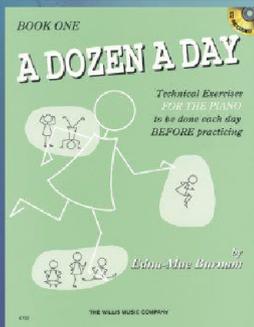
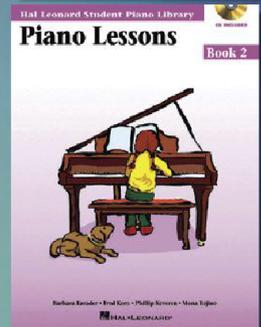
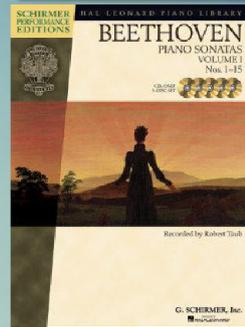
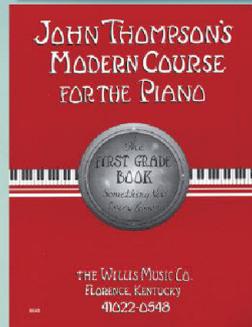
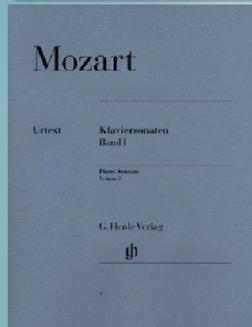
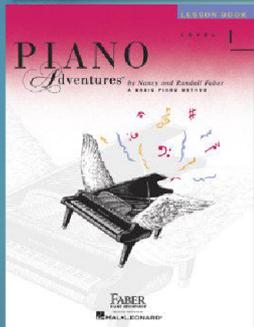
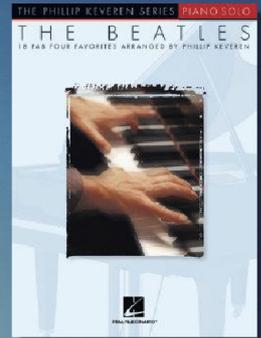
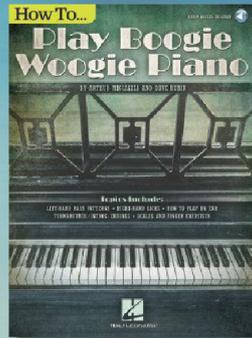
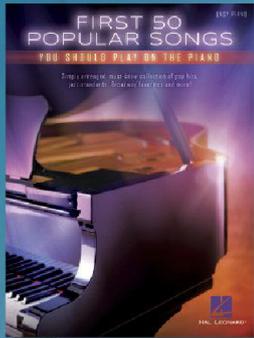
Recent innovations from the firm have included the Fishman Triple-Play wireless MIDI pickup system and more recently Fluence electric guitar pickups, which give electric guitarists with authentic sounding, noise and hum free pickups, with a choice of two classic pickup tones at the flick of a switch.

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Prolight + Sound Guangzhou 2016

This year's Prolight + Sound Guangzhou took place from February 29 to March 3, in Guangzhou.

The industry-leading fair occupied all 13 halls (130,000 sqm) of Area A in the China Import & Export Fair Complex to showcase 1,230 exhibitors presenting more than 1,500 brands from 25 countries and regions (up from 2015's tally of 1,186 exhibitors).

prolight+sound GUANGZHOU

Commenting on the show, Ms. Judy Cheung, deputy general manager for Messe Frankfurt (Shanghai) Co. Ltd. shared, "I am delighted to see more exhibitors joining this year and there is a growing number of brands' direct participation at the show. This reflects the importance of the show and the Chinese market to the global pro audio and lighting industry. I wish them all profitable experiences at Prolight + Sound Guangzhou."

To deliver a more dynamic and broad spectrum exhibition, specific product zones for conference systems, public address, headphones, microphones, pro audio and accessories, as well as the signature Audio Brand Name Halls, Pro Audio Halls, Lighting Halls, KTV Hall and Enping Microphone Halls were formed to provide an effective business platform for exhibitors and visitors alike.

D'Addario Launches First-Ever Guitar String Recycling Program

D'Addario has teamed with the global recycling organization TerraCycle to create Playback, a safe and independent way to recycle instrument strings. Currently, municipal recycling systems in the United States do not accept instrument strings because of the metals and alloys they are made from. D'Addario will not only be rewarding players for recycling their own strings, but will accept all other string brands as well as part of this program.

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Hal Leonard & Homespun Celebrate 20 Years Together

Hal Leonard and Homespun celebrated their 20th anniversary of working together at the NAMM 2016 show. Homespun has been a respected creator of instructional video and audio materials for over 40 years with a catalog of 500+ titles featuring prestigious bluegrass and folk musicians as well as a variety of other artists from all musical genres for all instruments, from guitar and piano to banjo and mandolin and everything in between. Homespun started out by providing instructional materials on reel-to-reel tapes manufactured on their kitchen table. They continued to change with the times always providing top quality audio/visual instruction in the manner modern musicians want it, including today's DVD and online video options.

Previously primarily a mail-order company, Homespun tapped into the Hal Leonard distribution network in 1995 to get their products more widely distributed into the music trade, which allowed them to focus on product development. "Right from the beginning, the entire staff at Hal Leonard was excited about the Homespun brand and our mission to produce the highest-quality instruction in roots music styles and techniques. As our distributors to the music trade, they have successfully brought our products to dealers large and small, and we look forward to continuing this fruitful association into the future," said Happy Traum, president and founder of Homespun Tapes. Jane Traum, Happy's wife and co-founder and vice president of the company, added, "Working with the Hal Leonard team has been a terrific experience. As a

company, Hal Leonard is passionate about music education. The excellent sales team has been very tuned into the kind of music instruction Homespun provides to learning players at all levels."

"Happy and Jane are the most genuine deal in the music market today," said Doug Lady, senior vice president of Sales at Hal Leonard. "Their unique history in the folk and bluegrass music scenes and their respected products hold an important place in music history. We're honored that they trust us to help them continue to keep these legacies alive and thriving for today's up and coming musicians."





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AES Mexico Conference to Begin March 13 Featuring Presentation by AES President John Krivit

The AES Mexico 2016 Conference is set for March 13 – 15 in Mexico City, featuring Masterclass presentations from top names in the industry, educational workshops, listening experiences, and more. This year's Conference, once again held in concurrence with Sound-Check Xpo, will also showcase AES president John Krivit in a presentation focusing on student and career development being held on the opening day of the show.

Hailed as the largest dedicated event for the Latin American professional audio community each year, the AES Mexico Conference will once again offer an array of top industry talent relating both personal and technical insights in their field. AES president Krivit's address, titled "From Student to Professional: Strategies and Best Practices for Matriculating into Your Audio Career," is expected to be a highlight of the conference's opening day. In this session, Krivit will share tried and true methods for achieving a foothold in the audio industry, and how industry trends can help shape the way to finding jobs and setting up a successful career in professional audio. Additional opening day sessions include "Line Arrays

vs. Conventional Systems: Adjustment and Optimization" with Fernando Guzmán, and "The Challenges of Mixing a Live Band" with José Rivera.



Day 2 events for the AES Mexico Conference begin with a workshop titled "The Art of Equalizing Without the First EQ" with recording, mixing, live sound and electroacoustic systems engineer Andres Millan featuring several critical listening and analysis examples. These will be followed by "Loudness From a Monitoring Perspective" with Thomas Lund, and closing out the day, "Saving Rock & Roll" with engineer/producer Erin Tonkon.

The final day of the conference will hold three additional events: An opening workshop by César Lamschtein titled "Mix Procedures. Staying Inspired and Reactive"; A presentation on "Classical Music Recording on Location: Challenges and Rewards" by Marcela Zorro; and a tutorial on "DRC (Digital Room Correction)" hosted by Mauricio Gargel.

AES Mexico 2016 Conference registration and program information is available online. Find out more about the Audio Engineering Society at aes.org.

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Supplier Scene

Hal Leonard Raffles Off Super Bowl 50 Guitar

To celebrate their recent distribution agreement with Woodrow Guitar, Hal Leonard raffled off a limited edition Super Bowl 50 Northender guitar at the Winter NAMM show.

Only 50 of these \$599 high-quality custom-painted guitars were made. The winning retailer was Mike Guillot of Mississippi Music.

Hal Leonard began distributing Woodrow's line of officially-licensed sports-themed instruments and music accessories – including guitars, guitar straps, picks, miniature model guitars, and more – in late 2015.

"We loved the excitement that this unique line brought to our booth... Their products start a conversation and once people see the quality behind the great looks, it's an easy sale!" said David Jahnke, vice president, National Sales for Hal Leonard.



Keyboard Concepts Named 'Dealer of the Year' by Yamaha

Keyboard Concepts of Southern California has been named "Institutional Dealer of the Year" by Yamaha Corporation of America.

The award was presented to the piano retailer at the 2016 NAMM in Anaheim, California. Keyboard Concepts was among only six piano retailers selected throughout the United States to be honored by Yamaha at the event.

Yamaha recognized Keyboard Concepts with the "Institutional Dealer of the Year Award" for its outstanding sales and marketing success with Yamaha pianos and keyboards in relationship with area colleges and universities.

Accepting the award from Yamaha Keyboard division top management were Keyboard Concepts President Dennis



Pictured here (from left): Dan Rodowicz, Yamaha Institutional Solutions Group channel manager; Tom Sumner, senior vice president, Yamaha Corporation of America; Dennis Hagerty, president, Keyboard Concepts; Jeff Falgien, vice president, Keyboard Concepts; Paul Calvin, vice president and general manager, Yamaha Keyboard division, and Jun Fujimoto, western regional manager, Yamaha Institutional Solutions Group.

Hagerty and Vice President Jeff Falgien.

"Yamaha has always appreciated Keyboard Concepts," said Bob Heller, national sales director, Yamaha Keyboard division. "But when you see Dennis and Jeff engaging personally with their institutional customers,

you know the universities and colleges they serve are getting the best possible care a Yamaha dealer can provide." Keyboard Concepts was founded more than 30 years ago by Hagerty and Falgien and has grown to five locations throughout Southern California. Keyboard Concepts is a factory authorized dealer for Yamaha Premium, TransAcoustic, Disklavier, Silent, Avant-Grand, and Clavinova digital pianos, as well as Bösendorfer pianos.

Jensen Tornado is Benson's Speaker Choice for Fender GB Signature Twin Reverb Amplifier

Inspired by jazz guitarist George Benson's Fender GB Signature Twin Reverb amplifier is an all-tube amp that produces rich, punchy tone with smooth attack and singing sustain.

The GB Twin Reverb is an updated version of the venerable classic amplifier tweaked to satisfy Benson's discerning ears.

Features include an 85-watt all-tube two-channel guitar combo amplifier, a pair of 12-inch, 100 watt, 8-ohm Jensen Jet Tornado speakers with neodymium magnets, two channels, — normal and tremolo; re-voiced low-gain normal channel — a solid pine cabinet construction, gray vinyl cover, silver sparkle grille cloth, a George Benson badge on the lower right of the front panel, and a protective amp cover.

The tonal character of the Jensen Tornado is designed to give clean, articulate tone with a classic full-bodied sound. The neodymium magnet design and characteristics resemble Alnico magnets, contributing to its distinct

behavior and quality of tone. The frequency response is extended in the upper range, generating a sense of airy openness and definition, essential to deliver all the details and the harmonic complexity of jazz chord play, and all the dynamic nuances in the fastest single note runs.

The high headroom from the two Jensen Tornado 12-inch speakers (each at 100 watts), allows every bit of the 85-watt GB Twin Reverb to flow through clearly and dynamically.



The Jensen Tornado speaker weighs only 4.45 pounds – less than half an average comparable 12" ceramic speaker. Combined with the solid pine cabinet, the GB Twin Reverb is 13 pounds lighter than a standard Twin Reverb amp.

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Bedell Guitars and Stand For Trees Team Up to Protect Threatened Brazilian Rosewood Forest

Bedell Guitars is committed to hand crafting guitars with sustainably harvested woods.

Recently, they partnered with Stand For Trees, and more specifically the Allcot Group's Brazilian Rosewood Amazon Conversation project, to protect a threatened Brazilian rosewood forest.

Stand For Trees empowers individual citizens and businesses alike to take direct action to protect endangered forests and reduce the impacts of climate change. Every time you buy a Stand For Trees Certificate, you help local forest communities around the world keep a specific forest standing and prevent a ton of CO₂, the most abundant greenhouse gas, from entering the earth's atmosphere.

Bedell Guitars will buy ten Stand For Trees certificates for each Brazilian rosewood guitar that is purchased, specifically supporting conservation efforts in Pará, Brazil. Pará houses one of the most diverse and abundant ecosystems on the planet. The Brazilian Rosewood Project in the Pará's Portel municipality works to protect this fragile ecosystem by stopping rampant deforestation of carbon-dense rainforest while allowing degraded forests an opportunity to regenerate. "Bedell Guitars recognizes the rareness of this revered tonewood," states Tom Bedell, founder Bedell Guitars. "Even though the Brazilian rosewood we use for our guitars was harvested legally Bedell wants to go further to support conservation practices in the area."

"Protecting the world's forests is the most important thing an individual or business can do to take climate action now, and Stand for Trees applauds Bedell Guitars for its industry-leading forest stewardship 'from seed-to-song' program and for raising awareness about forest conservation and climate change to guitar players and non-players alike," says Peter Mach, assistant director of Stand For Trees. Grattan MacGiffin, chief commercial officer at ALLCOT adds, "It is particularly rewarding for us to be associated with Bedell Guitars, who not only recognize the importance of conserving endangered forests but are going even further to compensate for their climate footprint."



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Harmony Project Gets Boost From Yamaha Institute for Mentoring Program

Los Angeles-based Harmony Project announced that it is working in partnership with the Yamaha Music and Wellness Institute to accelerate nationwide expansion of its innovative 'Mentoring Through Music' program.

During the halftime show of this past Super Bowl 50, Harmony Project students from Youth Orchestra Los Angeles (YOLA) realized a dream of a lifetime by performing under Gustavo Dudamel, world-renowned conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra in front of more than 100 million television viewers with Chris Martin and Coldplay.

Many of these young musicians were from Los Angeles' most underprivileged communities, effectively illustrating how music can enable low-income children and families to advance beyond seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Harmony Project's new partnership with the Yamaha Music and Wellness Institute will facilitate expansion of the program to other cities across the country, largely through the introduction of a collaborative training strategy for both program facilitators and local agencies committed to sustaining "Harmony Project of America" programs in their respective communities. The new alliance will also track the progress of each child in



the program, to create a robust central data repository for both short- and long-term outcomes-based research on the impact music has on underprivileged communities and individuals.

According to Barry Bittman, MD and CEO of the Yamaha Music and Wellness Institute, this alliance will not only serve those in need, but it will also facilitate a better understanding of how music can optimize the potential of each child in the face of life's greatest challenges.

"Harmony Project may very well be the antidote for the challenges low-income communities face, such as alienation, distrust, poverty, crime, and gangs that thwart each child's potential to thrive," said Dr. Bittman, who felt drawn to another key element of the program: long-term success.

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Hosa Technology Names Mainline Marketing as Rep of the Year



Hosa Technology, Inc. has named Mainline Marketing as its 2015 Sales Representative of the Year. Mainline Marketing (from left to right: Clinton Muntean, Michael Cooley, Steven Harger, and Craig Kutteroff).

The award recognizes remarkable performance throughout 2015. Mainline Marketing received the award during the recent NAMM Show in Anaheim, California.

Hosa's Rep of the Year award is based on numerous factors that lead to "comprehensive excellence in sales." The winning rep firm consistently reaches sales goals, exhibits first-rate communication skills, adapts to an ever-changing environment, and seeks out new market opportunities. The sum of all these traits is what makes Mainline Marketing one of Hosa Technology's top firms.

In addition to being the Hosa Sales Representative of the Year, Mainline was also presented the 2015 Mogan Microphones Rep of the Year award. This award is given to the rep firm with the highest net sales of the company's Mogan Microphones line.

"After working side by side with Mainline Marketing for so many years, it is our pleasure to recognize their efforts," said Jonathan Pusey, VP of Sales and Marketing at Hosa. "Clinton, Dana, and the crew came through for Hosa in 2015, as they so often do, regardless of the challenges they faced. Mainline is truly an extension of our company, sharing many of the same core values. We congratulate them on a successful year and look forward to many more as our partnership continues."

Billy Sheehan Participates In Bass Camp 2016 as a Professor

Billy Sheehan, has confirmed his participation as a professor as at the 2016 Bass Camp. Billy Sheehan is known for his work with Talas, Steve Vai, David Lee Roth, Mr. Big, Niacin, and The Winery Dogs. Since the '80s his technique, speed, and sound have caused quite a stir. Sheehan is most known for his use of chording, two-handed tapping, and right-hand three-finger picking. As well as his instructional videos, he has hosted numerous clinics.

In addition to Sheehan, the following

prominent bass professors have confirmed their participation:

Alphonso Johnson, Angeline Saris, Felix Pastorius, Günther Gebauer, Joe Hubbard, Juan Alderete, Marius Goldhammer, Neil Murray, Steve Bailey, Stuart Hamm, Tetsuo Sakurai, and Yolanda Charles.



New Websites for Knilling & Blessing

St. Louis Music is the owner of E.K. Blessing Brass and Knilling strings. For 2016, SLM presents both brands on a new online canvas: BlessingBrass.com & Knilling.com

"We've put so much work into the sound, crafting and look of both Knilling and Blessing," Says Craig Denny, vice president – Band & Orchestra at St. Louis Music. "We wanted to create websites that presented the Knilling and Blessing instruments in the manner they deserve, showcasing each lineup. We also wanted to make it easy for consumers and dealers to learn about each instrument."



Sites for both Knilling and Blessing feature a streamlined, minimalist design and each model of string or brass instrument is accompanied by high resolution images and a list of features. A dealer locator can point customers to the nearest store where either brand is available. Each site features a full catalogue download, one of the best ways to get acquainted with these legacy brands.

For more information or to become a Knilling or Blessing dealer call your St Louis Music Representative at 800-727-4512 or email at info@stlouismusic.com.



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Audix Award Presentations at Winter NAMM



Audix 2015 Rep of the Year Award was presented to AVA Reps, covering MO, NE, IA, KS in the United States. L to R: Todd Brushwyler, Audix National Sales Manager for Retail, Grigg Haws, Ben Shipman, Erich Uhlhorn of AVA and Audix National Sales Manager for Installed Sound Gene Houck.



Audix VP of Sales Cliff Castle receives the award for Microphone Line of the Year from Terry Lowe, publisher of *MMR Magazine*. "Being the recipient of an *MMR* Dealers Choice Award is a great distinction in recognizing a company's unparalleled commitment to value and quality," Lowe said in a statement.



Audix VP of Sales with Ian Young, Business Development Manager for SCV Electronics, the Audix distributor in the UK. SCV won the 2015 Distributor of the Year award for the EMEA (Europe, Middle East, Africa) region.



2015 Dealer of the Year Award being presented to Sweetwater. L to R: Todd Brushwyler, Audix National Sales Manager for Retail; Cliff Castle, VP of Sales; Chuck Surack, President of Sweetwater; Mike Brinker, Senior Product Manager Sweetwater.

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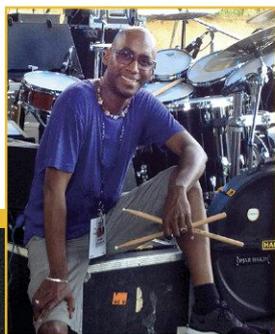
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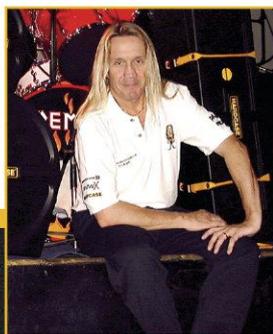


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by **Ronnie Dungan**

Meinl Pulls Out of Musikmesse

While the new look expo is gradually revealed, German percussion giant Meinl has become the latest company to pull out of this year's Musikmesse.

An ambitious new format with an increased consumer element appears to be struggling to convince a trade which has become increasingly focused on costs and ROI associated with the Frankfurt event. Industry scuttlebutt is of an emergency mission to NAMM by a team from the organizer in a bid to convince exhibitors not to turn their back on the event. The loss of a major exhibitor from its own territory will do little to quiet those rumours.



"We permanently strive to perfect the way we can reach our worldwide customer base," said the firm's Udo Heubeck. "This year's focus will be on our own events like the international Meinl Drum Festival in Warsaw Poland, and on an increased amount of drum clinics of our endorsees in certain international markets. We will also invest significantly more time and energy into our online communication efforts. We are confident that all these activities will strengthen the ties between the Meinl brand and our customers."

Instead the firm will be showcasing its new products at its own showroom in Gutenstetten, Germany.

Musikmesse Unveils Academy and Festival Plans

Musikmesse has teamed up with trade body the Society of Music Merchants (SOMM) to put together a programme of seminars and workshops at this year's show.

Under the heading of the Business Academy, the seminars, lectures, workshops, and keynotes are free of charge and advance registration is not necessary.

"The Business Academy programme in Hall 11.1 in the Business Plaza, is aimed specifically at the needs of the musical-instrument sector and thus oriented towards subjects of particular relevance to the sector. In cooperation with SOMM, top speakers, consultants, and coaches from the business, legal, and scientific worlds will pass on up-to-the-minute expertise in a varied blend of practice-oriented lectures, discussions, and workshops", explained Stephan Kurzawski, senior vice president, Messe Frankfurt.

"The spectrum covered by the Business Academy stretches from power and expert workshops for middle and senior specialists and managers to impulse lectures for retailers, wholesalers, and manufacturers, as well as newcomers to the sector", added Daniel Knöll, managing director of SOMM.

"Trade visitors will have the opportunity to attend a variety of power seminars and workshops on a wide range of subjects of relevance to the sector in the mornings and afternoons from Thursday to Sunday.

"There, experts, marketing gurus, social-media professionals, and specialist lawyers will examine core topics of relevance to the musical-instrument and equipment sector and discuss important issues. In this connection, the focus of the organizers' attention will be on modern professional development in the musical-instrument sector with the aim of strengthening the competitiveness of participants in all market segments. This includes profound knowledge of the opportunities and risks in the market and how external influences affect the situation in the market. Thus, even small changes to a company's strategy can result in increased sales while good training can lead to greater safety and security in their own company", concluded Knöll.



The Business Academy at this year's Musikmesse gathering in Frankfurt.

The 35-minute workshops and impulses lectures will spotlight subjects such as communication & sales, law, compliance, marketing, and facts & figures about the musical-instrument market.

Individual talks will focus on sales communication, sales rhetoric, and the best way to handle complaints. In the field of law / compliance, the lectures will revolve around issues such as the best ways to react to written warnings, tips and tricks for dealing with parallel imports, and goods seized at the border, as well as observing legal cases relating to internet sales, WEEE updates, and the legal basis for using YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, et cetera.

Additionally, specialists will examine shop window design and presentation, the correct use of social-media tools, and the abilities and skills necessary to use them.

There will also be talks on transferring business ownership and business successors, as well as expert recommendations on cultural networks and fund raising, not to mention ideas for perfect events at the POS. Among the subjects covered will be the correct use of web shops and how retailers can creatively counteract their competitors.

Further information about individual workshops and lectures, as well as the speakers, can be seen at www.musikmesse.com/business in the coming weeks.

On top of all that it has added a lineup of music acts for its first Festival, which will spread the event throughout the city of Frankfurt after the show has closed for the day.

The organizers have now announced an initial list of artists who will appear within the framework of the festival, across numerous venues.

Musikmesse Headliners Lineup

Al Jarreau & the hr-Bigband

Renowned international jazz, pop, and rhythm-and-blues musician Al Jarreau, is one of the leading singers of contemporary jazz and has released more than 20 albums in the course of his 50-year career. On April 10th, he will give a special concert together with the hr-Bigband in Saal Harmonie of Congress Centre Messe Frankfurt. Hits from Jarreau's repertoire will be performed in orchestral form under the direction of Jörg Achim Keller.



Cicero Sings Sinatra

The current tour by multiple Echo winner Roger Cicero begins on April 7th with an appearance in Frankfurt. On the eve of the tour premiere and on the occasion of the opening of Musikmesse 2016, the artist and his big band will give an exclusive concert at the popular Gibson Club (April 6th). Although intended primarily for invited guests, friends and supporters, there will also be a limited contingent of tickets for fans at the evening box office. For the first concert of the tour in Frankfurt's Alte Oper event hall on the following evening, there is only a limited amount of tickets remaining.



BigCityBeats Birthday

BigCityBeats, one of the best-known brands on the German nightlife scene, will celebrate its birthday in Frankfurt on April 8th. DJ duo Axwell and Ingrosso from Swedish House Mafia will headline. Their set at the BigCityBeats Birthday is also the warm-up for the BigCityBeats World Club Dome 2016 at the Commerzbank Arena in June.

Eisbrecher

The pioneers of the Neue Deutsche Härte (New German Hardness) rock music will appear on the stage of the Jahrhunderthalle concert hall in Frankfurt on April 8th. Eisbrecher will give their only indoor show in Frankfurt this year as part of their Full Speed Ahead Tour. The Munich-based sextet is characterized by a special combination of hard guitar sounds and powerful electro elements. Their latest album, *Schock*, reached number two in the German album charts.

Laith Al-Deen

Born in Karlsruhe but raised in the U.S. and Mannheim, Laith Al-Deen is one of Germany's most successful pop musicians. Since his debut in 2000, he has sold over a million albums. He will give an exclusive concert at the Unionhalle on the 7th of April.

International German Piano Award with Joseph Moog and Andrejs Osokins

The official Musikmesse opening concert will be held in the Alte Oper on the eve of the fair, April 6th. It marks the climax of the International German Piano Award Festival and presents award-winning pianists Joseph Moog (Ludwigshafen) and Andrejs Osokins (Latvia). The artists will appear with a national and international orchestra comprising the strings of the Kremerata Baltica and the wind sector of the Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra under the direction of Boian Videnoff. On the programme are works by Modest Musorgsky, Robert Schumann, Anton Rubinstein and Franz Liszt.

The Dead Daisies

The all-star band consists of John Corabi (Mötley Crüe, The Scream), Doug Aldrich (Whitesnake, Dio), Marco Mendoza (Thin Lizzy,

Whitesnake), Brian Tichy (Ozzy Osbourne, Foreigner), and David Lowy (Red Phoenix, Mink). After a highly successful tour of several continents, the band will appear as a special guest at Musikmesse on all four days – and play at Zoom in Frankfurt on Friday, April 8th.

In addition to the headliners, there will be numerous other concerts in clubs, off-locations, universities, and churches. A full programme with details of all artists, acts and venues will be published in March. The Musikmesse Festival will take place in over 20 concert halls, clubs, discos, and event locations in Frankfurt. As well as the Frankfurt Fair and Exhibition Centre with its three stages (Agora Stage, Unplugged Stage, Beck's Open Stage), they include: Alte Oper, Die Fabrik, Festhalle Frankfurt, Gibson, Hafen 2, Institut für neue Medien (INM), Jahrhunderthalle, Liebfrauenkirche, Orange Peel, PTH Sankt Georgen, Saal Harmonie im Congresscenter, The Cave, Unionhalle, Zoom and Zukunftspavillon auf dem Rossmarkt.

A special festival ticket giving visitors cheaper or even free admission to the events of the four-day Musikmesse Festival will be available. The ticket – a festival wristband and a voucher booklet – is free of charge for Musikmesse visitors and can be collected from all information counters at the Exhibition Centre. Members of the public buying the festival ticket for €15 at the box office of one of the festival venues will receive a discount on the price of a Musikmesse admission ticket. There will be no advance sales of festival tickets or discounted individual tickets.

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New Store for Aberdeen, Scotland

There is still some positive news to be found amid the current spate of closures and shops going bust, with a new music retailer opening in Aberdeen.

RamJam Music, on the city's Crown Street, opened at the weekend but will initially be focused on pre-owned instruments and repairs. It is being run by Jamie Clifton who has worked in MI retail since 1994, formerly at Bruce Millers.

He said: "It will only be quality second hand equipment we'll be offering. All items will have been checked, restrung, cleaned, serviced, and come with a warranty. It allows customers to access quality instruments cheaper than usual if they were new – which in the current climate is what people tell us they are looking for.

"A lot of musicians prefer a guitar that has been played-in, loved, and has a bit of history and character. Acoustic guitars sound better when they have been played a while and with electric guitars some people prefer the rustic, road worn look and feel."

As well as selling instruments the team is offering instrument repairs and set ups, full servicing, drum re-skinning, and a free restringing service.

The shop also stocks a range of musical accessories, folk instruments, drum kits, and effects pedals.

"We're looking forward to seeing familiar faces that we remember from as far back as the early days in Bruce Miller's coming through the doors," Clifton added.

"We've found musicians tend to get very loyal to shops and individual staff sometimes – people grow to trust you. We've had a good reputation over the years and it's one we're hoping to maintain with old customers and build with new ones.

"It's tough out there in the music trade but we are doing something different here," he said. "Musically there's a lot of talent in Aberdeen and we look forward to seeing it come through our doors."



Music Dynamics closed all three of its stores.

Store Closures Across the U.K.

Ambitious West Country dealer Music Dynamics, has gone into administration with the loss of all three of its stores.

The firm had shops in Stroud, Bath, and opened a third in Cheltenham in December 2015. Owner, Andrew Grigg, said at the time that the opening was bucking the industry trend and it appears that the move may have over-stretched the business to the extent that it is now highly unlikely to survive.

Despite interest, no buyer for the business has come forward and there will be a sale of the firm's remaining stock shortly. Hazlewoods will have more information on that.

Another part of the business, Choraline, which produces rehearsal and learning tools for choral singers, has managed to find a buyer, but no further details were available.

The closure of Music Dynamics was the third notable UK retail casualty since the turn of the year.

Reading-based retailer DrumWright went into administration after almost 20 years in business. The drums and percussion specialist cited poor sales ahead of the Christmas period as one of the reasons behind its closure, with management and legal advisors concluding that it was in the best interests of creditors and suppliers to wind up the business.

Peterborough Music closed its doors at the end of February, after 30 years in business, blaming the rise of online competition and increasing property costs in the area as the key reasons behind its closure.



DrumWright closed shop after almost 20 years in business.

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New Venue for Combined BPM/ PRO Shows

DJ and audio shows BPM and PRO shows are combining at a new venue this year.

Organiser Marked Events has put the two events together to create BPM/PRO, a single event with two separate areas – DJ & Studio and Sound & Lighting. In previous years the two shows were held at the same venue but were separate.

The show is moving to the Birmingham NEC's Genting Arena, and the opening dates have also changed. The DJ & Studio hall will open for two days (Sunday, 11th September and Monday, 12th September), while the Sound & Lighting expo will be three days, with an additional day on Tuesday the 13th.

Event director, Mark Walsh, explained: "As the industry continues to define its routes to market and with the contraction of the retail sector, we really have seen where we fit into the exhibition calendar. By continuing to listen to the industry, we have carved out our own audience and really know where we are heading. Shifting the focus away from two show names and redefining by product sector makes our message far stronger, makes it easier for our exhibitors to choose where to exhibit and, for our visitors, provides a far more user-friendly experience."

This year also marks the tenth anniversary of BPM.

"Even from day one we have never been afraid to stick our necks out and challenge the way the industry thinks about events," said Walsh. "BPM has been a raging success and is one of the few shows globally that has grown and survived the recession. There is such a good feeling in the industry right now and I feel the changes we are implementing will offer a fresh show that appeals to our audiences."

Tickets for the event will be available beginning in May. www.visitbpm.co.uk

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Trade Regrets

Joe Hibbs, Mapex and SONOR artist relations manager, passed away in Los Angeles on February 8. Hibbs was a veteran of the drumming and MI community for decades starting in retail in Houston, Texas, in the 1970s. He moved on to Promark as their artist relations and sales manager in the early '80s and subsequently worked with TAMA, and Premier. In 2003, he was recruited by Mapex (KHS America) to head artist relations, product development, and the rebranding of Mapex. Hibbs was an integral part of the growth of the brand and artist roster, signing such artists as Chris Adler, Matt Halpern, Rashid Williams, and Sean Fuller. In 2015 Joe was awarded with the KHS America "Presidents Award" and took over Artist Relations for SONOR drums when KHS America acquired Hohner Inc.



"I can't begin to express the impact Joe's passing has had on our KHS America and Mapex family," said Tabor Stamper, president of KHS America. "When we first shared the tragic news with our team, it was like somehow all the air was pumped out of the building. It goes without saying that Joe was such an integral part of our family, but we also know that his family was much larger, literally spanning the globe. As the news reached those outside of KHSA we have been deluged with messages expressing shock, sorrow, fond memories,

and condolences. We will miss Joe every day – his dedication, his expertise in all things drums and above all, his upbeat attitude toward life and work. He approached everyone he met with a smile, a handshake, and a 'How ya doin' today?' We'll miss that most of all".

In late February, we received the following message from NAMM's Dan Del Fiorentino:

NAMM past president and longtime music retailer, **George Lukas**, passed away last month. George passed away on January 29, 2016, having dedicated his entire life and career to music!



George recalled, in great detail, when he was aboard a Navy ship at the end of World War II and sitting down to play a blue-painted Steinway upright piano (also known as the Steinway GI). Two sailors stood on either side of the piano with rope and knots to ensure George was able to play as the ship rocked back and forth. As the president of Lukas Pianos, George saw the need to keep the industry strong and united. He was an active member of the industry and became president of the NAMM Board of Directors from 1975-1977. Over the years, he has amassed a large collection of piano- and organ-related artifacts such as action demos, posters, and ads. In 2004, George donated his collection to the NAMM Resource Center.



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ON THE MOVE

St. Louis Music (SLM) has announced that **Adam MacBlane** has been appointed to the newly created position of communications director – Band & Orchestra.



In his new role, MacBlane will be overseeing the print and online presence of several SLM brands, and also play a key role in customer & artist relations, marketing, and advertising.

"We've been really lucky to work with Adam on a contractual basis since 2012," says Craig Denny, vice president – Band & Orchestra at St. Louis Music. "He's fantastic with people and has real interest and expertise in marketing, and we know as a communications director he'll be very effective."

Adam will coordinate with SLM project managers to drive marketing, advertising, artist relations, and customer relations for key SLM brands such as P. Mauriat Saxophones and Trumpets, Knilling Strings, E.K. Blessing Brass, and Tomasi Flutes. He will also manage the social media growth of each brand across multiple platforms.

MacBlane commented about his new position, "Joining the staff at St. Louis Music is a dream come true and a remarkable privilege for me. There are many aspects which make a company great, and I see the new roles within this position as a true sign of something special happening at St. Louis Music and especially for the community we service."

ADJ Group has announced that **Juan "JC" Faxas** has joined the company as audio product director.



Faxas will develop and expand ADJ's audio product lines to meet the needs of the

company's growing consumer base, with the goal of providing exceptional customer service and support.

"Since the company's beginning, ADJ Group has been a leader in developing and providing the highest quality of products for the DJ market." Says Toby Velazquez, president of ADJ Group of Companies. "With the addition of JC to our team, we will continue well into the future with the development of products that our customers are looking for by listening and responding to their needs. JC is a natural fit for ADJ as he has extensive knowledge not just with our products but the market and end-users as well," adds Velazquez.

JC Faxas has a long and lustrous career in the DJ market. In 1977, he started his own mobile DJ business performing at weddings and parties in the Los Angeles and Hollywood area. He quickly expanded his business to larger clubs through the late 80s, and continued to create music and produced his own dance records while also opening for some of the top dance acts of the day.

In 1992, Faxas started at the Covina Guitar Center store working his way to department manager. In 2007, he was promoted to assistant buyer at Guitar Center's corporate headquarters collaborating with manufacturers on product ideas that turned into some of the industry's top selling products.

Faxas notes, "I have known and used ADJ products for most of my career. I am delighted to be working with one of the leading companies in the business."

Janet Cosgrove has joined the accounting department of **Korg USA Inc.** as an accounts payable associate.



"Janet's experience, thoroughness and attention to detail will greatly benefit our vendor relationships," stated Diana Cecchini, CFO and VP of Finance for Korg USA Inc. Janet had previously worked as a shared service supervisor for Weight Watchers International and as a payroll specialist for Sleepy's.

In order to maintain the rapidly growing **Vandoren** Regional Artist (VRA) program, Vandoren has created a new full-time position, hiring bass clarinetist **Rebecca Scholldorf** as the VRA administrator. Since its launch in the summer of 2015, the Vandoren Regional Artist program has been a huge success with band directors and school music dealers across the country. As a result of this success, the program has more than doubled in size to include more than 30 regional artists nationwide.



"We recognized early on that in order to maintain the quick success and rapid growth of this program, it would require a dedicated staff member to tend to its daily requirements," commented Michael Fenoglio, Vandoren product specialist. "After getting to know Rebecca through her internship here at DANSR, we knew she would be the perfect person to keep this program on track and moving forward."



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Note From Mary

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The Best Music Education Advocacy Begins at Home

The NAMM Foundation's Best Communities for Music Education program not only fosters local support for school music programs but also helps NAMM retail members strengthen their relationships with the districts they serve and champion music education at home.

The Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) program recognizes U.S. school districts and schools that are committed to providing music education as part of the school curriculum; the program also provides tools that help increase visibility and support for music education. Participation in the BCME program, now in its 17th year, has grown yearly, and The NAMM Foundation will announce the 2016 Best Communities for Music Education in March 2016.

With overwhelming research tying music education to higher overall student success in school and in life, The NAMM Foundation is proud to commend these districts and schools that believe, as we do, that there is a vital link between do-rei-me and the ABC's.

The BCME survey gauges funding, participation, facilities and other factors that affect access to comprehensive music education. Once the responses are verified, The Music Research Institute at the University of Kansas then reviews the data. The 2016 designees will be invited to participate in the "What Makes Music Education Great in My School" student

video contest and will be eligible to be considered for guest artist residencies for their schools, along with a special SupportMusic community forum.

Partnering with your local schools, and encouraging them to take part in the Best Communities for Music Education survey, can strengthen your relationships within your community and help assure that all students have access to music education. Best of all, everyone comes out a hero!

I invite you to learn more about the Best Communities for Music Education program, as well as our many other music advocacy initiatives, at nammfoundation.org.

Sincerely,

Mary Luehrsen

**NAMM DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS,
AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NAMM FOUNDATION**

"As our school district has just undergone one of the largest mergers in the history of public education, this designation helped us protect the quality music programs and teachers in our community."

Dr. Dru Davison
Shelby County Schools
Memphis, Tenn.

"The BCME program is another tool we use to boost—and in some cases create—relationships with schools. The designation also helps attract media attention and remind the community of the value of making music."

Mark Despotakis
Progressive Music Center
McKeesport, Pa.

"Receiving the validation ... tells the community that we're doing our job, and they'll want to support programs that are good for their kids."

Brad Van Patten
Irvine Unified School District
Irvine, Calif.

Building Relationships Growing Community Pride

The Best Communities for Music Education benefits school districts and music retailers alike. By putting a spotlight on successful music programs around the United States, the program reinforces the importance of a complete education that includes music and the arts, and helps to foster school and community support.



1 Paul Bauer of Music and Arts helped present the Best Communities for Music Education Award to the Aptakistic-Tripp School District in Buffalo Grove, Illinois. Paul says, “Being able to serve as the presenter on behalf of NAMM just reinforced the value of music education to the students and helped to bring our organization, and my business, to the attention of all.”

2 Mitzi Meyer Phelan of Meyer Music in Kansas City, Missouri, was thrilled to learn she lives in one of the Best Communities for Music Education. “Having grown up around the arts, it’s very important to me that my kids grow up in a district with a strong music education program,” she says. Mitzi was honored to present Liberty School District representatives with this year’s BCME Award and believes the designation will provide her store with even more opportunities to collaborate with local schools.

3 Mark Despotakis of Progressive Music in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, has always been active in supporting his local school music programs, but says his district’s involvement in the BCME program has enabled him to create relationships with schools he wasn’t already serving. Mark believes the Best Communities designation—and the publicity it creates—has not only helped his community to gain a real sense of pride about their local schools, it also reminded them about the value of music making.

The NAMM Foundation is Here to Help

Visit the Foundation’s website, a hub for music education advocacy with ideas and research tools to help you champion music education at home. www.nammfoundation.org



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NECESSITY is the root of INVENTION

Nuvo Instrumental's Max Clissold

By Christian **Wissmuller**

With a goal of producing musical instruments that are more accessible for younger (physically smaller) players, Nuvo Instrumental is an emerging force in the quest to create more lifelong music-makers. Their beginner flutes – affordable, durable, and modular – provide children with the opportunity to enter the world of B&O far earlier than traditional instruments.

We recently spoke with company CEO Max Clissold about the company's expanding range of products, new distribution center in Boston, and how Nuvo can help MI retailers attract a whole new market.

For those who may be unfamiliar, can you briefly discuss the origins of Nuvo Instrumental? Who were the primary players and what was the catalyst behind the company's formation?

Max Clissold: After 40 years teaching clarinet and seeing kids struggle with the size and weight of a traditional B \flat clarinet, Graham

Lyons decided he needed an instrument more suitable for the job. In a classic example of "necessity being the root of invention," the Clarinéo was born. A smaller, lighter clarinet with tone holes and finger stretches to suit kids' hands, the Clarinéo provides a perfect start for a child as young as five years-old with ambitions to play clarinet. Now there's no need to wait until fifth grade to introduce a single reed instrument. The transition from Clarinéo to B \flat clarinet has been done by thousands of kids in the U.K. and Europe and it takes about a day to get used to the larger instrument.

In 2010 Graham and I teamed up to redesign the original instrument with a view to expanding the range and market for kids instruments globally. Nuvo was born.

How many are currently employed by Nuvo?

Nuvo now has a team of 18 dedicated employees globally. From production workers to graphic designers, production engineers, office staff, and musicians. We also have a diverse group of "ambassadors" lead by Dr. Cassandra Eisenreich who is our music education specialist based in Pittsburg. The Ambassadors are music teachers, performers, composers, and music education professors who have enthusiastically adopted our instruments in a classroom setting and are eagerly sharing their experiences.

What are the complete current product lines?

Since the origination of the Nuvo concept with the Clarinéo, we have continued to create new instruments that enhance the learning process and make music more accessible for kids in all communities. Our second instrument was the Nuvo jFlute. A low cost, lightweight, durable flute with a curved head joint which is easier for kids to play and less likely to get damaged during the process. We encourage kids to keep their Nuvo out of the case and practice at every opportunity. Next, with a focus on filling the gap between recorder and traditional band instruments we developed the DooD and TooT. These are recorder step-up instruments that introduce basic single reed (DooD) and flute skills (TooT) at an early age with low cost instruments designed for small hands. The DooD and TooT can use recorder music and can be introduced to play alongside recorders to create a more interesting ensemble while preparing kids for the next step to Clarinéo and jFlute.

At NAMM 2016, we were excited to launch the latest addition to the Nuvo family of instruments. The jSax is a mini saxophone in the key of C. It is fully chromatic over one and half octaves and is a lot of fun to play even for an accomplished amateur sax player. The jSax provides kids (who all want to play sax!) with access to a low cost instrument that will give them some important basic sax skills with an instrument that suits them as early as second grade. Kids just love playing it and our hope is that it will breed more sax players of the future who will be looking to purchase a real alto sax in a few years. From a parent's point of view it's a great way to test the waters before investing in a real sax when they are older. From a retailer's point of view, it's a great way to sell a recorder step-up instrument and retain kids interest in music until they are ready to play a real saxophone. Your Nuvo customers of today are your band instrument customers of tomorrow!

You recently opened a U.S. distribution office in Boston. Can you talk about that facility and what the goals are with respect to expanding Nuvo's retail reach in America?

After a few years working on setting up our global distribution network and expanding and refining our product range we decided this year we were ready to take the plunge and invest in the U.S.

market which provides exciting opportunities. We have a small team in the U.S. who will be attending music education shows to promote the use of Nuvo in schools. Our WindStars program is proving popular with elementary schools and opens up whole new opportunities for retailers to sell pre-band classroom sets to elementary schools and secure new customers for the future. While we will work directly with schools in the short term, our preference is to work through local music retailers who can establish the connections and work as our local distributor into the schools. We will maintain a good inventory in Boston, enabling us to respond quickly to orders and provide easy access to spares and technical support.

Are there any upcoming product introductions or other developments in the coming months that you'd like to share with our readers?

Over the coming months, Nuvo will be reaching out to music retailers who are actively working with schools in their community. We will continue to promote the use of Nuvo in elementary schools and any retailers interested in partnering with Nuvo to act as a local distributor are welcome to contact me directly. The Nuvo WindStars program is an elementary band concept using Nuvo instruments with music freely available from the website and iPad app at www.nuvo-windstars.com.

What are your expectations for 2016?

These are exciting times for Nuvo and we hope for the industry in general. With budgets being cut in schools the opportunity



for elementary schools or parents to save by purchasing low cost, low maintenance instruments is welcome. We hope this will keep kids engaged with music and produce a long-term boost for traditional instruments. It should also produce more advanced skills in kids graduating to high school band. It's important for retailers to understand that our instruments do not replace traditional instruments but boost sales of those in the future. Nuvo provides the stepping-stones to high school band and we are optimistic about the impact on the industry and more importantly on kids. The sentiment is summed up in the Nuvo tagline: More Kids, More Music, More Fun! **MMA**

Retailers interested in finding out more and obtaining a catalog and price list, can contact Max Clissold at max@nuvo-instrumental.com

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METAL HEALTH

By Christian **Wissmuller**

Tapping into the Hard Rock and Heavy Metal Market to Turn Profits up to 11

Heavy metal. Artists within the genre – and of its slightly more respected sibling, “hard rock” – have rarely been critical darlings. Metal and hard rock is music for the lower classes, the debauched, the unsophisticated. These aren’t the kinds of folks a storeowner necessarily courts the business of.

Or so goes the stereotype.

I’m going to draw a parallel here with Harley Davidson motorcycles. Think Brando in *The Wild One*, Sonny and the rest of the S.F. Hell’s Angels wreaking havoc at Altamont in ‘69, *Sons of Anarchy*, or any of countless other iconic “biker gang” representations – bad guys, right? Outlaws, criminals, hooligans.

The least expensive Harley in 2016 lists for just under \$7,000 with the top of the line model maxing out near \$30 Gs. My own friends who ride own beat-up old Kawasakis and Hondas. The only folks I personally know who drive Harley Davidsons are upper-tier executives and “captains of industry.”

What’s the point?

Just as Harley Davidson can charge crazy markup prices for their apparel (\$98.99 for “Harley Davidson sneakers,” whatever the hell that is) and paraphernalia because the customer base now includes well-groomed CEOs and investment bankers, MI retailers would do well (and many do) to recognize that the hard rock/heavy metal consumer isn’t necessarily some penniless pothead. Metal has been around since the late ‘60s and unless you believe

that every formerly teen-aged fan of Sabbath, Zeppelin, and the bands they spawned are now incarcerated or dead, simple math would lead one to acknowledge that there’s a hefty chunk of the “music fan” populace that’s made up of folks who like to listen to – and *play* – rock that’s loud, fast, obnoxious, aggressive, and all other things “metal.”

Metal and hard rock fans and players represent everything from budget-conscious beginners to legitimate “big money” – money that your store could be tapping into. And these musicians are some of the most passionate and obsessive out there, driven to emulate their idols. In seeking to mimic these heroes, most hard rock and metal guitarists and bassists are serious gear-heads. That means multiple amps and guitars, the requisite cables, picks, straps, and accessories to make everything work well together – oh, and effects pedals. These guys and gals *love* stompboxes and rackmount effects. All in all, it’s a lot of gear and someone is going to be selling it to these folks.

So, if you’re an MI dealer who stocks guitar and bass related gear, are you tapping into this market segment? If you’re not, should you maybe consider it?

We’re going to share some thoughts on this market segment from suppliers and retailers, so that you can be sure to stock the gear that might make your store the go-to spot for hard rockers in your town – and might make you some serious cash.

EXPERT OPINION

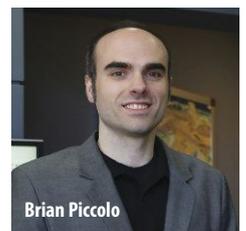
Blackstar has products in every price point that resonate with these types of players. Our Series One amps are trusted by some of the biggest hard rock and metal bands and provide the clarity, definition, versatility that’s needed. Blackstar’s patented ISF tone control technology allows players to find their individuality no matter how loud and heavy the sound.

What I love about the hard rock/metal consumer is that they are ageless and ever-evolving. There really is no “typical” consumer in this genre. You have very young kids just starting out playing metal in their bedrooms and garages, to older players with 40 years of professional experience completely rocking out on the weekends. The hard rock/metal genre has produced a huge number of loyal and eager players that love to discover new amps, sounds, and techniques.

Having a diverse offering of brands and models for the consumer to experience is key. Blackstar still believes strongly in the importance of hosting in-store meet and greets and clinics. These intimate events allow the consumers to have genuine conversation with artists and brand experts about products. Most importantly, retailers who support their customers with excellent service before, during, and after they decide on a new amp become a real partner to the musician.

Two major trends we are seeing is the downsizing of gear in both size and wattage and a shift to digital rack-mount

style products. Basically consumers are looking for smaller and more portable gear that achieves similar performance to the traditional 100W heads and 4x12 used in the past. Though they want their gear to be smaller for convenience, they still want that big and heavy sound that defines metal. The emergence of better sounding digital processing has made these type of products very popular again.



Brian Piccolo

- Brian Piccolo

Director, Guitar Brands Management, KORG USA



The hard rock and metal community, in my experience, generally views itself as a pretty small, tightly knit group. They have a few names they trust, and seem more prone to gear trends than others. Knowing those names, and knowing those trends is crucial. Knowing which producers of the big records use what gear, and which musicians are using what gear, will add to your credibility and strengthen the value of your recommendations, whether you carry that gear or not.

For example, if you don't sell a Kemper profiling amp in your shop, you *need* to know how it works if you're going to discuss it in comparison to a Line 6 Helix. Both are completely capable of doing what most folks need; they just use different methods to get there. There will always be the opinion of "better and worse" that you have to deal with, but the real issue is your ability to credibly triangulate.

Follow forums, follow these bands, and learn their gear decisions. Like it or not, that's what is going to direct the trends.

Accessorizing the sale comes back to knowing the gear.

Always sell a boost pedal – with an amp, preamp, modeler, anything. Modern metal tends to favor more articulate hi-gain tones, and the easiest way to achieve this with most amps (espe-

cially Mesa Rectifiers) is to back off on the preamp gain, and hit the front end harder with a clean boost.

Impulse responses are all the rage right now. Two Notes engineering makes a whole family of products that combine load boxes for silent recording, with the ability to load cab impulses. This is huge for silent stages, and recording.

Trends in modern metal are starting to favor more articulate, passive pickups in many cases. When selling a guitar, make sure you know the customer's end goals for the guitar. Are they going to swap out the pickups? If they're planning on a passive swap, avoid selling a guitar that's routed for soapbars or actives.

Today's market also has very successful metal bands playing comparably small stages, so "footprint reducing" gear is great: In-ear monitor systems; Loadboxes/Impulse Response hosts; amp modelers.



Arend Raby

- Arend Raby

Senior Sales Engineer, Sweetwater

The most obvious answer [regarding amplifiers preferred by these players] would be "high-gain," but I would add another crucial characteristic: "sonic definition" – especially in a band situation. Giving an amp high-gain is relatively simple, but doing so in such a way that the player using it cuts through when playing with a band is not. I've played amps that sound great by themselves, but get totally lost when used in a band – and it has nothing to do with volume either. It's being heard and also sitting well in the mix with the drums, bass, vocals and, possibly another guitar.



Nick Bowcott

Granted, I'm a tad biased, but to many folks – be they fans, critics or players – Marshall is synonymous with hard rock and heavy metal. Our logo has been omnipresent from the very start and also with the many sub-genres – from AC/DC to Accept; Lemmy to Led Zeppelin; Zakk Wylde to ZZ Top; Jimi Hendrix to Joe Satriani; Megadeth to Motörhead; to Yngwie Malmsteen; and Slayer to Slash! To that

end, a number of our products (including 4x12" cabs - walls of them!) fit the bill.

To quote the late, great Dimebag Darrell: "Heavy metal is like that damned mole you can't catch or kill – it may go underground for a while, but it *will* be back to mess up your yard!" The same is true of hard rock. If you go to a rock festival you'll literally see all walks-of-life and all ages – from 11 years old to 65 years young; and from ditch-diggers to doctors, dentists and CEOs. The difference between hard rock/heavy metal and some other genres? It's a lifestyle and has longevity. Rock is not a trend or fad. As has been sung: "You can't kill rock and roll."

Make sure you have an employee or two on the selling floor who really "gets it." Namely, someone who not only talks-the-talk but also walks-the-walk. Guitarists of any style are invariably passionate, learned and astute. They know their subject and can spot a "fake" a mile off. You also have to stock the right guitar, amps, and pedals, too.

Some trends I've noticed lately include: a definite upswing in sales of lower-wattage, all-valve heads and combos; More research (the worldwide web is a wonderful thing!) and also reliance on the opinions of peers they respect; Today's youth are more open to new technologies than ever before, but aren't easily duped by mere specs or subjective advertising clichés; tone and feel are still *very* important; Guitar playing is definitely aspirational and to that end, what gear a player's heroes use definitely influence trial and possible purchase. Another reason why a good salesperson needs "to know"; Invariably, the longer a player has been playing, the more simpler (and often "old school") his or her rig becomes; The playing standard has never been higher – thanks mainly to YouTube and all the other learning tools that exist today; Young players are often learning from and aspiring towards "older generation" guitar heroes. This truth is reflected in reader's polls and rock T-shirts sold at Target and Walmart! Sadly, as of right now, there is no "new" guitar hero who has had the impact of say a Hendrix, lommi, Slash, Van Halen, or Dime.

- Nick Bowcott

Director of Artist Relations & Marketing, Marshall USA



Kerry King and Jeff Hanneman (RIP) of Slayer, with their JCM800 2203 heads.

These customers are regular people, [my advice is]: just be straightforward and don't be a douche.



Bobby Beeman

Pointy guitars with humbuckers [are key products to stock]. There were a lot of 7-strings players a while back, but 8- and 9-string guitars are becoming more common. Other essential gear to stock includes high-gain amps, metal distortion pedals, and a noise gate. With all that gain, there is a lot of unwanted noise unless you gate it. And if you sell extended range guitars, stock strings for them, too.



Just have a variety of stuff in stock, and point out that you have it. That is the key for retail today. There are so many products available that you can't have them all of course, but try and hit at least the high spots.

- Bobby Beeman
Owner, Texas Guitar Ranch,
Irving, Texas

The amp has to have the perfect amount of saturation, tight focused low-end, and the attack has got to be fast. The primary thing is the tone has to be great.



Jon Romanowski

I think there are three factors when discussing metal guitars and basses – aesthetic, playability, and tone. If you can combine those three elements, then you've got a winner. People gravitate towards something that looks striking and then if it plays well and is made well, you're that much closer to a sale.

From my experience, retailers who successfully engage this particular market segment pick key brands and offer the customer strong selection – and a selection that gets refreshed a few times a year. It's also key to have salespeople who are knowledgeable about the products and the genre. Some people can find metal to be "scary," but these guys buy gear over and over and over and can be great, important customers to your business. But they know their gear, they know the music and they can smell a fake immediately. Once they do, you're dead to them. Also, being genuinely connected and present in the community, helping bands, being part of the local music scene helps give a music store legitimacy within the metal community.

- Jon Romanowski,
Director of Category Management -
High Performance Brands:
Jackson/Charvel & EVH, FMIC

ESP and our sub-brands of ESP E-II and LTD have been established as some of the most well-known and popular instruments for the metal/hard rock markets due to design decisions geared toward players of those genres. That means we offer smooth and comfortable neck shapes, heel joints that allow easy access to higher frets, fast fingerboards, and a modern and sleek aesthetic.



Chris Cannella

We've also developed a great reputation for quality, as guitars and basses in the realm of metal often take a lot of abuse. Finally, we (and our customers) benefit from the use of established third-party components, such as EMG pickups, Floyd Rose tremolo systems, and the like.



There has been this misconception that only people from age 16-25 are interested in metal. While that's still very much an important part of the ESP customer base, we also find that once someone gets into metal, it's rare that they abandon the style.

The metal community can spot a retailer or brand who is "faking it" very easily. Have a staff that is conversant in both current and classic metal artists that will allow them to better relate to the consumer and develop a good rapport. In stores, that means to also stock the proper pieces that are connected to influential musicians. No matter what your personal feelings are toward metal, be appreciative of the level of talent required to play it.

Customers are also more likely these days to have a specific brand/model of pickup they want in guitars, and sales can be supplemented by adding those pickups separately when they're not included in the guitar. Finally, unlike some other genres of music, metal players aren't only tied to one technology in amplification and recording. Some people remain die-hard traditionalists with tube amps and all-analog signal chains, but another big segment of the metal market (mostly the important younger generation) has found that they really prefer the tones and flexibility of using profiling/modeling amplifiers and software-based plug-ins.

- Chris Cannella
ESP Director of Artist Relations/
Product Management

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Getting in the **Mix** Live Sound Mixers In 2016

By Christian **Wissmuller**

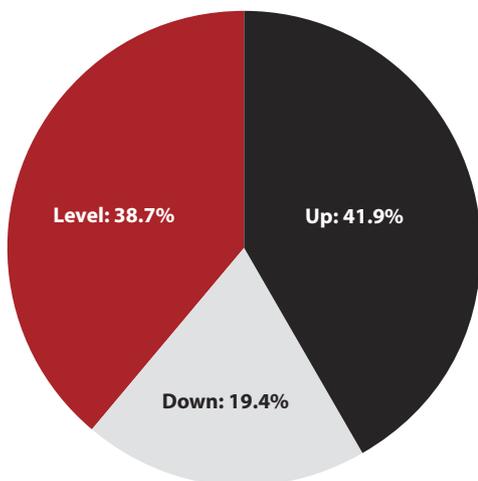
An essential piece of gear for any musician or venue hoping to stage performances for an actual “audience,” live sound mixers in 2016 are now available in a variety of configurations and at prices ranging from the historically affordable to sky’s-the-limit, upper-tier.

In reviewing the results of this month’s poll – sent out to just over 350 retailers – there are some clear trends that emerge. First and foremost, while there are those dealers (and customers!) who remain steadfast in their loyalty to analog consoles, it’s clear that digital mixers continue to lead the market. As Adam York of Tulsa, Oklahoma’s The Music Store puts it, “The digital mixers are definitely taking over. The prices keep getting lower and they are jam-packed with almost everything you need built in.” Many we heard

from also pointed to the evolution of remote, smartphone, or iPad controlled mixers as being a hot topic.

Another fairly consistent sentiment amongst participants in this survey is that customers for this type of gear really seem to inhabit the lower-end of the pricing spectrum. “Everybody is always on a budget!” bemoans The Music Trader’s (Tucker, Georgia) Paul Allison, with RJ Hood of Rick’s Music Shop (Manhattan, Kansas) adding, “People want something for nothing.” Certainly with the price points of serviceable digital mixers dropping to heretofore unheard of lows, newer and less “pro” customers are now part of the mix. Or, as Danny Wilson of Lion’s Roar Church Audio in Denham Springs, Louisiana puts it (rather succinctly): “People are cheap.” **MMR**

Compared to this time in 2015, sales of live sound mixers for your store are:



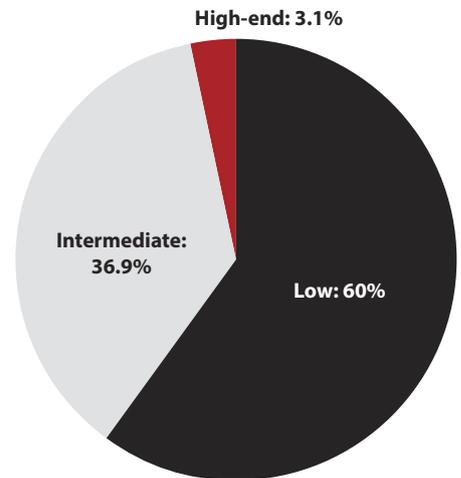
“There’s hardly anywhere for people to play anymore. It seems that people just don’t care anymore about a live venue. Go figure?”

RJ Hood
Rick’s Music Shop, Inc.
Manhattan, Kansas

“School orders are up, in-store sales are down.”

David St. John
Gard’s Music, LLC
Glendora, California

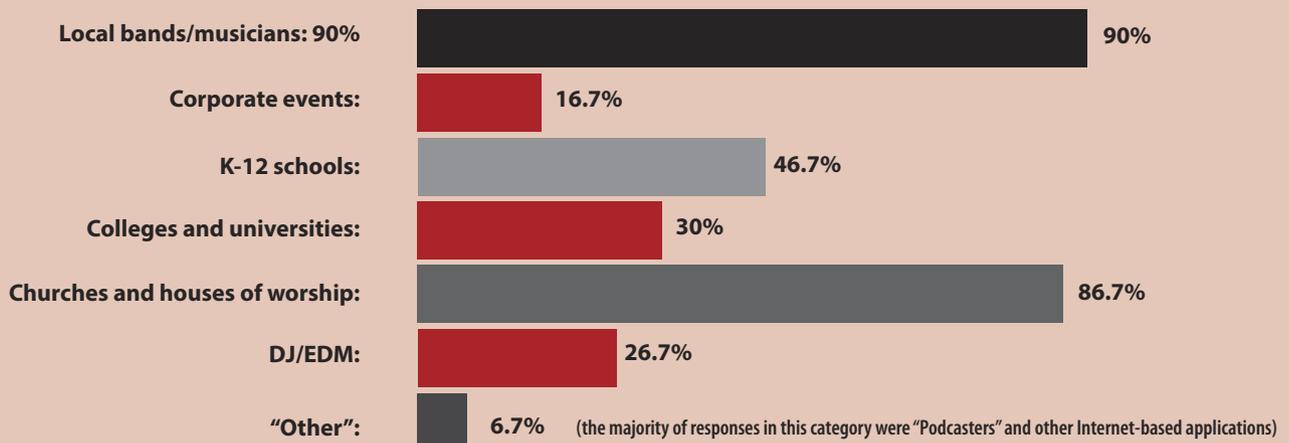
With respect to live sound mixers, what price points are doing best for your store?

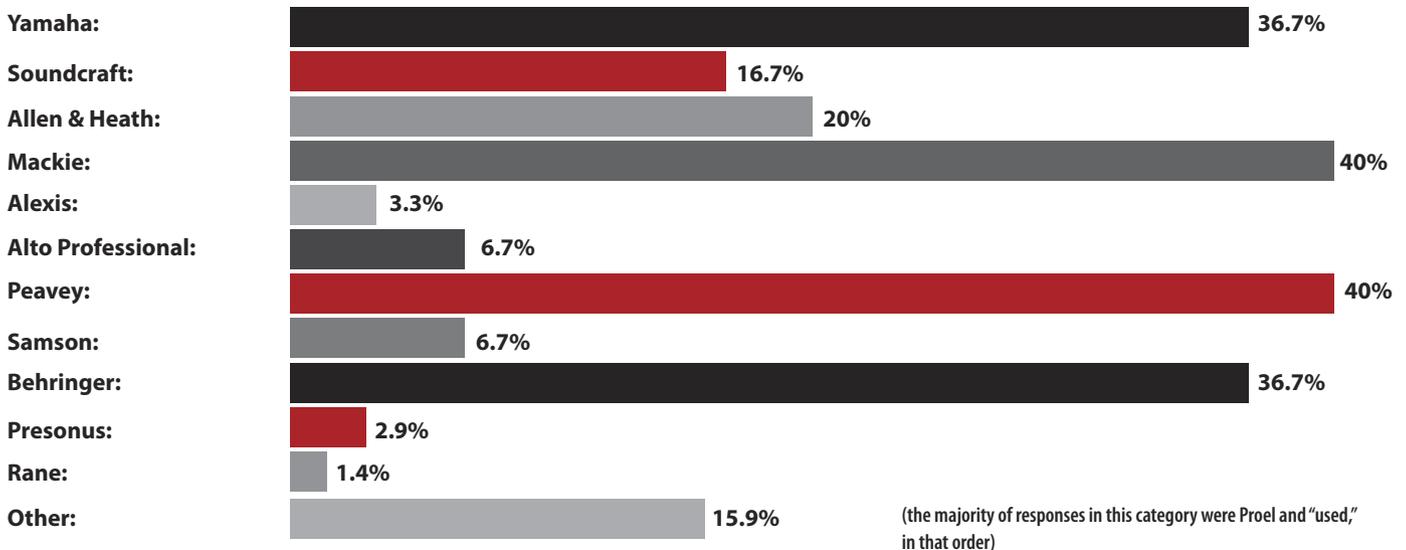


“The past year has been huge for small mixers. Customers are wanting to do recordings and podcasting.”

Chris Teesdale
Willis Music Company
Lexington, Kentucky

Can you describe the majority of customers in your store for this type of gear?



What brands of live sound mixers are the strongest sellers for your operation so far in 2016?**What larger trends have you been noticing in this particular market segment (popular feature sets, emerging tech, buyer demographics, popular add-on sales, et cetera)?**

"Clients are looking for digital, but at a low-end price and we can't compete with larger Internet prices!"

Mario Roacho
Extream Pro Audio
Calexico, California

"Digital mixers are the hot item."

Shane Hall
Uptown Music
Keizer, Oregon

"We're seeing some churches and groups moving back to analog, because they don't have a sound person on staff full time."

Dan Patterson
Roger's Music
Fort Payne, Alabama

"Peavey has begun shipping their new mixers with 'mid-morph'; (Mid-Morph improves the sound no matter which direction the knob is turned, pulling out harsh mid frequencies when the knob is cut and adding crispness when it is boosted) and Antares Auto-Tune pitch correction, a technology that can literally help anyone sing in key. Just a couple of new things to discuss when showing these units."

Kevin Hedley
Uncle Ike's Music
Dubuque, Iowa

"It's going digital. They generally don't sound as 'fat' as analog, but they are super convenient with effects, compression et cetera built in. Of course the Behringer x32 has become an industry standard with the Midas mic preamps."

Paul Allison
The Music Trader
Tucker, Georgia

"Digital mixers have dropped into the under \$1K price point, which is fueling the increase in sales."

Mike Kay
Ted Brown Music
Tacoma, Washington

"Live sound mixers are a fantastic opportunity to sell high-end speaker cables from CBI. It's important that customers think of your store as being their only knowledgeable choice. With so many stores not investing in Pro Audio gear, it gives good dealers a chance to stand out."

"We have noticed a significant push toward digital mixers, and it's nice that the price points have become more affordable."

Anthony Mantova
Mantova's Two Street Music
Eureka, California

"We're seeing more features for non technical people to wreak havoc on the audience's ears, such as carrying their iPad and 'adjusting' the sound everywhere."

Mitchell Cederquist
Music Box Studios, Inc.
Shelby Charter Township, Michigan

"Wireless units are much easier and affordable. The built-in effects are better on FX models. Easy set-ups with powered QSC speakers and it makes it almost too easy."

Jack Watkins
Aaron Avenue Records
Arlington, Texas

"Small iPad-controllable mixers seem to be hot."

Bob Cap
Advanced Audio, Inc.
Gilbert, Minnesota

"The digital mixers are definitely taking over. The prices keep getting lower and they are jam-packed with almost everything you need built in."

Adam York
The Music Store, Inc.
Tulsa, Oklahoma

"I'm sticking with the analog mixers. Few are qualified to properly manage the digital units...very dry sound."

Pete Van Alstyne
Pete's Music Center
Yuba City, California

A lot of things come in groups of three. There are three primary colors. The strongest geometric shape – a triangle – has three sides. A BLT has three ingredients – bacon, lettuce, and tomato. And Hear Technologies, the manufacturing group of parent company, Quantum Technologies, has just three full-time employees. “The three of us have spent most of our lives as sound engineers and musicians, so while designing our products, we are very mindful to the needs of sound engineers and musicians,” says Donnie Pitts, one of the three members of the Hear Technologies Development Team. “We have the backbone support of our parent company (which has around 100 employees) and its resources.” Hear Technologies shares a 52,000 sq. ft. space with their parent company, which has staging area for assembling large A/V racks and testing loads of gear. Office spaces and the stock/parts room surround the staging area, and adjacent to the parts room is the office and development space, the Hear Technologies lab.

The company started in the mid ‘90s. “While QTI was installing A/V systems in federal courthouses, they saw a need for specialized audio equipment for the federal judiciary,” explains Pitts. “A couple of system engineers got together and developed the first product—the interpreter box, for foreign language interpretation. Then came the C.R.A.I.S. (Court Room Audio Integration System). Being musicians themselves, the engineers knew of a few problems they could fix in the studio as well. So, in the late ‘90s, Hear Technologies branched into recording studios with the Talk Back 200, 600, and 600MV, designed for consoles that didn’t have that function built-in. It was in the early 2000s when the 8-channel Hear Back system made its way to market and became a staple in not only recording studios, but live sound as well. The 8-channel Hear Back system is still on the market and is still very popular even today.”

Hear Technologies is a small company, and Pitts believes they use that to their advantage. “Because we are small, our customers and dealer/distributor networks get more personal attention than with a

The Rule of 3

Donnie Pitts of Hear Technologies explains how a company so small – just three full-time employees – has such big plans for the world of pro audio.

By Paige **Tutt**

lot of larger corporations. Hear Technologies is focused on a small niche in the audio world: personal monitoring. This allows us to do what we do exceptionally well without trying to cover a large gamut of product lines. Most of all, we are willing to listen to what our customers want. Just suggest something—chances are we can make it happen.” Pitts says Hear Technologies prides itself on user experience. “We strongly believe the gear needs to be intuitive enough that someone who has never seen a personal monitor mixer can still walk right up, turn a knob, and understand how to use it without any training,” he says. “The interface has to be performance-friendly; if you’re playing an instrument, you might not have time to dig through a menu to turn down your ambient mic, or turn up the intercom, for example. We make the crucial controls immediately accessible, and the rest of the configuration and functionality no more than

one button-push away.” Pitts and the Hear Technologies team kept all of these things in mind when designing the Hear Back PRO. They asked their customers “what do you need; what they didn’t like about the original 8-channel system.” The majority of the responses said to keep the interface simple but add more flexibility and functionality. So that’s what they did. “The Hear Back PRO is made by engineers and musicians, for engineers and musicians,” Pitts says. “Each of us comes from a different area of the music industry, and we each bring a different perspective to the process. Our products are manufactured five minutes down the road from us in Madison, AL, in a facility that typically manufactures medical and aerospace products for NASA. They adhere to AS9100 regulations, which is far stricter than typical manufacturing facilities. We think that has made a big impact on the quality of our products!”

The 2016 Winter NAMM Show was, according to Pitts, one of the best shows Hear Technologies has attended since the release of the aforementioned Hear Back PRO. “We were hit with a lot of attention due to the release of our new digital I/O cards – ADAT, AES/EBU, Dante, and Waves’ SoundGrid,” he says. “At last year’s NAMM, we were only selling our system with Analog Input Cards,



**Hear Back PRO 16-Channel
Personal Monitor Mixer System**



Mix Back Mixer

but now people are noticing how easily we play with any format, and can match the high sampling rates (up to 192kHz) of the high-end digital consoles. Existing customers loved the ADAT Card for the backwards compatibility with the 8-channel Hear Back system; new customers loved the fact that they can choose their format by simply popping a Card in the Hub. Every situation or feature request someone hit us with, we already have or are working on a solution. And those questions help us prioritize what to work on next."

With the NAMM Show over and done, Pitts says Hear Technologies will be keeping its attention focused on the Hear Back PRO looking forward. "We have a lot of add-ons and accessories planned for the Hear Back PRO that will enhance the personal monitor mixing experience," he says. "We put an expansion card slot on the side of each PRO Mixer with the idea that we could provide a wide variety of supplemental products for the user to pick and choose from, to tailor it to the way they want to use their system. The engineer might have an expansion that gives him more control from FOH or the control room, while a musician might want to have some sort of insert at their mixer. The ultimate goal is to make the process as streamlined as it can possibly be." Two new products are just now coming out for the Hear Back PRO: a stage-box for mixer distribution, and an Intercom Footswitch. The stage box looks reminiscent of a Countryman Type 85 Direct Box, but is a metal housing for a single 8-port network card (like the one that comes in a PRO Hub). "This allows you to make one CAT6 run from your hub (out of the HBUS OUT port) to wherever you'd like to breakout to the mixers," explains Pitts. "This is especially handy for an FOH engineer to only have to run one CAT6 up to the stage as opposed to each mixer needing a home run directly from the hub. You can get the stage-box

with or without a network card populated, in case you'd like to use an existing card from your PRO Hub." On the other hand, there is the Intercom Footswitch, which is a passive A/B switch that eliminates the need for an extra mic just for intercom use. "Plug your vocal/instrument mic into the Footswitch, plug one Footswitch output into your PRO Mixer, and the second Footswitch output into your console or sound card," says Pitts. "This way you can use your mic as you normally would, until you press the switch, which will mute the signal to

the console, and automatically engage the intercom on your Mixer, letting your mic serve a dual purpose. When you let off the Footswitch, your mic will jump back to serving its normal function. This Footswitch can actually be used anywhere you'd need a momentary A/B switch, as it just uses standard XLRs."

Definitely keep an eye out for Hear Technologies in the future. Too often people underestimate the little guy, and it seems Hear Technologies, despite being small, is making a run with the big dogs. **MIMR**



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Personal Monitor Mix Systems – Part II

By Stephen **Fortner**



In Part I of this article, we looked at simple personal monitor mixing systems (PMMs for short) that let musicians hear themselves better. Now, we'll examine the plethora of modular, networkable, multi-component solutions that can handle large groups and venues but still place monitor mixing under the control of individual musicians.

A main selling point is that these systems are *scalable*. By adding as much or as little hardware as needed, they work for a wide range of applications: touring acts who don't want to be at the mercy of whatever monitor setup they may find at the next stop; nightclubs that have permanent front-of-house sound systems but don't want to install or staff a dedicated monitor mixer; and venues with regular house bands and possibly rotating guest musicians, such as houses of worship or TV show sets.

The same modular approach that makes these systems so flexible can also make the buyer's journey confusing. We could fill this issue with facts and features and still not do a proper "roundup" of all the brands and options, so instead we'll look at the essential principles that will help you ask your customers the right questions.

What Components? How Many?

The goal is the same as the one-box products we covered last month: To let each musician control his or her own monitor mix while affecting neither the house mix nor the monitor mixes of bandmates. But instead of one or two musicians having their own "more me" boxes or everyone sharing something like a JamHub, everybody has a mixing station that derives an individual mix from a common audio network.

Aviom was an early trailblazer in this area and they continue to be, and since, products including **Hear Technologies**, **Digital Audio Labs LiveMix**, **Movek MyMix**, the **Behringer P-16** line, and more have taken the usual leapfrog turns in terms of features and bang-for-buck. A modular PMM system often (but not always; bear with me) consists of:

- At least one *input module* that converts all the band's audio signals into digital information, then sends that information out over a computer-style Ethernet port. This connects to:
- A *distribution module* that has a bunch of Ethernet ports to split that information to a bunch of destinations. Which are:
- One or more *personal mixers* that let each band member control their own balance of sounds.
- Some brands offer a supplemental *output module* to send all signals somewhere further, such as a separate recording rig or centrally located bank of wireless in-ear transmitters.

Musician-controlled monitoring also shows up as part of full digital mixing systems that handle the whole show, such as the **Avid Venue**

or **Roland V-Mixer** families. However, our scope here is stand-alone systems that can piggyback on an existing—and often old-school—house PA.

Why did I say "but not always" a moment ago? Because not all brands require every type of component listed above. For example, **HEAR Technologies' Hear Back Hub** combines both multi-channel input and Ethernet distribution functions in a one-rackspace unit, as does **Behringer's Powerplay P-16I**. Some brands of personal mixers, such as the **Allen & Heath ME-1**, **Behringer P-16M**, and **Aviom's** now-discontinued **A-16 II**, might not need the distribution module at all. Instead, they let you daisy-chain personal mixing stations together. Generally, if a personal mixer has two Ethernet ports on the back, it can be daisy-chained; if it has only one, it wants to be fed from a distribution point. Another option to look out for is that some personal mixers, including the **A&H ME-1** and the **Movek MyMix**, can use off-the-shelf wired Ethernet switches for distribution. Be sure to check manufacturers' recommendations about this.

Beyond scalability and individual control, here are three more key benefits to call out. First, the use of common, inexpensive Ethernet cables (Cat-5e, as a rule) minimizes the "spaghetti factor" of moving audio everywhere it needs to be, as one cable can carry many channels of audio bi-directionally. Second, cable runs of up to 300 feet can be accomplished without signal degradation. Third, although these systems tend to focus on live sound, a recording studio could use one to put artist-adjustable headphone mixes in every tracking room.

Downstream vs. Upstream Input

Figuring out how and where sound goes into the system will form your customers' first impression of their new PMMs, long before they touch any bells or whistles on their personal mixers. There are two main ways to do this, each with consequences about what kind of input module you should recommend.

The most common and affordable PMM input modules are single-rackspace units with 16 or sometimes 24 analog ins that expect to see a line-level signal. They go *downstream* of the main mixer and thus keep things "business as usual" in terms of onstage setup: mics and instruments plug into the main mixer either directly or via a standard passive snake. The mixer then feeds an input module parked nearby. Ideally, the mixer should have pre-fader *direct outputs* for each of its input channels.





Aviom D800



dbx TR1616



Live Mix

Using direct outs means that one channel coming into the snake equals one channel going out over the PMM network, giving the musicians maximum monitoring flexibility. Some digital mixers can interface directly to a PMM via an optional output card, such as the one **Aviom** makes for **Yamaha** O1V96 and DM-series boards. Note also that with a line-level-only input module, the main mixer needs to come first anyway, as it will be providing any needed mic preamps.

For live gigging, the downstream setup is ideal for two sorts of customers: Venues that want to permanently integrate a PMM system, and bands that run their own front-of-house sound—think wedding and corporate-casual bands that tote their P.A. to hotel ballrooms, often handling sound from stage-side to keep gear and cables away from foot traffic.

It's less ideal for touring bands who are faced with an ever-changing lineup of house P.A. gear and sound personnel. Even if they're nerds enough to carry every type of adaptor cable known, shoehorning their input module into a crowded mixing booth during a too-brief sound check just may not fly. Here, the solution is to get everything into the PMM *upstream* of the main P.A.

A real standout for this application is the **Movek MyMix** line, because its personal mixers do double duty as mini input modules—with mic preamps! Each MyMix has two mic/line ins on XLR combo jacks, letting the musician plug right into the audio network. Each also has stereo line-level outs, which can then act as “thrus” for feeding the main P.A., or route the monitor mix into a powered floor wedge or wireless in-ear transmitter. Via the **Power8** distribution module, all the Ethernet cables that carry the monitor mixes can reside onstage, making for a very self-contained solution. The MyMixes are also great for a rehearsal room where the PMM system is used *instead* of a P.A.

Otherwise, the “upstream” approach gets either higher-end or more kludgy. On the kludgy side, bands can and do plop a line-level input module next to the stage snake and use whatever outputs they have on hand to get signals into both: aux sends from the keyboard submixer, “thru” outs from the guitar and bass amp heads or direct boxes, and so on. Mics will still need preamps, lest they be heard only in the house but not in the PMM system—so by now we're talking about a lot of extra plumbing onstage.

In the higher-end direction, there are input modules that include mic preamps. The **Aviom AN-16/i-M** and **dbx TR-1616** are two popular 16-channel examples. Both also pack 16 XLR outs for splitting everything to the house. These invariably cost more than line-level-only input modules, but they're the bulletproof way for a band to take charge of its monitoring situation with virtually zero impact on connections and house workflow from the stage snake on down.

Personal Mixer Features

The personal mixer is the part of the system each musician interacts with most. At minimum, it's a box with a volume knob, channel selection, a headphone jack, and an accessory for clamping onto a

mic stand. Basic operation is the same across the entire brandscape: Select a channel and crank the knob up or down to adjust that signal in your monitor mix. Again, you can't overemphasize the Big Idea that this won't affect what *anyone* else hears.

User interfaces and convenience features is where personal mixers differentiate. Things manufacturers talk about and customers ask about include:

- Saving and recall of mix presets, a time-saver for when the band returns to a venue.
- Additional (line-level) output for feeding powered speakers or wireless in-ears.
- Stereo panning of signals in the monitor mix.
- Banks or groups to expand the number of adjustable mix channels.
- High-res display (sometimes a touchscreen) and onscreen naming of mix channels.
- Onboard effects for the monitor mix. (Great for vocalists who want reverb.)
- Power over Ethernet to avoid “wall wart” AC supply.
- Onboard recording to an SD card for capturing demos.

A couple of standouts we haven't mentioned yet are Digital Audio Labs' **LiveMix CS-Duo**, which can provide two musicians' mixes with one unit, making it a good candidate for placement in a background vocal or horn section. Then, the **PM-16** from **Elite Core Audio** has separate volume and pan knobs for every channel but no display or menus, trading programmability for easy-to-learn “analog” operation.

The Sky's the Limit... But Stay Down to Earth

We've only scratched the surface of how Ethernet-based PMMs can be configured, and the scalability can range from the corner coffee house to a globally watched awards show. Multiple input modules can be used. What I've called “downstream” and “upstream” approaches can be combined. Some brands offer optional digital I/O for formats such as ADAT, MADI, and Dante, for interfacing with venues' digital mixers or the broadcast truck parked outside. A large enough and properly configured system can handle channel counts in the hundreds.

Chances are, though, that the needs of the customer who walks into the music store are less grandiose. For getting started, many manufacturers offer bundles of an input module, network distributor, and several personal mixers as a single-SKU product.

A final thing both customers and retailers can love is that there's a good deal of compatibility between brands. To take full advantage of features, it's of course best to stick with one branded ecosystem of input, network distribution, and personal mixers. In the real world, musicians hop from band to band, and they may have invested in their own personal mixer that matches the system their old band had, whereas their new band uses a different one. So when considering a line, always ask “Do your personal mixers work with any other companies' stuff?”

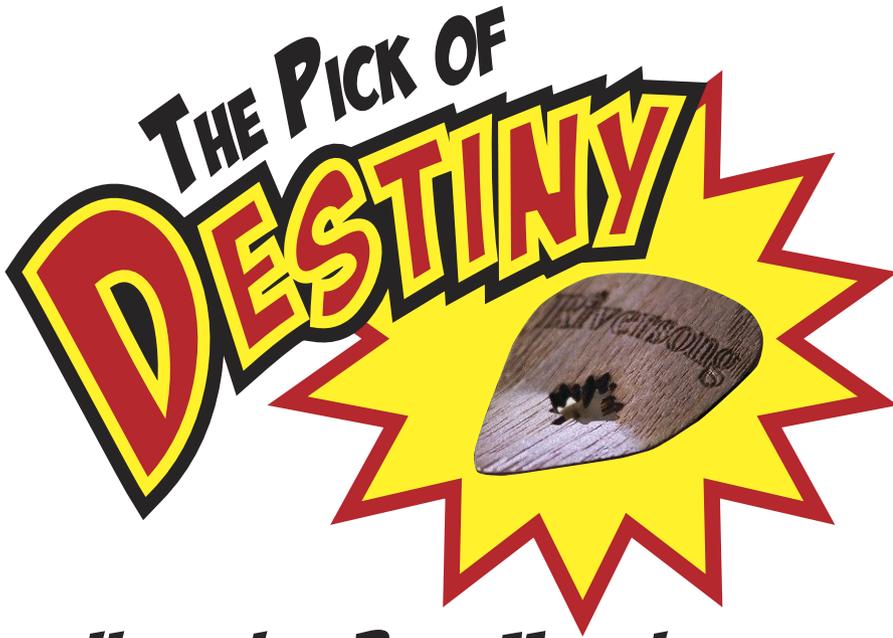
Bottom line: Any pro audio technology this flexible and configurable is bound to have a learning curve, but in the case of networked PMMs, the rewards are huge. Educate yourself so you can educate your customers about buying once and buying right. **MMA**



Hear Back Mixer



Roland V-Mixer family



OR HOW A JACK BLACK MOVIE INSPIRED THE CREATION OF RIVERSONG GUITARS

By Paige Tutt

The year is 2006. The film *Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny* is released in theatres, and Mike Miltimore goes to see it. He realizes he must make guitars. Ten years later, Miltimore reflects on the origins of Riversong Guitars, discusses new innovations and product introductions, as well as plans for the future.

What if I told you that the key to success in MI today could be bought for the measly price of \$2.99? You'd think I was lying of course. But Mike Miltimore, CEO of Riversong Guitars, will echo my sentiment. Two dollars and ninety-nine cents – That's how much it costs to stream the film *Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny* online. You're probably wondering to yourself why you'd possibly need to watch a film starring Jack Black and Kyle Gass in order to succeed in MI. A younger Mike Miltimore and luthier Mike Trelenberg in the year 2006 watched that film for the first time. "We went to see that and we were like 'we have to build guitars!' So we started to build electric guitars and then got into acoustics in a big way," Miltimore recalls.

Miltimore's musical journey began in the 1970s. His father opened a music store, and through the '70s and '80s Mike worked there part-time. "In the golden years of the '80s, I was working in the shop and helping my dad out, learning the craft of becoming a guitar repair tech," he says. "We would build custom electric guitars, which back then meant buying the body, neck, and

the electronics and putting it all together. In 2006-2007 we expanded and opened up a second location, things were hopping for us as a music store. Because of that expansion I needed to hire another guitar tech, so I hired a guy to work with us who was a luthier." You all know what happened next. 2006 was the year *Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny* was released, and from that moment on Miltimore knew his true life's purpose.

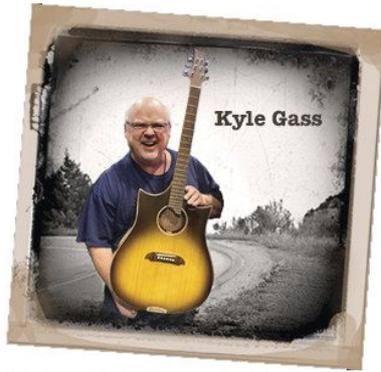
Riversong Guitars is a humble operation, with a staff of thirty dedicated employees working out of the facilities in British Columbia, Canada. "I kind of feel like the little guy swimming with the big guys," Mike says, laughing. "We're not set up to make 500 guitars a day. We're really nimble. We make one guitar at a time, which is really important. As we come up with better ideas or encounter issues in production, it's not like 500 units are bad. We build one at a time and are able to be very nimble." The first model Miltimore brought out in 2012/2013 happens to be one of the most popular models for them to date – the Tradition Canadian Special Edition. "It's made from 100 percent domestic woods," he says. "It has a really cool com-

bination of Chillakwian Maple and Sitka Spruce for the top, for the tonewoods, and maple neck and a walnut fretboard. To me, it's just voiced really well... Currently, our most popular guitar, the one that's getting all the hits on our website, that everyone's asking about is the Tradition Two Performer. We took everything we know in our boutique shop like the comfort cuts for your arm and put it all onto this guitar – super comfortable, and plays amazing."

If you were in attendance at the 2016 Winter NAMM Show in sunny Anaheim, California, this past January, you may have seen those aforementioned models, among a few other new introductions Riversong had up their sleeve. "We released a bunch of new guitars, our Grand Auditorium that we just came out with and the Special Edition Tradition 2," explains Miltimore. "We just came out with a ukulele as well. We're a different kind of company. I don't do things based on what I think is going to sell; I do things based on what I'm really passionate about. And I wanted to make a ukulele. In our music store we stock a large number of ukes and they all feel, for lack of a better word, toy-like. They're ukes made by ukulele manufacturers, and I said 'what would a ukulele look like if a guitar manufacturer took everything they know about building guitars and put it into ukuleles?' That's what I did with mine. It's got an adjustable neck, free-floating top, it even looks like our special edition guitars. It's loud, sounds amazing, and more importantly, it feels great." Riversong also developed and launched a new collection of composite guitar picks. "Our guitar picks were developed because we had a lot of offcuts from our guitars and in particular Chillakwian Maple, which is a wood that comes from British Columbia here," he says. "It's like a flamed maple. We were making pick-shaped jewelry for one of the office girls here and we thought it'd be a great use of scrap wood. I started playing on them and realized they have actually great tone and feel, problem was we couldn't get them thin enough so we developed these new composites – wood mixed with other materials – which allows us to get really thin picks but still have the advantage of the tone of the wood and stiffness of the wood. It's quite a different feel than a plastic pick, and doesn't ruin the environment. (He laughs). There are 10 different models of these picks, which we just expanded up. Our newest one is a 5-layer .46 mm pick – super thin and amazingly strong."

Riversong Guitars really prides itself on pushing the envelope, but staying true to its

root. "People don't really consider me a traditionalist with what we do, but I really consider myself a traditionalist," Miltimore says. "I'm just trying to squeeze as much tone out of an acoustic guitar as I can and fix the problems we've been seeing in the industry for far too long. I'm not trying to build something really crazy – just trying to make a great, great guitar." As far as fixing problems that have been seen



Kyle Gass with the Riversong Tradition Canadian.

by people in the industry for far too long, the Riversong guitar neck is one way Miltimore and the Riversong staff have found to perfect the instrument. "About ten years ago, we started building custom guitars in the back of our family's music store and I hired a luthier to work with me," he says. "We were building guitars, selling them, and we became quite popular. And during the process I kept on seeing the same problems, and we kept doing the same things that were driving me crazy about all the things we saw in our music store for example 14th-fret humps, inconsistencies with tone up and down the neck, and strength issues where the neck would bend into the body because of strength tension. I started to experiment with a new structure. What I wanted to invent was a system that could pull back the string tension and allow the top and body to vibrate, so after many experiments I came up with the system where the neck runs all the way through the inside of the guitar. And that string tension can then go across the soundboard between the neck and the bridge. It's a much stronger structure, therefore we can lighten up on the bracing and make it resonate better... With this we realized we could eliminate the 14th-fret hump from happening by making the neck solid down to the last fret, instead of the fretboard laying on top of the body. We also realized we can move the neck in and out of the body to achieve perfect intonation."

When you ask Mike Miltimore what's next for Riversong moving forward, you can hear him smiling. "My plan is to take over the world one guitar at a time," he says. Riversong Guitars has its eyes set toward expansion. Their new factory is capable of producing 440 guitars a month. Consistency and quality are also very high up on the list of important things for Riversong. "I am probably the luckiest guy in this industry," says Mike. "I've realized that just because you create something that's great doesn't

mean you're going to get as far as we've gotten in these short three years that we've been doing it. I'm thankful for all the luck that I've had, and this great team. I feel like I'm really that small town story of the boy that thought he could, that created something and rallied all his friends around him to do it and they're working and people are liking it. I feel like I'm really lucky to have found my spot in the music industry. Our dealers are super supportive. My vow to our dealers and sup-



The Tradition Canadian Special Edition, a top seller.

porters is to keep working on our guitars, making them better, and support them any way that I can."

In this industry, everyone has their aha! moment where they discover what it is in life that they really truly want to do. For Mike Miltimore, building guitars really is his "pick of destiny," if you will. And Riversong Guitars just signed Kyle Gass as an endorsed artist! Talk about taking things full circle. **MIMR**

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ROVNER Products



George and Lynn Reeder

From the Dark, Small Things Turned Big in the World of Woodwinds

By Charlene **Arsenault**

A ligature is no small thing. It's the company motto, and the initial building block that started Rovner Products, a highly innovative company making accessories for woodwinds that is internationally known for developing its first groundbreaking, patented textile ligature 42 years ago.

In 1974, Phil Rovner developed a ligature in hopes that it would improve the sound of his saxophone. Dubbing it the "Dark," this little-but-big product ultimately became one of the most widely recommended ligatures in the world.

"You've got an engineering head who is a musician and he says, 'You know, this thing isn't working as well as it could,'" says George Reeder, president and owner of Rovner Products since 2014 with his wife Lynn Reeder.

Rovner, who worked in the fields of microwave, mechanical, and electrical engineering, also studied music at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore. He combined the fields of expertise and continued to expand on the Dark, developing more high-performance ligatures. But it was a slow evolution.

Initially, Rovner worked out of his home, marketing his product to the clarinet community, which is considered a "conservative community" in the world of musical merchandise. The company did not shoot like a rocket from Rovner's Maryland basement.

"It was slow to grow," says George, "but eventually after a couple of years, he thought, 'Hey, this could be a company.' I would say the first ten years it was in his basement, then moved up to the living room, and ultimately into a real industrial space 32 years ago."

Expanding from the home, the first Rovner facility, located in Timonium, Maryland, spanned 1,800 square feet, and eventually grew to occupy 5,400 square feet. Rovner designed and added several mouthpieces for the saxophone and clarinet over the years, with the most recent being the performance-enhancing

product, the Rectangular Bore Clarinet Barrel.

"The accessory takes a novel approach to improving intonation," says Lynn. "It's made of durable and stable polymer, and offers an affordable option for the student clarinetist, a market that Phil felt was underserved and for whom the barrel's features are especially supportive. Available in seven sizes for optimum tuning, it is also an excellent option for the woodwind doubler, who is often flat when switching from sax to clarinet."

Rovner hired George, for the first time, in 1995 as his general manager, pulling him away from a 19-year career at Xerox Corporation. He hoped George could take on administrative duties so that Rovner could focus on bringing a new mouthpiece design to the market. But, it proved still too early for the company to embrace a growth spurt of that degree. He wasn't able to support George, so the position lasted only a year.

They stayed in touch over the years, and in 2008, Rovner approached George again with a strong desire to bring new products to the market.

"That's when things once again really began to take off for the company," says George.

That year, Rovner responded to an ailing economy by developing the Star Series ligature, the first of five patented Next Generation Rovner models. The company made changes to the assembly process, which allowed for a more affordable ligature. The Star Series then inspired the Legacy, followed by the Platinum, and in turn the Versa-X, and then the Van Gogh; all models featured the patented Resonating Ribs™ and Mass-Loaded™ technology.

"Our classic models have a strong grip on the woodwind player's psyche," George says, "but I believe our Next Generation models are the ligatures of the future because they take a targeted instead of generalized approach in supporting the player and solving problems."

Rovner had relied almost solely on word-of-mouth marketing, but knew that these newer models would need a stronger push in the market. He hired the Reederes as subcontractors to take care of this role, and they developed a successful advertising campaign. They also became the face of the company after attending countless trade and educator shows. Perhaps the economy was ailing, but Rovner Products managed to experience growth.

In 2014, Rovner retired and officially sold the company to the Reederes.

"I've had multiple lives," says George, "from working as the general manager at a precision sheet metal company, then owner of a high-end construction company, and before that I was a field engineer for a mainframe computer company, and then Xerox. I've been in the corporate world, and an entrepreneur. And now I'm home as an entrepreneur in the world of music."

Rovner is still a fixture at the company he started, and actively develops new products and "continues to be a resource for improving the existing line," notes Lynn. Rovner and George are also side-by-side in one of several big bands in which they are either members or subs.

The company employs nearly 20 full and part-time employees, and still sits in the same location it has for the past 32 years.

This year, Rovner Products is celebrating the 42nd anniversary of the Rovner Dark, the original Rovner ligature. Four of its products have been around for more than 34 years. Ninety-seven percent of Rovner products are sold through domestic and international distributors, with the remainder sold to the occasional dealer who wants to deal direct, and to the end user via the Rovner website.



The ligature line now includes nine patented models, with each bringing a unique approach to the playing experience, and “each creating a synergistic relationship between the ligature, reed, mouthpiece, and player.” These models are available in from nine to 23 sizes. With the Rectangular Bore Clarinet Barrel, along with another product called Boost Juice, that makes 11.

Until the recent NAMM show, Rovner Products’ newest creation was under wraps. Just released at the event in January, the company debuted a blue ocean product called the Mouthpiece Manager. As the name would imply, it’s designed to organize mouthpieces. Durable, washable, and compact, retailers can stack Mouthpiece Managers, so they are easy to store. The organizer holds 12 mouthpieces, sells for \$24.95, and like all Rovner Products is made in the USA.

George says that the company’s products are often inspired by the musicians to which they cater. Rovner Products attends numerous trade shows throughout the year, and welcomes direct feedback from the consumer and other companies.

“The biggest thing we hear is how much difference a ligature can make, especially when people aren’t accustomed to it,” he observes. “We received a call from a well-known musician in the L.A. area recently. He was never a gear guy, and always used what he had started playing with. Someone turned him on to our ligature recently, and he said he couldn’t believe the difference. People love our products because they are brand loyal to us, because our products work, because we’re made in the United States, we’re affordable, high quality, and our products last a long time.”

Between November and April, the Reeders have ten shows on the books to attend, and keep a dynamic schedule. Alex Hesson, the Reeders’ son, was hired in 2014 to fill a newly formed technologist role. He’s involved in production, human resources, trade show staff, and more.

“I believe our Next Generation models are the ligatures of the future.”

– George Reeder

“The implementation of the new technology increased efficiency, further refined the quality of the products and enabled Rovner Products to deliver top-notch customer service to our network of distributors,” said Lynn. “The company is scalable, sustainable, and more stable than ever. Customer satisfaction is at the center of every change that has been implemented, and gratitude for the decades of excellent customer relationships that have contributed to the Rovner success story is what propels the company forward.”

Invariably, Lynn explains, at every show the Reeders attend, a player walks up to them and pulls a tattered, old Dark

out of his pocket, saying he’s been using it since the 1980s and, “isn’t the least bit inclined to replace it with a different model.”

“There are extraordinarily talented celebrity players who will not budge from our classic Dark,” says Lynn, “which is one of our least expensive models but which provides them with the warm sound they are looking for. And there are kids who want the Platinum, no matter the cost, just because it’s so pretty. Fortunately, the performance is well worth the price tag. We believe we have a model that can satisfy the needs of most any player, at any level of experience, and in any musical genre.” **MMP**

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Quinlan & Fabish

People Make the Difference



Doc Severinsen with George Quinlan, Jr. in November of 2015.

George Quinlan Jr. on the Importance of Earning Strong Customer Relationships

By Christian **Wissmuller**

Back in 1959, fellow music educators George Quinlan and Tom Fabish joined forces and launched Quinlan & Fabish. The goal was to assist and guide Chicago area school music programs and students and, nearly 60 years later, that fundamental philosophy remains the business' defining characteristic.

Quinlan bought out Tom Fabish's share in the retail operation in the late '60s and by the end of the next decade, son George Quinlan, Jr. was a full-time employee. Now fielding eight stores throughout three Midwest states, Quinlan & Fabish is a B&O retail powerhouse – respected by suppliers, fellow dealers, and consumers for both effective business practices and a genuine passion for music education and customer service.

George Quinlan, Sr. passed away in 2013 – mere months after becoming co-recipient of *MMR's* Don Johnson In-

dustry Service Award, along with his son – but the younger George has continued the tradition of excellence begun by his father. The company CEO (and still active rep!) recently took the time to speak with *MMR* about his time with the family business and how the organization continues to serve its communities.

Can you talk about your own beginnings at Quinlan & Fabish?

George Quinlan Jr.: I joined my dad at QF full-time in 1979. We still have a couple folks in the company with longer tenure than me! After college, I had gathered some industry experience working at The Selmer Company in Elkhart and G. Leblanc Corp in Kenosha in their customer service and marketing departments. I gained a lot of great experience and made many lifelong connections with folks in the industry, too.

Can you talk about how your position within the company has evolved over the years?

I started as one of two school reps in the company working from a single store in Chicago. Since we had a pretty lean crew, we had the flexibility to try new things, learn valuable skills from travelling manufacture reps and our “elders,” manage inventory and purchasing, and share these ideas with each other. I leaned toward marketing and sales, trying to establish our company as a trusted partner in music education - a motto we still use today (“A Trusted Partner in Music Education since 1959”). As the company grew, my position evolved gradually but, I still visit several schools each week as a school rep. I believe “staying close to the customer” is vital in a business like ours that is dependent on relationship-based support from band & orchestra directors.

How many are currently employed by Quinlan & Fabish?

We have approximately 130 full-time staff, but the seasonal and part-time staff expands considerably during the peak seasons – spring and fall.

Can you describe the facilities at the eight stores?

We have a broad range of facility sizes (2,000-50,000 square feet) depending on the purpose of the location. The smaller stores are located in smaller towns and the surrounding schools in those regions, typically are served by a single school rep. By contrast, our largest facility in the south western suburban Chicago area is home to 10 reps, a large percentage of our rental instrument inventory, a full-service (brass/woodwind/string) repair center with 25 technicians, accounting, marketing & administration, and most of our support services.

What are some of the key product lines you carry?

We proudly represent many of the leading manufacturers of band & orchestra instruments – most of the major

brands, of course, but a few niche products and brands, too.

Would you talk more about your relationship with area schools and districts? What advice would you give to other, smaller MI retail operations looking to build and maintain connections with schools in their own towns?

Successful school music retailers realize their success is primarily dependent on the strength of the relationships they establish and nourish with local band & orchestra directors. You cannot buy your way, threaten your way, or trick your way into a trusting relationship. You can only do it the hard way – *earn it*. Be there and be supportive. Start with one teacher who is willing to give you a chance, earn that person's trust, and work on gradually building a network of support based on the reliability and integrity you've established with that first customer. Note: We continue to service almost all the same school districts that we had in 1979 – the teachers have retired, but the relationship, when properly managed, continues.

Let's talk about your lesson program. Do all eight locations offer instruction?

We offer lessons in five locations. Our most important consideration is the quality of the instructor. Our goal is never to simply "fill the rooms." We believe that the lesson program should enhance our reputation for quality and service, so we are very selective about who teaches at QF.

Similar question, but with respect to repairs: How many on-staff technicians are there and how many instruments get serviced per year?

We have approximately 50 repair servicemen. Obviously, with a staff this large, our crew produces tens of thousands of individual instrument repairs each year. About 40 percent of their time is spent on school & retail customer repairs and the remainder on instruments requiring preparation and set up for rental and those customer rental instrument repairs covered under our maintenance plans.

To what extent do you feel that offering these "value-added services" sets Quinlan & Fabish apart from the competition?

We work in highly competitive markets with many other good school music retailers. We believe it's not *what* you do...



it's *how* you do it. All our competitors offer repair service, loaner instruments, school music delivery and pick-up via reps, et cetera. So, it's not the services that set us apart, it's the attention to detail, concern for customer satisfaction, and pride in knowing that schools rely on us for dependability and quality. We cannot let them down. People make the difference and we believe we have the best staff of reps, techs, and support staff in the industry.

How important is social media to your business?

We employ a limited amount of social media to market our company. We try to find a unique twist whenever possible. For example, for the last several years, in April we run a contest on Facebook pri-

marily for band & orchestra directors to recognize the importance of their school rep. We ask them to complete the phrase: "I like my QF rep because..."

We have received very creative entries ranging from poems, songs, videos, et cetera all extolling the virtues of our school reps. (What a great confidence builder for any parents visiting our FB page!). The winners receive tandem custom-made bobble heads of themselves with their QF rep (they are hilarious). The rep also receives a set and one set goes into the QF Bobblehead Hall of Fame!

That sounds like a great social media campaign. Looking at the current market, what are your observations on the state of B&O in 2016?

The B&O market is always steady – often despite the economy. A good year might be up five percent and a bad year down five percent. If we continue to meet the expectations of our customers, we believe we can continue to grow at a nice, steady pace. We occasionally look for opportunities that stray – ever so slightly – from our focus. A few months ago, we opened a flute specialty shop, Windy City Flutes, in our Burr Ridge location to address professional level flutes for flute teachers and their advanced students. **MMA**

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Four Truths of a Retail Business, or 'If I Had Known Then What I Know Now'

By Menzie Pittman

In a seminar we did together on this topic, Greg Billings from the Steinway Piano Gallery in Naples, Florida said, "If I had known then what I know now, I would have embraced my early failures rather than trying to excuse them." Greg also shared that it is important to make sure to "engage in relationship building." I couldn't agree more.

One benefit our industry provides dealers is the opportunity for comradery and sharing best practices. Some of my best relationships have bloomed from dinner conversations at the NAMM Top 100 held at the summer NAMM show.

Here are some reflections I have gleaned from dealers I have met along the way:

1. The most important thing I know now...

is that the music industry – no matter how many changes and nuances we endure – remains passionate, innovative, creative, and exciting; and just when you think you have seen everything, someone takes an old idea and makes it relevant again or develops a fresh way to consider applying something that's been right under your nose. You need look no further than a Google of Chris Stapleton and Justin Timberlake on this year's CMA's to understand this take-away. This is just as true in music retail and music education as well. Where there is passion, there is fire.

2. Money, Money, Money, Mon-ney...

The most common "If I knew then" I hear from almost every dealer that has tried his hand at owning a music store is he wishes he had possessed a better understanding when he began of how much funding it takes to run and maintain a retail music store. Most independent storeowners are usually musicians, repairmen, or music educators who have had success in some other aspect of the music business and then opened a retail store to expand their success. What is often discovered is that when you expand offerings, there is a lag time before the new undertakings generate a positive cash flow. Simple stuff, right? You may be surprised to learn it is a problem that never takes a day off. Since you can't control extenuating circumstances, the best protection you can have is to plan accordingly in advance

and expect the unexpected. To budget for the unexpected is a difficult discipline, but one that you will learn all too well, and it is the most important tool of survival.

3. You must go in knowing trends change, and new trends have to be embraced...

Do you remember Fafisia organs, Trixon Drums, or eight track tapes? They are a true reminder of what Tower of Power told us years back, "What is hip today might become passé." This ties directly into economic trends as well; you can never be over prepared for the unexpected. The problem is that even the best

of us can't see into the future. Our industry is always in the process of reinventing itself, and it definitely is in that process now.

Distribution channels pertaining to every aspect of the music business whether it's gear or music itself are constantly in a state flux. Just ask the people of Indiana how they feel about Carrier moving their plant out of Indiana and into Mexico.

Everyone knows that "mobile" is the hot medium now, and you can't argue with that, so review and embrace the current

trend and make your necessary adjustments. You also may think social media is inconvenient to maintain, but the truth is you can't fight the current trends, so keep pushing into learning.

4. "It takes a long time to play like yourself." ~ Miles Davis...

I would like to close with the most important take away I have learned in my career... and that is to trust the masters because the truth is they always play like themselves. What Miles is telling us is simple really: You are guaranteed to fail if you try to be something other than who you really are. In my case, I am a musician first, and I approach every aspect in my business from that understanding. I educate from that knowing, and sell from the same understanding. In music, as in life, communication matters, listening matters, and being genuine matters. A business is a living breathing entity... and like Miles, I invite you to "play like yourself." **MMP**

“I am a musician first, and I approach every aspect in my business from that understanding.”





By Mary Luehrsen

Mary Luehrsen has been a senior executive at the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) since 2001 and serves as executive director of the NAMM Foundation, an organization that supports music research, music education advocacy, philanthropic, and public service programs.

The Time is Now

ESSA Passage Opens Up Opportunities for School Music Programs

I write this article for the March issue of *MMR* on President's Day as the snow is falling in New York. Halfway through the month of February, it feels like the longest month of the year here in the Northeast, even with regular sunset walks and fireside gatherings. I've read that winter is supposed to be a slower time of year per our natural biorhythms; that we rest and store up energy for busy times when the days are longer. My advice to music education advocates everywhere is to rest now because some of the most intensive and exciting days for music education are ahead of us!

For many years – possibly decades – music and arts education advocates have responded to threats of cuts to programs during school budget cycles each spring. During the months of March through June, I would receive plaintive phone calls from people around the country who were worried and/or desperate after hearing their music programs were to be reduced or eliminated. Each caller asked me to “do something – send a celebrity, write a press release, call the national guard!” – *anything* to make the threat of a cut to a music program “go away.” My advice was always the same: gather like-minded parents to organize and share a positive message about the benefits of music education; speak respectfully and sensibly to school leaders (administration and board); carve out a plan for sustaining access; build a temporary “fix it” to bridge to better times; and work to secure as much opportunity for music learning for all students as possible. My advice is based on “we have to work together to do the right thing for kids.” Over time, local advocates turned what was a “911” call for help to stop the elimination of a music program into a “wellness care and management” program designed to nurture and expand the support for music education.

With the passage of the federal education reauthorization, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), new opportunities for expanding and developing music education are more attainable than ever. Among the new law's requirements is accountability for “school climate,” and already, we are hearing from school and district leaders that they are looking to music and arts educa-

tion expansion to help meet goals for improving student engagement and to enhance student connection to school. From what I've heard, school administrators and district leaders want MORE music education and MORE diverse music learning experiences that reach and serve more students. And with this call to “give us MORE” they are signaling to professional music and arts educators and their community arts collaborators to build high quality, impactful, and sustainable music and arts education curricula.

All of this is to say that *now* is the time to plant the seeds of expansion and development for music education programs in all school districts across the country. If your school or district has a fairly solid band, choir, and orchestra program serving single digit percentages of students in the middle and high school years, now is the



time to suggest curriculum expansion to include classroom guitar, world drumming, or music learning via the vast offering through technology. If your school or district offers general music for all elementary students, now is the time to assure that all students receive equitable access via district-wide assessment of students' opportunity to learn music (equity of teacher-time); and it could be time to expand “time to learn” for all students. Now is also the time to expand project-based music learning via composition, improvisation, or steel drum ensemble, or think way outside the box and start a instrument training program in high school – no performance expectations, just total immersion into the elements of music and playing an instrument.

A remarkable opportunity awaits. Let's do this! **MMR**

New Products

DRUMS/PERCUSSION

Tama G-Walnut, the Vintage Poplar Maple, and Vintage Hammered Steel Models



Tama has again expanded its Sound Lab Project (S.L.P.) lineup with three new drums, including the G-Walnut, the Vintage Poplar Maple, and Vintage Hammered Steel models. For the drummer seeking a vintage vibe and tonality, the S.L.P. Vintage Poplar Maple is a 5.5" x 14", 8-lug drum that offers warm, open sound that fits nicely into medium-volume band mixes such as Jazz, Rock, Blues, and other acoustic-driven styles.

The 6.5" x 14" G-Walnut model features a 10 ply, 9mm Walnut shell. This thicker shell produces a brighter tone and increases sonic presence and punch. Highly dynamic, the G-Walnut is capable of articulating nuanced playing at lower volumes as well as screaming with an abandoned roar.

The randomly angled surfaces of the Vintage Hammered Steel's 5.5" x 14" shell gives this drum a dark, rich, tonally complex sound that's dry yet surprisingly articulate. Fitted with triple flanged Sound Arc hoops to help focus overtones, the Vintage Hammered Steel produces full-throated, articulate tone capable of cutting through any mix.

tama.com

ACCESSORIES

Music Nomad String Fuel Display Pack

Music Nomad Equipment Care announced that their String Fuel string cleaner and lubricant is available in a point of sale display pack. String Fuel is an efficient way for guitar players to clean and lubricate their strings in one swipe. The ergonomically shaped device fits comfortably into your hand and makes it easy to cover all your guitars strings in one pass. The dense wool pad is impregnated with a blend of refined natural oils and premium mineral oils. The proprietary blend allows you to clean and protect your strings for a longer life while conditioning your unfinished fretboard wood. Like to slide? The cleaning/conditioning oil enhances speed while reducing finger noise. New guitar players like how the lubricant protects their fingers from string wear and tear. This compact and well-designed tool includes a lint free cloth that fits securely in the handle to wipe up any excess oil. The String Fuel display contains 12 pieces. String Fuel retails between \$8.99 and \$9.99.



musicnomadcare.com

DR Strings' VERITAS

DR Strings announced VERITAS, a patented new type of phosphor bronze acoustic guitar string, with longer life and no surface coating or treatment.

Accurate Core Technology is at the heart of VERITAS strings. DR's patented Accurate Core Technology strengthens and perfects any variations of the core wire. The core wire is far stronger and more accurate along its entire length for highly improved pitch stability and longer life.

Beta testing feedback was particularly positive, with players noting VERITAS strings' robust and resonant tone, excellent sustain, and extreme stability in alternate tuning applications, all at an affordable price point. VERITAS are available in standard extra light, custom light, light, and medium gauged sets.



drstrings.com

PRO AUDIO

Cordial DSUB Cable CCFD Intro Series

For reasons of space, the latest generation of slim, only 1 RU multi-channel AD/DA converters feature up to 8 DSUB connectors to connect analog in- and outputs. In this case of little mechanical strain (during studio operations and for internal wiring of converter racks you hardly ever have to replug or reconnect) users prefer price-optimized cables. In line with this trend, the German cable manufacturer CORDIAL now offers the new, budget-friendly CCFD-DSUB



breakout cable from its intro series for 8 in- and outputs via XLR male or female.

cordial.eu

AMPLIFIERS

Radial's Shotgun

The Shotgun is a guitar-signal distribution amplifier that is able to drive up to four amps simultaneously without introducing the hum and buzz that is typically encountered due to ground loops.

Designed for Hi-Z instruments, the Shotgun may be set up for mono use with one input driving four outputs or in stereo with two inputs driving two pairs of outputs. Each output is individually buffered to lower the impedance and reduce susceptibility to noise. Output-1 is the default that provides a safety ground path to the guitar while outputs 2, 3, and 4 are transformer isolated to eliminate nasty ground loop hum. This is supplemented with individual ground lift switches. When used dual as a 1 x 2 splitter, Radial's innovative Constant Load Correction circuit steps in to ensure the impedance on the guitar and subsequent tone remains consistent. Compact and made rugged for the road, the Shotgun employs a standard 9V power supply (not included) or connection from a pedalboard power brick. Top mounted 180° polarity reverse switches ensure all amps play in phase. (MAP: \$169.99)



radialeng.com

BAND AND ORCHESTRA

The Sax Dakota Straight Tenor Saxophone

Since the tube of this unique saxophone is straight, the structure of its sound is organized, not only by the shape of the tube, but also by you, the player. This straight tenor is for the saxophonist who is looking to craft his or her own unique voice. The instrument is for players of all ages and styles. Tone boosters are hardened/ plated steel for maximum personal sound projection. All pad cups are custom designed as "low profile" for crisp 'note to note' speed plus full register impeccable intonation set-up.



saxdakota.com



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CASES AND STANDS

Manhasset Chorale Microphone Stands

The Manhasset Chorale Microphone Stands uses the Manhasset Symphony shaft with Magic Finger Clutch and the Symphony base for great stability and support. The mic adaptor (included) has 5/8" threads to easily attach to almost any 5/8" mic clip can be attached to hold the microphone in place. Suggested list price is \$49.50 (microphone and mic clip sold separately).



manhasset-specialty.com

FRETTED

Ibanez SR300E Basses

Available in 4, 5, and 6-string versions, the SR300E, 305E and 306E are designed for experienced players. New pickups and EQ electronics give the SR300 series a new level of sound quality and control. New Ibanez "PowerSpan" dual coil pickups feature stainless steel poles for greater output, clarity, and fullness than any other pickup in its class. Accessed by a 3-way "Power Tap" switch, these proprietary pickups offer three tonal options: a rich humbucker sound, a pure single coil sound, or an enhanced single coil sound—all fattened by supporting low-end, provided by the humbucking portion of each pickup. Precise tone preferences are dialed in with the Ibanez Custom 3-band EQ. At the core of the SR300E is a mahogany body that creates full, warm tone. Other features include a sturdy 5-piece maple/rosewood SR neck, a rosewood fretboard, and the Ibanez Accu-cast bridge for superior string vibration transfer and precise intonation.



ibanez.com

FRETTED

Merida Guitars Parlor Series

The new Parlor Series instruments feature a solid sitka spruce top, mahogany back and sides, a newly designed and modified scalloped bracing, and slightly smaller frets than previously found on a Mérida Guitar. This series will also include a model outfitted with Fishman Electronics. These instruments start at \$399.



meridaguitars.com

PRO AUDIO

Audix Performance Series Wireless



The central component of the system is the easy two-step process of Scan and Sync. Pressing a hot key on the receiver instantaneously Scans for open frequencies. Within 5-20 seconds, depending on the intensity of other wireless frequencies in the area, the system will select an available frequency from a grid of pre-coordinated internal frequencies. Once the frequency is selected, the user holds the transmitter next to the Sync light on the receiver, and within 1-2 seconds, the transmitter will lock to the receiver. If more than one system is required, the user simply repeats the one-touch Scan and Sync process.

The Audix Performance Series is available in two performance levels: the 40 Series and 60 Series. Both series are packaged in durable metal housing.

audixusa.com

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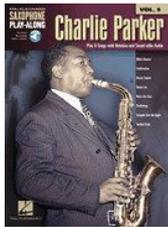
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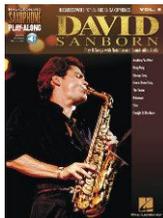
Hal Leonard's *Charlie Parker – Saxophone Play-Along Vol. 5* and *David Sanborn – Saxophone Play-Along Vol. 8*

Hal Leonard released two new volumes in the *Saxophone Play-Along* series that will enhance the collections of all sax players: Charlie Parker and David Sanborn. Just follow the music, listen to the audio to hear how the saxophone should sound, and then play along using the separate backing tracks. The series now also includes Playback+, a multi-functional online audio player that allows you to slow down audio without changing pitch, set loop points, change key, and pan left or right.

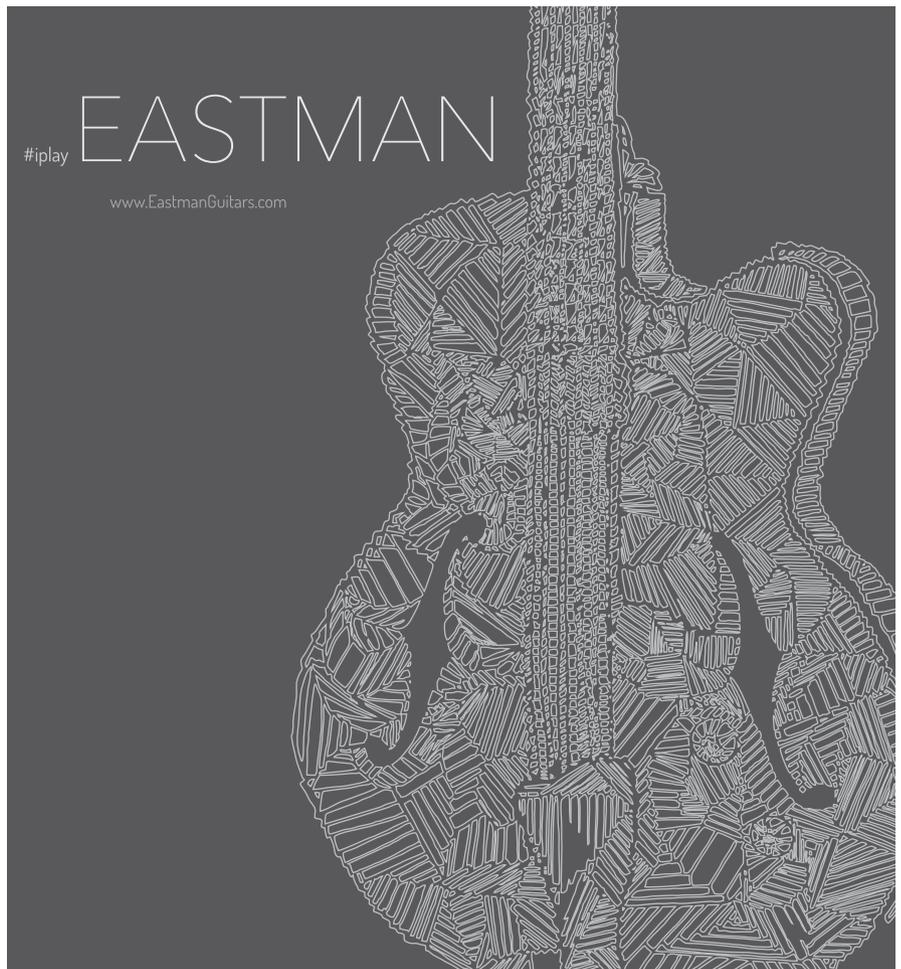
Virtuoso Charlie "Bird" Parker has influenced legions of musicians with his remarkable fast technique and chordal improvisations. His new volume includes eight songs: Billie's Bounce (Bill's Bounce) * Confirmation * Dewey Square * Donna Lee * Now's the Time * Ornithology * Scrapple from the Apple * Yardbird Suite. (\$16.99, ISBN: 9781480337947, Inventory #HL00118286)



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By Dan Daley

We Are Family – Or, at Least, We Were

Sterling Ball held a StingRay bass aloft on the stage set up inside Ernie Ball’s spacious stand at the Winter NAMM Show. He recalled how the guitar came to be, the result of collaboration between Leo Fender and Tom Walker and himself, who took it out on the road and put it through its paces before its release in 1976. At the same show, Ball, the CEO of string and instrument maker Ernie Ball, announced that his son, Brian, would become president of the company, founded by his father, the eponymous Ernie, in 1962.

The event was a reminder, along with the invocation of the Fender legacy, of how much of the MI business is based on family. Certainly, brands like Peavey, Zildjian, and dozens of other familiar monikers reflect the sense of pride and dedication that’s necessary when you put your name on your work. And the vast majority of MI retail establishments are family propositions, such as Chuck Levin’s Washington Music Center, where three generations have run the business since 1958.

But there are fewer of them than there has been, a trend that’s become clear in the larger business landscape. According to data from the Census Bureau,

entrepreneurship in the U.S. is on the decline, with Americans starting over 27 percent fewer businesses in the last five years than the previous half-decade. Sure, Silicon Valley looks like a veritable amusement park of start-ups, but it’s a cluster in a bigger picture that’s instead seeing fewer and larger entities as a result of ongoing consolidation and conglomeration. The recession didn’t help, and neither does a denser regulatory and tax environment as state and local governments look to small business to generate revenues lost to the recession, globalization, and other macro economics. But the trend predates that: according to a *New York Times* analysis, “Businesses with one to 19 employees, *nearly all of them family run*, lost 757,000 jobs from the second quarter of 2007 through the third quarter of 2008, according to figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics... That amounts to 53 percent of all private-sector losses for a group of companies with about 20 percent of all employees.” (Italics are mine.)

Family-run businesses have some historical headwinds to combat, as well. According to the Family Business Institute, an American consultancy, only 30 percent of family businesses survive

into the second generation and 12 percent into the third. Barely three percent make it into the fourth and beyond. In fact, Asian cultures seem to have codified this tendency: the Japanese say “The third generation ruins the house” while the Chinese phrase it barely differently when they say “Wealth does not survive three generations.” Family businesses portrayed in popular media can seem downright pathological, from television’s *Empire* crew to *The Sopranos*, and not every generation manages to inherit either the genes or the inclinations, even though they may get the legacy.

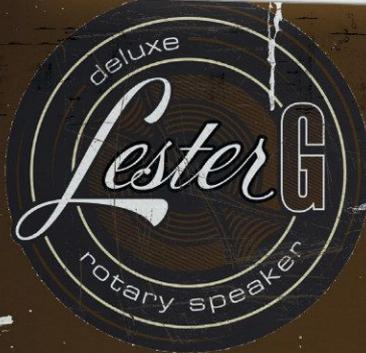
Music: Special Glue?

But music businesses bring a different dimension to the equation. They are a melding of art and commerce. Most MI retailers are musicians themselves, as are at least the founding generations of even the largest MI manufacturers. This creates a special kind of glue, one we see at work today in the many family-based boutique companies building amps and stomp boxes, and that’s worth fostering going forward.

The Conway Center for Family Business has identified several challenges ahead. By 2017, it estimates that about 40 percent of family-business owners expect to retire, creating a significant transition of ownership in the U.S., while less than half of those expecting to retire in five years have selected a successor. Nearly a third of family business owners have no estate plan beyond a will, and barely half of these owners reported having a “good understanding” of estate taxes that could be due. Finally, even though nearly 70 percent of family businesses would like to pass their business on to the next generation, only 30 percent will actually be successful at transitioning to the next generation.

Not every family is cut out for a dynasty, but at Summer NAMM, the “mom and pop” edition of the trade show, take a look at how many families make this expo their own particular pilgrimage. There are far more station wagons and SUVs with out-of-state plates than there are local rental cars in the parking of the Music City Convention Center. It’s where you see what the bedrock of the industry is composed of. Paying attention to family might be one of the best long-term strategies there are for the health of this volatile business. **MMB**

“Entrepreneurship in the U.S. is on the decline.”



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