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THE BEAT GOES ON



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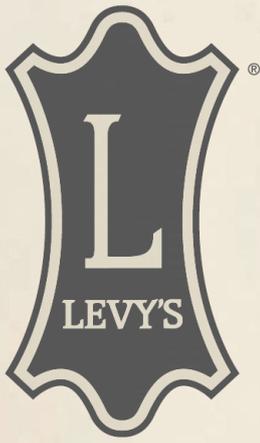
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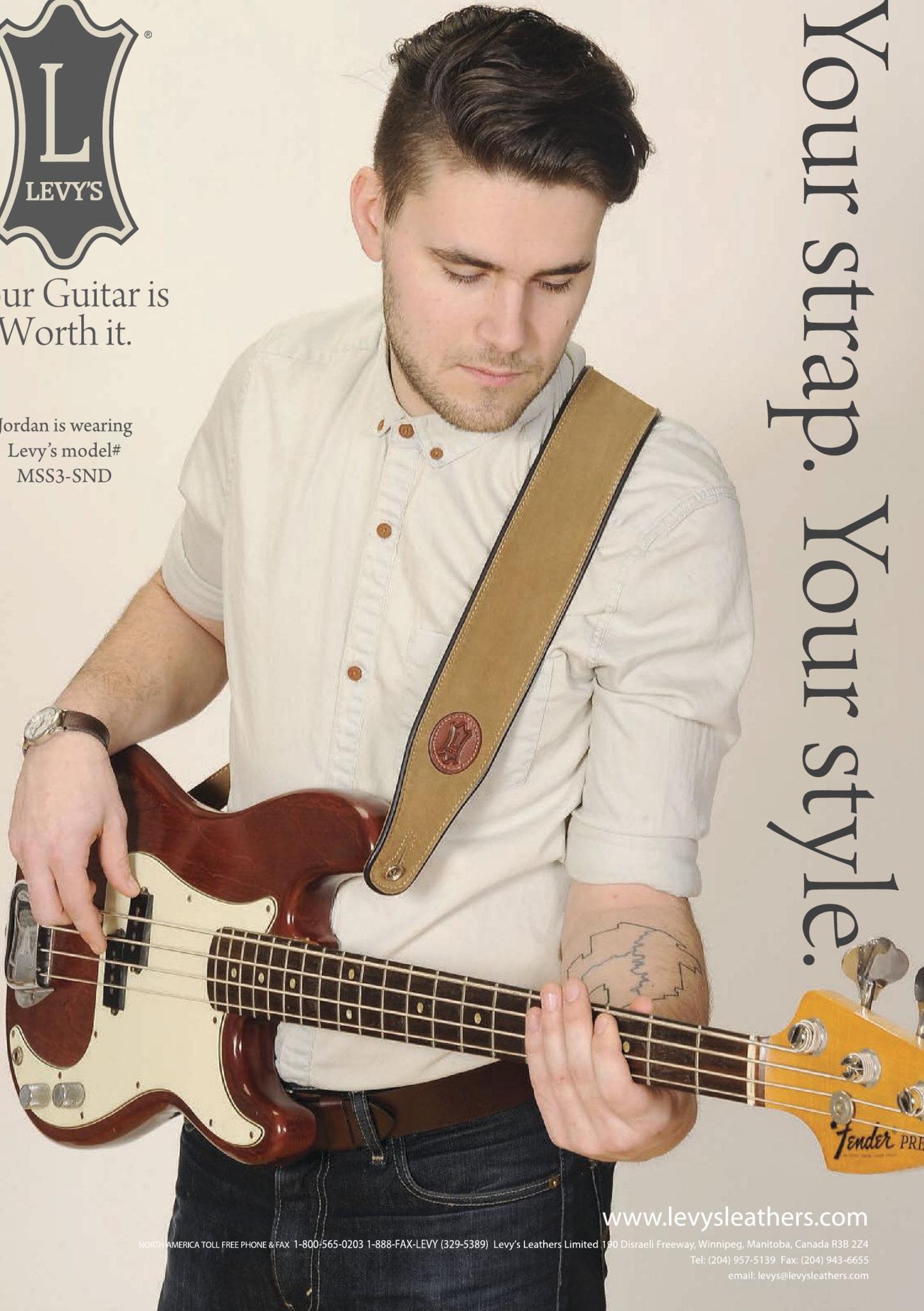
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MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

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Remember the 808



by Christian
Wissmuller

A good chunk of this current issue of *MMR* turns the spotlight on electronic drums & percussion, with significant attention given to how recent (and ever-continuing) technological strides have benefitted both top-level performers who make use of increasingly realistic and “tweakable” sounds, as well as entry-level players as kits drop in price. Those are absolutely valid selling points for suppliers and retailers, to be sure, and it’s a segment of the market I’ve watched with great interest over the past few years as its grown into new levels of acceptance – to the point of being effectively a “must-have” for many. As Roland’s Drew Armentrout notes in this month’s roundtable, “Contemporary music of practically every style requires the modern drummer or percussionist to use some type of electronic percussion. It is simply an essential tool.”

Nonetheless, some retailers remain unconvinced, as demonstrated in this month’s survey.

“Even with most high-end sets you can’t get a natural cymbal sound,” says Dan Patterson of Roger’s Pawn & Music in Fort Payne, Alabama. Shane Kinney of New Hampshire’s Drum Center of Portsmouth maintains that, “People buy [electronic drums & percussion] for volume issues. They would prefer to buy acoustic. It’s a diminishing focus for us.” And, of course, there were plenty who told us they simply don’t or won’t sell electronic percussion instruments.

As a peripheral, but related issue, as we’ve been putting together the content for this month, I’ve been thinking more and more about the venerable drum machines of the ‘80s and ‘90s. Much like analog synths, which have seen a healthy resurgence in popular culture in recent years (see Paige Tutt’s feature on KORG’s reissue of the ARP Odyssey in our October 2015 issue or our in-depth cover story on the larger topic in our May 2014 issue), decades-old drum machines are getting plenty of play in contemporary music.

The most visible example of this phenomenon is Roland’s TR-808 – an instrument which, interestingly, wasn’t particularly embraced by players and producers of the time when it was introduced in 1980. Digital sampling was all the rage back then and the 808’s analog-generated sounds went against the grain.

Cue to the present day, however, and the TR-808 is an iconic instrument whose sounds have helped define innumerable hip hop, dance, and electronic music hits, with no end in sight (and one which, by the way, is distinguished by not being particularly capable of producing realistic, “natural” drum sounds).

When asked in the current issue of *SPIN* what they expect the music of the year 2040 to sound like, top producers give shout outs to the time-tested machine: “Extensive use of Abelton, software synths like massive and nexus, vocal chops, 32-triplet hi-hats and 808 drums,” says Tor Erik Hermansen (Stargate). While Danja (Britney Spears, M.I.A.) offers, “It seems urban music becomes the basis for pop as the years go by, so I’ll say 808s and sub basses, moody pads and vocal samples, urban based hip-hop style production.”

You can’t necessarily predict what instruments or gadgets will take off and wind up having lifespans that stretch across generations and musical tastes. While hardly alone as an emerging and evolving instrument category, electronic drums & percussion have already proven their worth and potential for profit for many, though. At the very least, keep an open mind and your ear to the ground. Sales very often go to the early adopters and quick thinkers.

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NAMM's New Solar Installation

Visitors to NAMM's Carlsbad, California headquarters will notice a major new addition, as state-of-the-art solar panels now cover NAMM's parking lot.

Following a nearly yearlong project, NAMM has installed 714 solar panels that will provide clean energy, shade, and power vehicles. The solar installation will cut NAMM's operational electricity costs by more than 98 percent, while providing ample shade to visiting NAMM members and NAMM Museum of Making Music guests.

"Reducing expenses at the industry headquarters allows us to direct more resources toward achieving our vision, mission, and objectives," said Joe Lamond, president and CEO of NAMM. "Over the next two decades this solar installation will achieve our energy reduction goals, while saving the association more than a million dollars, money that can be reinvested into promoting music and music education around the world."

The new system is designed to produce 359,453-kilowatt hours per year including a dual station car charger for those arriving at NAMM in electric vehicles.



The newly installed solar panels covering the parking lot at NAMM's HQ

KMC Music Named U.S. Distributor of Rhythm Tech, Monster Cable's Prolink

KMC Music (www.kmcmusic.com) recently announced that parent company JAM Industries (www.jamindustries.com) had acquired Rhythm Tech (www.rhythmtech.com). The acquisition, completed in September, makes KMC Music the sole United States distributor of Rhythm Tech percussion products and accessories, according to KMC Music president Mark Terry.

"JAM Industries is very excited to add Rhythm Tech to its growing portfolio of company owned brands," Terry said. "For more than 35 years, this great company has helped to set the standard for hand percussion, mounted percussion, drums, and accessory products that are the choice of leading players like Carmine Appice, Carter Beauford, Greg Bissonette and Dennis Chambers. This tradition of innovation is guaranteed to continue because Richard Taninbaum, the founder and president of Rhythm Tech, will continue to consult on future Rhythm Tech product development and design."

According to Taninbaum, the acquisition of Rhythm Tech by JAM Industries will help the brand in many important ways: "Rhythm Tech will now have the industry's greatest retail sales force to represent it in the marketplace as well as a new and greater depth of resources behind it that will enable Rhythm Tech to continue its long proud tradition of innovation."

Founded in 1980, Rhythm Tech's debut of the now iconic crescent-shaped tambourine redefined the world's view of what a tambourine could be and the role it could play in the creation of music. Conceived of during a recording session at the Power Station in New York with Bob Clearmountain, the crescent tambourine was an overnight sensation, evolving into the de facto standard tambourine not just for percussionists, but for millions of singers, keyboardists, horn players, and anyone else whose live or recording situation requires them to make something jingle.

"It's hard to believe that the elegantly ergonomic, infinitely playable shape of

Rhythm Tech's famous crescent-shaped tambourine hasn't always been with us," Taninbaum reflected. "The fact is that before we broke the rules and created it, tambourines were always round and could be about as pleasant to jangle as a dumbbell! This commitment to break the rules can now continue with the great resources of JAM Industries and KMC Music behind it."

The acquisition of Rhythm Tech by JAM Industries is just the latest in a series of industry moves by KMC Music in the percussion category. "The addition of Rhythm Tech to a line-up that already includes Paiste, Gibraltar, Latin Percussion, Remo, Toca, Vater, and Vic Firth further strengthens our position as the industry's only one, true 'one-stop' source for all their percussion needs," emphasized KMC Music vice president of merchandising Roger Hart.

KMC Music has also announced that it has been appointed to serve as the United States distributor for Monster Cable's Prolink® Line of instrument (guitar, bass and acoustic) and Pro Audio (microphone, speaker, and premium headphone) cables.

The newly redesigned Prolink line of cables consists of Monster's signature "Good, Better, Best" product offering which includes their top of the line Studio Pro 2000, as well as Monster Rock, Monster Acoustic, Monster Bass, Performer 600, and Classic series cables. The line currently consists of 69 individual SKUs, according to KMC music merchandising product manager Brian Blood.

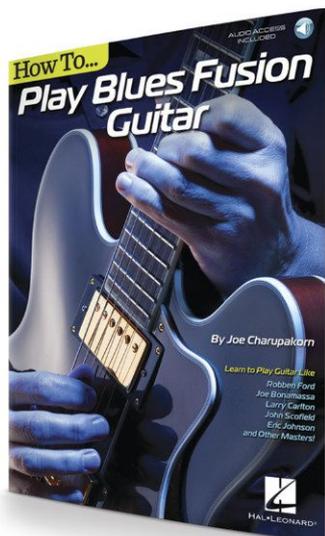
"The addition of Monster's line of Prolink cables to our product portfolio significantly expands the range of accessories we can offer our dealers," Blood says. "Monster is recognized industry-wide as a true innovator in every product category. Their product quality, coupled with their lifetime guarantee, makes them the obvious choice for quality-conscious musicians. KMC Music could not be more proud to have their cables in our all-new One Stop catalog."



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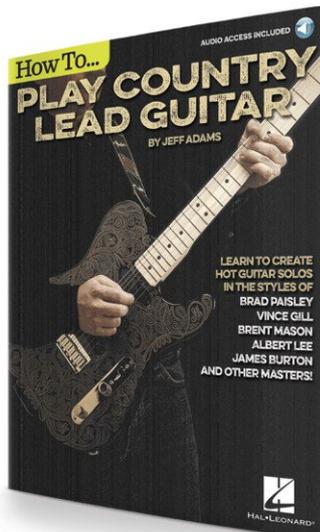
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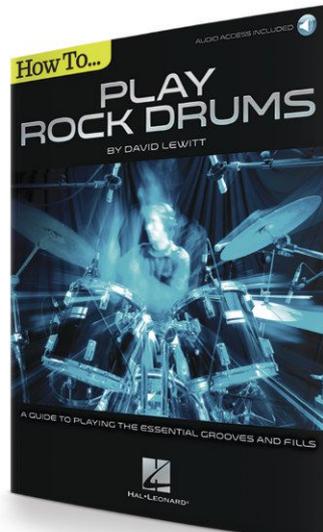


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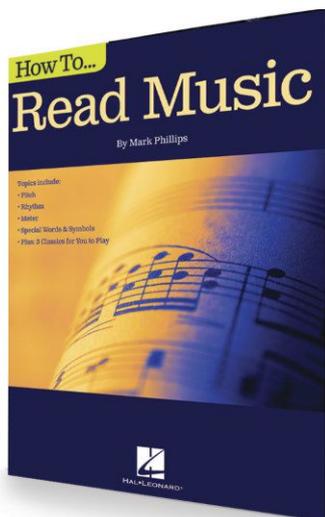


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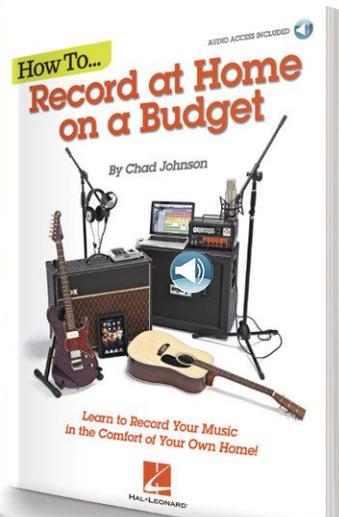


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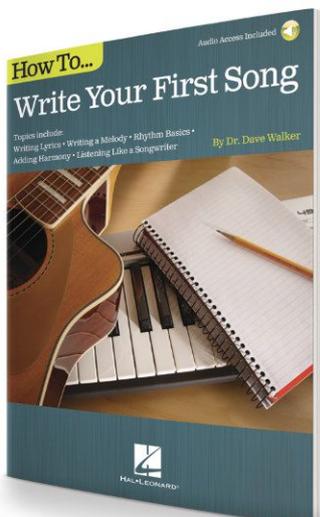


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Canada's Prime Minister Visits Riversong Guitars



Riversong's Mike Miltimore and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper

Riversong Guitars recently hosted the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, at their guitar manufacturing facility to show him their patent-pending and multi-award winning Neck and Body System guitar design.

The company's founder Mike Miltimore gave Mr. Harper a demonstration of the guitar's features and showed the PM how Riversong's solid one-piece neck results in a deeper and richer sound. The Prime Minister met the luthiers and workers who make up the Riversong production team and signed a custom guitar with the Canadian flag design hand painted on the front.

"It was a true honour to have the leader of our country, Prime Minister Stephen Harper visit us at our guitar factory in Kamloops, BC, Canada," said Miltimore. "He, himself, is a musician and understands the emotional connection one has with a good instrument."

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NUVO Opens U.S. Sales and Distribution Center

After three years of steady growth in the U.S., Nuvo has opened the doors of its new sales and distribution center in Boston.

"It's been exciting to come to NAMM, win awards, and meet new customers over the past three years," said Max Clissold, Nuvo CEO, from his office in Hong Kong. "Now that we have a base in Boston

we can reduce lead times, improve terms, and offer our retail customers the back up they need to successfully bring our products to local schools."

Nuvo produces a range of innovative instruments designed with the young beginner in mind. By designing instruments that are lighter, more durable, and more suitable for kids, Nuvo presents an oppor-

tunity to bring real band experience to Elementary and Middle Schools without blowing too much budget. "The idea is to capture the imagination of kids as early as possible with real instruments that are more suitable for a school environment and that don't cost a lot at the outset or in long-term maintenance."

At NAMM 2015 Nuvo was awarded "Best Tools for Schools" by MMR sister publication, *School Band & Orchestra*, in recognition of its innovative products and its newly launched WindStars program. WindStars offers free music downloads and an iPad app to support schools in creating ensembles using Nuvo instruments. "One of the great things about Nuvo instruments is that they are all tuned in C so that music can be easily shared between Recorder, DooD, TooT, jFlute, and Clarinéo," explained Clissold. "We have created modern music such as rap, pop, and



reggae as well as traditional and seasonal arrangements that can be easily played by young kids in a Nuvo WindStars band." For more information and to download free music you can visit www.nuvo-windstars.com. From a retailer's perspective Nuvo offers a whole new market to bring kids into Band and Orchestra at an earlier age which will result in more sales of traditional instruments and more participation in high school band as they grow older. "We've all witnessed children as young as 6 struggling to manage a traditional instrument such as a flute or clarinet and this can be demoralizing for the child as well as the teacher. Now we can start them on more suitable instruments such as the Nuvo jFlute or the Clarinéo and they will be hooked on music for life," explained Clissold. "One of the other great things about Nuvo is that the instruments are super-durable. We have a KIO (Keep It Out) slogan which encourages kids and schools to keep the instruments on a stand or wall hanger so it's always there for a quick practice."

For more information about Nuvo, visit www.nuvo-instrumental.com or email Max Clissold directly at max@nuvo-instrumental.com for a catalog and price list.

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NAMM Foundation Visits Best Communities for Music Education

The John Lennon Educational Tour Bus hits the road this fall to help keep music education strong in six of NAMM Foundation's Best Communities for Music Education.

The tour includes SupportMusic Forums and Lennon Bus residencies. During the residencies, students will have the unique opportunity to write, record, and produce original songs and music videos. The NAMM Foundation will host a SupportMusic Community Forum at each school inviting educators, NAMM members, and community leaders to galvanize local support for music education.

The NAMM Foundation invited schools named as 2015 Best Communities for Music Education, and recipients of the SupportMusic Merit Award, to submit a one-minute video. For a shot at a Lennon Bus residency, students creatively highlighted the strength of their music programs through the theme 'What Makes Music Education Great in My School'. The videos featured everything from clowns in bands, to a teen whose life was comically dependent on a small keyboard.

"The passion that students have for music resonates so clearly through these videos," said Mary Luehrsen, executive director of the NAMM Foundation. "The NAMM Foundation is honored to put a spotlight on these standout music programs and music teachers, and lend inspiration to these talented students as they continue to journey down their musical paths."

Students will spend the first day of the residency creating a music video project in the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus' mobile recording studio. On day two, the NAMM Foundation will host a national SupportMusic Community Forum webcast that will share the successes and challenges of each school's music education program. The forum will also present strategies to shore up support for music education within a school or district's core curriculum.

Inspiration from the Lennon Bus will play on after each stop thanks to generous donations by NAMM member companies. The instrument and equipment donations total more than \$3,500 per school



Aboard the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus

and include gear from Audio-Technica, Epiphone, Genelec, Mackie, Other World Computing (OWC), Neutrik, Yamaha and ZVEX Effects.

The SupportMusic Community Forums and Lennon Bus residencies kicked off in October in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, with stops in Waxhaw, North Carolina and in Miami, Florida. The Spring tour resumes in February 2016.

The NAMM Foundation invites NAMM members to participate in local forums, to tour the Lennon Bus and to share the winning videos.

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Pictured: Florian Alexandru-Zorn with the New Split Brush SB
Photo by Mario Schmitt

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Supplier Scene

ADJ Open House Events Announced

ADJ Lighting announced two Open House events at their Los Angeles and Miami locations where dealers and end users can see new products releases from over the summer, get a chance to see new products announced at LDI 2015, and sit in on ADJ Live Learning seminars.

The Open House events will take place November 10 (10am - 6pm) at ADJ Los Angeles and November 12 (10am - 6pm) at ADJ Miami. These events will be comprised of two parts: the first will include training sessions on Advanced DMX, LED Video Wall training, as well as a guest speaker who will share ideas for using the latest ADJ technology to great effect during shows and events over the holiday season. The second part will involve an open house session, during which attendees can take a tour of ADJ's showroom and check out the wide range of new products, including those announced at LDI 2015. In this, attendees will get the chance to get ahead of their competitors with a glimpse of what's new for 2016.

"There's nothing better than seeing something in person," said Alfred Gonzales, ADJ USA national sales manager. "Our L.A. and Miami Open House events will be the perfect time to see and feel the build quality and brightness of our products. These type of events are some of my favorite because I get a one-on-one chance to meet with and give hands-on demos to our customers."

The Open House events are free to dealers and end users if they sign-up before October 31. On November 1, the 10am-2pm Live Learn seminars are \$99.99 at the door. The 2-6pm Open House is free to anyone.

Hard Rock Goes Full Circle With Chauvet

Drew Carey mentioned it in his autobiography. KISS mounted their comeback by playing on top of its bar. Jamie Foxx liked to celebrate New Year's Eve there. Ben Affleck was a regular. Even by the standards of Las Vegas nightspots, the Center Bar at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino has been a celebrity magnet. Perched under a domed ceiling in the middle of the hotel's 30,000-square-foot casino, it has long been the place to see and be seen.

However, even icons need updating to remain fresh and vibrant, which is why this June the Hard Rock Hotel had a "Final Call" party for its famous bar, and promised to reopen the 20-year-old landmark with a new design that would make its future as glittering as its past. This goal was accomplished, thanks to a massive and dazzling abstract design by LD Robert Athey of All Things Integrated that drew on the pixel mapping capabilities of



300 ÉPIX Strip 2.0 LED linear fixtures from Chauvet Professional.

The ultra-bright ÉPIX strips form a circle over the round bar. For 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the strips display stunning video images that coordinate with the musical performances shown on the room's video monitors, as well as with architectural lights around the bar.

"It creates a very immersive experience that really draws you in," Athey said of the new design. "I think its bold high-tech looks let everyone know that the Center Bar is back and totally ahead of the curve."

continued on next page

Nord Artist Isamu McGregor Tours with Colbie Caillat

Nord keyboardist, Isamu McGregor, toured North America with Grammy award-winning artist Colbie Caillat during her "Girls Night Out, But Boys Can Come Too" tour.

The core of McGregor's setup is a Nord Electro 3 and Electro 4. "These keyboards are great. When someone sees that red keyboard on stage, they know I must be a guy who knows what he's doing," he said. "Nord is simply the best."

Both keyboards were used for different reasons. "My main board is the Electro 3. On this tour it was mainly used for the piano and occasional Wurlitzer sounds. The Electro 4 is on standby for when I want another organ," said McGregor.

McGregor loves the drawbars that regulate the B3 Hammond organ on the Nord Electro 4. "It feels like you're involved in the creation of sound. The drawbars are made into physical things you can pull," he exclaimed. "It's great to have this flexibility right at my fingertips. The slightest



shift of tone, thanks to these drawbars, can affect the overall sound," he said.

Not only does McGregor admire his handmade keyboards from Sweden, but he also appreciates the help from Nord's technical support guru Pablo Mastodon. "Pablo is the greatest. I call and he always helps me with anything, even the nitty-gritty things," said McGregor.

"When you buy a Nord, you get me with it. People are often surprised when they reach someone live on the first call," Mastodon said.

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Hard Rock Goes Full Circle With Chauvet *(cont.)*

Athey, who has enjoyed a longstanding relationship with the Hard Rock Hotel and has been involved in numerous projects for the chain, including the design of the iconic video wall at the Las Vegas hotel's registration desk and Vanity Nightclub, was called in by management to create a revitalizing design for the Center Bar.

"When it came time to redesign the Center Bar, they called on us, and we helped drive several concepts including using the iconic dome and video mapping it," he said. "When all of the elements were on the table a committee of owners, operations people and others met and it was agreed to move in the direction of the 'abstract' design for the dome. The concept was to create something that drew attention to the Center Bar and pulled the whole room together with a unifying look. The pixel mapped ÉPIX strips did this by tying the music videos with light."

Lose used Video Dust from Thundering Jacks to manipulate live feed from the room's music video monitors for display on the ÉPIX strips. The ÉPIX strips display alternating images of custom content cue and Video Dust content cue. There is a two-hour cue list of custom and Video Dust content, which plays throughout the day and night.

"Seeing these images on the ÉPIX strips makes it feel like you're immersed in a concert venue," said Lose. "As the content designer and programmer, I was given a lot of freedom to display

whatever I felt would represent the Hard Rock Hotel best. I generated custom content in Adobe After Effects and programmed with the Chauvet VIP Media Server and ArKaos.

"The ArKaos Media Master Pro 4 and the Chauvet VIP Media Server have been rock solid," he continued. "We're using most every feature of the ArKaos. One input is used for Video Dust and the MIDI pad is used for triggers. We are using ArtNet for the LED mapping, and we're using a handful of the effects to liven up the content. Having the ability to create a cue stack in ArKaos made it so that I did not even need a console to do any of the programming. I'm especially impressed that the VIP Media Server is able to take content in most any format."

The pixel mapped ÉPIX Strip 2.0 fixtures replaced a large globe that had dominated the area over the Center Bar. Although the new abstract design created with the LED strips looks like the perfect fit for this area, installing it was not without challenges.

"Like every project that looks this spectacular, a lot of hard work and teamwork were required to make it happen," said Edwards. "A cool thing about this project is that we created and installed structural pipe work to attach the ÉPIX strips to, and we mounted ÉPIX drives on top of the pipe structure. The brightness of the ÉPIX units has been amazing; we run them at 60% so they don't overshadow the other lights."



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Mapex Mars Series Free Tom Promo: Now through December 31

Mapex brings back their “Mars Free Tom” consumer promotion in time for the 4th quarter. Customers who purchase any Mars 4, 5, or 6-piece Shell Pack from an authorized Mapex dealer during the promotion period will receive at no charge an 8” or a 10” matching tom pack. This pack includes the matching 8” x 7” or 10” x 7” tom, a TH687S adjustable tom clamp, and the AC910 mounting clamp. Customers can claim their free tom at the point of purchase. The customer doesn’t need to fill out any forms or paperwork.

The Mars Series Shell Packs offer shallow depth 100 percent Birch shells complete with the new SONIClear Bearing Edge. The new award-winning SONIClear bearing edge increases contact between the drumhead and shell and allows the head to sit flat on the edge. This produces a stronger and more centered pitch and makes the drums remarkably easy to tune. The SONIClear Bearing Edge enables



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Fishman Creates New Retail Packaging

Fishman has just launched distinctive new retail packaging for its acoustic amplification products. Developed in collaboration with White Ink, a NYC-based full service branding and design agency, the packaging retains the color and icon identification elements of Fishman’s product families and categories as represented in the company’s full line catalog.

The black on black box design is complemented with two wraparound decals that include product features and specs, as well as easily identifiable family color markings on four of the six sides. Both the outer slipcase-style sleeve and the inner box are marked with a metallic silver foil Fishman logo. The new packaging comes in two sizes depending on the product and can be displayed and merchandised in a variety of different configurations at dealers.

The interior box has a dual-magnet enclosure that, along with redesigned compartment inserts, offers a premium presentation that reflects Fishman’s reputation for quality, innovation, and performance. Fishman’s new packaging is being manufactured by Stephen Gould Corporation, whose team was integral in the mechanical design process and offered custom solutions for the company’s unique product needs. With over 50 retail SKUs, it was imperative that the interior product trays and insert components were modular in order to inventory as few unique parts as possible. Fishman’s director of marketing Chris DeMaria commented, “What started out as a design change turned into a larger group effort. Our team had to work with every individual product not only for presentation but also for protection. The goal was to have a universal packaging design that had a premium fit and finish and used high quality materials in order to align with the Fishman brand.”



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QSC Announces Partnership with Dubai's VIVD AV Media

QSC has expanded its global influence by bringing Dubai-based AV marketing & sales consultancy VIVID Audiovisual Media onto its team. Glen Harris, QSC director of sales EAME (Systems Group), said, "I am delighted to be working with VIVID AV Media at a very exciting time for QSC Systems. With VIVID's knowledge of the systems business in the Middle East, they are an ideal partner to build a strong sales channel for the company's recently announced Corporate AV solution based around the new Q-SYS Core 110f, TSC-7t and SPA amplifiers.

Those corporate solutions made a big splash in the U.S. market in 2015, winning several rewards at the InfoComm release, including rAve Best New Audio Product and Sound & Video Contractor Best of Show for the Q-SYS Core 110f DSP Appliance.

QSC looks forward to helping corporations improve collaboration experiences in boardrooms, conference rooms, and more by allowing users to focus on their meetings rather than worrying about the room's technology.

Chris Hellmuth, managing director at VIVID AV Media, said "It's great having QSC on board. The company has a clear picture of where they want to go and how to set up their distribution channels accordingly. With our connections and experience, we'll support QSC Audio to achieve their business objectives for the systems group portfolio in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt."

Roland Corporation U.S. Welcomes Home a Soldier

The staff at Roland Corporation U.S. participated in a special surprise homecoming at their headquarters in Los Angeles. Mary Ann Sherman from Roland's Sales Administration Department was treated to a memorable day when her daughter, U.S. Army Specialist Kim Sherman, completed her service a few months early and arrived home ahead of schedule. As far as her mother knew, Kim was not due home until later this year.

Roland caught wind of the early homecoming and planned something special to surprise Mary Ann. Her co-workers organized a party and decorated Roland's video studio to give it a patriotic touch for this special day. Roland Corporation U.S. officers, directors and employees celebrated and posed in photos with Mary Ann and Kim, for a homecoming none of them will ever forget.

"Our employees are our extended family, so we wanted to create a special memory for Mary Ann and give her daughter a warm 'Welcome Home' from our team," noted Jay Wanamaker, president & CEO of Roland Corporation U.S.



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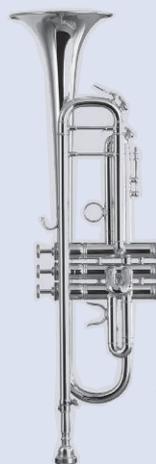
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MMR GLOBAL



by **Ronnie Dungan**

UK Dealer Opens Third Store

West Country retailer Music Dynamics is planning to open its third shop in as many years in Cheltenham, this December.

The dealer, owned by Andrew Griggs, opened its first store in Stroud three years ago and another in Bath last year. Cheltenham is scheduled to open on 1st December and may not be the last store opening.



music dynamics

Griggs told *MMR*: "We're trying to buck the trend a bit, but it seems to be going OK. Lots of shops have closed but they tend to be of the old school who want to sell guitars and amps all day and they are not attracting the new type of customers. If you look at some of the modern retailers, they feel like a cool place to be and when people come in they feel that there is something there for them.

"I put my suit on and go out and talk to the local schools and universities as I feel you've got to get out and sell the shop and I also plug the 'buy local' thing as well. I think the way to make a profit is not in selling, it's in the buying, and the bigger you get the better that is."

He says the new shop will also act as a warehouse for stock sold online, with plans to roll out a click and collect service across all three shops soon.

Tracktion Buys 2JW

Recording software specialist, Tracktion Corporation, has acquired Seattle-based, audio hardware manufacturer, 2JW Design.

The merger is seen as the next step toward Tracktion's stated goal of creating a new line of boutique professional audio hardware. The first of these products, a high-end computer interface called Copper Reference, is due in 2016.

Prior to the acquisition, 2JW Design had specialised in the creation of bespoke professional audio gear for customers such as Guitar Center and Microsoft. It was essentially a custom design shop coupled with the manufacturing capability to quickly produce thousands of units.

"We've been relying on 2JW's engineering talent throughout the development of our hardware program," explained Track-



tion co-founder, Dave Christenson. "Merging Tracktion and 2JW into a single company is intended to streamline operations and speed products to market. After a couple years of close cooperation, we're pleased to finally bring everyone together under one roof, so to speak."

Tracktion is best known as the developer of the popular Tracktion digital audio workstation (DAW), which is designed for use by musicians without a studio engineering background. The company has also released Master Mix, a mastering quality audio processing plugin and plans to release the virtual instrument, BioTek, shortly.

The new hardware group will focus on the design and manufacture of limited run, high value recording products currently intended for manufacture in the US.

PLASA Confirms Olympia Move

Audio and lighting show PLASA, has ended its three-year stay at London's ExCeL, promising a revamped and reinvigorated event at Olympia next year.

The 2016 show will move forward on the calendar, running from September 18-20 to be more aligned with the industry's purchasing cycle and before the touring season begins.

Christopher Toulmin, director of PLASA Events, said: "We are grateful to Platinum Sponsor Robe, Gold Sponsor Clay Paky and Silver Sponsor TMB, as well as all the exhibitors and visitors for their help in making PLASA Show 2015 a success."

"It was good to end our stay at ExCeL on a high and we are excited to be moving back to West London in 2016 for a new, refocused PLASA Show at Olympia."

He continued: "We have listened to a great deal of feedback and are making some significant changes to ensure that, next year, we will deliver an event that is better aligned for the needs of the market. With the continued success and support of the industry for our Focus events, next year's London Show will build on what we have learned."

Drum Show Launch for British Drum Co.

Drum manufacturing start-up, The British Drum Company, will be launching at November's London Drum Show.

The firm is a joint venture between master drum maker Keith Keough, Kasabian drummer Ian Mathews, top-level military marching drummer Stu Warmington, British product designer Alan Kitching and comedian and drumming enthusiast, Al Murray, better known as The Pub Landlord.

It will be bringing hand crafted drum kits and marching drums to the show, which takes place from 21st-22nd November at London Olympia, where it will hold its official launch.

"I have never felt so positive about a team of people or drum brand! The passion, drive, and commitment for this new venture will be apparent throughout our new and exciting range of drums," said Keough.

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Yamaha Rolls Out Electronic Drum Roadshow

Yamaha Music Europe (UK) is demonstrating its electronic drum range and showcasing new products for 2015 with a series of events throughout the UK in November and December. Led by Yamaha UK's DTX Demonstrator Simon Edgoose, the sessions are aimed at providing an overview of the full potential of Yamaha's DTX electronic drum range including the new DTX582 kit, DTXM-12 Multi Pad drum machine, and the apps for iOS devices.

Simon has been playing professionally since he moved to London at 18, working in many different areas of the music industry from being a member of various signed bands, a first call session player or offering technical support for some of the biggest drummers around. He is highly experienced in electronic percussion and as such has been involved with Yamaha's R&D team in London supporting many new product designs and creating voice content exclusively for Yamaha and offering technical support.

During the one-hour sessions he will highlight all of the new features with performances and advice, then hands on sessions are available with personal one to one advice from the drummer. The sessions are suitable for all levels of drummers, those who already play Yamaha or those who do not, those who are already use electronic drums or those who are considering.

Booking space to this event is essential, to secure your place call the store number attached to the location you want to attend.

At the heart of the new DTX502 Series is the all-new, redesigned, re-engineered, and re-voiced DTX502 Drum Trigger Module, which delivers brand new rock, jazz and electronic kits and include real Yamaha Acoustic Drum Samples. USB connectivity allows it to be easily interfaced with computers, apps and its internal memory can store samples or songs from Yamaha Music Soft. Complementing the DTX502 series are

the pads themselves either the DTX Pads or the newly designed rubber pads both designed to provide a soft feel and wider dynamic range.

Dates:

- Nov. 3** – Academy of Sound, Stoke on Trent (6pm onwards)
- Nov. 4** – Manchester Drum, Manchester (6pm onwards)
- Nov. 5** – Drum Shop, Gateshead, Newcastle (6pm onwards)
- Nov. 7** – PMT Birmingham (10am – 4pm)
- Nov. 14** – Wembley Drum, London (10am – 6pm)
- Nov. 15** – PMT Bristol (11am – 5pm)
- Nov. 17** – Bonners, Eastbourne (6pm onwards)
- Nov. 28** – Absolute Music, Poole (10am – 6pm)
- Dec. 5** – Yamaha Music London, London (10am – 6pm)

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New UK Distributor for Dean Markley

Blackstar's distribution arm, DIST-X has taken on exclusive UK distribution of the Dean Markley string brand. It takes over the UK and Ireland distribution from Korg, which took it on in 2013.



DIST-X UK sales manager, Drew McDonald commented: "Dean Markley are among the best strings in the world and we are proud to have them under the Dist-X umbrella. We feel the history and the quality behind the products and the brand will ensure a strong footing in the UK market."

Dean Markley's CEO John Weaver added: "We are very excited about our new partnership with DIST-X. We believe their market intelligence, energetic and modern advertising approach and their management are among the very best in the industry and we look forward to Dean Markley products being distributed by their team."

PRO Show Makes Changes

Marked Events has outlined the changes it will be making to next year's PRO audio and technology show, changing the days and moving it to a new venue.

Next year PRO will expand into the Genting Arena (formerly the LG Arena) and across two NEC halls. The new space will allow for improved noise separation and indoor and outdoor exhibiting opportunities, additional educational areas and new B2B hospitality packages.

"2016 marks a landmark year for PRO, as it moves into an expansive, more-flexible space inside the Genting Arena," said show director, Mark Walsh. "We understand that the industry is always changing, which is why our vision is for a fresh, exciting event that provides an experience-driven exhibition floor, an extensive learning programme and the opportunity to socialise and do business. The move into the Genting Arena will ensure that PRO is even more dynamic and feature-rich in 2016, providing a show that gathers the industry together and continues to build the future."

As well as changing its venue, organiser Marked Events will also be adjusting the days for PRO, moving forward by one day to run Sunday-Tuesday from 11th-13th September.

Despite its adjustment in days and new location, PRO will remain collocated with the annual BPM DJ and Electronic Music Production event.

German Trade Bodies Come Together

Five of Germany's musical trade bodies and associations are now together under one roof, having moved to a new shared building in Berlin.

The German Music Publishers' Association (DMV), the Society Of Music Merchants (SOMM), the General Association of German Music Retailers (GDM), the Federal Association of German Private Music Schools (BDPM) and the Federation of German piano makers (BDK) are all now sharing a single address and believe it will improve networking between the various associations.

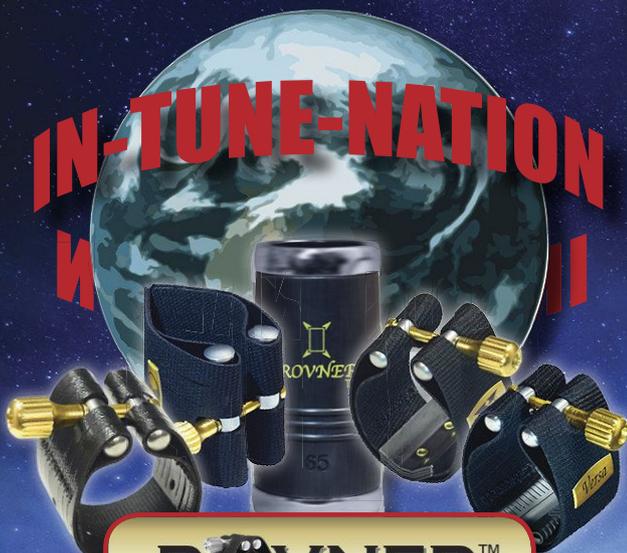
The DMV, GDM, and BDK moved from Bonn to the capital, while SOMM and the BDPM were already located in Berlin.

"I look forward to a good and cooperative partnership under one roof. I would also like to see synergies from which all organisations can benefit," explained Daniel Knöll, managing director of the Society of Music Merchants.

Dr. Heinz Stroh, managing director of DMV, GDM, and BDK, added: "The move from Bonn to Berlin, means we can act more quickly to our members when it comes to cooperation with federal institutions. In addition, it will mean we are working more closely together in today's troubled times."

Mario Müller, chairman of BDPM, said: "After only 18 years, the BDPM is still a very young organisation, but in the field of music education we are gaining momentum. For us the joint office is a further step in the professionalisation of our association."

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Trade Regrets

On October 15th, NAMM's Dan Del Fiorentino sent the following message:

Don Banks passed away yesterday at the age of 86. Don was a band director who felt he could have more of an impact on music makers by providing them with quality instruments. In 1967 he opened Don Banks Music in Tampa, Florida to serve the local school bands. Over the years he expanded the store to include a full line of product offerings and repair service for all musicians. Don's son, Mitchel, joined the company right out of school as did Don's grandson.



J.P. Moats, co-founder of Heritage Guitar, Inc. in Kalamazoo, Michigan passed away on September 18th – reportedly of complications from injuries suffered during a car crash on September 14th. He was 79. Moats worked as a luthier for Gibson Guitars for 27 years, prior to Gibson's relocation to outside of Nashville, Tennessee in 1984. He and two former co-workers formed Heritage Guitar, eventually moving the operation to the old Gibson Guitar factory on Parsons Street, where Heritage continues to be based. J.P. Moats continued to work at Heritage until 2010 when he "semi-retired" and moved back to his family home in Alabama.



On October 4th, we received this news from NAMM's Dan Del Fiorentino:

In 1946, just a few years after marrying the love of his life, Polly, **Dick Ellis** opened a small retail music store in Vermont. Since that time the store has grown to cover hundreds of school music programs in and around the state as well as transition to a second generation when his son took over the store. Dick played saxophone for a number of big bands during the great Swing Era. He played in Mal Hallett's Orchestra and was invited to join Gene Krupa's band but decided to focus on his dream of running his own store. When Dick passed away last week at the age of 91, the first thing I thought of was, at last he will be reunited with his dear Polly, who passed in 2007. His store remains a vital business, now run by his three children and the role he played in bringing music to countless students over his long career will forever be a part of his musical legacy.



Yoshinori Kimbara, a former Yamaha Japan Corporation executive who worked under Genichi Kawakami beginning in the 1950s, passed away on September 3rd. Kimbara was the first general manager of the Yamaha Music Foundation, tasked with strengthening music education programs in Japan.



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ON THE MOVE

St. Louis Music (SLM) has appointed **Richard Grossman** to the newly created position of national sales manager.



"Richard will work closely with our outside team to help them manage the extraordinary growth St. Louis Music is experiencing," says Mark Ragin, president and CEO of St. Louis Music. "His first major task is to help the outside team expand the retail footprint of our newest strategic partner, SABIAN Cymbals."

Grossman has over 35 years experience as an outside sales representative of a major company in the music and distribution business. "I am very excited to be joining St. Louis Music," Grossman comments. "For many years, SLM was a major competitor to my former company, but I was always impressed with how they conducted business with their dealers. The new team at SLM is a very seasoned and dynamic group. I am looking forward to being part of that team, and continuing SLM's tremendous growth and success."

SLM has also announced that **Rich Dumstorff** has been appointed to the newly created position of vice president of the SLM Marketplace, St. Louis Music's extensive catalog of accessories.



"Rich has worked for SLM over the past 17 years as an inside sales person and as the Call Center manager," says Ragin. "Rich will work closely with all of SLM's current and future accessory suppliers to ensure SLM offers the optimum representation of all our accessory brands. Rich will also work on re-establishing several house brand accessory items as well. Rich is returning to SLM after a three-year stint as an outside road sales person."

Dumstorff also commented about his new position: "I am very excited to be coming back to SLM as the VP SLM Marketplace. Most retailers in the USA market relied on the accessory offer-

ing within the SLM Marketplace for many years. I am proud to be bringing the SLM Marketplace brand back to the prominence it deserves! The new team at SLM is a very seasoned and dynamic team. I am looking forward to being part of that team, and continuing the extraordinary growth SLM is experiencing."



Ken Blecher (NSM) with **Giovanni Barbieri** (sales and marketing director of dBTechnologies) in dBTechnologies' headquarters in Bologna, Italy.

American Music & Sound (AM&S) has announced the appointment of **Ken Blecher** as national sales manager for dBTechnologies.

dBTechnologies, headquartered in Bologna, Italy, is one of the industry's forerunners in active speaker and dig-

ital amplifier technologies. Blecher's role is to increase sales within the United States by providing essential marketing strategies and product training to dealers and representatives.

AM&S president Lynn Martin is thrilled to welcome Blecher onboard. "Ken is an industry veteran who has a knack for the MI, Production, and Installation Audio Markets. He also has extensive experience developing international brands throughout the U.S.," Martin said.

As a pro audio sales professional with over 30 years of experience, Blecher's career has always been based around his passion for sound. He has watched dBTechnologies grow over time and knows what it takes to develop and market products around the world.

"I'm excited to be apart of dBTechnologies' expansion," Blecher said. "This is a great opportunity for all of us to work together as a team to promote the brand in North America."

AM&S and dBTechnologies, announced their partnership earlier this year. The two companies will kick off their U.S. distribution arrangement with the introduction of the ES 503, the first born of dBTechnologies' ES Entertainment System series.

Nominee for Acoustic Guitar of the Year





2015

MMR

MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

DEALERS CHOICE AWARD

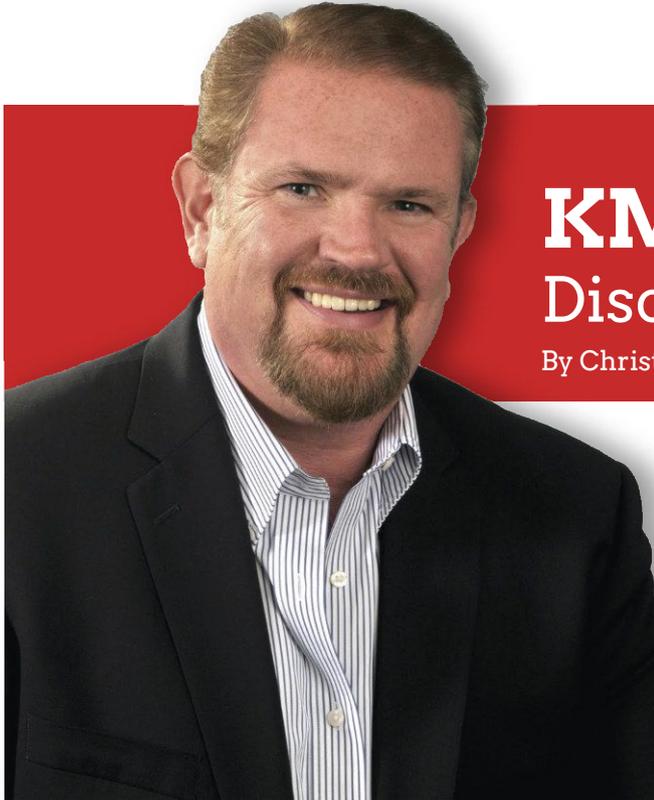
Acoustic Guitar of the Year

Nominee

Trad 2

Acoustic Guitar

We need **YOUR** vote, Dealers!



KMC's Mark Terry Discusses an Eventful Year

By Christian **Wissmuller**

“That’s our goal and our promise to dealers – to be the biggest, best, and fastest solutions provider in the business.”

What’s the primary catalyst for all of these changes?

Technology and the resulting demands and expectations of consumers. Let’s face it, our customers’ customers now have more choice in all product categories than ever before – and that’s a good thing. It means the industry is succeeding while it changes. However, consumers have been conditioned to get what they want when they want it. They don’t want their choices to be limited by what is only available in the store. They do their research online and then expect to see that product in the store. Since retailers can’t keep every possible SKU in stock they need to rely, more than ever, on a large strong wholesale distributor. When a customer comes in and has seen something on the Internet, the dealer needs to be able to get that item for the customer in 24-48 hours. It’s a hybrid business model that is emerging in the retail MI space and it offers the potential to be a very healthy one for manufacturers, retailers, and customers – but the driver that makes this model work is the distributor that can deliver the most number of solutions in every product category in the fastest amount of time. That’s our goal and our promise to dealers – to be the biggest, best, and fastest solutions provider in the business. And we’re doing it.

Can you go into more detail?

Sure. Since March of this year, at KMC we have added at least eighteen new brands to our portfolio, including Paiste, Supro, Rhythm Tech, Keeley Pedals, Mono Bags, Mooer Pedals, Pigtronix Pedals, RCF professional audio products, Suzuki Harmonicas, Latin Percussion, Toca, and Gibraltar. We expanded our field sales force by appointing three new regional sales managers in the Southeast, West/Northwest, and Mid-Atlantic regions.

What’s the long-term vision for the JAM U.S. Music Group?

KMC Music is now the primary distribution company in the United States for many of the brands previously distributed by U.S. Music. For our dealers, it’s going to mean immediate access to a broader range of industry-leading brands that are backed by KMC’s legendary customer support. U.S. Music will serve as a developer of brands, leaving the sales and distribution to KMC Music and Davitt & Hanser.

To say that the past 12 months or so have seen a lot of changes for KMC Music could be safely qualified as an understatement: In January of 2015, the organization (still at the time a subsidiary of FMIC) sold all of its percussion brands, as well as Ovation Guitars, to Drum Workshop; Just one month later, FMIC completed an asset sale of the KMC Music wholesale distribution business and proprietary brands to JAM Industries, Ltd.; early June saw the opening of a new KMC headquarters in Connecticut and relocation of warehousing and distribution to Mississippi; later that same month KMC became the U.S. distributor for Supro amps; July saw KMC being named sole U.S. distributor for Paiste America; and this fall, the organization was named the American distributor for Rhythm Tech after JAM Industries acquired the brand.

And that’s really only scratching the surface.

Like I say – a busy year.

Recently *MMR* sat down with JAM U.S. Music Group CEO/KMC Music president, Mark Terry, to chat about all of the developments of the past year, as well as his expectations for the coming months.

2015 has been nothing short of dramatic over at KMC Music. Can you discuss what’s been going on?

Mark Terry: We’re rewriting all the rules that need to be re-written for us to serve as the 21st Century’s leading full-service MI and pro audio distribution company. That’s what’s going on at KMC Music in a nutshell – and the effort encompasses just about every aspect of what we do. Since being acquired by JAM Industries, by far North America’s largest MI and pro audio distribution company, we now have the resources and commitment needed to add more products to our portfolio, more sales professionals to our field and call center teams, new MIS and order processing systems, and a new automated warehouse distribution center that is going to greatly accelerate ‘just in time’ delivery of products to our customers.

U.S. Music has done an outstanding job of developing and managing our own proprietary brands such as Washburn, Randall, Oscar Schmidt, Jay Turser, and others. They will continue that focus as well as take on the management of brands that we own in KMC like Barcus Berry, Jasmine, Hilo, MBT, and others. They will be our center of excellence in brand management and marketing. We will be investing heavily in this area. Additionally they will handle international sales for those products and continue focused distribution of a limited number of premier brands like Marshall, Eden, Natal, and Digitech.

KMC Music and Davitt & Hanser will be the centers of excellence for U.S. distribution and dealer support. Each company has a different product mix and customer base. They have operated independently and successfully in the industry for years and will continue to do so. KMC Music will now sell many of U.S. Music's brands such as Washburn, Randall, and others, alongside Hagstrom, Warwick, and the more than 250 other brands they currently carry. As another example Davitt & Hanser will now be selling our Jay Turser brand.

The KMC Music Sales force is taking on quite a lot in a short time – up to the challenge?

Absolutely! KMC Music has over 40 outside and inside sales people that have already been trained to bring these additional products to market through our retail network that now exceeds 6,500 dealers. We have 10 seasoned sales managers to provide additional in-field support all across the country, and we're not

done. Over the next few months you will see us add additional resources to every part of our sales and support teams.

With NAMM on the horizon, what are your expectations for 2016?

Winter NAMM will be a great show for us this year. We will be launching hundreds of new products. In the long term the industry continues to have legs. As long as human beings enjoy making music there will always be an MI business to serve them. That might sound simplistic, but I think we all have to remember that making music is a central part of the human experience. This reality about human nature is what will keep our industry thriving even as it is constantly forced to change. Yes, we as an industry are going to be challenged – and challenged in every part of the business: mix of product, retail structure, and delivery technologies. When you think about it, though, challenge has always been a big part of this business. The key to *sustaining* success in this business is for retailers to execute strategically and consistently in a number of different initiatives around the music space in their community. The retail MI business is no longer, if it really ever was, a business where retailers could simply hang product on the wall and wait for customers to come into the store to make a purchase. But they're not alone in this effort. That's exactly where KMC Music can really become a true partner in the cause. We have the resources, the product mix, the delivery technologies, as well as the training and support that can help our retailers to continue to meet the challenges posed by change. **MMR**

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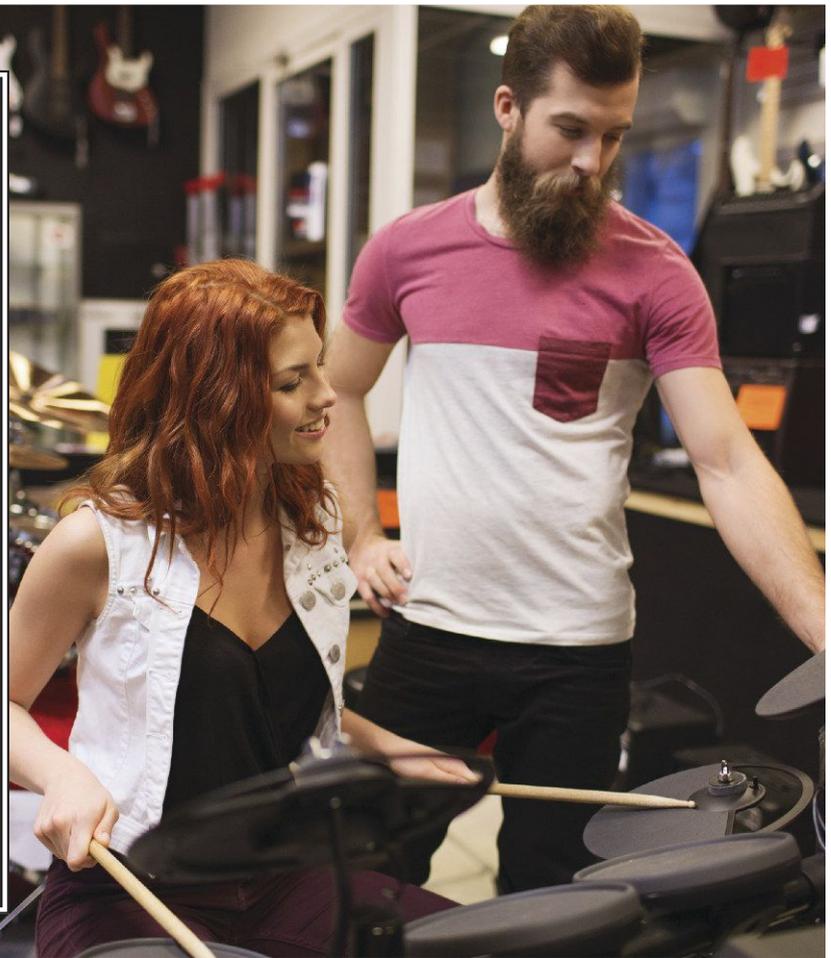
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THE BEAT GOES ON

Major Players in Electronic
Drums & Percussion Discuss
Trends in the Market Segment

By Christian **Wissmuller**



Interest in electronic percussion had sort of “ebbed and flowed” from the ‘70s through the early 2000s, but in recent years it seems like those types of instruments have solidly moved past being considered – by some – to be a passing fad and are now embraced by many players. What do you think are some of the major drivers behind the evolution to the current level of acceptance and appreciation?

Drew Armentrout: Great question, and frankly, there are a few factors that have come into play. With electronic drum sets, playability and feel are key. Although there is a clear distinction between an acoustic drum set and the electronic counterpart, improving the playability and responsiveness has made it easier for the acoustic-only player to appreciate today’s instruments without having to modify or adapt to something that feels radically different. The instrument should always be a tool that works for the player, not a design that impedes them or feels awkward. A more obvious change is in the quality of sound, not just in terms of emulation, but also expressiveness. In other words, as the components of the kit respond to the player’s playing style and technique, so should the sounds in terms of expressiveness and dynamic range, whether they are playing a cymbal swell, a buzz roll on a snare, articulating the nuances of a hi-hat, or the character of a percussion instrument. (Not to mention the ability to play virtually silently with headphones in a practice, teaching, rehearsal, or recording environment.) Aside from the technological advances, contemporary music of practically every style requires the modern drummer or percussionist to use some type of electronic percussion. It is simply an essential tool.

Steven Fisher: In the past, electronic percussion systems consisted entirely of pads and modules, which hardly constituted a fully functioning electronic drum set. These systems incorporated synth sounds that made it a fad for the music of that period, and the player typically had to incorporate their acoustic cymbals to make a “complete” drum set.

The ‘90s marked the debut of the electronic “drum set,” which evolved into more advanced and “acoustic” feeling sets with quality and expressive acoustic drum samples in the 2000s. Still, acoustic drummers with their “electric counterpart” remained far behind keyboard players and guitar players who had these electric/acoustic options for decades. The most important factor for growth in recent years has been people’s desire to have a “quiet” solution that allowed for more drumming opportunities in noise-sensitive locations, as well as a way to directly record drum performances in today’s smaller studios, much like keyboardists and guitar players do. Just as the electric guitar market experienced significant growth in the ‘50s and ‘60s, we see great potential for the electronic drum market. It’s still in its infancy with a lot of room to grow.

Mark Moralez: I give a great deal of credit to Yamaha and especially Roland for their continued development of electronic e-drum kits and modules. I think the V-Drum kit finally broke new ground for drummers looking for an e-kit that could really take a beating and have a stylized look and feel of an acoustic drum kit. The mesh head allowed for better sensitivity and response on the pads while keeping the volume fairly low. However newer pads like Yamaha’s silicone pad have now given drummers another option in feel that still has great play-

ability. When KAT first came on the scene in 1985 with the MalletKat and the DrumKat controllers they used FSR pads. That was a huge breakthrough in a trigger surface because it was not dependent on vibration like standard piezo pads are. However KAT didn't get into making full size e-kits until just a few years ago. The current KAT e-kits are using a piezo trigger design that allows us to keep the kits affordable while still maintaining a great response, look, and feel. With KAT e-drum kits we use large rubber pads that are very low in ambient volume but have excellent dynamic response. Still, we have not abandoned FSR for our e-kits but are working on perfecting it now. Another huge reason for e-drum acceptance has to be the creation of great drum software from companies like ToonTrack, XLN, Steven Slate, BFD, and many others. These programs contain gigabytes of ultra hi-end samples that can easily be used with e-kits. So drummers are no longer tied to using internal sampled sounds. In that sense the e-kit is being used as a control surface to play software sounds from your computer. Overall though I think the volume issue of acoustic drums has made it so drummers have had to find a way to practice without driving the neighbors and family members crazy. Cities are more crowded than ever and the ambient volume of acoustic drums is a big issue.

Bob Sabellico: Today's music demands electronic sounds and the drummer has to be able to create them on stage. The drummer is responsible for triggering sounds that may have been sampled from the original track to make the live performance a true representation of the song. Guitar and keyboard players have been faced with this issue for years and now the drummer faces the same type of sonic demands.

Mike Sutton: Some of the major trends for drummers using electronic percussion are that they are more affordable, readily available, sound better, and also they are easier to use than earlier versions that came to the market in the 1980s/'90s. There are multiple options for today's drummer to choose from to fit the intended "gig" applications.

Mike Robinson: Originally, electronic drums couldn't mimic the experience of playing an acoustic kit...both in terms of feel and playback quality. The sounds emitted worked well for niche musical genres, but failed to accurately represent the different styles of music and the needs of the majority of players. Electronic drums have come much closer to filling those needs, at least for those utilizing the instrument for home practice, recording, and within the worship market where volume control is critical. Utilization of full electronic kits in most live playing settings has grown within some segments, but it's still the minority application.

Tim Root: I think there have been a couple major drivers in the acceptance of electronic drums over the last decade or so. First, electronic drum technology has improved tremendously. The electronic drum products today are so much better than ever before. The sound is better, they feel and play better, they're easy to use, and they give you an incredible amount of creative power. The other thing is that technology in general has embedded itself in almost every facet of our life. So much technology is used in making music nowadays it's a natural for drummers to use electronic drums now.

Hybrid drum kits and other peripherals or accessories that allow players to enjoy the benefits of both acoustic and electronic instruments have been becoming more and more of a factor in the market. Do you feel this is the "trend of the future"?

SF: Driven by the trends in today's music, hybrid sets represent a logical and exciting evolutionary change from the traditional drum set, which has been continually evolving for over 100+ years. For sure, growth slowed at times, marking smaller, incremental improvements, but it has never been at a standstill. Drummers are constantly searching for new sounds to enhance their sets, and electronics provide a great way for them to dramatically increase their sound options, and allow them to express themselves in new, creative ways.

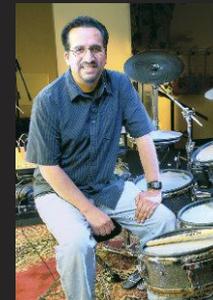
Yamaha is addressing this trend with DTX Hybrid Packs that are a one-box solution with everything the drummers need to start hybrid drumming — sound module, triggers, pads, cables, and mounting hardware. We also have step-by-step videos posted on YamahaDTX.com that demonstrate how to set everything up, including files for the module so that drummers don't have to do any programming. It couldn't be any easier for drummers to create a hybrid set.



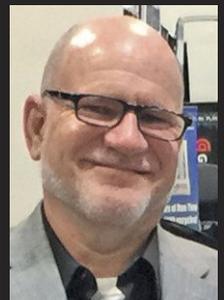
Drew Armentrout – Product & Artist Relations Manager, Drums & Percussion, Roland Corporation U.S.



Steven Fisher – Marketing Manager, Yamaha Drums, Yamaha Corporation of America



Mark Moralez – Brand Manager, Kat Percussion, Drum Workshop, Inc.



Tim Root – Alesis Drums Product Manager, InMusic Brands, Inc.



Bob Sabellico – Product Manager, Electronic Percussion, Pearl Corp.



Mike Sutton – Gen16 Product Manager, Avedis Zildjian Company



Mike Robinson – Vice President of Marketing, KHS America, Inc.

BS: Absolutely! Many Pearl artists are using hybrid kits that incorporate our Tru Trac pads with their acoustic kits. We have designed kits for Tommy Lee, Mike Mangini, and Brian Frasier Moore and they are always looking to push the envelope with new additions to their kit configuration. Pearl is a 70 year-old acoustic drum company and we recognize the benefit of electronic percussion. We are fully committed to the development of products in the electronic percussion market.

MS: The hybrid kit concept really comes from professional drummers needing to incorporate specific sounds from songs into live performance, as audiences are demanding exact reproductions of their favorite songs in a live show. Recently the products have become more compact so the working and club level performers can incorporate this technology more. We see this trend moving forward as technology continues to evolve and be refined. Everyone from players, manufactures, and engineers will be delving deeper into the electronic percussion waters as it is a future avenue of the instrument.

MR: Yes, and this trend is only going to grow. Drummers now have options to augment their acoustic kit by adding multi-pads that give them the ability to



Yamaha Stage Custom Hybrid set

expand the pallet of sounds and trigger backing tracks and samples. In many cases, this is actually changing the role of the drummer in bands as they're able to expand their creative contribution to the music. The limiting factor of what's been done to date is in the placement of the pads. Rather than the single location of a multi-pad, drummers need the freedom to place electronic trigger surfaces in and around the kit so they can be more accessible in the midst of playing. The last thing a drummer wants to do is

finish a fast fill on the floor tom and then immediately have to find a 6" x 6" target to the left of their hi-hat to cue a sample.

TR: Yes, I do see the "hybrid" concept becoming more and more of a factor in the market. Playing a hybrid setup is heaven for the drummer. It's the best of both worlds. Whenever I have the opportunity to put my dream drum setup together it's always a hybrid setup.

MM: I view hybrid setups as a bridge between acoustic drummers and electronic drummers. Modern music has so much production in it now that many drummers see a need to add e-pads to their setup to have access to various trigger samples that will fit into their set list. Just about every major touring or TV drummer will also have some sort of hybrid setup or control pad in their setup. I see more and more integration of these trigger setups coming in the future. The multipad/trigger trend now is also including DJ's who want to be more interactive with the music. In the future I can see more and more looping being included in live gigs to give more expression to the music. The interactive sample loop scene is growing quickly.

DA: Hybrid drumming of course is nothing new, as drummers have been incorporating some type of electronic device for decades. The use of triggers, multi-percussion pads, auxiliary pads, and various sound sources has been an evolving process, and even though musical trends and styles have changed during these years, the use has never really gone away. Today, these hybrid components typically have better design elements, are more reliable, and of

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Tommy Lee's (Mötley Crüe) Pearl kit, with r.e.d. box Sound Module

in our products. We have developed a strong following in the Worship market because they require a kit that looks like a real set of drums and featured the traditional sizes of an acoustic kit. Drummers were asked to play electronic kits at the services because of sound issues and we have worked closely with them to address their needs.

TR: I think the look of electronic drum kits is still one of the biggest turn-offs for many drummers. Electronic drums just don't look as cool as acoustic drums and cymbals... yet!

MM: Drummers are always searching for the best feel and will relate and compare the feel of electronic drum pads to real, acoustic drums. Until we can really nail that feel in an electronic playing surface while keeping the volume down some drummers will continue to be hesitant to jump all in with electronic drums. Also, the setup time and portability is still an issue. Plugging in multiple wires and speaker cables is a drag not to mention dialing in a decent mix. In live gig situations there really is very little time to experiment with mixes or to troubleshoot connection problems. These issues need to be improved so that drummers can feel confident that their e-drum setups will enhance rather than hinder the gig.

course, the available sound sources are in abundance and are sonically superior to what was available in the past. Also, these peripherals and accessories are more affordable, making them more accessible to a wider range of players. Again, today's music almost always requires some type of electronic percussion for the contemporary drummer, and the hybrid approach is another means for players to achieve these musical goals. I expect to see more of these types of products in the future.

BS: The tide has really turned in this category and we don't hear as many players saying they hate electronic drums but they do have issues with the look and feel of some of the kits. When we designed our E pro kit, we asked drummers what they were looking for in an electronic kit. Since we have a building full of drummers and percussion experts, we compiled a huge list of requests and that is how we came up with the real drum set look and feel

What do you feel are some of the aspects, if any, of electronic drums & percussion that remain a barrier or turn-off to certain players?

MS: The major trade-off for certain players has been that the user experience of early electronic drum products was not good. They were not "drummer friendly" or they didn't "feel right" with non-drum like playing surfaces. This was especially true of the cymbal playing options until the Gen16 system came into the market which feature real cymbals with a specialized hole pattern to reduce the volume while keeping the authentic Zildjian feel. Then we use our Direct Source pickups to take the audio signal from Buffed Bronze cymbals and run it through the DSP in the Digital Cymbal Processor to create Tone Shapes. These Tone Shapes allow drummers to have cymbal sound variations from bright to dark and thin to full. The Gen16 system has helped remove one of the barriers of using electronics by having a better playing experience.

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DA: In some cases, it is awareness, not knowing the capabilities, and resistance to change from a “comfort-zone.” Although I previously mentioned the importance of great feel and response from these instruments, electronic drums and percussion are not intended to replace their acoustic counterparts; they serve as an additional means to achieve a musical end. Some resistance may initially originate from the instruments not feeling exactly like the acoustic instrument, which can give some players a negative first impression. This negative first impression can be increased by factors such as inadequate monitoring and amplification.

SF: One of the main barriers is the interface to the technology. That’s why Yamaha introduced free iOS apps for our DTX products. These valuable tools effectively flatten out the learning curve and make more of the features easily visible. If you can run an app, you can run your DTX module. In most cases, the only time I put my hands on the DTX module is to turn it on and off.



Zildjian's Gen16 AE Cymbal System in Buffed Bronze

Another barrier is the relative newness of electronic drum sets, which may require drummers to get acclimated to a different instrument – just as keyboard players did with electric pianos/synthesizers and guitar players did with electric guitars. These musicians have had their electronic counterparts for a much longer period of time and have come to embrace them. Electronic drums can most certainly have “acoustic feel” qualities and some crossover applications, but they’re a different instrument and

will never take the place of an acoustic.

MR: First, the look of electronic kits to this point have been a turn-off for many drummers as they don’t fill the space like acoustic drums do, the cymbals don’t glisten under the lights as well, etc. There’s something about the look of an acoustic drum set, regardless of the genre, that’s tough to replace. It’s the centerpiece on a stage. The other turn-off for players that want the ability to practice at home is the trade-off they’ve been asked to make. Most people don’t have space enough for two full kits and certainly don’t want to disassemble/reassemble every time they want to switch between acoustic and electronic. The NFUZZ system eliminates this concern as the pads sit directly on top of the acoustic drums and can be put on or taken off in a matter of minutes without having to remove rims and heads. This allows drummers to enjoy the best of both worlds within a limited practice space...the sound and feel of acoustic drums when nobody is around to care about the noise, and electronics at night when the kids are sleeping or when the neighbors want peace and quiet. The other major turn off is that up till now, the sound samples included in the modules have been highly compressed and don’t live up to the sound of real drums. NFUZZ has taken the option to fill the available memory with uncompressed samples and get rid of all the quirky sounds that nobody uses more than once...like barking dogs and car horns. This brings the experience of hearing the samples a lot closer to what drummers are used to when playing their acoustic drums. For those that desire more sounds, we’ve included a copy of BFD Eco NFUZZ Edition VST which has a huge library with the ability to expand and an easy export to module function.

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Zildjian's L80 Low Volume 468 Box Set

For your own brand, how are sales of electronic drums & percussion instruments compared to this same time in 2014?

SF: Yamaha DTX products have done very well this year compared to last year, and we are very excited about the future in electronic drum and percussion products.

DA: Our sales, in the U.S. market in particular, are up year to date from 2014, which of course is encouraging. The month to month sales this year are also consistently strong, which indicates that our dealers are experiencing strong sell through to consumers.

MM: In our situation with Kat, sales are consistent with last year even though we were recently acquired by Drum Workshop at the beginning of 2015. The great thing about Drum Workshop is that they believe in making very high quality products. They have blazed a trail of innovation in acoustic drums that has set the bar very high. Now with KAT all of us here at DW are very excited to bring that same energy and mind set to our on-going development of electronic drum and percussion instruments. We've kept the momentum going and are even launching new higher-end products this year such as the KT4 kit and the HD400 2.1 e-drum speaker system. Very exciting times for KAT and DW.

BS: Right now our focus is on our EPAD conversion kits that allow you to convert you existing acoustic kit to electronic. We do offer the E Pro powered by Export Kit as a turnkey option, but we are seeing a growth in the conversion market. Sales have been steady and we are tracking ahead of 2014.

MS: We have seen continued excitement for our Gen16 line, but we mirror the changes in the electric drum market. This is because we have a unique product offering that is purchased for use on existing drum sets and electronic drum kits. Also we have expanded into new market opportunities such as the new L80 Low Volume, which are strictly for the acoustic drum market.

What models, in particular, are your hottest sellers in 2015?

TR: Our low-priced DM6 kit and the new DM10 mesh kits are all doing well. Our SamplePad Pro multi-pad is flying off the shelves. It's been a huge success.

MM: Our KT3 kit has been a great seller for us as well as the KTMP1 Multi-

pad. Both of these units offer an incredible bang for the buck. Our KTUI26 headphones have also received rave reviews for sound quality and outside isolation while still being very affordable.

DA: In drum sets, we have hot sellers at several price points. At the \$999-\$1,600 range the TD-11K and TD-11KV have been consistent sellers since their introduction in 2012, and our newer TD-25K and TD-25KV (introduced in April, 2015) are selling very well. The flagship TD-30KV and TD-30K models are still great sellers as well. In the percussion area, the SPD-SX Sampling Pad is the industry standard and a strong selling product, and our new RT-30 Acoustic Triggers are being embraced by the industry, and are in very strong demand.

MS: We recently launched the L80 Low Volume cymbals at Summer NAMM and there has been a great reception to the product, which utilizes some of the technology used in the Gen16 system while being completely acoustic. These cymbals feature a new alloy, finish style, logo, and market positioning.

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Yamaha DTX 502 Module



Roland TD-25 Drum Sound Module

BS: EPADRB conversion Kits and E pro Powered by Export.

SF: Our DTX400 series is a tremendous value for the money. The DTX400K is the quietest kit we make, but they all have an easy to use interface, great sounds, songs, and training exercises for any skill level. Unlike other kits in that price point, our system allows you to customize kits and sounds, as well as load new songs in the module, and the DTX400 Touch app makes it simple and intuitive. The DTX502 series kits have also done well. The DTX502 module also has free iOS apps, sample import, and a perfect module for a hybrid set, which is why it's the module in our DTX Hybrid Packs.

Are there any other trends in the market that you've been noticing?

SF: We've seen significant growth in education, as more and more educators are using electronic drums and percussion for a wide variety of learning and performance applications.

Yamaha possesses vast and deep

resources in acoustic drums, electronic drums, and audio products to take drums and drumming to the next level. This is why we are uniquely positioned to capitalize on the education market, and are truly excited about the future.

MR: We expect the category to change a little over the coming years... maybe not months. Like with most technology, consumers are going to expect more from it. They won't want a cluster of small targets that make the experience feel like playing on an expensive toy. They'll want their electronic drumming experience to more closely resemble the feel, sound, and positioning of their acoustic drums.

MS: A current trend in the electronic percussion market is the increase of tools that simplify the user experience ranging from apps that are easier to understand, to hardware panels on products. All this is a good thing, enabling drummers to embrace technology in day-to-day activities.

DA: One trend is simply the increasing number of choices available to the

Gatchell Violins



Many new Accessories have been added along with the addition of eight new Master Makers from Europe and China

- Ametto • H. Luger • Nicolas Parola*
- Stefan Petrov • Ricardo Galaini • Viktor Kereske*
- Plaman Edrev • Radiana Edreva • Nocolo Marcasi*
- Keith, Curtis & Clifton • Rudolph Fiedler*
- Danio Wu • Dennis Yi • Lefio Pan • Marco Jian*



Hermann Luger Bows



consumer. More and more manufacturers are developing and introducing electronic percussion, which is a very positive indicator for the electronic percussion business as a whole. And many new products naturally offer more features for less cost, which is true of any technology products as those technologies evolve and improve. The challenge is to refine and add these features while maintaining quality, reliability with consistent and attractive designs at a reasonable cost. My expectations in short are more growth, more choices, and incredible advances in newer technologies. It is a very exciting time!

MM: The trends I see now are DJ's getting into drumming and incorporating pads and triggers to their setups. I also see that the home studio scene is still happening and more drummers are utilizing VST software in their setups. I hope that soon we can break into wireless e-drum setups that are workable and affordable. I'm sure it will happen at some point. For now the trend is adding more realism to drum modules and im-

proving the quality of acoustic samples.

I also should mention that Mario DeCutiis is still the owner of the KAT brand name and is licensing it to DW so we can co-develop products and have a great sales force. We work closely together with ongoing development of new and future advanced product.

BS: Right now I am seeing what we call "The race to zero." The kits are getting cheaper and the features are very limited. Pearl is not going to enter this segment of the market at this juncture and we think that there is definitely an audience for a kit that is a "Game Changer." I expect that the 2016 NAMM show will have some new and exciting products because all of the existing big-ticket kits from the major manufacturers are a bit long in the tooth.

TR: I think the hybrid concept is going to continue to grow and the ability to interface with virtual drum software programs is going to be an area of growth going forward. Alesis has high expectations for 2016... that's all I'm going to say. **MIMR**



KAT Percussion KTMP1 multipad drum and percussion pad

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Note From Joe

Discover Tomorrow's Technology at NAMM: Increase Sales and Improve Your Business in 2016

Technology is intersecting with nearly every aspect of our lives, including our industry, as a wealth of new innovations drive our businesses forward and influence the ways in which our customers create, record and share music.

At The 2016 NAMM Show, you'll experience these changes firsthand as you explore new product introductions and take advantage of the many educational forums designed to make businesses more efficient and profitable through the use of technology.

Technology Products to Increase Sales and Grow Your Business

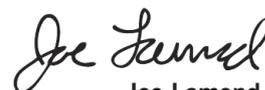
Your customers are embracing music technology like never before, moving seamlessly between our rich tradition of handcrafted instruments and the latest digital music and sound technology. From apps that help students learn faster, to products that enable musicians to create and share music on their smart phones, and new lighting and video ideas that enhance musical performances, NAMM exhibitors are now putting the finishing touches on thousands of innovative products they plan to debut in Anaheim. Your customers will look to you for guidance and to bring home the latest product news of what to buy in the New Year. I can't imagine how one could get the same information and knowledge from four days spent at NAMM in any other way.

Attending The NAMM Show gives you the first look at what's new for 2016, allowing you to demo groundbreaking products and meet inventors of the latest technologies. In the pro audio and lighting sector, new hardware and software releases will push the boundaries of live sound and event production. The 31st Annual NAMM TEC Awards show celebrates this fast-growing segment, recognizing creative excellence and gathering the community of audio equipment and software manufacturers, top music producers, engineers, sound mixers and musical artists. New this year, SOFTWARE.NAMM will showcase the emerging developer and app community, and illustrate how their solutions help to create more music makers worldwide.

Technology to Make Your Business More Efficient and Profitable

With enhanced education tracks, NAMM will help you understand and make the most of technology solutions that can help you grow your business. This year's Retail Boot Camp will feature SEO expert Larry Bailin, and—as an extension of this popular show feature—NAMM will also introduce Technology Boot Camp, providing a fundamental overview of the evolving tech landscape as it applies to retail. In addition, NAMM U will feature a variety of sessions designed to help dealers improve their websites and implement the latest digital marketing techniques. NAMM's new TEC Tracks (formerly The H.O.T. Zone) will showcase future-forward sessions in areas like game audio, app audio and other pro audio product breakthroughs. We're also working with A3E to present The Future of Audio, which will explore the many ways that new products and technologies will impact our industry going forward. Attending The NAMM Show will enable you to identify important technology trends, learn implementation tactics and gain helpful strategies so you can use these new solutions to your advantage.

While technology continues to play a role in our industry and our lives, some things will never change—music continues to define us as individuals, as a community and as a global industry dedicated to achieving NAMM's mission of a world in which the joy of making music is a precious element of daily living for everyone. See you at The NAMM Show, where the music begins.



Joe Lamond

NAMM PRESIDENT AND CEO

Over the last five years, The NAMM Show has seen an increase in the following product categories, offering attendees hundreds of new products to review:

-  **25%** Pro Audio
-  **26%** Computer Hardware and Software
-  **20%** DJ Equipment
-  **38%** Lighting
-  **6%** Technology Media

NAMM presents more education and events designed to grow your business and celebrate product communities:



NAMM TEC Awards
Celebrating the Best in Professional Audio and Sound Production



SOFTWARE.NAMM
THE MUSIC SOFTWARE COMMUNITY. Powered by NAMM & IMSTA

SOFTWARE.NAMM
The Music Software Community Presented by NAMM & IMSTA (International Music Software Trade Association)



Technology Boot Camp
Introducing Technology Boot Camp, basics retailers need to know to utilize new technology to their advantage



NAMM U
How-to tips, tactics and strategies for SEO, website development and other aspects of digital marketing



sound | studio | stage

TEC Tracks
Formerly The H.O.T Zone, 70+ advanced sessions for sound, stage and studio pros



We're seeing innovation and change everywhere—especially at this year's NAMM with the big guys releasing major new products and the infant industry of brands we'd never heard of jumping right in the mix with them."

Peter Dods
OWNER OF EASY MUSIC CENTER, HAWAII



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For more information and to purchase tickets, visit tecawards.org

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I Just Wanna Bang (Quietly, Even) on the Drum All Day!

Electronic Drums Continue to Appeal to a Niche Market, While Hybrid Kits are Here to Stay

By Christian **Wissmuller**

Based on this month's survey – sent out to over 450 MI retailers, globally – electronic drums & percussion represent a fairly static market segment in 2015. While more participants (almost 38 percent) indicated sales of these instruments were up this year than down or level, it was hardly a slam-dunk.

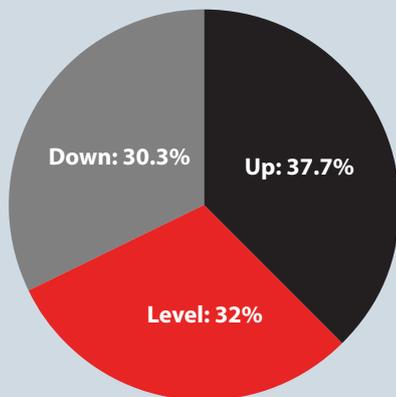
Trends that were frequently reported by dealers include the appeal of these types of drums to younger, intermediate players and the increased prevalence of hybrid (acoustic and electronic) drum kits, across all skill levels and ages.

Additionally, the “quiet factor” continues to be a selling point for

electronic drums & percussion, appealing to apartment-dwellers, parents, and others who just can't have (or don't want) the volume that comes along with traditional, acoustic kits.

Overall, these instruments seem to be serving an ever-growing number of needs as technology evolves and price-points drop. As Anthony Mantova of Eureka, California's Mantova's Music notes: “Electronic drums meet so many different needs, such as keeping the neighbors happy, maintaining controllable volumes in church, and the ease of folding up for storage. Those benefits span all age groups.”

Compared to this time in 2014, sales of electronic drums & percussion for your store are:



“Electronic drum sales are up, but acoustic drum sales are way down.”

Chad Clausen
Brass Bell Music Store
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

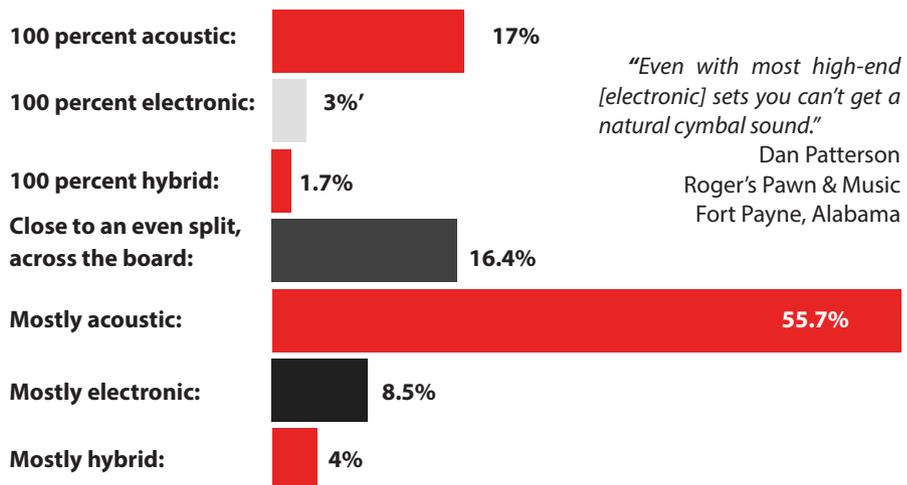
“It's a diminishing focus for us.”

Shane Kinney
Drum Center of Portsmouth
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

“Drums had a rough time in 2014, but this year sales are way up! We hand-built a great drum display that holds up to 16 drum kits, and subsequently drummers have chosen us as the place to go.”

Anthony Mantova
Mantova's Two Street Music
Eureka, California

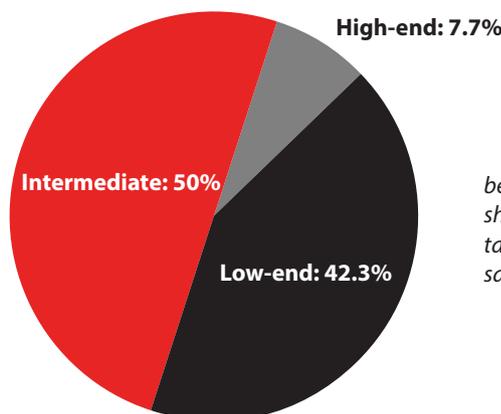
What's the breakdown, percentage-wise, of total drum sales for your operation?



“Even with most high-end [electronic] sets you can't get a natural cymbal sound.”

Dan Patterson
Roger's Pawn & Music
Fort Payne, Alabama

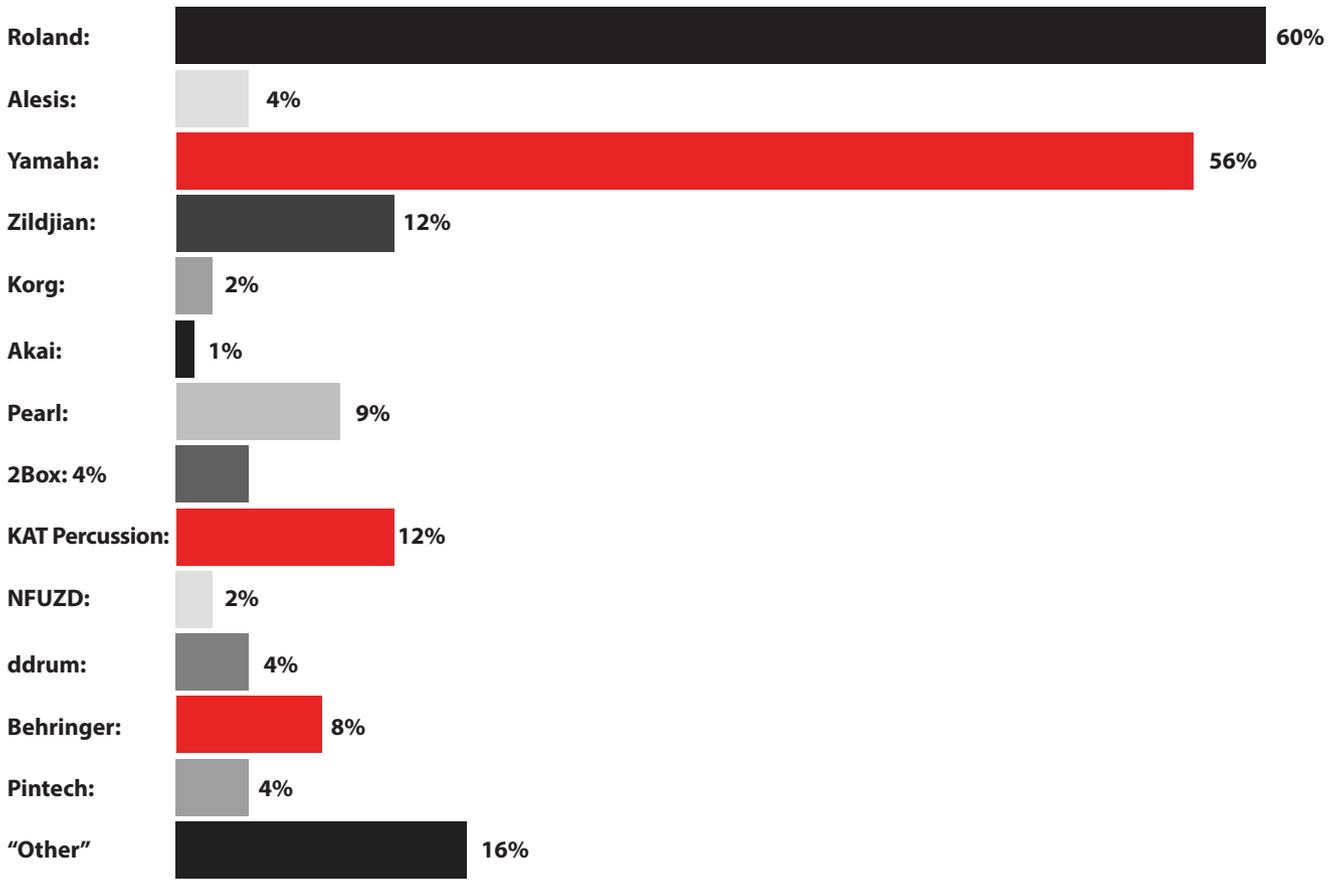
With respect to these types of instruments, what price points are doing best for your store?



“The \$500 to \$1,800 price range is our best seller. Over \$3,000 kits are selling at shops that avoid MAP pricing, local sales tax, and [offer] free shipping. Not paying sales tax on an over \$3K item saves money!”

George Sigler
Ritchie's Music Center
Rockaway, New Jersey

What brands of electronic drums and percussion instruments are the strongest sellers for your operation in 2015?



(The most commonly cited "other" brands were, in order: Tama, GIG, Percussion Plus, and Ludwig)

Can you describe the typical customer who purchases electronic drums at your store (age, ability level, et cetera)?

<p>"Extremely mixed, from children to teenagers, to young/older adults – Usually hobbyists."</p> <p>Greg Allen Long Island Drum Center of Nyack Nyack, New York</p>	<p>Steve Barone World of Music Erie, Pennsylvania</p>	<p>"Younger age – 23-28 – Intermediate level of drums."</p> <p>George Copeland North Channel Music Elliot Lake, Ontario Canada</p>
<p>"Parents that want to have the headphone hookup and low volume."</p> <p>Kurt Gilbert The Hill Music Co., Inc. Casper, Wyoming</p>	<p>"Many parents buying a first kit for their children."</p> <p>Ronn Marriott Long and McQuade Musical Instruments Windsor, Ontario Canada</p>	<p>"12-50 years old – novice, intermediate, and semi professional."</p> <p>Rob Wilson Footes Music London England</p>
<p>"Church worship groups, apartment residents, and intermediate drummers who already own an acoustic kit. Ages vary."</p>	<p>"Beginners, or intermediate – 20-45."</p> <p>Mark Fullerton Ted Brown Music Yakima, Washington</p>	

Tom Schmitt: Driving Sales with Brass Accessories



Tom Schmitt, President and CEO of Schmitt Music

Tell us a little bit about the history of Schmitt Music.

Schmitt Music started in 1896 when Paul A. Schmitt, my great-grandfather, acquired the sheet music business of The Century Piano Company. The company has grown steadily through the years and specializes today in band and orchestra instruments, music education, and pianos. Schmitt Music is an independent, family-owned and operated business and currently serves customers in eight Midwestern states.

What made you decide to develop a specialized trumpet pro shop for your stores?

We decided to open The Trumpet Shop three years ago based on the success of The Sax Shop which had opened the year before. Thanks to our excellent staff and world-class products from Denis Wick and others, the Trumpet Shop found customers right away and has been growing steadily from day one.

With all the brands that you carry, why has Denis Wick been so important to feature?

The Denis Wick line of trumpet and trombone mutes are an industry standard for collegiate and professional players across the country. In our effort to remain relevant to students and professionals alike, Denis Wick has been and will continue to be in our mouthpiece and mute offerings.

Your sales of the American Classic trumpet mouthpieces have doubled from last year, what about this new mouthpiece line is driving that increase?

Much of our pro shop selling practices are based on consultative sessions with our specialists in each area. A large part of the process is the customer experiencing different instruments, mouthpieces and mutes recommended by our Advisory Board and in turn our shop managers. The increase in sales is driven by the quality of the American Classic line and its ability to outperform others in the market place.

We're also very excited to have live Skype connections available at schmittmusic.com for Trumpet Shop customers who'd like to learn more about Denis Wick products or visit us online.



“ The Denis Wick line of trumpet and trombone mutes are an industry standard for collegiate and professional players across the country. ”

How has engaging the community impacted your sales on brass accessories?

The success of our specialty shop is tied directly to our involvement in the brass community here in the Twin Cities and regionally. Our Trumpet Shop manager presents at local festivals, performances, and hosts clinics and master classes throughout the year. For example, hosting the Alliance Brass Quintet in September was an excellent way to showcase Denis Wick Products as well as including an educational component.

Any other insight you would care to share on growing brass business?

In addition to having the correct merchandise, having specialty shop managers who are active and performing in their respective areas establishes the credibility necessary to grow the business.

For more on Denis Wick Products, visit bit.ly/deniswick1

For more on Schmitt Music, visit www.schmittmusic.com

What larger trends have you been noticing in the electronic drums & percussion market?

"We are starting to see an increase in drum set sales, electronic and acoustic, and the price ranges move higher. Signs of an improving economy."

Mike Guillot
Mississippi Music, Inc.
Flowood, Mississippi

"More church and school sales."

Terry Nirva
Leithold Music
La Crosse, Wisconsin

"[There are] more percussion students now that they can have quieter drum kits to practice on at home."

Kathryn Irving
Sound of Music
Abbotsford, British Columbia
Canada

"On a down cycle. Seems like every other year is decent on electronic kits."

Eric Burgess
Alpha Music
Virginia Beach, Virginia

"Interest in accessory items to augment acoustics. This could be a larger market, but current prices are too high."

Justin Hoppe
Cadence Music
Rochester, New York

"More hybrid setups are being used, adding a pad or two to the acoustic set seems to be a growing trend."

Adam York
The Music Store, Inc.
Tulsa, Oklahoma

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Pa Rum Pum Pum Pum Kraft Music & The E-Drum



By Paige Tutt



Where it all started – the Kraft Keyboard Center within Ralph Hanzel Music

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music

30
years

**Celebrating
30 Years**



Kraft Music's current main office/showroom

Ben Kraft, president of Kraft Music, explains how he and his staff navigate the MI landscape through the use of technology, and sounds off on e-drums – one of their more popular items.

If you asked Ben Kraft, president of Kraft Music, to write about the history of Kraft Music, he'd say that he considers the store to have had two chapters. Chapter one begins with his father, Roger Kraft.

Chapter One

"My dad was a gigging musician as early as his high school years," says Ben. "He played his way through college, and even landed in the United States Army Band during the draft, touring England and Scotland. Upon returning to the U.S., he continued to perform as his primary source of income. Dad was always on the forefront of technology, and even built his own "keyboard" that consisted of a Hammond B3 organ, a Moog Satellite, MiniMoog, and an Arp String Ensemble (that keyboard was later featured in Keyboard Magazine as the "Keyboard of the Month" in 1999). Right around 1980 a local music retailer who frequented Roger's shows asked him to come on in and sell some keyboards. He came to work at Ralph Hanzel Music and took over the keyboard department offering sales, repairs, rent-to-own programs, et cetera."

In 1984, Roger Kraft purchased the keyboard department from Ralph Hanzel Music, and Kraft Keyboards Inc. was born. Roger became Milwaukee's exclusive dealer for Kurzweil, Oberheim, Linn, Ensoniq, and others. Other brands that were represented were Roland, Moog, Alesis, Korg, Tascam, Synergy, Akai, Crumar, Kawai – nearly the entire assortment of synthesizers available during that time. "And of course," Ben notes, "1984 was when MIDI was born, and customers flocked to Kraft Keyboards to get demonstrations of this exciting technology."

While all of this is happening, Ben Kraft is around 10 years old. "I loved coming to work with Dad and in between filing papers, vacuuming, and doing other odd jobs, I was able to play the latest wonder in electronic instruments and I became hooked on it all myself," Ben explains.

Over the next decade, Kraft Keyboards ended up in several locations around Milwaukee due to one reason or another – a lease that ended early; a small expansion that led to there being two stores on each end of town; and a short attempt to create a full-line combo store to augment the keyboard offerings with guitars and drums. "By 1990 or so, Kraft Keyboards ultimately ended up locating in a small space, right smack downtown," says Ben. "With just a few employees, it was easy to manage and still fulfilled its mission to be the leading technology store."

Two years later, Ben goes off to school at the University of Wisconsin-Madison to study business (accounting). "Working summers at the shop, an employee and mentor of mine helped me to dream of the market our company could have if we could reach customers through AOL, CompuServe, and other dialup communities that were popular at that time," says Ben. "In the fall of 1994, I convinced Dad to upgrade my old Mac to a new PC, and I took it to Madison and began exploring ways to sell online when I wasn't in class. The Internet was in its infancy, but I had easy access to it as a student of the university and quickly found the 'newsgroups' that electronic musicians were hanging out in. I began to make friends through my knowledge of the gear, and ultimately earned their business."

In 1995, with the help from a classmate, Ben launched the first Kraft Music website (they chose the name Kraft Music to avoid pigeon-holing themselves to only keyboards). "I ultimately left school without finishing and began working on Internet sales full-time despite my unhappy mother and father," Ben explains. "Dad wasn't enamored with the music products industry any longer due to increases in competition from mail-order retailers and the rise of Guitar Center. But I was too foolish to listen, and began working my way through creating an 800-number, answering email, shipping, and creating online content."

But it turns out Ben was onto something, and Kraft Music quickly outgrew its downtown Milwaukee location, replacing it in 1997 with

another space in the Milwaukee suburb of Brookfield. This move provides more storage, more offices, and more area for retail. But it wasn't all growth and expansion for Kraft. "Our misstep was in the retail efforts," says Ben. "Energy that was previously put into learning the World Wide Web was quickly sucked into hiring and promoting our new retail location, and the next few years became very difficult. In the meantime, I hired a friend and early adopter of website development to build the first e-commerce enabled kraftmusic.com."

The site was ready to launch in the late summer of 2000, and it was launched just in time. The retail shop had essentially failed, and all employees had jumped ship leaving just Ben's dad, Ben, and one part-time employee. But the launch of the site began to generate calls, emails, orders, and hope, and in March of 2001 Ben bought the business from his father and Roger left the industry. Ben believes that Chapter 2 began that day.

Chapter Two

"And with one employee (whom I hired the week before I bought the business and who is still with me today), the focus became square on e-commerce," Ben says.

Today, Kraft Music has 30 full-time employees, and Ben mentions hopefully a few more will begin to work with Kraft by the time this article runs. "Most of the growth for Kraft has come in the last six-seven years, attributed to a laser-sharp focus on e-commerce," Ben comments. "Remember that 2008 was the beginning of the Great Recession, and between that and skyrocketing fuel prices, consumers were embracing the web as their preferred method of shopping. We couldn't have timed our focus better, and our past experience with the Internet gave us the foundation and confidence to invest heavily at a time when others were contracting in size."

2014 marked the official 30-year mark for Kraft Music. But Ben and his team hardly had any time to celebrate. "A few years before, we had grand plans to party, and have open houses, et cetera, but we never really got around to it," he says. "The growth of the business has made everything more complex, and we quickly decided that maybe we would wait for our 35th to celebrate!"

A Peek Inside

The Kraft Music office/showroom is divided into four functional chunks, consisting of 3,000 square feet of open room (with private offices for management) to house the team of sales advisors. "This talented

group of musicians give advice based on their expertise, solve order-related problems, and provide customer service to our customers from around the country," says Ben. On the opposite side of the building, there is about 4,000 square feet, which houses the marketing team who is busy creating content for Kraft Music's website and third party shopping sites, shooting and editing videos, designing images, taking still photography, among a slew of other tasks. Executive offices, HR, and accounting are also in this wing.

There are a few training and conference rooms, a generous break area, a video and photography studio, and some storage. "Our large distribution space is predominantly set up for receiving and fulfillment, but we also have 2,000 sq. ft. of offices that house staff who are in the weeds keeping a busy shipping and receiving operation running," Ben explains. "Visitors who are expecting a 'music store' and whatever that means in their head are often surprised to see so many people working on large computers and on phones, etc. I like to say that while we're a digital, e-commerce centered retailer, it takes an awful lot of analog activities to make it all tick... We have an enormous amount of 'brick and mortar' that we operate within. While I think the fantasy is that an e-commerce retailer can operate with less space, and less 'overhead,' that is only true to a small degree. The reality is that our customers do not provide their

own transportation for their purchases or returns. We do that with forklifts, delivery trucks, and service providers, et cetera. We invest heavily in software, hardware, and equipment in order to meet the high level of customer service that is expected from us, or anyone."

Sandwiched in between both wings is the 2,000 square foot showroom, which Ben and his employees generally like to refer to as a gallery. "It's a beautiful space with open ceilings, soft colors, wood floors, and a hi-tech room to highlight the latest synths," he explains. "We can't possibly show all of our available products, so we tend to display new and top SKUs that represent the latest and greatest from the manufacturers that we get behind. While this room is an excellent place for a customer to spend time auditioning the latest keyboard, guitar or electronic drum set, it doubles as a spot where our sales advisors can put their hands on products to better assist our customers. Each sales advisor wears a wireless headset, and it's not uncommon to see one or two of them in the showroom walking a customer through the operation of an instrument over the phone."

Kraft Music offers everything from guitars, drums, recording and PA, and home electronics to what his father first started out with in the '80s: pianos, keyboards, and synths. "We've been a seller of high-end keyboards and synths for a long time, and that market has sure changed over

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Staff, Fair Treatment, & Details – What Makes Kraft Different

When asked what differentiates Kraft Music from its competitors, Ben was able to succinctly break it down into three simple bulletpoints. “First, we’re very fortunate to be in a business where we can add real value to our customers by being experts at what we offer,” he begins. “We’re not selling commodities – we’re helping people make music. And folks appreciate a person they can trust who can walk them through their first digital piano purchase, for example, and beyond. So the first differentiator is our staff. We have a caring, knowledgeable, dedicated staff. Customers feel it immediately, and as a Google Trusted Store, we boast the highest rating of any music retailer competing with us. We do our best to take care of our employees, and they in turn take extremely good care of our customers.”



The second focus for Kraft is upholding the strictest and highest standard in all of their business dealings with vendors and partners. “Whether it’s an instrument manufacturer, a supporting bank, a service provider or anyone else that we have a relationship with, we make every effort to treat them fairly and promptly,” says Ben. “We like to have an open channel of communication with all of our partners, and our goal is to be the first place that these partners want to do business.”

“Beyond that, the devil is in the details. We’re working around the clock to give the customer what they demand and deserve. Our YouTube channel recently exceeded 20,000,000 views, and our eBay store maintains a 99.9 percent Positive Feedback rating as just two quick examples of how much hard work goes into achieving the service level that we strive for.”

the years,” Ben says. “High-end synths and workstations have flattened out with software and iPads offering alternative ways to create music. Gone are the days where a keyboard player would purchase a master controller and load up on racks full of sound modules! But it sure is exciting to see the resurgence of classic synths – the re-issue of the Arp Odyssey, Aira from Roland, ReFace from Yamaha, and many more. What’s old is new again, and it’s fun to see.”

One thing Ben says that they’re noticing at Kraft in all the instrument categories is increased quality at the lowest price points. “It’s amazing what one can buy today at prices that were unimaginable just a few years back,” Ben exclaims. “The price barrier one has to overcome to learn or to start playing music is extraordinarily low, and that’s positive news for our customers and future customers. Lower ticket prices are certainly an operational challenge, however, but we’re certainly not the first industry to face that.”

Well into their second chapter, as Ben calls it, Kraft Music continues to push forward, continuing to adopt new technology, innovate, and serve as many people as they can. “So that’s a long story made long,” exclaims Ben. “As you can see, we’ve really survived two chapters: one as a traditional retailer, and another as a company operating in the crazy world of e-commerce and digital transactions... Finally, I suppose most business people have been saying this for generations, but business seems to be getting harder and harder, and there seems to be more obstacles that are thrown at us than ever before. We joke that we would love to just get back to selling keyboards (and thankfully we have a great staff who can concentrate on that), but the day-to-day for my executive team and me seems to be focused more on compliance, regulations, changing regulations, cyber security, human resources challenges (retirement plans, and benefit do’s and don’ts) and a host of other activities that take us away from our core reason for being: to help people make music. But in the end, I’ll take it, and I’m extremely grateful to be operating in the industry that we all are in.”

Ben Kraft on E-Drums

Electronic drums represent a strong share of Kraft’s business. “We carry many of the brands active in the category,” he says. “Roland, Yamaha, KAT Percussion, Alesis, Pearl, Nord, Korg Wavedrum, the Zildjian Gen16 products, etc. There are a few old and new brands that we haven’t estab-



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Audio Source, Inc is pleased to announce the appointment of Mike Madlener to the role of Territory Manager, effective August 1, 2015. Mr. Madlener has over 10 years of experience in all phases of the MI industry. His last 5 ½ years have been as District Manager for Fender in the Pacific Northwest Territory. Mike will manage retail and online channels as well as “non-retail” customers.

“Mike is a real industry pro. His dedication to his customers and solution-based services fit our company profile perfectly. It has always been our goal to invest in the absolute finest talent for roles at Audio Source. We are 100% certain that our customers will benefit greatly from Mike’s dedication to excellence.” adds Audio Source Founder, Richard Gibson.

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lished relationships with yet, but that's coming. Every manufacturer in the space has something interesting to offer here, so it's an exciting category to watch."

Ben notes that they were early adopters of electronic drums, selling KAT and Simmons many years ago. "There are way too many advantages to ignore (volume, size, headphones, just to name a few), and we're seeing customers from all levels get interested in them," Ben explains. "Acoustic kits can be excessively loud. Every parent's nightmare is when the little one asks for a drum kit for Christmas, right? They're too darned loud and too disruptive... especially if you're in an apartment, or condo. But with an electronic kit, everybody's happy because the volume level is solved... Second, the technology makes it easy and fun to learn. Built-in metronomes, coaching functions, built-in songs that you can play along with, et cetera - it's an awesome way to learn, and keeps making music fun. One could make the case that anyone who is beginning to learn to play drums should be starting on an electronic kit of some type." Ben notes a few particular brands who are doing interesting things in the e-drum market. "We love what Pearl is doing with electronic drums - they make beautiful shells and hardware, so now an electronic kit doesn't have to look like an electronic kit! Same with the Zildjian Gen16 cymbals, and other products coming down the line.

Roland's V-Drums are the lion's share of Kraft's business. "MI SalesTrak consistently shows Roland having 70 percent or so marketshare, and that is reflected at Kraft Music as well," explains Ben. "What's so interesting is that the Roland products are by far the most expensive, and yet they're the most popular by units. They play great, sound great, and Roland continues to innovate and refine the technology. The relatively new TD25 kit has been a stunning success, even at its \$2,500 price-point. But there's no shortage of innovation and interesting ideas from the competition and we're thrilled to have as many options for the customer as we do today... We see great products from Yamaha, Pearl, Alesis, and there's more to come. Just like a digital piano has taken over the acoustic piano market in many ways (and most of our customers refer to a digital piano simply as a "piano"), you have to wonder when a "drum set" will simply refer to an electronic drum set in the consumer's vocabulary. Lots of reasons to love them! The hybrid kits are especially exciting, and it will be fun to see the category progress."

While the electronic drum product is the centerpiece of the market, it's supported, Ben says, by accessory products - sticks, pedals, stands, and also cables, headphones, and powered speakers, among other things. "Rarely is the electronic kit self-contained, so we can really show our expertise by helping the customer match their choice of electronic kit with the right hardware, headphones, and much, much more," says Ben. "So a good electronic drum

dealer really can't serve the customer well without having a breadth of knowledge and inventory of traditional drum products (thrones, pedals, sticks, et cetera) as well as technology brands (for speakers, headphones, recording gear, and more). We're extremely proud of our selection, and our sales advisors receive regular training from all of the manufacturers to ensure that we're serving the e-drum customer to the best of our ability." **MMR**

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The news out of China this past summer was mostly centered around the nation's stock market crash – a main source of global economic volatility for many months – but if anyone suspected that such recent instability would have a negative impact on the Music China show, the turnout and tone of October's gathering in Shanghai quickly put such thoughts to rest.

Numbers were up across the board, with 80,468 total visitors attending in 2015 (up 12 percent from last year) and 1,782 exhibiting companies from 30 countries and regions on-hand (up slightly from 2014's tally of 1,775). 10 dedicated pavilions were fielded, from Belgium, the Czech Republic, Italy, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK, and Taiwan. Prolight + Sound Shanghai also saw steady increases with 2,455 total visitors (up 6 percent from 2014) and roughly 500 exhibitors.

Nearly everyone we spoke with commented on the ever-increasing importance of attending Music China. "For us Asia is a very important market, so the Shanghai show is a must for us," observed JodyJazz's Jody Espina. "It allows us to see our Asian and Australian dealers and distributors who might not come to the NAMM show. Also for us it is a brand building opportunity for the Chinese market."

Saga Musical Instruments' David Gartland adds, "If you want to learn about what's happening in the world, Shanghai is right at the epicenter right now of everything that's happening in the music business."

While there was some consistent criticism of certain features of the get-together (unchecked noise was a common complaint – there are no "decibel police" such as what one sees in Anaheim), it seems that Music China is only going to continue to grow in stature.

Changes in Store for Frankfurt

"Musikmesse needs a revolution and not an evolution," said Stephan Kurzawski, senior vice president of Messe Frankfurt Exhibition GmbH at a press conference on October 15th. He then outlined a number of significant changes in store for the Frankfurt Show, beginning this coming spring.

New features will include:

Musikmesse Insider The Musikmesse Insider

customer program returns again in Hall 11.1, aimed at European retailers from all segments of the musical instrument sector with max. 50 employees. The program attracted over 1,700 registrations at the last show and is being expanded again for 2016.

Business Academy Experienced speakers contribute to an educational program tailored exactly to the needs of decision makers in the musical-instrument sector.

Hall 11.1 Exhibitors can book an exhibition stand in the 'Business Meets Business' area as a stand-alone solution – or in addition to their presentations in the themed music halls, 8.0, 9.0, 9.1, 10.2 and 11.0. There are no restrictions on stand design in Hall 11.1. There, they can present their products to an audience of trade visitors and demonstrate them via headphones or soundproof cabins.

Business Lounge The Business Lounge, a modern conference area in loft design for undisturbed conversations in a B2B context, is located in the immediate vicinity of the Market Place. Exhibitors from the themed halls can also use it as a meeting place for specialist and business discussions. Additionally, all Musikmesse exhibitors have the chance to book fully furnished meeting rooms in the Office Lane for a certain period.

Future Shop The Future Shop in Hall 11.1 shows retailers how to present musical instruments effectively and make visiting the shop a positive experience. It also offers valuable insights into the opportunities offered by multi-channel marketing.

Business Breakfast Open to both exhibitors and trade visitors on the second day of the fair in Hall 11.1, and featuring a keynote speaker. There is also a new Matchmaking program, especially designed to actively bring together exhibitors and trade visitors.

Consumers The themed music halls (8.0, 9.0, 9.1, 10.2 and 11.0) are open not only to retailers and distributors but also to consumers on all four days of the fair.

"Musikmesse Frankfurt is not one of our most profitable exhibitions," conceded Kurzawski. "But modern trade shows are much more than just buying and selling. Sometimes Musikmesse has caused headaches, but we are working – even with headaches – with heart."



Stephan Kurzawski, senior vice president of **Messe Frankfurt Exhibition GmbH**, outlines changes in store for the Frankfurt show in 2016 and beyond.



1: Harvey Levy of Levy's Leathers. 2: Taylor Guitars' Andy Lund. 3: Pearl River's June Wang and Eva Luo. 4: Jody Espina and Colin Schofield of Jody Jazz. 5: The Music People: Justin Wang, Tina Zhang, Tom Tedesco, and Bob Shen. 6: An oversized gehu at the Shanghai No. 1 National Musical Instruments Factory booth was a frequent gathering spot for show attendees looking to snap a picture. 7: Marco Stuve of Global Truss Corp. 8: Thomastik-Infeld Vienna president Zdenka Infeld. 9: Petr Jankele and Jan Janiček of Janice Picks. 10: Brian Miller and Stephen Wick of Dennis Wick Products Ltd. 11: Howarth of London's Nigel Clark. 12: Lee Woo of D'Addario Shanghai Trading Co., Ltd.

Some are skeptical though. As JodyJazz' Espina put it: "The changes they have implemented for 2016 seem like a dying breath, a desperate scramble to try something that will revive the show. We are going in 2016, but it could likely be our last year."

Voices from the Show Floor

"The biggest take away for us was how the show is really shifting from a 'outsourcing' show from the West, to being more focused on the Chinese domestic market. With the focus of the Music China show turning towards China's domestic market, I think that the show in Shanghai will be so important for companies like ours in that emerging market. There is so much opportunity for the MI industry in a county that is home to nearly 20 percent of the world's population.

"I think that the way this show compliments the other [trade shows] is that it opens up our brand to an emerging market that in some circumstances wouldn't have that exposure otherwise."

– **Ryan J. Richman, Eastman Music Company**

"I've been twice [to Music China] now and each time I am impressed with the organization, the diversity of exhibitors and the growth of the Chinese market in general.

"Speaking as a retailer, to me it looks primarily like a Chinese gathering, and of western brands selling into China. With that being said, there is a vibrancy to the market that is very exciting. NAMM has been providing NAMM U sessions at Music China for ten years now, and the Chinese retailers pack every session. They are extremely eager & hungry to learn. NAMM also hosted the China Music Education Conference concurrently with Music China this year and I was really impressed with the emphasis and value placed on music education. There are great things happening in China & the Shanghai gathering is serving that market very well.

In my opinion, whenever and wherever our industry comes together to improve and grow it's a good thing. Of course each show has its own unique character, but I suspect it will come as no surprise that my favorite has always been the NAMM Show!"

– **Mark Goff, WH Paige & Company and NAMM chairman**

"Over recent years the profile of the show has changed significantly concurrent with the rapid growth and significantly increasing business potential of the local Chinese market. The emphasis of the show is now far more on existing international brands including all the major international brands and/or their Chinese distributors exhibiting in order to establish their brand in the Chinese market and looking to support existing and new customers. With that, the show it itself has rapidly expanded in size year after year. In 2015 I think we can say that the transition of the Music China show from an 'Export' show to a show primarily for the China market has truly been completed.

"The Music China show is increasingly becoming the primary show for distributors and dealers from Southeast Asia and Australasia. This is where they go to meet with the U.S. and European manufacturers. Many of the major distributors and dealers from these regions certainly do go to Winter NAMM, but increasingly few now go to Frankfurt. But there are a great many mid-level distributors and dealers who do not go to Winter NAMM and certainly do not go to Frankfurt, and the Music China show has become the primary show and of great importance for them."

– **Colin Schofield, JodyJazz, Inc.**

"The show was very good for us, we always manage to find some new distributors from other countries other than China. Last year we made an exclusive agreement with a Chinese company and we were very happy about that, they are doing a great job for us. This year was just as good, as we made some distribution agreements in other countries. Some of these new customers I don't think we would have met in either NAAM or in Frankfurt. Therefore it's an important show for me and we will go back next year.

"I wish that the show was better managed especially with the sound control – It was torture sometimes. Also the quality of the venue is not up to par with the other shows we do. I fell on my ass when my chair went through a hole that was covered by the carpet. They told me not to put the chair there any longer. Right – how stupid of me! I guess in the future they will learn?"

– **Richard Cocco, Jr., La Bella Strings**



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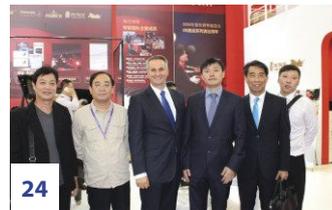
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13: Darren Kopas of **Saultone**. **14:** Yamaha's Chi Xu. **15:** Conrado Pesinato of **Santo Angelo USA**. **16:** La Bella Strings's Richard Cocco, Jr. **17:** Zhang Peng of **Casio (China) Co., Ltd.** **18:** NAMM chairman Mark Goff and Sandy Goff of **Paige's Music** in Indianapolis, Indiana. **19:** There was a rumor that **Orange Amplification** had a presence at this year's gathering in Shanghai, but it's difficult to be sure... **20:** Qian Ni and Ryan Richman of **Eastman Music Company**. **21:** Saga Musical Instruments' David Gartland. **22:** Hu Huan and Xia Yuanyaun of **Parsons Music Ltd.** **23:** Kawai's En Kou. **24:** Jason Tan (**Hailun Singapore**), Zheng Hu (VP of development, **Hailun**), Basilius Strmec (CEO **Hailun USA**), Mark Chen (executive VP **Hailun**), Wu Jintao (**Hailun Beijing**).

"Some observations from this year's show: More and more overseas exhibitors attended Music China; the music education business is growing fast in the Chinese market; the market for digital musical instruments is growing fast in China.

"Shanghai is an international metropolis in China and acts an important role in worldwide culture and fashion. It has become one of the best gathering's 'place' based on Chinese market. Music China in Shanghai grows faster, compared to NAMM and Frankfurt Messe."

– **June Wang, Guangzhou Pearl River Piano Group Co. Ltd.**

"This was actually my first time at Music China. It was quite different than I had expected, but still very positive. In other trade shows I had not seen more than one distributor showing similar products, with the booth displays usually being operated by the manufacturers. This was the first time for me to see products in more than one booth, or more than one hall during a show.

"The market in China is of course very exciting as it still has such huge growth potential. It seems to still be very controlled by distributors, and it can be challenging as a customer at the store level when compared to North American or European markets. It was interesting to see such a huge influence on product availability by the music schools, many of which are working to produce their own branded products for students. In other markets, much of the MI industry was driven by the needs of professional musicians. There are less opportunities for working musicians in China at this time, but as the next generation of performers come online it will be exciting to see how the MI and live performance develop in parallel.

"For the developing MI markets, I think this show in China is invaluable. Many of the worlds best products are shown and most importantly people in the region are able to communicate in their own language to distributors and manufacturers."

– **Darren Kopas, Saultone Percussion**

"Music China 2015 will go into my annals of music trade shows as a watershed moment for the keyboard industry. The bland flavor of past music shows in Shanghai incorporated regurgitations of what

NAMM and, to a lesser degree Musikmesse in Frankfurt, had presented earlier in the year. And while the show was always very important to present products to the Chinese domestic market, its main offer to Western buyers, at least for the keyboard segment, was to identify low-priced suppliers that could provide a cost-advantage back in the U.S. or Europe. Music China 2015 shattered that mold and a new show emerged: for the first time, manufacturers across booths and aisles offered new technologies that were not presented before at other shows and that opened new business opportunities. Here are some examples: integrating digital technology and acoustic piano for learning purposes, focusing on iPad or Android and the power of apps to smoothly bridge interaction between piano students and the piano, or out of the box innovations for the acoustic piano user. The musical year used to start with the NAMM Show, but if the trend continues, we will all switch to the 'Chinese' calendar with Music China being the place where cutting-edge innovation is first shown."

– **Basilius Strmec, Hailun Pianos**

"The Music China show is an important show for us for three reasons. We meet with our international customers, we meet with our domestic China customers, and we are able to meet with our suppliers. Over the last few years we have noticed less international importers attending the show, but we have seen an uptick in Chinese domestic business. This is an important show for our China Office and I believe this show focus will be the trend going forward.

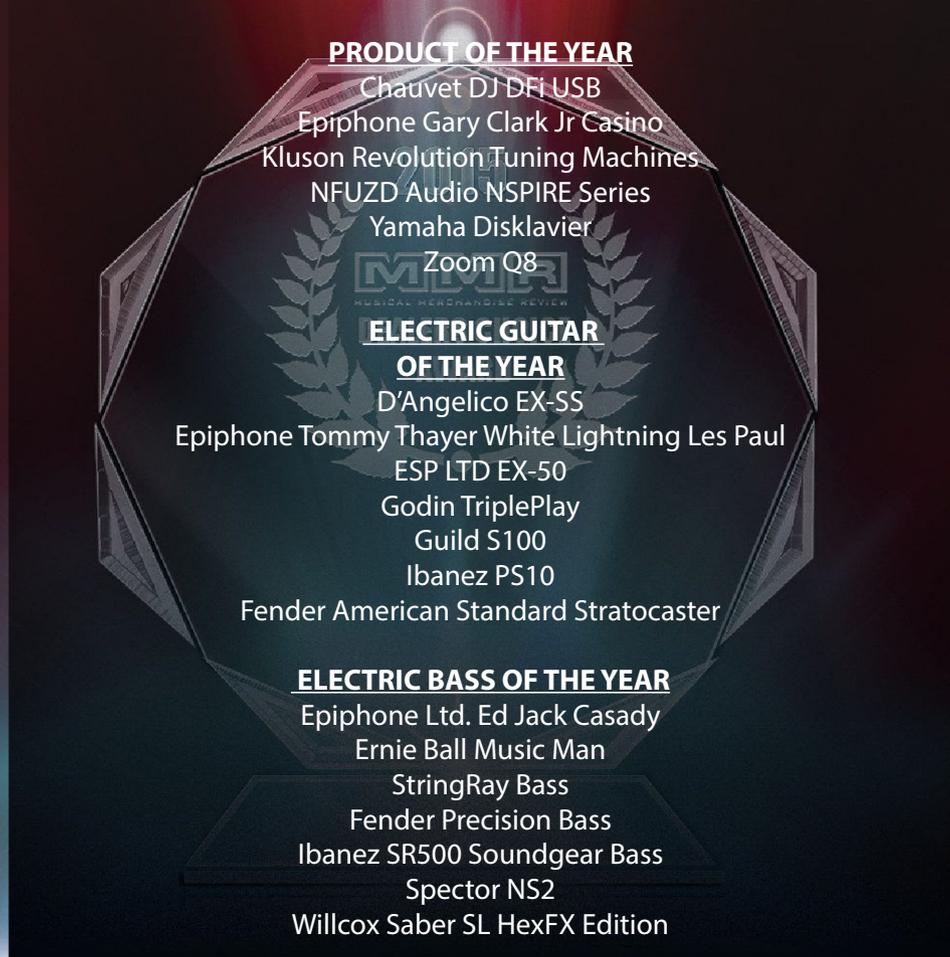
"With NAMM and Frankfurt so close some people are deciding to only attend one or the other. As a USA-based company, for us NAMM has always been our most important show and I don't see that changing anytime soon. Being an international company selling in over 80 countries the Frankfurt show does give us the opportunity to meet with some European and African customers that only attend that show. In the same regard, some of our Pacific Rim customers only attend the Music China show. In totality the three shows give us the opportunity to meet with all of our customers at least once a year."

– **Tom Tedesco, The Music People! Inc.**

Music China 2016 will take place from October 26-29 in Shanghai



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ACOUSTIC GUITAR OF THE YEAR

Breedlove Tradition Two
Eastman AC-DR2
Epiphone Masterbilt AJ-45ME
Hohner A+ ACO3
Martin D-35
Riversong Tradition 2
Taylor 614ce

SOUND REINFORCEMENT LINE OF THE YEAR

Gemini Sound
JBL
Peavey
Presonus
Yamaha
Yorkville Sound

AMPLIFIER PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Blackstar Series One
Epiphone "1939" Century, Limited Edition
Fender Twin Reverb
Marshall DSL
Peavey Vypyr
Henriksen Amplifiers, The Bud



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MICROPHONE LINE OF THE YEAR

Audio-Technica

AUDIX
CAD

Lewitt

Sennheiser

Shure

RECORDING PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

Focusrite Scarlett

JoeCo BBR64

PreSonus StudioLive

Roland R-26

TASCAM DR-40

Zoom H6

BAND AND ORCHESTRA INSTRUMENT LINE OF THE YEAR

Antigua Winds

Cannonball Musical Instruments

Conn-Selmer

Eastman Music Company

Jupiter Band Instruments

Yamaha

audio-technica

SENNHEISER

PreSonus



Eastman
MUSIC COMPANY

AUDIX
MICROPHONES

SHURE

Roland

Antigua

JUPITER.

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TASCAM
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HOME DIGITAL KEYBOARD OF THE YEAR



DJ LINE OF THE YEAR



PRO DIGITAL KEYBOARD LINE OF THE YEAR



MICROPHONE LINE OF THE YEAR

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ACOUSTIC PIANO LINE

OF THE YEAR

- Hailun
- Kawai
- Pearl River
- Steinway
- Yamaha
- Young Chang

PRO DIGITAL KEYBOARD LINE

OF THE YEAR

- Casio
- Korg
- Kurzweil
- Nord
- Roland
- Yamaha

HOME DIGITAL KEYBOARD

OF THE YEAR

- Casio CGP-700
- Kawai CN series
- Korg LP-380
- Kurzweil MPG series
- RP Series
- Yamaha Clavinova

DJ LINE OF THE YEAR

- Chauvet DJ
- Gemini
- Numark
- Peavey
- Pioneer DJ
- Reloop
- Stanton



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PERCUSSION LINE OF THE YEAR

- Drum Workshop Performance Series
- Ludwig Legacy Mahogany
- Mapex Mars
- Pearl Export
- SABIAN AAX Series
- Tama Starclassic
- Zildjian K Series

PRINT MUSIC PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR

- Alfred
- Carl Fischer Music
- Hal Leonard
- JW Pepper
- Mel Bay
- Meredith Music Publications

LIGHTING LINE OF THE YEAR

- ADJ
- Blizzard Lighting
- Chauvet
- Martin

ACCESSORY LINE OF THE YEAR

- D'Addario
- Hercules
- Kluson Manufacturing Music Nomad
- On-Stage
- Snark



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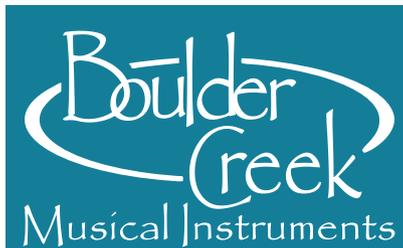


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Worth Fighting For

By Jon Shepherd

“We had to put everything that we could back into the business, so I could buy inventory and the company would stay alive.”

– CEO Jeff Strametz



The Boulder Creek team: Lou DiMarino, warehouse/shipping manager; Juli Strametz, office/logistics manager; Jeff Strametz, president & CEO; Sam Sotelo; sales manager, Mark Azevedo, director of marketing; (in front, panting and looking expectantly) Rajah, security and relationship manager.



Jeff Strametz

The Boulder Creek Guitars warehouse and office space sits amongst pastoral fields of garlic, tomatoes, and corn in Gilroy, California, at the southernmost tip of the Santa Clara Valley. Boulder Creek is, in the words of CEO Jeff Strametz, a “small and mighty company of five people.” Chances are, if you call their office and ask to talk to someone in Product Development, Factory Relations, Quality Control, U.S. and International Dealer and Distributor Sales, Customer Service, or Marketing, the person on the other end of the line will be Strametz. Sometimes he even drives the forklift, too.

Jeff has been involved with Boulder Creek since its inception in 2006, when one of his former guitar students decided to start a company founded on the intention of radically redesigning the acoustic guitar. The idea was that by leaving the soundboard intact and eliminating the X bracing on the underside, they could increase the guitar’s resonating ability, and thereby improve its sound. After a year of trials and adjustments, they came up with their now patented aluminum Suspended Bracing System. What the SBS brings to the instruments is that the bracing actually transmits the string’s energy all the way across the soundboard and creates a tone balance throughout the tone spectrum, devoid of dead spots, creating a sustain that is not found in other instruments. For centuries, the acoustic guitar has traditionally had a sound hole in the middle, and purists might shy away from the unconventional look of a Boulder Creek, but the sound that these guitars produce is slowly shifting people’s paradigm of what a guitar should look like. “I always enjoy watching the face of someone who picks up a Boulder Creek for the first time”, says Strametz. “Strum or pluck the instrument and a smile of amazement fills the room.” Jeff calls that “The Boulder Creek Moment”. The first guitars were born in 2007, and Boulder Creek Guitars was off and running, and has been growing in both size and reputation ever since.

Their innovative approach, which they have applied not only to their Boulder Creek lines of guitars and acoustic basses, but to their Riptide ukulele line as well, seems to have earned them accolades from just about everyone who has picked up one of their instru-

ments and played it. From the everyday consumer to members of the music press and major recording artists, the sound of Boulder Creek Guitars and Riptide Ukuleles is being lauded around the globe. Travis Toy of multiplatinum country artists Rascal Flatts still tours with his prototype Boulder Creek guitars, Sarah McLachlan plays Riptide ukuleles, and Fleetwood Mac play Boulder Creeks both in the studio and on the road. “These guitars are incredible performing instruments,” Strametz says, “and with the sound hole placement that we have, are the best behaved guitars on stage. There is no need for a feedback buster. If you play acoustically, it is like having a personal monitor plugged in. It is quite unique.” In addition to performers, many music publications have also given them rave reviews. *Guitar World* has awarded Boulder Creek as a Best Value and *Bass Player Magazine* named them an Editor’s Choice, and their EBR3-N4 acoustic bass was nominated for the Musikmesse International Press Award for the best acoustic bass, as voted on by over 100 music magazines.

While this might so far sound like the quintessential American success story, it is not without its pitfalls, and this is where the “mighty” in “small and mighty” comes in. In Jeff’s words, “After enjoying six years of solid growth and success, the founding owners set out to sell the company and move on to other interests. They successfully came to an agreement in 2013 with a partnership that was going to take the company into the future and beyond. Unfortunately, the buyers defaulted on the purchase and during the default process the company was thrown into some turmoil. This was a heart-wrenching time for the company, as everything that had been created up to that point had been turned upside down so

to speak. This is not a completely unique situation as we have all heard of similar instances where companies have become victims of unfortunate situations. It was after this event, and my subsequent acquisition of the company, where the blessings started to unfold for Boulder Creek Guitars. It became very apparent that the Boulder Creek "family" was going to rally to rebuild this great company. Everyone from the factories, to the dealers and distributors, the artists, and the employees began to rally behind me to rebuild the company."

And rally they did. The factories held onto orders that had been placed prior to the sale, after Strametz expressed to them that his intention was to purchase



Sarah McLaughlin and her Riptide EUC-11NS ukulele

and rebuild the company and honor those orders. They could have sold off their inventory, but they held onto it for two years until Jeff was able in 2015 to develop and raise enough funds in order to purchase that merchandise, a move based solely on their working relationship with Strametz and Boulder Creek. Boulder Creek's dealers and distributors also got on board, essentially going into "hibernation mode" until the company was again in a position to service their needs, and as Jeff was able to regain control of the company, they began to repurchase and restock. "The dealers didn't cast me to the wind and say, 'Sorry, tough luck, take a flying leap,'" says Jeff, laughing, "Same thing with our distributors. So, the factories, the dealers, and the distributors knew of the turmoil that the company was in, and through ongoing contact with me decided that they were going to stick with me until we got turned back around and got things going."

As if that wasn't enough of a testament to the strength of Jeff's conviction, the majority of the Boulder Creek employees stayed with him through the default process as well. "Some guys were doing part-time work here and there," says Strametz, "but everybody kind of stayed available. All but one of my old employees stayed with me. Not only were they loyal to staying with the company, and knowing what kind of mountain we had to climb to come back, they also had to sacrifice, and we all still are, to a high degree, what our incomes are. We had to put everything that we could back into the business, so I could buy inventory and the company would stay alive. I like to say that we are one of the most reasonably paid executive teams, in fact, you could combine all our salaries and it still wouldn't match what a COO would normally get paid at any other company."

"We're at the position now where we have, for the first time in probably four or five years, a full inventory of almost everything that we've got at this time of the year, which is one of the peak periods for instrument sales, so we're really excited about that," Strametz states, "and that was through a lot of sacrifice, and just keeping Boulder Creek at the forefront of people's minds as much as possible."

That inventory, at press time, boasts over 50 production models throughout the Boulder Creek and Riptide lines, along

with the 30 per year USA Limited Edition line of custom guitars hand built at their facility in Gilroy.

Boulder Creek was built through independent MI dealers, and to this day remains loyal to that base, providing a unique offering that is not available around every corner or in the big box stores, and giving them the ability to compete and get musicians in their doors. With great price points, dealers are able to profit while fulfilling their customers' needs for a \$3,000 sound at a fraction of the cost.

It is that loyalty and connection that is the true measure of the worth of Boulder Creek Guitars today. "It's all about the relationship," says Strametz, referring to the employees, artists, and dealers that helped to pull Boulder Creek back from the brink of extinction. "My thing that really gets me emotional, through all of this, is their dedication to me and their belief in me as a person, to keep this thing alive and get it turned around, and being able to reward them for that someday. It's the scariest thing I've ever had to do, but I want people to know that it's worth fighting for. If you've got the desire to do it, it can be done."

For inquiries about becoming a Boulder Creek Guitars dealer or information about any of their products, email jeff@boulder-creekguitars.com or call (408) 842-0222. Check them out online at www.boulder-creekguitars.com. **MMR**

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Strings & Things



Nicola Parola Cello and Violin Group

Gatchell Violins is helping the world make beautiful music – one violin, viola, cello, or upright bass at a time.

Under the “about us” section of the Gatchell website you will see a section labeled “Our Mission.” There are a few paragraphs explaining a number of things the company is committed to providing – high quality instruments, impressive price points, et cetera – but their mission can be summed up, and is summed up, in just one line, “We want to know how we can help you at every turn.” Steve Crisafulli, general manager at Gatchell Violins, says their true mission is simply just to help. “Our mission to music educators, students, parents, and all other players is to provide quality instruments at affordable pricing to aid in the mastery of their instrument and foster a love of music,” he says.



“We are completely focused on the instrument of the bowed string family and all of our resources are put to work in their support.”

– **Steve Crisafulli**
general manager, Gatchell Violins

Gatchell Violins, based in West Melbourne, Florida, exclusively sells bowed string instruments. We’re talking violins, violas, cellos, and upright bases, but they also sell all of the accouterment associated with those instruments – cases, strings, bows, rosins, shoulder rests, among other things. “We are the exclusive distributors of Ametto, H. Luger, Nicolas Parola, Stefan Petrov, Viktor Kereske, Plamen Edrev, Radiana Edreva, Nicolo Marcasi, Keith Kurtis & Clifton, Rudolph Fiedler, Danio Wu, Dennis Yi, Lelio Pan, Marco Jian, CFX Braid bows, SUMI shoulder rests, Stradpet Titanium fittings, and DOUX strings,” Crisafulli explains. “We also produce our own line of GVC cases, bows, rosins, and carbon fiber bows. In addition, we are distributors of Pirastro products.”

H. Luger instruments for the student market and Nicolas Parola and Stefan Petrov for the step-up markets are some of their top sellers, but Gatchell is also committed to introducing new instruments into the market alongside their tried and true top brands. “Last year we introduced violins made by four talented master makers who formed the Guangzhou Consortium,” explains Crisafulli. “They offer

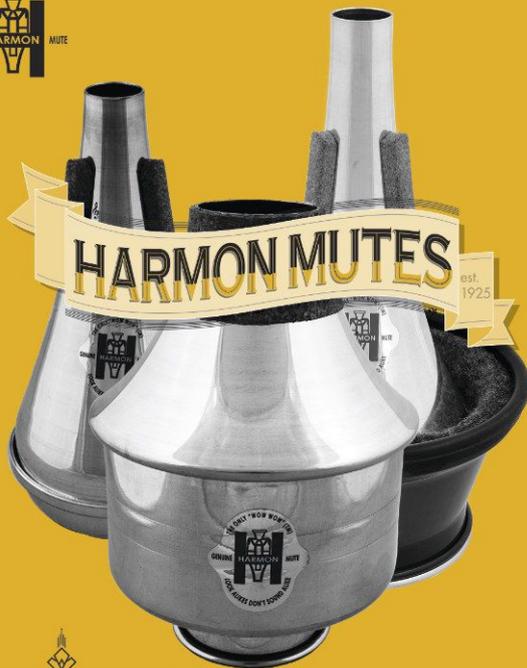


Hermann Luger White Horn Frog Violin Bow

top quality professional instruments, providing players affordable alternatives to more traditional instruments without compromise.”

Mr. Gatchell himself is heavily involved with the process of choosing each instrument that Gatchell provides. This is one of the things Crisafulli notes that differentiates the company from competitors. “Our owner is a violin maker with a keen eye for exceptional craftsmanship and quality materials,” he says. “Any product that we offer must pass his exacting and stringent standards. Each product is also test marketed in the two Central Florida locations of Atlantic Strings, a retail store owned by Mr. Gatchell. A broad network of players, teachers, and parents review the products. Only the very best are offered by Gatchell Violin Company.”

To assist Mr. Gatchell, Gatchell Violins employs a small team of managers, support staff, and four highly skilled luthiers. “We are also extremely proud of our customer relations,” says Crisafulli. “We focus on the needs of the customer and continually work to be a strong business partner for our dealers. The processes we have created enable us to provide instruments to our dealers that are truly



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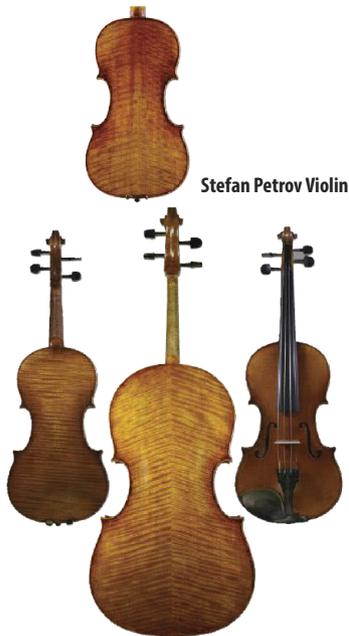
The J2 Mute
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ready to play. This allows our dealers more time to focus on their own customers, without the need to re-work the instrument set-ups before showing them to the customers. The success of our customer relations shows in the many unsolicited comments we receive from our dealers praising our instruments and our set-ups. We frequently hear how we have exceeded their expectations.”

Crisafulli, when asked about trends he’s noticed in MI, says more and more people are turning their eyes towards Asia. “People have rightfully become more accepting of instruments made in Asia, realizing that the skills and materials being used are second to none and that the instruments created in this environment offer unprecedented value,” he says. “World wood supply is dwindling and labor costs are on the rise. Innovation and forward thinking is our key to continue to offer our quality standards at each price point.” He also explained that he has seen a boom in cello and bass players. “At Gatchell Violins we offer an incredible range of cellos and basses at every level,” he says. “We expect to see an increased demand for these instruments.”

In a constantly changing MI landscape, Crisafulli explains that Gatchell sees the issues dealers are faced with and is working to aid them in any way that they can. “Dealers are currently facing a number of challenges, many of which are due to the very nature of



Stefan Petrov Violin

Nicola Parola Cello with 2 Violins

stringed instruments,” says Crisafulli. “At Gatchell Violins, we are committed to addressing these in a cost effective and progressive manner. We want to keep, celebrate, and preserve the long-standing traditional ways of violin making while applying innovation to address the issues that take our dealers away from their customers. Throughout 2016 and beyond we will be bringing this innovation to all the markets that we address.”

On the top banner of the Gatchell website you will see the words “old world craftsmanship” and “outstanding value” – two things which Crisafulli credits Gatchell’s success to. “We are completely focused on the instrument of the bowed string family and all of our resources are put to work in their support,” he says. “We are very proud of the exceptional quality and value of the instruments we offer. This allows our customers to access top level instruments and receive a great value for their purchase price.” At the end of the day, it’s very simple. Gatchell Violins is a wholesale company serving the needs

of players through music stores, violin shops, violin-makers, and other dealers. They want to help in any way that they can. **MMR**

Visit Gatchell Violins at Winter NAMM Booth #3329



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Eco-friendly Practices – It's in the Bag

By Christian **Wissmuller**

While environmentalism is hardly a new concept, the past couple of decades have seen many truly up the ante, in attempts to stem the tide when it comes to global warming and other detrimental byproducts of pollution and careless consumption. Plenty of individuals, organizations, companies, and governments across the globe have embraced “going green” – working to find new and more effective ways to minimize their carbon footprint – to help ensure a healthy world for generations to come.

The realm of MI is no different, with a number of suppliers and retailers taking drastic steps to adopt creative, evolving approaches towards environmentally friendly solutions. Yamaha – a longtime advocate for, and active participant in, eco-friendly practices – recently embarked on yet another such avenue with their new Global Green line of cases and bags for guitar.

“As the world’s leading producer of musical instruments, Yamaha is dedicated to lead through innovation, quality, and value,” explains Dennis Webster, manager of marketing at Yamaha Corporation of America. “As a responsible global corporate citizen, Yamaha is equally committed to respect and preserve the environment and nature by manufacturing, sourcing, and supplying green products. Yamaha has always been a leader in preserving the environment and reinvesting back into nature. Yamaha has been involved in reforestation for decades. The woods we use in making our instruments are sustainable woods and we continue to search out new materials each year. The finishes and glues used in making our instruments are made in house to comply with the most stringent restrictions. When Yamaha develops new products, they must pass laws and regulations in the global market.”

Making the Case for ‘Green’ Cases

For the past eight years, Yamaha has been partnered with Music Express, a U.S.-based company that manufactures bags and cases for many MI companies and their own brand, ACCESS Bags and Cases.

“As regulations have changed globally we have been working with them to keep up with ever-changing material manufacturing,” Webster explains. “In the past year or so, Music Express has been able to source materials that comply and pass U.S. regulations, including C.A.R.B. and California Prop 65 regulations, REACH and RoHS European regula-

tions, and Japan’s regulations. Each and every shipment will be accompanied with the certification, documentation, and chemical test results for every production month, ensuring that each case and bag will be held to the highest standards in the MI industry.

“All of the traditional materials used to produce guitar bags and cases, including adhesives, plywood, PVC exterior covering, foam padding, polyester interior lining, zippers, and hardware have been sourced and reformulated to comply with major global environmental regulations. Yamaha guitar gig bags, soft cases, and hard cases are produced in China, as are the materials sourced for manufacturing.”

Global Green: Available Now

At the present time, the Global Green line of cases and bags has exclusively been introduced for Yamaha guitars. “The A Series and L Series of Yamaha guitars ship with these new Global Green cases,” says Webster. “The cases and bags can be purchased separately and are designed to fit more than just Yamaha guitars. The retail price points start at \$70 for bags and go up to \$150 for some hard-shell cases.

The new Global Green line began shipping in October.

MIMR



Dennis Webster, marketing manager



Add it Up!

3 Steps to Successful Add-On Sales

By Tracy E. Leenman



Some years ago, at my former company, I analyzed a season's worth of rental and lease contracts, and found that only 27 percent of them had any add-ons at all. That meant that over 70 percent of our customers left with no accessories, no maintenance or theft coverage, not even a method book. Most clarinet and saxophone players left without reeds. Few customers came back later on for the supplies I knew they'd need just to get started playing. As the newly appointed band and orchestra manager, I found this appalling.

1. Employee Incentives

So we set out to change our employees' thinking. We offered spiffs for certain percentage of add-ons, and for the employee with the highest add-on dollar amount each week. We ran a care kit "contest" where employees earned one dollar per care kit sold, and the employee with the most care kits sold for the season got an additional \$50. We put little colored dot stickers on each care kit, and employees collected the dots on a form which was turned in weekly. This became a huge game – people hid each other's dot sheets; one even had a teddy bear "steal" others' dots and hold them "hostage"... in exchange for chocolate. It turned out to be a great morale booster, as well as an effective way to change our employees' thinking. By the end of that fall, our add-on percentage was up to 92 percent. And in the eight years that followed, the percentage of add-ons remained over 90 percent each year.

2. The Soft Sell

When I founded my own company in 2009, we were determined to make add-on sales on contracts a priority – not only because of the potential profit, but also because we knew how aggravated our customers would be to learn we didn't adequately prepare their children for the first day of class. That being said, we knew parents would have "sticker shock" at the prices of the instruments and be hesitant to spend *even more* on other stuff when their children didn't even begin playing yet.

So we developed more of an informational, "soft-sell" approach to add-ons. First, we created a "Welcome to the... (Flute, Clarinet, etc.)" handout for each instrument, written from an educational – not a sales – perspective, reinforcing that our concern was not only sales, but also ensuring their children had the best possible start in music. It includes basic instructions for instrument care and assembly, and a list of "things your child will need to succeed in class." Parents get this handout early in the rental process, so they have time to read through it; instead of us having to talk parents into accessory add-ons, they now say, "Oh, and we need (this) and we need (that)..."

Our *Welcome* sheet mentions the need for each instrument to have a check-up and adjustment at least every six months, which paves the way for our conversation about coverage. We compare this to regular oil changes for a car – "You can neglect to do them for a while, and all seems fine. Then one day, your engine seizes up and you've got a real problem." So instead of being seen as "piling on the charges," we are seen as helping them keep their instrument "running well." Customers are then asked to accept or decline our coverage on the contract (and initial), so they understand that, by declining, they are taking responsibility for maintenance and repairs on their own; this often re-opens the discussion, and gives the customer another chance to reconsider.

3. The Total Package

Packaging is a great way to help boost add-on sales. Our "Encore Package" includes the child's "textbook" (method book), a folding stand for home use, and a care kit (with instructions and a coupon for one free lesson in our Conservatory) – all at a discounted price. Employees are taught to explain why each component of the Encore Package is necessary to give the child the best opportunity for success in music. Because we offer the folding stands in a choice of colors, the question is no longer, "Do you want a folding stand?" but "What color stand would your child like?" Referring to the method book

as a “textbook” helps reinforce that music is (recognized by federal educational policy) an academic subject, just like math, science, history, and English - it’s not “extra-curricular” or “co-curricular,” regardless of what parents and administrators may think. Lists posted on the wall over our method book section help parents find the correct book for their child’s particular school and grade easily. This helps reinforce that we work closely with the local band and strings teachers, and are aware of their requirements and preferences.

We make our own packages of reeds too – we buy in bulk (to take advantage of the lower cost per reed), and re-package in packs of five (with our own header, for additional branding), at a discount price. Since we opened our doors in 2009, nearly 100% of our beginning clarinet and saxophone customers have left with a pack of reeds. Nothing is as frustrating to a beginning reed player (or that beginner’s teacher!) as not having one single playable reed.

In his book, *Retail Truths*, Chip Averwater notes that, “profit is the sum of a thousand little improvements... every missed detail comes directly off the bottom line (p. 43).” Each of these strategies may seem like a minor paradigm shift, but all together they have had a major impact on our add-on percentages, and with that, our bottom line. We are consistently showing a 95 percent add-on rate for new leases and contracts, where very few customers leave with only an instrument and no coverage or accessories. More importantly, these strategies have also emphasized to our customers – parents and educators alike – that our foremost concern is not profit, but helping to strengthen our local band and string programs and create more successful young musicians.



Tracy Leenman is the owner/CEO of Greenville, South Carolina's Musical Innovations – named NAMM's 2015 Dealer of the Year this past July. Leenman

has over 40 years of experience as a music educator and over 15 years in the music industry. Tracy has been a longtime, valued contributor of articles and editorials to both MMR and our sister publication, SBO.



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By Mary
Luehrsen

Learning Music: In Praise of Print

I grew up in a home with a grand piano. Although today a trim electric keyboard or other nifty digital instrument may be the musical centerpiece of a home, when I was a kid, growing up in a rural community, many homes had acoustic pianos – and even a few families had cherished home organs! My memory doesn't offer accurate recall of my earliest piano training (I think my mom was my first teacher), but what is crystal clear to me is what my first piano method book looked like. *The John Thompson "Teaching Little Fingers to Play"* beginner piano book in which the first piece had me position my right thumb on middle C and directed me to play the four quarter notes on the musical staff. As I recall those earliest piano lessons, I remember that encountering musical notation was sort of a jolt to my cognitive system. Sound, sight, rhythm, and playing the music were all jumbled together – or so it seemed. Still, I jumped in with print music as my anchor. So much so that the look, including all the pencil notes in the margins, of my first piano book remain sharp in my memory.

My personal anecdote is meant to highlight a critical asset to the field of music education: print music. Be it beginner method books, scores and charts for school ensembles, music for annual regional and state solo and ensemble contests, or published arrangements of current top hit tunes and artists, the availability of print music is critical for music learners. Music manuscripts transmit emotional creations of all types and offer a limitless journey of musical discovery. There is a group of like-minded music industry professionals who have dedicated their careers to being experts in print music who are also members of the Retail Print Music Dealers Association (RPM-DA). Among music stores today that continue to offer customers the option to browse stacks and stacks of music manuscripts and review potential repertoire for their students and themselves, many are likely to be RPM-DA-affiliated music retail stores – and if they are not, they should be!

RPM-DA members are passionate about music education and music manuscript in its many forms; they believe in, produce, and distribute print music

that becomes a pathway for learning and making music at every level – from beginner to professional. They are also informed and passionate advocates for music education. In Spring 2014, during the RPM-DA national conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, RPM-DA hosted a SupportMusic Coalition "mock policy debate" that featured Kevin Cranley, president and CEO of Willis Music Company (and publisher of the aforementioned *John Thompson* piano method!), Ron Manus, president and CEO of Alfred Music, and Marcia Neel, president of Music Education Consultants who also serves on the steering committee of the NAMM Foundation's SupportMusic Coalition. RPM-DA conference attendees were treated to a fictional (though not far-fetched!) debate, written and produced by the NAMM Foundation staff, about the merits of offering music education curriculum during the school day – taught by certified music teachers. Kevin, Ron, and Marcia rocked the house with a debate that pitted reasons for-and-against the role of music education in the curriculum and it stirred the RPM-DA troops to recognize and appreciate the important roles they serve in their communities as supporters of music education. Spoiler alert: pro-classroom instruction of music education won the debate by a large margin!



“Sincerest thanks to all RPM-DA members for what you do every day to support music teachers and music learners everywhere.”

Proving that advocacy is a lifestyle and not just a one-time deal Kevin and Ron, (and their companies) are leaders in the print music field, as well as strong and seasoned advocates for music education. In fact, both Ron and Kevin have made numerous trips to Washington, D.C. to participate in NAMM's Music Education Fly-in to advocate at the federal level. In 2016, our friends at RPM-DA will celebrate 40 years as an association and as a prelude to this important year, we say, "CONGRATULATIONS!" Sincerest thanks to all RPM-DA members for what you do every day to support music teachers and music learners everywhere. You are all music education advocates when you put a piece of sheet music, a chord chart for a song, a first method book or a reprint of a proof of a work by a master composer in the hands of a music learner. Print music in all of its forms provides pathways to deep and meaningful music making.

MIMR

ACCESSORIES

AIM Gifts

Stuff those holiday stockings and your store's cash register selling AIM Gifts music design candy mint tins. Each display holds 24 mint tins with each tin holding 50 mints. Pictured are the piano, multi note, violin, acoustic, and electric guitar designs. The tins are reusable and make great collector gifts. AIM Gifts offers 10,000 different music gift accessories.



aimgifts.com

Korg Sledgehammer Pro

With advanced new design, operation, and functionality the Sledgehammer Pro provides ultra-precise tuning with an accuracy of ± 0.1 cents, making it one of the most reliable clip-on tuners ever produced. The three dimensional display offers unparalleled visibility, allowing players to tune confidently in any situation. Its tubular body has a shuttle switch that's simple to use and allows users to easily operate the tuner with just one hand, even while performing. Offering both extreme accuracy and a unique, highly visible display, the Sledgehammer Pro is described by Korg as the ideal clip-on tuner for professional guitarists and bassists. MSRP: \$29.99

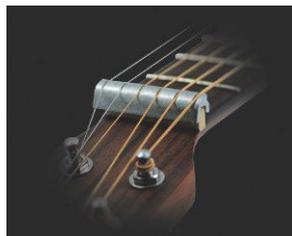


korg.com

Grover Perfect Guitar Nut and Ukulele Humidifier

Grover Musical Products has reintroduced the "Perfect Guitar Nut" for slide steel playing. Sold successfully for over 50 years under the Micro brand, the new Grover model is produced using a totally new, but exact reproduction die cast mold, which provides a much brighter, resonant sound than stamped steel versions. 1 7/8" total length - 1 5/8" Center E to Center E, The Grover Perfect Nut will fit almost all six string guitars.

Grover Musical Products has also introduced the Ukulele Humidifier. It is important to keep your valuable instrument at the proper humidity level. Most experts agree that this is between 40% - 50% humidity. Too low and your instrument finish can be damaged and the wood can crack. Too high and your instrument will swell, fret ends become sharp, and it will not sound right. The Grover Ukulele Humidifier is the perfect product to combat these problems and to protect your expensive instrument. Our unique cover allows you to partially or completely cover the sound hole for extreme conditions and allows you to add water without removing the cover. For very moderate conditions, you can do without the cover and hang the humidifying tube between the strings. Made of soft latex, the Grover Ukulele Humidifier is harmless to all instrument finishes.



grover.com

New Products

AMPLIFIER

Harman JBL EON618S Powered Subwoofer

HARMAN's JBL Professional introduced the JBL EON618S, an 18-inch, 1000W powered subwoofer that is durable, supports true low-frequency extension, and can be controlled wirelessly. The JBL EON618S is designed to meet the demands of today's working musicians and sound providers in the areas of flexibility, portability, and ease of use.

While the JBL EON618S weighs in at 78 pounds, it delivers a range of robust new features and capabilities. The JBL EON618S's maximum SPL output is 134 dB, with a frequency range of 3Hz - 150Hz (-10 dB) and a frequency response of 42.5Hz - 150Hz (-3 dB). DSP parameters, including presets for EON600, EON200 and other manufacturers' full-range loudspeakers, can be controlled via a Bluetooth app for iOS and Android. Selectable crossover presets are available through the EON Connect app. The JBL EON618S is tuned for optimal performance with the JBL EON610, JBL EON612 and JBL EON615 full-range systems.



harman.com

ACCESSORIES

EHX Key9 Electric Piano Machine

The KEY9's layout is straightforward and intuitive. A nine-position switch selects the desired instrument. The Keys knob adjusts the volume of the preset while Dry controls the volume of the untreated instrument level at the Keys Output jack. This enables a player to mix the sound of their original instrument with the electric piano, etc. to create lush layers, or mute it entirely. CTRL1 and CTRL2 provide adjustment of key parameters that help define each instrument's signature sound. Many presets include adjustable modulation such as tremolo, phaser, and chorus.



The new KEY9 Electric Piano Machine is available now, comes standard with an EHX 9.6-Volt/DC200mA AC adapter. List price: \$293.73.

ehx.com

Perri's Guitar Straps & Picks

These new ranges continue the expansion of Perri's licensed collections, which includes accessories featuring The Beatles, AC/DC, and Pink Floyd, amongst many others.

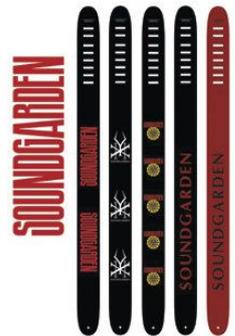
There are ten **Nirvana & Kurt Cobain** guitar straps and two sets of picks in the new range. Images used on the straps and picks include the Nirvana smiley face, Kurt Cobain's white and black alien sunglasses, and of course seahorses, which featured in many of his paintings and drawings.

KISS's simple, strong, and instantly recognizable logo is featured on the new guitar straps and picks. There are eleven straps and two sets of picks to choose from, which include images from their first album 'Kiss', the critically acclaimed *Destroyer* album, and the classic *Rock And Roll Over* album.

Soundgarden also has a range of five straps & two sets of picks. Designs include the jagged cyclone from the two times platinum *Badmotorfinger* album and simplified version of the *King Animal* album cover featured on the "Been Away Too Long" single.

Completing the quartet is **The Doors**. Synonymous with the band is their simple and bold geometric logo, with the reflective double 'O's and the tiny but essential psychedelic "The". Its distinctive design is immediately familiar and makes the four guitar straps and two sets of picks in this series extremely noticeable. Also featured are many iconic images of the band members.

The polyester webbing straps, with durable heat transfer designs are 2" wide and adjustable from 39" to 58". The leather effect vinyl straps, with high resolution imaging, are 2.5" wide and adjustable from 44.5" to 53". The themed medium sized picks are manufactured using superior materials to enable fantastic sharp images to be produced. The picks are lightweight and come with just the right amount of flexibility to aid playing.



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ADJ Ricochet

The Ricochet is a brand new 20W hybrid LED scanner/beam effect that utilizes precision stepper motors, dual mirrors and an array of color/pattern options to let users create pure lighting excitement in the form of beams, cones and wave-style effects. Affordable and compact too, it's the ideal laser/beam effect for club and bar owners, mobile entertainers, event organizers, touring bands, roller rinks, and bowling alleys.



Combining a powerful 20W LumiEngin LED and a variable beam angle, the Ricochet is capable of both a single super-tight beam (at 4-degrees) and a wide, flat laser-like effect (at 120-degrees). Thanks to the unit's precision stepper motors and dual mirrors, these effects flicker and flit about rapidly to create an intense club-style atmosphere, while 29 pattern macros allow users to project distinct patterns on the floor, walls, and ceiling. The Ricochet is also fitted with a color wheel that offers a choice of 10 hues – including the options to split them for a varied dual-color effect – allowing users to generate beams and patterns in a range of eye-catching colors. The unit is lightweight, weighing 11 lbs., and compact, measuring 11.25 x 9.75 x 9.75 in.

adj.com

Denon DJ MC4000 Controller

Featuring a sleek new design, all metal construction and inviting appearance, the MC4000 continues Denon DJ's reputation for innovative features, dependability, unrivaled sound quality, and peerless value.



The all-new MC4000 is a 2-deck Serato MIDI controller for the professional DJ, wrapping in-demand audio manipulation tools in a robust steel chassis. In addition to precision touch-activated jog wheels, performers get access to dedicated hot cue and sample pads for on-the-fly creativity. Long-throw 100mm pitch faders and an intuitive control layout deliver natural operation when balancing complex set elements. Known for their emphasis on sound quality, Denon DJ includes a premium 24-bit audio output path for noticeably clearer mixes. Denon DJ's highly regarded dual microphone inputs are complemented by a studio-grade echo effect, and "ducking" feature—effortlessly moving vocals to the top of the mix without riding faders. The MC4000 includes Serato DJ Intro and is natively supported by Serato DJ, Virtual DJ 8, and Algoriddim djay PRO. A Traktor Pro 2 mapping is also available on the MC4000 product page. \$399.99.

denondj.com

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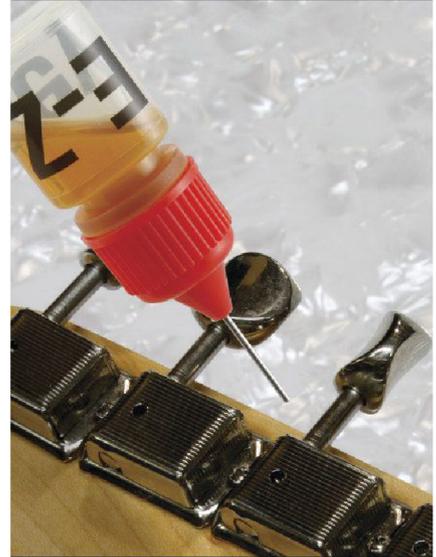
SLM Apollo Drums AP522

The Apollo AP522 5 Piece Drum Kit features Popular 6-ply construction, 10" and 12" mounted toms, a 16" floor tom, 22" bass drum with foldable spurs, and a matching 5 x 14 wood snare drum. The kits come with double-braced durable, black-coated hardware; a double-braced throne, chain drive bass drum pedal, 14" hi-hats and a 15" crash/ride. The AP522 comes in a variety of great finishes; black, red, and gun metal.



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By Dan Daley

Pro Re-Imaginings as Two MI Icons Point Towards a Changing Future

The two most iconic brands in MI, Fender and Gibson, are in the process of remaking themselves. These aren't cosmetic makeovers – the companies are making moves that will fundamentally alter what they are. They will also point towards the future of MI retail.

Servco Pacific, longtime majority investor in Fender, along with more recent equity partner TPG Growth, has been nudging the company into a more diverse digital future for some time. In 2011 they unveiled an automotive sound system in conjunction with Volkswagen, built by Panasonic but with a Fender twist that configures the eight-speaker system so as to put a virtual stage on the dashboard and create a “concert in a car” experience. That live-sound concept may get taken further by Ethan Kaplan, who recently came on board as Fender’s chief digital products officer. Kaplan, who had previously run Live Nation Labs, the hoped-for-but-failed digital innovation hub for the world’s largest concert promoter, also worked for Warner Music Group and Gracenote, a music-database company. As per an interview with Kaplan in TechCrunch, his immediate mandate seems to be to build a bridge from the company’s existing products into an online, software-based community. A digital tuning app under construction may also track a user’s genre preferences and intuit some future preferences and make song and product recommendations.

Kaplan’s presence suggests not only further leveraging of the live-music trend that has remade the music industry, with concert and merch revenues struggling to replace the huge drop-off in recorded music sales, but other digital ventures down paths far from Stratocaster-land.

As disruptive, and as digital in its own way, was Fender’s decision late last year to begin selling directly to musicians through its website, a move that has considerably riled its foundational base of brick-and-mortar retailers, who were already looking over their shoulders at e-commerce sites such as Amazon and eBay. But in doing so, it looks like Fender is listening more attentively to retail analysts, who saw it as a strategy to connect more deeply and directly with its customers.

Gibson’s Buying Spree

Gibson has been getting deeper into pro audio and lifestyle verticals. In 2011 it bought the Stanton Group’s portfolio of KRK Systems, Cerwin-Vega, and Stanton DJ; since then, its acquired Onkyo, TEAC, Tascam, and Cake-walk, and most recently the audio, video, multimedia, and accessories businesses of Philips. The TEAC investment (they actually own a controlling interest in what is, in Japan, a publicly traded company) adds more depth on the professional side than meets the eye: its range of products includes data recorders, medical devices, video image recorders, disc publishing, in-flight entertainment systems on airlines, and a storage device business.

The company entered the crowded consumer headphone market at the last CES, but with a twist: an emphasis on fitness and an endorsement deal with speedster Usain Bolt. An official name change last year, from Gibson Guitars to Gibson Brands, is confirmation of a strategic shift to a consumer orientation as well as an assertive perceptual signal of change. As the local newspaper in Nashville,

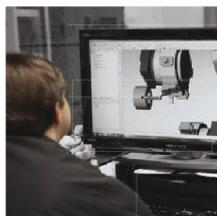
Gibson’s HQ city, expressed it last August, the company “has emerged as a consumer electronics manufacturer first and foremost, and a guitar producer second.” A credit opinion by Moody’s Investors Service indicates that 75 percent of the company’s consolidated revenue is now derived from consumer electronics.

The guitars that have been both companies’ avatars – Gibson’s Les Paul and Fender’s Stratocaster and Telecaster – will continue to be at the center of their respective heraldries, but over time they may become as much a trope as a core product. Guitar sales overall, while trending slightly up in recent years, have trended downward over 30 percent in the last decade, as per NAMM data, as musical tastes change and computers continue to become the platforms for more music creation and production. Both companies are doing what any intelligent corporate entity would do: diversifying across market verticals and product categories. No need to try to imagine a world without Fender or Gibson guitars, because plenty of people will always want them. But probably not enough of them to sustain either company’s growth going forward.

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“The guitar that have been both companies’ avatars... will continue to be at the center of their respective heraldries, but over time they may become as much a trope as a core product.”

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