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MUSICAL MERCHANDISE REVIEW

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Audio Interface Sales During the Pandemic and Beyond



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INSIDE



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2021 Dealers' Choice
Awards Ballot



Upfront Q&A
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Lorenza Cocco

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Upfront Q&A

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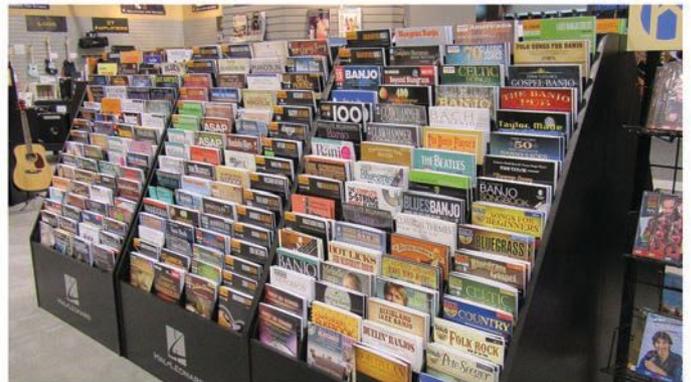
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Awards Season

By
**Christian
Wissmuller**

Ah, it's that heady time of year once again: time for the cream to rise to the top, for champions to be crowned – and for you, *MMR* readers, to do the heavy lifting while I sit back and enjoy a little break. The Dealers' Choice Awards (DCAs) are truly determined by our subscribers and I merely report the results in a couple months. Who better to single out the most impressive instruments, gear, and entire lines of product than folks who actually work in the MI industry – in particular, retailers?

Is it purely coincidence that honors handed out by other publications and organizations seem invariably to go to their biggest advertisers? Odd, that...

There's no smoke-filled back room with myself and other *MMR* executives pouring over spreadsheets and ledgers in order to make sure we reward our strongest business partners with a trophy. The DCAs aren't decided upon by some "panel of experts" (Have you ever really looked at some of these "panels" that adjudicate other awards? Experts at *what*, exactly?), but by the *actual* experts – our readers.

“The DCAs aren't decided upon by some 'panel of experts,' but by the *actual* experts – our readers.”

So the ball is now in your court. Head on over to mmrmagazine.com and click on the "2021 Dealers' Choice Awards Ballot" tab up near the top (Or I'll save you the trouble. Here: <https://mmrmagazine.com/site/2021-dealers-choice-awards-ballot/>) and make your selections in each of the 17 categories, including the big one: Product of the Year. While our nomination process for the DCAs – which ran from mid-July through to mid-September – was open to anyone who cared to suggest an instrument or brand, the actual voting for the winners of the awards is restricted to current *MMR* subscribers – one ballot per.

Traditionally we hand out trophies to the top vote-getters while in Anaheim in January. For obvious reasons, that part of the whole process will be postponed a few months, but we'll still be announcing the big winners in our December issue and you have until 5pm ET on Friday, November 10 2021 to be a part of establishing who those winners will be.

Following his appearance at this year's MTV VMA's, British singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran opined that U.S. awards shows are, "Filled with resentment and hatred towards everyone else and it's quite an uncomfortable atmosphere... It's just lots of people wanting other people to fail."

While we certainly appreciate and even encourage a healthy sense of competition between nominees, the DCAs are quite a different animal from poor Ed's experience with U.S. awards. As we all know, one of the MI industry's greatest strengths is the conviviality and spirit of community that exists between even many of the most competitive brands. This annual event is an opportunity to celebrate the creative, technical, aesthetic, and design innovations that have driven sales and connected with end-users in the past calendar year. No resentment or hatred at this party. Nope!

Hop online right now and cast your votes for this year's Dealers' Choice Awards. Let your voice be heard!

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Music & Arts Expands Throughout 2021

Music & Arts is in the midst of an eventful 2021, with a large number of new store openings and acquisitions expanding the reach of Music & Arts into new communities, serving families and schools while furthering its mission of promoting and supporting the merits of music education and the joy of music lessons.

Four brand-new Music & Arts locations have opened this year: East Tucson, AZ; Edison, NJ; Savannah, GA; and Summerville, SC.

Additionally, five retailers (across nine locations total) have been welcomed into the Music & Arts family as acquisitions so far in 2021: Whole Note Music in Stockbridge, GA; Center Stage in Augusta, GA; Master Musician in Murrieta and Palm Springs, CA; Howren Music in Charlotte, NC; and all four Mississippi Music stores, located in Flowood, Biloxi, Hattiesburg and Meridian, MS. These retail locations will now operate as Music & Arts stores while retaining personnel and maintaining the grassroots business footprint that they have worked to foster in these communities. And as with the other new and existing Music & Arts locations, each store will be offering instrument rentals, repairs, and in-store and online lessons, in addition to an expansive product offering.

The Mississippi Music acquisition in particular is a significant step for Music & Arts, as it represents the very first Music & Arts locations in Mississippi and the next step for Mississippi Music, a highly respected and influential MI presence in the region for decades.

Mississippi Music is a top 100 musical

instrument retailer with an extensive reach covering most of the state of Mississippi. "After 75 years, it was time to come up with a plan to transition Mississippi Music's business in a way where it could continue to scale and grow to keep up with the demand of our beloved and loyal customers," said Rosi Johnson, owner of Mississippi Music and former NASMD President and NAMM board member. "This acquisition is the best of all possible outcomes, as Music & Arts will bring more diversity, more options and continue to be located across our areas to serve our musicians, school music programs and customers. This is not the end but a new beginning."

The advent of these new Music & Arts locations follows the acquisition, earlier this year, of Be Part of the Music, a nationally renowned music education advocacy organization led by Scott Lang and Andrew Hrynshyn. Now under the umbrella of Music & Arts, the free services offered by Be Part of the Music will be more accessible to music educators nationwide than ever before. Founded in 2011, Be Part of the Music provides a wide range of free content (videos, documents, advocacy materials) and "done-for-you" solutions (website builders, automated solutions, pre-built campaigns) for the recruitment and retention of school music students. Known and trusted by music educators across the U.S., Be Part of the Music is more than a leading voice in music education; they serve as advocate, counsel, and champion to the 22,000+ music educators and hundreds of thousands of parents who use their content regularly.

Music China Postponed to January 2022

In light of the recent pandemic situation in China, the 20th edition of Music China has been re-scheduled from October to January 14 – 17, 2022 at the same venue, the Shanghai New International Expo Centre. The move is in alignment with the Chinese government's anti-pandemic measures, and will ensure that the organizers can deliver as safe a fair as possible for participants.

In recent days, the pandemic situation in China has been evolving and as a result the country has extended its pandemic containment measures. To adhere with the Chinese government's prevention and control guidelines, the organizers have come to the decision to postpone the show to January 2022 following an extensive consultation with all stakeholders.

Although preparations had been in full swing to welcome exhibitors and visitors to mark the 20th anniversary edition, the organizers believe that this step into January is a wise decision, because providing a safe trade fair for all participants and staff members should remain a top priority. In January, the organizers will celebrate the important milestone and continue to provide a quality trade platform for conducting business activities, brand building, education and networking.

At the rescheduled January event, additional hygiene measures will be strictly implemented, including face recognition, entry checkpoints to verify health declaration codes and temperature scans. All participants are required to submit travel records and wear a face mask at all times.

Neutrik USA Expands Its Horizons and Becomes Neutrik Americas

Neutrik USA is pleased to announce a dramatic expansion in its operations, and with that expansion comes a new name: Neutrik Americas. Neutrik Americas, a wholly owned subsidiary of Neutrik AG and a member of the Neutrik Group, will now service all the Americas from its Charlotte, NC facility. The goal of this organizational shift is to provide centralized operation for the Americas, with the benefit of consolidated sales and support for the entire region.

One of the key benefits of this company reorganization is greater responsiveness for customers. This includes more effective sales and support services – without such a great variance in time zones – making it easier to contact the company, regardless of one's physical location. As part of this expansion, Neutrik Americas now offers multilingual sales and support services. Neutrik Americas offers English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French language support from its Charlotte headquarters – ensuring ease of communication with customers no matter where throughout North, Central, and South America they may physically be located.

Neutrik's commitment to its customers and partners remains the company's highest priority, and the expansion into Neutrik Americas is a direct reflection of that pledge. Key on the list of company priorities is the ability to make it easy for customers to conduct business with Neutrik, to fully support customers in their respective time zones and languages, and to maximize logistics from the Charlotte location.

In addition to the Neutrik Americas expansion, the Neutrik Group launched a new global website www.neutrikgroup.com on October 1 where all group and brand information can be located. The NEUTRIK® brand www.neutrik.com and REAN® brand www.rean-connectors.com websites will remain active for direct access.

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Warwick/Framus Wins Legal Dispute with Gibson

In the legal dispute over the sale of V-shaped electric guitars, Meissner Bolte has achieved a victory for guitar manufacturer Warwick. On September 22 2021, the Federal Supreme Court dismissed the appeal of U.S. manufacturer Gibson against a judgement of the Hamburg Higher Regional Court (I ZR 192/20).

The proceedings were based on a lawsuit filed by the U.S. guitar manufacturer Gibson. In 1958, Gibson launched the “Flying V”, the first guitar with a V-shaped body. The model became famous through musicians such as Jimi Hendrix, Lenny Kravitz, and the German band Scorpions.

In 2014, Gibson filed a lawsuit against the German guitar manufacturer Warwick, that sold a V-shaped guitar approximated in shape under the “Framus” brand. Gibson objected to the imitation of its products and demanded a sales stop arguing that customers were being misled about the origin of the guitar, and Warwick was unfairly exploiting the reputation of the Gibson guitars.

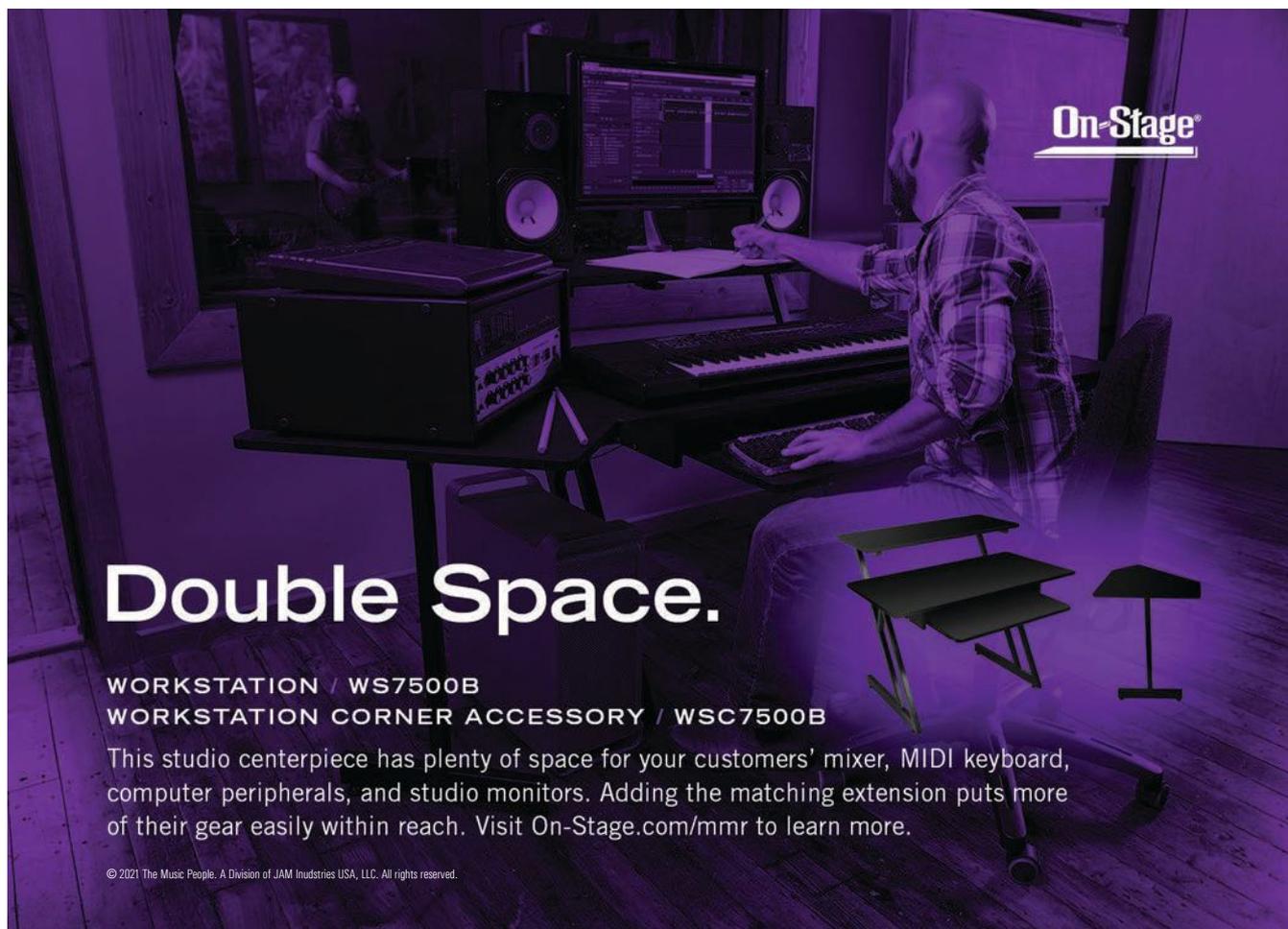
In July 2017, the Hamburg Regional Court decided in favor of Gibson. The Higher Regional Court overturned this decision in November 2020 (Case No. 15 U 86/19) stating that despite a subsequent adoption of design elements, Warwick had not acted unfairly. In spite of the same shape, the brand and the manufacturer’s reference could be clearly recognized. Potential buyers could distinguish the guitars and were therefore not misled about the origin of the instruments from different manufacturers. The Higher Regional Court did not see any unfair exploitation of reputation as both guitars were high-quality, high-priced models and Warwick therefore did not participate in the good reputation of the Gibson variant.

“With this ruling, the Federal Supreme Court once again clarifies that the Unfair Competition Act does not grant absolute product protection, but there need to be additional unfairness features,” says Dr Stefan Zech, partner with Meissner Bolte in Munich. “We are pleased that after the Higher Regional Court, also the Federal Supreme Court has followed our arguments and confirmed that there is no unfairness in the case of Warwick’s V-Guitar.”

Excelcia Music Publishing Announces Acquisition of Wingert-Jones Publications & RBC Publications

Excelcia Music Publishing has announced the acquisition of Wingert-Jones Publications and RBC Publications from J.W. Pepper & Son, Inc. Excelcia Music Publishing plans to expand and amplify the presence of both Wingert-Jones and RBC in the educational music space. Wingert-Jones and RBC have strong reputations in the American music landscape for producing works in their catalogs that aptly meet the needs of today’s music programs.

Pepper will retain some ownership in the resultant company and continue to provide printing and order fulfillment services for Wingert-Jones, RBC, and Excelcia Music Publishing through their Atlanta Distribution Center. Excelcia Music Publishing will continue to market each of the three brands separately to emphasize their unique offerings.



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Player Plus Studio Sessions: Powered by Fender

Fender Musical Instruments Corporation (FMIC) announced the launch of the Player Plus Studio Sessions: Powered by Fender on September 27. This global program seeks to fulfill the creative aspirations of independent artists around the world by getting them back in the studio and providing them with the tools they need to create their musical art. To bring this program to life, Fender has partnered with notable recording studios in the U.S., U.K., Australia, Japan, and Mexico to host Fender-funded studio sessions with engineers, a mixing credit, Player Plus gear and mentoring resources for winning artists.

Inspired by the recent launch of the Player Plus series, Fender's new line of guitars and basses are designed with creators and independent artists in mind to be the tool that these artists use to bring their passions to a global stage. The Player Plus Studio Sessions aim to take that same goal a step further by purposefully supporting rising talent, helping them share their message and creativity through original music. This new global program reinvigorates Fender's ongoing commitment to musicians, and in particular, independent musicians.

To enter, independent artists must submit either a recent single, music video or live performance to best showcase their talent and creativity. Instrumental acts, bands and solo artists are also encouraged and welcome to enter the Player Plus Studio Session. Eligibility requirements are as follows: applicants must be 18+ years of age, play or have a band member play guitar or bass and must be a fully independent artist. Additionally, applicants must be able to travel to the nearest selected city and studio as winning does not provide travel to and from the studio.

Participating studios by market include:

- S. Studios: EastWest Studios (Los Angeles), MDDN (Los Angeles), Flux Studios (New York City), Welcome to 1979 (Nashville)
- UK: RAK Studios (London), Coastal Sound Recording Studio (Liverpool), Steelworks Studios (Sheffield), Chamber Studio (Edinburgh), Camden Recording Studios (Dublin)



- Australia: Sing Sing (Melbourne), Studios 301 (Sydney)
- LAT AM: Pieza Estudios (Mexico City)
- Japan: Freedom Studio Infinity (Tokyo)

The entry period will run from September 27 through October 20, 2021 with winners announced on November 10, 2021. Each submission will be reviewed by a panel of judges made up of noteworthy producers, artists, journalists, and Fender executives.

In addition to earning valuable studio time, the winning artists will receive a one-hour consultation with Ari Herstand, CEO of Ari's Take and author of the bestselling book *How to Make It in the New Music Business*. Herstand is also the author of the 2021 *Fender Artist Playbook*, a step-by-step guide for emerging artists to tackle the new frontier of music, from cracking TikTok algorithms to leveraging alternative revenue streams, digital marketing tips, NFTs and more. Winners will also receive a Fender Player Plus guitar or bass to use in the studio at their recording session and keep for future shows and creative endeavors. The new instruments bring Fender's most iconic models into the modern era. Noiseless pickups provide classic Fender sound with enhanced clarity and advanced switching capabilities for a wide variety of tonal options. Upgraded features include rolled fingerboard edges and locking tuners and hot, fresh finishes including Belair Blue, Silver Smoke and Tequila Sunrise.

To learn more about the Player Plus Studio Sessions: Powered by Fender head to <https://playerplusstudio.com/>. Winners will be contacted by Fender directly in early November. Recording will take place throughout November and December 2021 and through January 2022 in Australia.

Gibson Gives Donates \$300,000 To Metro Nashville Public Schools and Music Makes Us To Support Students

Gibson Gives, the philanthropic arm of Gibson has announced a \$300,000 donation to benefit students attending Metro Nashville Public Schools. The public private partnership Music Makes Us will distribute the donation of guitars and other music equipment across Metro Nashville Public Schools music education programs, as well as sistering school districts.

The Gibson Gives donation will directly benefit students in schools with guitar learning programs including the following schools: Antioch High School, Bellevue Middle School, Donelson Middle School, H.G. Hill Middle School, Hillwood High School, John Overton High School, Maplewood High School, McGavock High School, and Nashville School of the Arts. The donation includes Gibson guitars (electric, acoustic, and bass guitars), 36 amplifiers, 1700 pairs of guitar strings, and 116 guitar stands. Additionally, Gibson Gives has provided 1000 PPE face masks to all Nashville Metro Public Schools music students valued at \$4,000.

"Gibson Gives' extremely generous donation to Metro Nashville Public Schools and Music Makes Us will make a huge difference for our guitar students and teachers across Nashville and Davidson County as they enjoy being back in classrooms and

on stages together," says Dr. Adrienne Battle, Director of Schools, Metro Nashville Public Schools. "Thank you to Gibson Gives for once again sharing the gift of music with our schools."



Above (L-R): Chelsea Payne (Donelson Middle School), Ryan Murphey (Nashville School of the Arts), Sarah Robinson (Performing Arts Coordinator), Jeffrey Smith (Director, Visual and Performing Arts, Metro Nashville Public Schools), James "JC" Curleigh (President and CEO, Gibson Brands), Cesar Gueikian (Brand President, Gibson Brands), Heather Freeland (Entertainment Relations-Nashville, Gibson Brands) and Dendy Jarrett (Executive Director, Gibson Gives)

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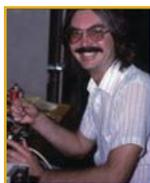


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TRADE REGRETS

The family of **Steve Rabe**, the founder and president of SWR Engineering Inc., announced his passing on September



30th 2021 at the age of 73. Known for his innovative and breakthrough designs in bass amplification products Rabe was the chief engineer from his founding of the company in 1984 until it was sold in 1997. Later the brand was sold to Fender.

The company's name was derived from Steve's initials, Steven William Rabe. Prior to starting SWR, Rabe had worked at Acoustic Amplification and A.M.P. He developed his own ideas for a hybrid design of amplification that included a tube preamp with a solid state power section. In addition to iconic bass models and memorable names such as the Redhead and Goliath, SWR produced the California Blond series which set a new standard in acoustic guitar amplification. Rick Carlson, who headed up sales and marketing at SWR and worked side by side with Steve for ten years reflects "Steve redefined the boundaries of bass amplification and changed the game, his legacy lives on in the hearts of the musicians that knew him and all those that played SWR gear. His influence was considerable and set the course for bass amplification as we know it today." Steve leaves behind his wife Linda and sons Brian and Michael.

Dex Johnson, executive vice president and owner of Mississippi Music up until the recent sale of the store to Music & Arts, passed away on October 3.



Johnson grew up in the music retail business his parents founded, and worked in every department of the company, managing several locations of Mississippi Music over his career.

As a couple Dex and his wife, and NASMD past president. Rosi were strong supporters of a number of music industry programs and organizations. They were inseparable in all things, at work and at home, rais-

ing their daughter Ashley and doting on their granddaughter. Dex, an avid golfer, was famous for participating in hilarious skits at NASMD conventions that brought the house down, and he and Rosi were always the life of any and every party. The family is planning a celebration of life service in the coming weeks.

Music educator and one of the founding members of the Jazz Educators Network (JEN), **Jim Widner**, passed away suddenly of a heart attack on October 3 2021. He was 75 years old.



Jim was given the opportunity to join his grade school's orchestra, which provided him an instrument to play. His love of music was fostered years later when he became a student of his highly influential high school band director. These early experiences set Jim on his path in music, which included touring with big bands (Stan Kenton, Woody Herman and Buddy DeFranco), teaching (and creating a jazz program at the University of Missouri at St. Louis), owning his own music store with his wife (Pro Music Shop), becoming a product endorser (for Yamaha), and being on the team that established the Jazz Educators Network. All this thanks to the kindness and guidance of a few music teachers and a grade school that gave him an instrument.

Holger Seims

passed away on September 18 2021. Seims had a prolific career in music publishing. Beginning in his native Germany, he worked for several top publishing firms in key positions. Among his many accomplishments included establishing the United States branch of G. Henle Press. Relocating to Missouri, Holger helped bring the Henle catalog to America, where he worked closely with the Retail Print Music Dealers Association (RPMDA) and others in supporting music making by promoting method books and music training publications. He was a mentor to many and a friend to many more.



'Music & Sound Retailer' to Cease Publication

On October 4 2021, The Hazan Media Group announced in an email that it would be halting publication of *The Music & Sound Retailer*, *Sound & Communications*, and *DJ Times*.

"We are not alone in believing in these businesses and our long-time team," read the message. "We sincerely hope they live on in some shape or form in the very near future. But that story has yet to be told.

The Music & Sound Retailer and Testa Communications founder and longtime publisher Vinny Testa passed away in April of this year. The Hazan Media Group had been publishing the three now-shuttered titles for the past four months.

D'Addario Acquires National Picks

D'Addario has announced the acquisition of National Picks, the metal finger-pick that solidified itself as the industry standard.

Available now, the renowned finger and thumb pick company will be branded as D'Addario National Picks. Unchanged since their introduction in 1930, National Picks are made in the United States from various alloys to create a brilliant, vintage-American sound.

In 1930, the United States Government issued a patent for National Picks that proudly etched on the original models. Each pick's face also has the National logo and the U.S.A. make and model number etched for easy identification. All picks will continue to be manufactured in the U.S.A.

National Picks provide a smooth, comfortable, and fully adjustable fit, as well as a brilliant, finger-picking sound on an acoustic guitar or a plucky bite on a banjo.

The D'Addario National Pick offering will include finger picks in stainless steel, brass, and nickel (to be released in 2022). In addition to the finger picks, D'Addario will be offering the National Celluloid thumb picks available in white, black, and tortoiseshell in both large and medium sizes.

National Picks are available in 4-packs, 12-pick bulk packs, and 6-pack finger and thumb pick bundles with prices starting at \$8.99 MAP.



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PEOPLE

Exertis | Jam has announced two key leadership appointments. Lynn Martin, the founder and long-time president of American Music & Sound will fill the new role of director of Strategic Development for Exertis | Jam. Pat Sullivan has been tapped to fill the role of president of American Music & Sound.

American Music & Sound, an Exertis | Jam business, has been led by Lynn Martin for almost 20 years. Given his stellar track record and keen eye for new products, companies and wider consumer trends, Martin will now fill a wider role as the director of Strategic Development across Exertis | Jam. Replacing Martin as president, American Music & Sound is Patrick Sullivan, recent president of InMusic and past vice president, Merchandizing at Guitar Center. Today AM&S distributes and supports brands such as Allen & Heath, CAD, Focusrite, Fostex, Glorious, Hercules, Kurzweil, Lewitt, Nord, Novation, PLAYdifferently, Reloop, Studiologic, and Xone.

Michael Flores has joined the **Fender (FMIC)** team in his role as PR & Communications manager, Specialty. He will be leading all strategy for the brands and will be a main point of contact for Jackson and Gretsch.

Flores is a publicity and content specialist with experience leading strategies for consumer product, gaming, and corporate communications. Michael comes from The Walt Disney Company where he first supported PR for “Star Wars” consumer products before transitioning into the Disney Parks division where he oversaw publicity tied to CSR efforts for Walt Disney World and other international parks.

Hal Leonard has hired Blair Wilson to become their first chief marketing officer. In this role, Wilson will oversee the company’s overall marketing strategy for Hal Leonard as well as its other companies including Sheet Music Direct, Sheet Music Plus, and Noteflight.



Lynn Martin



Pat Sullivan



Wilson graduated with a BA in economics from Brigham Young University and an MBA from the University of Wisconsin. His background includes 15+ years of consumer, e-commerce and B2B marketing & business strategy experience for Fortune 500 companies and privately-owned businesses.

Korg USA has announced the hiring of Andrew Moore as international sales manager for Aguilar Musical Instruments and Spector Musical Instruments. In this new role, Moore will be responsible for Spector and Aguilar sales in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia, serving as the central point of contact for distributor accounts in these markets.

Moore joins Korg USA with more than 10 years of industry experience, including a seven-year tenure at D’Addario & Co. in Farmingdale, N.Y. In his most recent role of territory sales manager, he built relationships with approximately 300 customer accounts, including national chains, distributors, manufacturers, and independent retailers.

A passionate bass player of more than 25 years, Moore earned a Bachelor of Arts in Music Business from the State University of New York at Fredonia, with a minor in Jazz Performance and concentrations in Music Technology and Public Relations.

Korg USA welcomes Andrew Moore to the sales team and looks forward to his contributions in advancing the company’s international sales strategy.

CHAUVET Professional continues to develop its capabilities to further serve the broadcast, studio, and film markets with the addition of Scott Laurentz to its management team. Formerly with The Lighting Design Group in New York, Laurentz joins Chauvet as product resource manager for Broadcast lighting.

In his new position, Laurentz will draw on his extensive global experience working on lighting projects to provide the CHAUVET Professional and Kino Flo product development team with strategic input. He will also be involved in building customer relations and conducting training related to broadcast, studio, and film lighting.

Laurentz started his new position in September. He can be reached at slaurentz@chauvetlighting.com.



American Way Marketing Acquires Spacefiller Quality Lubricants

American Way Marketing LLC (AWM) purchased Spacefiller Quality Lubricants in May 2021. While some traditional petroleum-derived lubricants are odorous and can accumulate on valves, rotors, and casings over time, Spacefiller synthetic products are odorless, nontoxic, and keep instruments free of gunk. Spacefiller products include Pad Life, Ultimate Piston and Rotor Valve Lubricant, and Ultimate Tuning Slide Lubricant.

Spacefiller Quality Lubricants, originally created in 1987 and distributed in Decatur, Georgia by MAMCO, is a pioneer in the synthetic musical instrument lubricant category. Tim Ricci, Vice President of American Way Marketing, travelled to Decatur in April to facilitate the purchase and remarked, “We are excited to continue the legacy that Jay Himmel and Charles King began over thirty years ago. Spacefiller is a perfect addition to the AWM family of brands including Superslick, Faxx, and Luthier’s Choice. The synthetic musical instrument lubricant category is an important part of the continued growth strategy for AWM

and having an additional high quality brand manufactured in Elkhart by our talented team works extremely well.



Kathy Donahoe, Jay Himmel, and Tim Ricci

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Eric Cocco, Bob Glaub of Jackson Browne's band, Richard Cocco, and Lorenza Cocco

A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

E.&O. Mari, Inc.'s Lorenza Cocco

By Christian Wissmuller

E. & O. Mari, Inc. is the world's oldest continually family-owned and operated music string manufacturer, fielding the celebrated La Bella brand. We recently checked in with COO Lorenza Cocco to learn more about the company's long and fascinating history, how they've fared during the pandemic, and what's on the horizon.

The company can trace its beginnings back to the mid 17th century in Italy, but the "La Bella" brand didn't appear until the 1920s, after much of the operation had migrated to NYC. Can you talk about the origins of La Bella, specifically, and how it came about?

Brothers Emilio and Olinto Mari were some of the first people, if not the first, to properly commercialize musical strings. The company name was first "Mari Musical Strings" established in the 1910s, and began using a number of different "brands" name to delineate different instruments and also levels of quality (value line vs. premium). These names included La Bella (trademarked 1920), NuTone, La Preferita, Sweetone, and Criterion.

At some point this became confusing for consumers, so in the 1930s a board meeting was held to determine which brand had the most brand equity and would become the prominent brand name, and La Bella "won."

E&O Mari was incorporated in NYC in 1935. What were the main reasons for selecting New York as a headquarters at the time? What did the city and immediate area offer an MI brand such as La Bella?

The company was established around 1910 as "Mari Musical Strings" which was later incorporated in the 1930s, and then eventually changed to "E. & O. Mari, Inc" to reflect the sole ownership of both brothers.

Brothers Emilio and Olinto arrived as young men in New York at Ellis Island seeking new opportunities. The Spanish Flu in Italy had killed their parents and many family members in a matter of months. They started working as laborers excavating the pillars used to build elevated subways in Queens. At night they made samples of gut strings, a craft they learned from their family in Salle, Italy – a family tradition, which started in the 1600s. They brought these samples to



Washing gut strings at the Astoria Factory in the 1940s



Emilio and Olinto at the facility in Lanciano, Italy

music stores across Manhattan, one of them being the famous Wurlitzer store which serviced many professional violin players, who fell in love with the Italian craftsmanship of their gut strings. The Wurlitzer family gave the brothers a loan to setup their own small operation in Manhattan. After decent success, the brothers could not keep up with production themselves, so Olinto went back to Lanciano, Italy to setup a factory, hiring string makers from their nearby family string-making hometown of Salle, Italy. Eventually, due to embargos and then World War II, the entire workforce at the Lanciano factory was moved to a larger factory in 1935 in Long Island City, Queens with the help of the U.S. Consulate in Naples. Around the 1940s, the production was moved from Long Island City to Astoria where it remained until 1980.

New York was a natural fit for young immigrants and the music center of the United States. At the time, New York City was home to many musicians, factories, entrepreneurs, immigrants – it was really the perfect storm for anyone wanting to create something from nothing, or in this case create a product from a very specific skill set that was in demand for the blossoming music industry. New York was also the closest point to travel to Italy by steamship, where they would travel back-and-forth from for decades to come. Eventually the brothers put down roots in Astoria, Queens, which was at the time was home to many Italian immigrants (and stores and restaurants), where they felt close to home while being thousands of miles away.

Can you talk more about the choice to close up shop in Italy and fully relocate HQ to Long Island. With and "either/or" choice at the time, why did the company select America over Italy?

In 1935, the Italo-Abyssinian War brought production in our Italian operations to a halt as sanctions were imposed in the Italian government on imports/exports. The Lanciano factory was where the majority of production was being made, so Olinto visited the U.S. consulate in Naples for a work permit for himself and all 60 employees to start making strings in New York, which was issued in a record 36 hours. The factory in Lanciano remained open thereafter to support some production, and was repurposed during WWII to make war goods, but became too hard to manage from afar after WWII, so all machinery was moved to New York.

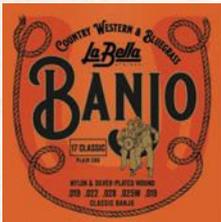
2021 marks the 40th year of La Bella being based out of Newburgh, NY. What was behind the move to Newburgh and what about the location and facilities has made it such a good fit for such a long time?

In the 1980s, E. & O. Mari, Inc. was forced to move out of Astoria, as Long Island City was under siege by an unscrupulous labor union. In fact, many small businesses left Long Island City for the same reason. At the time, Newburgh was spearheaded by mayor Joan Shapiro who lured many businesses through an economic development initiative. Many of those initiatives disappeared shortly thereafter, but Newburgh remains a good home for La Bella, as it's centrally located and still close to New York City. As a New York-based company, we make a very big effort to support New York suppliers when possible. Much of the wire used to make strings is made in upstate New York.

Further we do have a showroom in Brooklyn, NY, which is headquarters for our Olinto project spearheaded by vice president and fourth generation string maker Eric Cocco. We host many events there – when we're able to, and now very responsibly – such as our annual Lords of the Low End and concerts and workshops featuring La Bella artist. Our Olinto basses are made by hand by master luthier Mas Hino and James Carbonetti.

Currently, what are the top-selling lines of La Bella strings?

Our company has sold to distributors and retailers for over 100 years to over 100 different countries, so naturally each region has its own best-sellers. In the U.S., we continue to dominate the classical guitar and electric bass string market, in addition to our line of handmade Olinto basses. In the Gulf Region, our Oud strings are extremely popular as we leverage our skill in classical guitar strings to make strings for the ancestor to the guitar. And our entire catalog including our Latin Folk sets sell very well in Central and South America. Our broad product offering allows us to have the opportunity to offer something in every single country we sell in, which is an advantage that only one other string company has other than La Bella.



This also helps stabilize sales if a certain part of the world or large market is experiencing economic headwinds, or if the U.S. dollar strength poses a challenge. We're very diversified from a product and market point of view.

As you mentioned, in addition to strings, La Bella fields both Olinto Basses. What was the catalyst behind entering the fretted instrument market? How have the brands evolved within the company?

For decades, our strings have graced the basses of the finest musicians in modern recording history. After years of working with world-famous luthiers in developing cutting-edge strings, we felt the next natural step was to introduce a bass that equally embodies that vintage tone which put La Bella on the map. When Eric Cocco (VP) worked with master luthiers Mas Hino and James Carbonetti to develop our Olinto basses, the concept of our vintage flat wound bass

strings was always at the forefront of development. We've now sold hundreds of these basses all over the world, from pro-

fessional touring musicians to everyday players, and the response has been enormous. We're very proud producing a high-quality instrument that we know will stand the test of time, as our strings have.

The past year-and-a-half has presented numerous, once-in-a-lifetime challenges to nearly every industry and, within MI, certain segments – live sound reinforcement, for one – were absolutely decimated. Fretted instrument sales, however, soared during the 2020 lockdowns and beyond. How has the past year-plus been for La Bella?

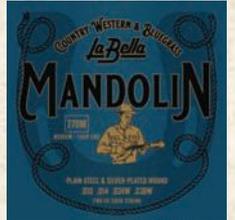
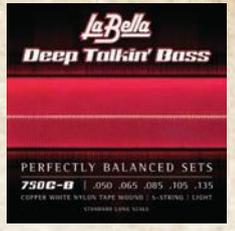
We've been fortunate to see an uptick in sales since the pandemic. Given the large variety of our product catalog, we decided a few years ago to really focus on online retailers who were willing and able to carry our complete product line-up. It's nearly impossible for a small music shop to carry our entire product offering, especially since we cater to professionals who value a high quality product that at times comes at a higher price point. When the pandemic hit, these online retailers across the globe were positioned to pick up where brick-and-mortar stores could not, which in turn boosted our sales. Also, as players went online to buy just about everything, many were introduced to our brand for the first time as we're healthily represented on a lot of these online stores (with great product ratings!), when they would not have necessarily seen our strings on the wall at their local shop.

Any new or recent product introductions of note you'd like to draw MMR readers' attention to?

We recently came out with the La Bella "Roadie Club" (<https://roadieclub.labella.com/>). It's a free club where members get access to super limited edition handcrafted bass and guitar strings made by our string artisans in our New York factory. Given our history and skill in string making, we have tons of ancient books with hundreds of pages of string constructions and notes dating back to the 1940s with era-specific string constructions. We will revive those sets and come up with new super handcrafted strings that can only be made by very skilled machine operators, that serve a tonal purpose and might happen to also look really cool. The Roadie Club highlights our ability as 400 year old string makers, it's not just a gimmicky marketing scheme.

Expectations for the coming months – not only for La Bella, but for the industry, as a whole?

We expect to see further disruptions in the supply chain, inflation, and consolidation throughout the MI space. No one is "safe" and you have to stay on your toes to come up with the best way to tackle the newest headwind that presented itself today. When we were forced to close down for a few months back in March 2020, it was truly a first for a company like ours, even though we've been in business for 100-plus years. Even during WWII, our factory in Italy was repropoed to make condoms out of sheep gut for soldiers! While we don't think we will be forced to shut down again, we have to accept the new normal of the unexpected and unpredictable, whether it's delays from vendors or headwinds associated with operating a facility in a COVID-19 environment. Not all will be able to handle these challenges and this will result in closures or sales of business not willing or able to fight to stay open.



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upfrontQ&A

TIMELINE



Mari Family in Salle

- Fonderia Fratelli Mari began in the 12th Century making church bells (skills which became key in making metal strings many years later)
- 1640s documentation found that House of Mari was making gut strings to Amati, Stadivari, et cetera
- Emilio & Olinto Mari (founders of E. & O. Mari, Inc, parent company of La Bella) left Salle in the 1910s for New York City and ended up in Queens

The E. & O. Mari factory in Lanciano, Italy



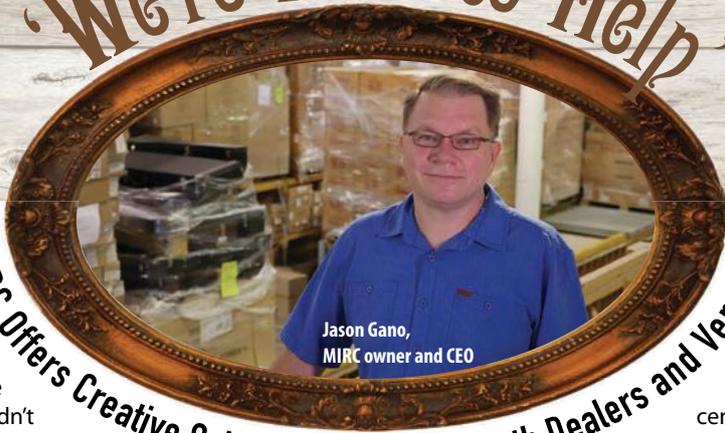
Lanciano/NYC

- Emilio & Olinto soon figured out they could use their string making skills and made gut samples in NYC and sent them to Wurlitzer violin maker in NYC who soon started placing orders
- 1913 E. & O. Mari, Inc. was incorporated in New York City.
- 1924 Olinto leaves New York and ends up in Lanciano (where he meets/marries his wife, Laura Siroli, who has strong ties to Lanciano). Emilio remains in New York to maintain the sales side of the business while Olinto builds a factory in Lanciano where all string production is moved.
- Other Mari relatives move their metal foundry to the factory in Lanciano where bells, olive crushing machines and other machinery is made alongside strings
- 1935 Italo-Abyssinian War forces production to stop due to sanctions on imports/exports. Olinto visits US consulate in Naples for work permit for himself and all 60 employees to start making strings in New York, which is issued in 36 hours
- 1935 E. & O Mari opens up a factory in Astoria, Queens (38-01 23rd Ave)
- 1980 E. & O Mari moves from Astoria to Newburgh, NY
- Present Day: The company is still operated by Richard Cocco Jr. (grandson of Olinto) and his children Eric Cocco (vice president) and Lorenza Cocco (chief operating officer)

'We're Here to Help'

By Christian **Wissmuller**

MIRC Offers Creative Solutions Benefitting Both Dealers and Vendors



Jason Gano,
MIRC owner and CEO

Unfamiliar with MIRC, or only vaguely aware of what it does or how? That's both not necessarily "your fault," nor surprising. "For a long time, the previous owner of MIRC really didn't necessarily want anyone to know it existed, in some ways," says current CEO Jason Gano. "That was great when there was no internet, but now you can tell your own story and apply your own narrative – and we want to do just that, because there are some false narratives out there."

So what exactly is MIRC – Musical Instrument Reclamation Corporation – all about? Perhaps a little history is in order. In 1993, the organization was founded by Monte Richards in Nashville, Tennessee as a wholesaler of refurbished, used guitars. Originally, MIRC acquired distressed instruments from a handful of suppliers, repaired them to as close to "as new" condition as possible, and then sold the guitars to smaller MI retailers and pawn shops. The market for this type of business model proved to be robust and, within less than a decade, MIRC had partnered with well over 30 suppliers and, as of today, is the world's largest used guitar wholesaler.

Jason Gano had the background – and the history with MIRC – to make him the ideal successor to Richards. "I've got 30 years [in the industry]," he explains. "The short and sweet story: my degree is in music education from West Virginia University. I was working in a music store as I was going to college and ended up managing that music store in West Virginia for seven or eight years. Later I worked for Eastman and Remo and SWR, before Fender had them. Following that, I worked for St. Louis Music for 10 years, and I had several different territories with St. Louis Music. I was there when we got bought by LOUD Technologies. Then I worked at Korg for a long time and, after Korg, I was vice president of sales for Marshall, U.S.A."

"I ended up purchasing MIRC because, in my last job just before this, I had been VP of sales for Guild and Cordoba and I was selling instruments to the place. Monte wanted to retire, so it felt like a really good opportunity

for me. But I knew MIRC from selling them things and it had solved a big problem for me because returns come back, shipping damage – there's a few percentages of what comes off the containers that just didn't make it safely across the water, and that stuff piles up after a while. It never really made sense to me that you would throw away instruments that could be repaired."

Setting the Record Straight

In this industry we're all about creating more music-makers, so fixing up instruments and passing along savings to independent dealers and end-users – rather than tossing those imperfect guitars in the trash heap – seems like a good thing, right? So what are those "false narratives" that had emerged during MIRC's era of relative radio silence?

Gano explains: "From my vantage point, when I said, 'Oh, hey, I'm purchasing this business,' some people were like, 'Oh, great,' and some people replied, 'Isn't that just, like, a junk shop? Don't you just do junk?' It's like: 'No, we have 20 really talented people that work here that restore instruments and keep things from going to a landfill.'"

And, truly, without a more public face, it was easy for some – either those with an agenda or just a healthy dose of cynicism – to take some minimal awareness of MIRC and evolve that into a belief that the wholesaler was really just a place where factory seconds go to die or be resold in shoddy condition to naïve dealers and players. But, as Gano noted, these instruments are meticulously refurbished and very transparently marketed and sold as "non-new" musical instruments. Nobody is being swindled, unplayable guitars are given a second life, and both businesses and players benefit from access to instruments that, as new and unblemished product, would be unattainable to many.



Nashville Guitar Works fields acoustic guitars, electric guitars, basses, amps, and accessories





“That’s the bulk of what we’re doing: the small mom and pops, pawn shops, and tiny online retailers.”

– Jason Gano

Back to those “20 really talented people” who work on MIRC’s gear: “Let’s see, we have seven in the shop currently,” says Ian Harold, director of operations. “There are five full-time in the warehouse, we have a couple different departments or divisions, too, we have three people on the sales staff, and an office manager.”

What exactly goes on in the shop? “That’s mostly just structure work,” Gano explains. “So, snapped off head stocks, acoustic guitars with an extra sound hole in them which we have to fix, et cetera. And we have a full-time electronics repair technician and a full-time painter who is fabulous. So, the work will get done, and then, if it needs electronics, it goes to the electronics shop, or it will go over to paint when it’s done in the shop. And our paint booth that we have here is better than the paint booth we had at Guild!”

A lot of the team’s efforts are spent not just dispelling misconceptions and negative assumptions, but also pointing out the fairly obvious upsides of a partnership with MIRC. “Every manufacturer that I’ve ever worked for, or been part of, always has a pile in the back corner of the warehouse that just kind of grows,” says Gano. “So, the conversations I have with manufacturers that aren’t familiar with us is, ‘Hey man, go back to the back corner of your warehouse and you see that pile of stuff?’ ‘Yeah.’ ‘You usually just throw that away, don’t you?’ And they’re like, ‘Yeah.’ ‘Well, how about instead of that, I’ll just send you a call tag, and then, I’ll run you a check?’ And it’s like, ‘Oh...’

“And then, the next question is usually, ‘Well, you know, I don’t want things out in the market that are going to negatively impact my brand.’ Which is totally valid and a great point, but once you buy a guitar and then sell it to someone else, the used market is already there. So, all a seller needs to do is differentiate between what is new and what is used. In a lot of cases, we stamp the instruments ‘USED’ on the back of the headstock and, that way, there’s no question about what it is. Our repair guys are pretty darn good. So, when we get done with something, it’s in pretty great shape, but it’s also got that stamp or a new serial number, so that we keep that line clear for it.”

Whether a MIRC guitar is stamped “USED” or given a reassigned serial number is entirely dependent upon the arrangements that have been agreed upon between the company and individual manufacturers

MIRC. “We deal with a lot of those types of retailers,” Gano says. “That’s the bulk of what we’re doing: the small mom and pops, pawn shops, and tiny online retailers. We have a thousand-dollar minimum to start with, and you can get from us kind a smattering of everything to check it out. And in a lot of cases, these are the people who will end up, 10 years from now, being bigger dealers and probably go on to be a dealer for certain manufacturers. But this gives them the opportunity to answer the question, ‘Can I really do this? Can I sell these instruments?’”

One particularly large conduit for sales of these carefully reconditioned instruments has also been helpful in addressing questions from both dealers and players. “A lot of our stuff gets sold on Reverb, and we were having to answer a lot of questions,” says Gano. “It would be like, ‘Why is this serial number changed? Why is this stamped USED on the back of the headstock?’ So, we ended up doing an article with Reverb explaining, ‘Hey, here’s what we do, and this is why this is actually in great shape when you get it.’”

Multiple Divisions, Multiple Solutions

Just as MIRC represents opportunities for dealers and suppliers as a wholesaler, the company’s other divisions address other needs: Nashville Guitar Works, The Music Retail Show, and Franklin Guitar Works.



At work inside the MIRC Shop



Larry Phelps, Shop Tech



Nathan Westbeld, Director of Sales



Tim Stumph, Electronics Tech



Chad Winn, Shop Tech



Jake Hawkings, Shipping



John Richmond, Franklin Guitar Works

"Nashville Guitar Works is our brand that is just entry-level instruments for these small mom and pops who generally would buy things out of a jobber or someplace where they're getting just the inexpensive instruments," Gano explains. "When you're in that \$99 to \$149 range trying to find something that's playable *and* will stay together can be tough. So, we bring in our own brand to help these small mom and pops have something brand new to sell as well.

"Franklin Guitar Works is basically our parts division," he continues. "When something can't be repaired and it's just not going to work, then we strip everything off of it. So, we'll get pickups, we'll get all of that stuff – that's available to dealers who may need some kind of a nice, cost-effective pick up where you just need turners for something. We have so many parts, we're still going through everything and cataloging everything and getting all that done.

"The last thing, in the other part of our business, is we have a podcast that's called 'The Music Retail Show,' and that is designed to help our dealers be more educated, because a lot of them are just starting out in the business. And overall, like we tend to focus everything we do on how can we help the smaller dealers succeed and thrive in this climate that we have right now?"

One other thing that MIRC does to assist smaller retailers is simply that they do not sell directly to the consumer. "We don't compete with our dealers," states Gano. "What we do sell are the parts. So, at our Franklin Guitar Works, we'll sell the parts and bodies and some mix, but we *do not* compete on instruments."

When asked what message he'd most like to convey to *MMR* readers, Jason Gano replies simply, "I think if I wanted to say anything, it's just that we're here to help."

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USER FRIENDLY



Audio Interface Sales During the Pandemic and Beyond

By Christian **Wissmuller**

As with a handful of other fiefdoms within the world of MI, the pandemic has actually been good for sales of pro audio equipment – in particular entry- and mid-level gear that can easily facilitate home recording and the like. As time progresses, however, certain challenges such as supply-chain interruptions threaten to throw some cold water on the party.

MMR recently spoke with reps from five industry-leading suppliers of audio interfaces to learn about trends in this market segment during the early days of lockdown through to the present. Their feedback shines a light on how this type of gear is truly connecting with end-users and helping to realize the creative impulses of many at a time when such an outlet and release is desperately needed.

In the past 18 or so months, there's been a huge spike in home and remote music creation and recording, podcasting, et cetera. How have sales for your brand been impacted by the pandemic and periodic lockdowns?

Paul Youngblood: TASCAM was positioned nicely for this. The TASCAM brand is legendary, and the TASCAM strategy has always been about home recording, music creation, and value,

bringing the most features and technology together at an affordable, realistic price. Because of this, we saw an increase in sales and demand much beyond our expectation.



PreSonus AudioBox 96 Studio



PreSonus Revelator io24

Ryan Roullard: As folks looked to new hobbies and outlets to occupy their time stuck at home, many decided to try out music creation and livestreaming. Audio interfaces, microphones, Studio One, and PreSonus Sphere have performed phenomenally for us during what has otherwise been a trying time. On the other hand, live sound products like sound reinforcement loudspeakers have struggled right alongside the live music venues that rely on them. In a world where gathering isn't very safe, demand for live sound equipment was understandably hamstrung.

Stefan Schreiber: For the year 2020 we observed a significant sales increase, especially for entry-level products like two-channel audio interfaces and podcasting equipment. Since the beginning of 2021, sales have returned to the level that it was prior to the pandemic. Generally speaking, gear designed for personal home recording and that which enables collaborations in music production have experienced a significant increase.

Dan Boatman: Like many companies, sales of our recording and music creation accessories increased dramatically during the lockdown. The lift was most dramatic in interfaces, microphones, and software, as I think a lot of musicians took the opportunity (and probably their stimulus) to upgrade their setup. We saw a lot of interest in more premium products, like our AXE I/O audio interface, our iLoud MTM studio monitors, and our Total Studio 3 Max software bundle – all products that are a step-up from the more low cost, entry level items.

Jimmy R. Landry: There is no doubt it has been an interesting time for M-Audio and MI in general. Thankfully, we have

“As folks looked to new hobbies and outlets to occupy their time stuck at home, many decided to try out music creation and livestreaming.”

– Ryan Roullard, Documentation Manager, PreSonus





Steinberg UR22C Recording Pack



Steinberg UR22C

“Gear designed for personal home recording and that which enables collaborations in music production have experienced a significant increase.”



– Stefan Schreiber

Senior Marketing Manager, Steinberg

seen sales spikes, but that is just part of the conversation. A greater conversation is navigating supply and demand during times like

Recording Pack have been well received. What is special about our UR-C interfaces is that they are affordable yet offer so many great features, such as on-board DSP effects and an easy-to-set-up loopback mode for streaming – offering premium sound quality when streaming performances through social media channels. We have witnessed influencers hosting living room concerts from home during the pandemic to maintain the connection to their network. The UR-Cs are perfect for these kinds of occasions. Also, as a direct consequence to the situation that many people are currently working from home, we decided to release a firmware update with a new voice chat mode that is optimized for video conferencing.

this. Variables such as the availability of parts, new marketing tactics, and even logistics are all part of the sales landscape these days.

What are the hottest models of audio interfaces for your brand?

RR: Since there’s a ton of new customers getting into music and media creation for the first time, the hottest sellers continue to be smaller, entry-level interfaces like the Studio 24c and 26c, and of course the Revelator, where customers essentially get a microphone, interface, signal processor, application mixer, and DAW in a single purchase.

PY: Actually our hottest audio interface is the Model 12, which is a combination mixer, multi-track recorder, audio interface and control surface. The value and technology are astounding.

More seasoned producers are looking to the ioStation 24c, as it’s a 2-channel interface and DAW controller in a single, small-footprint device. And the AudioBox Studio Bundles have done really well because they include everything you need to record, including cables and a comprehensive software suite making them an affordable solution for customers looking for an all-in-one package.

Even after several years, the US-16x08 has become a standard with its sheer amount of I/O and capability at an affordable price point.

DB: Where we saw the biggest growth by far was on our streaming interfaces like iRig Stream, which was really the first custom-built audio interface for mobile streaming. Musicians suddenly needed a way to connect to Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Clubhouse – all these different apps became the only way for musicians to connect with fans, and since our iRig Stream was built just for that, the demand was absolutely incredible. We had DJs comparing the demand for these products to when there was that run on toilet paper and other essentials – they needed them that badly.

The new US-HR (High Resolution) lineup is hot because of their super high specifications, our new drivers, and we added truly usable software bundles. The software bundles are not based on quantity, but musical quality. We did not want the customer to be constantly pitched on a software program that is shown but really not available with annoying pop ups asking for a purchase. For example, the US-HR lineup come with a full studio version of IK Multimedia SampleTank, CubaseLE, Cubasis, and a free three-month subscription to the complete Auto-Tune collection. Even the ultra-affordable US-1x2HR has all this.

JL: We have recently seen a lot of success with our M-Track Duo, M-Track Solo and AIR 192x4 interfaces – and the whole AIR line, really. It is an interesting scenario because the two lines serve a different type of customer which shows a wide net of musicians, podcasters, and creators of all different levels learning how to take their productions into their own hands – something that M-Audio has always stood for.

What are some “best practices” adopted by dealers who are especially successful in servicing this market segment?

SS: Currently, our hottest audio interfaces must be our line-up of UR-C audio interfaces – especially the UR22C and the UR22C

SS: I believe dealers who realized early on that customer demands changed during the pandemic did the best job and were especially successful over the past year. Helping customers make the right choices to easily continue to make music at home, to be creative and collaborate remotely made all the difference during these challenging times.

JL: This is the great question of the times. We have all been through unprecedented situations in the last 18 months and I think there has been a lot to learn. The best “best practices”



TASCAM US-1 16x08



“In this market segment, the dealers who invest in knowledgeable staff who know recording technology and the latest information are always going to win.”

– Paul Youngblood

Director of Product Marketing, TASCAM



TASCAM US-1x2HR



“Variables such as the availability of parts, new marketing tactics, and even logistics are all part of the sales landscape these days.”

– Jimmy R. Landry, Senior Marketing Manager
Akai Professional | M-Audio |
Marantz Professional

have certainly shifted and been tested. Obviously, many retailers and even manufacturers had to quickly pivot and figure out their online components from their presence to their backend systems, and even digital marketing. Furthermore, many conversations took place on how to even talk to customers during such an incredibly difficult time. We have so many great dealers in our M-Audio network that showed their true colors by recognizing and connecting with musicians having a hard time. From grounded touring musicians to others working from home, and to even those in more unfortunate situations, we heard a lot of positive stories from dealers and manufactures that made us proud to be part of this industry – the pivot to online sales was at the forefront, but I think humanity became a “best practice” for most in our industry.

PY: In this market segment, the dealers who invest in knowledgeable staff who know recording technology and the latest information are always going to win. It’s hard to fake knowledge of high-tech recording today. Does your website or staff discuss the value of drivers and latency? Does your website or staff translate the benefit of high specifications and software bundles into language a creative musician understands? The #1 TASCAM dealer in dollars is not #1 for TASCAM audio interfaces. Our #1 audio interface dealer tends to focus on recording and application and it shows.

DB: I think education is really key. For a moment there, really almost the entire music world had to stop and learn how to share or stream online, so the dealers who took that moment to inform users which products fit which needs really benefitted the most. Or those who had already established themselves as that “trusted source!” As much content as we brands put out, I think users still really rely on neutral third parties who can represent the full range of options. So the dealers who made the invest-



IK Multimedia iRig Stream



“We had DJs comparing the demand for these products to when there was that run on toilet paper and other essentials – they needed them that badly.”

– Dan Boatman

Marketing & Sales Director, IK Multimedia



ment in social media, YouTube, articles, et cetera all saw a big benefit as they met that tidal wave of customer demand.

RR: Have a salesperson or two who understands the value proposition of these products and is equally knowledgeable in podcasting and livestreaming – particularly in setup and routing. You’ve probably got a guitar instructor on staff, and maybe a vocal coach; why don’t you have an online content expert?

I can’t stress enough that most of your customers for these products are going to be entry-level. So don’t come at them from a “pro audio” perspective. This crowd typically doesn’t know what a sampling rate is, so make every effort to demystify the technology and make it as non-intimidating as possible.

Do you have any new or upcoming audio interface models that you’d like to draw MMR readers’ attention to?

DB: Yes. Given the success and market leadership of our iRig Stream, we have some exciting expansions to that family that take all the lessons we learned last year. We spent the pandemic working with everyone from home DJs to world-class artists, and meeting with many of the most popular streaming apps, and we’re excited to leverage that knowledge into some really innovative new stuff coming later this month and beyond!

RR: You bet! The Revelator io24 is our latest two-channel interface. It essentially allows users to turn whatever mics they already have into Revelators, taking advantage of all the signal processing, loopback routing, and presets that Revelator is known for. It’s an amazing tool for podcasters and streamers, but being PreSonus, we didn’t forget about musicians: It has MIDI I/O and ships with our Studio One Artist DAW.

I can’t talk about future plans other than to say you’re probably going to be pleasantly surprised.

JL: The AIR 192|8 is really an incredible value for those who have a home project studio. It’s super versatile unit for seasoned music creators, or for those who are just starting a home product studio and want professional results. Like the whole AIR line, it features the transparent Crystal Preamps, but just as importantly has great A/D D/A converters which is something

many overlook. You always hear people talking about preamps, but if you don't have great quality converters to go along with those preamps, the end result of your project may not sound as big as it could. Our world-class Product Team did a great job on the AIR line which delivers high-level quality on all fronts.

PY: Sometimes it's about other items in addition to the hardware. For example, the new US-HR lineup and the entire TASCAM line have new drivers. Drivers and OS compatibility are so important. Our new drivers can go down to 4 samples depending on the computer CPU which translates to high performance and very low latency. TASCAM audio interfaces have very low latency, and that translates to a great feel and musicality.

I mentioned the Model 12 and it breaks all the rules. Instead of the usual table top box with a big knob, a couple of buttons, and moderate I/O, we integrated several TASCAM technologies into the model 12. It's got the tactile interface of an old-school analog mixer complete with several channel strips, long throw faders, lots of I/O, and big track arm buttons. But inside it's a super high-tech recording interface, control surface, and multi-track recorder.

SS: We will continue to focus on our popular range of UR-C interfaces by providing firmware updates and continue to introduce new features – I suggest looking out for these new feature additions. Also worth mentioning are the exciting use-case-specific hardware/software bundles that we've already planned.

Expectations for this market segment in the coming months?

JL: We are thinking hard about the short-, mid-, and long-term plans in general like every manufacturer these days. With

more people working from home and the economy picking back up, we think sales will continue to be strong for M-Audio and our market segment thankfully. Once things get back-to-normal a bit more in terms of travel and safety, we think there will be a rebound and surge of live performances resulting in a wave of live and mobile gear sales.

SS: Podcasting and vlogging are the most popular kids on the market block, and we're happy to be able to provide the necessary tools to maintain their popularity. We also notice an increase in the demand for more sustainable products. As a result, customers are content to stick with their audio interfaces. In light of these demands and to take responsibility, we plan to continue providing regular updates for our range of hardware products.

PY: The big demand for home recording that we saw in 2020 through early 2021 is dropping. But it's still substantially higher than before 2020. We see the next big opportunity as dedicated podcasting and streaming products, which are simply variations of audio interfaces and recorders.

DB: I think there was a dip as musicians were finally able to get out and start gigging again, since there was so much pent-up demand for that. But as the weather turns we're confident musicians won't abandon the social fanbases they built online, so we're expecting an extremely strong holiday season. I think this new streaming market is here to stay, and it's something dealers need to make a regular part of their assortment.

RR: Only growth. Daily work-from-home and the normalization of online videoconferencing has raised the expectations of quality in a typical user's online presence. And it turns out that there are a lot of people on the Internet. 



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Shine a Light

Lighting & Stage Effects Sales Still Struggling

By Christian Wissmuller

As goes the fate of live music performance, so too go the fortunes of related income and purchases. While perhaps not connected in quite so obvious a manner to a vibrant club and concert scene as, say, sound reinforcement equipment, sales of lighting and stage effects gear has also been taking a beating as venues remain closed, operate at limited capacity, or vacillate between being open or closed as pandemic related protocols and restrictions evolve throughout the country and the world. On a larger scale, postponed, cancelled, rescheduled, and truncated touring schedules for bands and theater groups don't help the situation either.

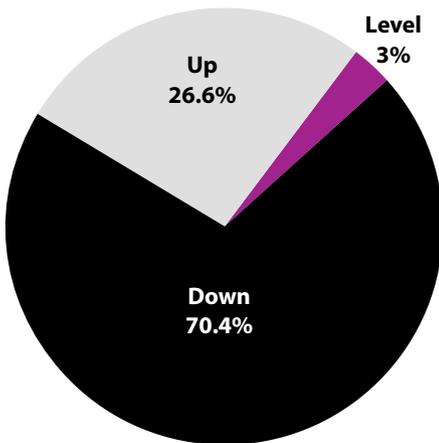
Are there any reasons to be optimistic? Well... In a similar survey from last fall, when asked about lighting and effects products, 76 percent of respondents reported that sales were down compared to 2019. This year, that figure dipped to 70.4

percent, so that's an improvement – albeit minimal. And it's worth remembering that participants in this month's survey are reflecting on the entirety of the past year – much of which was just as challenging as 2020 – so that's bound to have an impact.

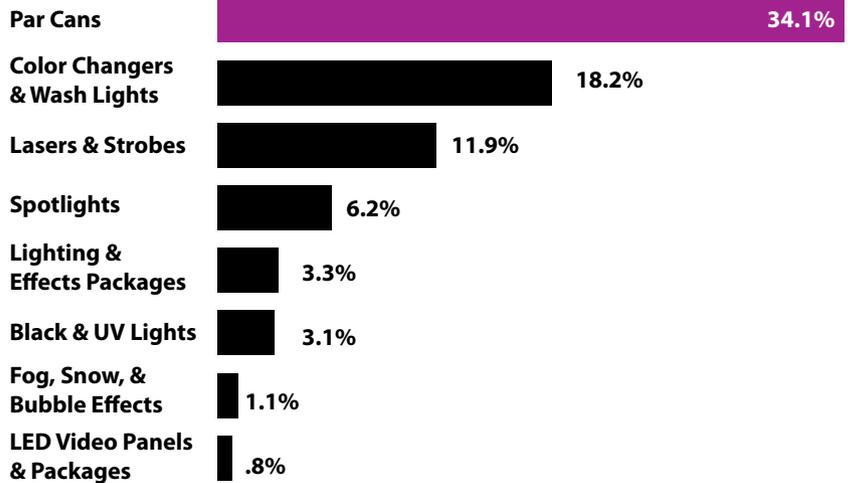
Tellingly, one question which was asked in this poll – What trends have you been noticing in this market segment of late? – got so few responses that we're not even bothering to "quote" any of them in the summary below. The bulk of the feedback amounted to one- or two-word answers: terrible, awful, don't ask, dead. One participant who specifically asked not to be named offered the following: "Lighting sales will remain down until live performance returns in a consistent and large-scale way."

As the Delta surge seems to be receding, therapeutics are developed, and vaccination rates continue to increase, there is reason to hope that such a return may well be on the horizon. Fingers crossed...

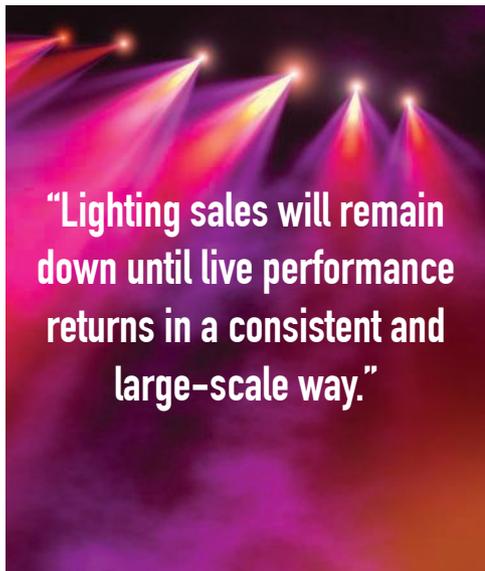
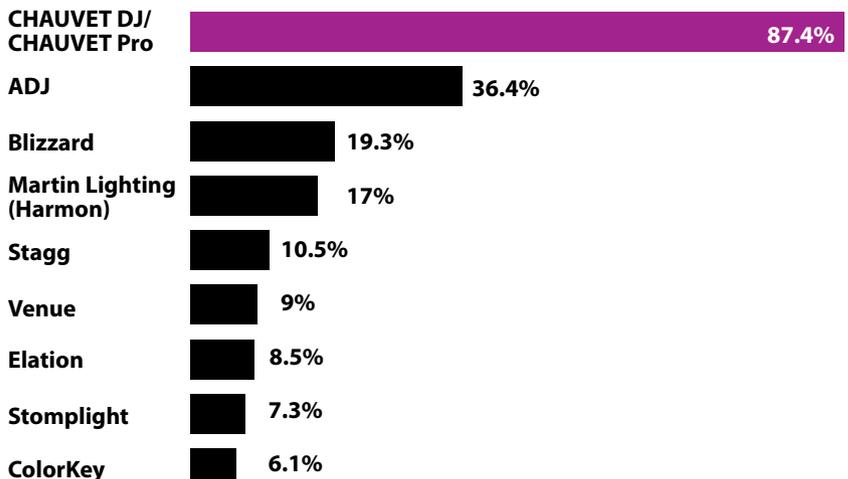
Compared to last fall, your store's sales of lighting gear is...



For your business what types of lighting are selling most?



What brands of lighting are driving sales for your store?



Deciding. Fast or Slow?



By
Jaimie
Blackman

Have you ever wondered how you or your team members make decisions? Are you the type that makes a fast great decision based on intuition, or are you more methodical, testing a variety of ideas until just the right one miraculously reveals itself?

One isn't necessarily better than the other. For example, if a patient is bleeding to death, a quick start would be preferred to stop the bleeding, rather than taking the time to conduct extensive research. Obviously. On the other hand, if a patient needs complex brain surgery, perhaps a more methodical approach would be preferred. Right?

Like tone color in music, you are looking for a combination of different sounding instrument on your team to create the desired outcome. While there are a variety of behavioral assessments which analyze qualities, preferences, and traits like Kolbe and DISC, by simply observing your team, you probably have a good idea of where the strengths are.

For example, a "quick start" is great for starting a project, while a "follow thru" would be necessary to complete the project. The great achievers have high scores in multiple categories. For some, the necessary study, practice, and preparation may correctly enable immediate decision making. For others, it's all about iteration. In either case, patience, passion, and tenacity before the decision is called for, or during the decision making process will eventually get you over the finish line.

John Williams, an American composer who has received multiple Academy and Golden Globe awards, said "Tenacity will get those of us who are not geniuses, but mere mortals, over the finish line."

When Williams wrote the five-note musical theme for director Steven Spielberg's "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" in 1977, it came down to the choices he made. The five notes had to be perfect. It didn't matter that Williams had previously won an Academy Award for scoring Spielberg's film, "Jaws." He needed to take his time and get it right. By the time he landed on the perfect five-note riff, he'd written 350 possible themes. That's 350!

The irony is, when one hears the five-note theme, it sounds like it came to the composer as one idea and he simply wrote it down. Williams watched the movie 50 times, agonizing over five notes. It didn't matter to the audience. It was the perfect decision, because the audience connected with the five-note theme. After listening to it so many times, I couldn't imagine it being anything else.

On the other hand, take a composer like Jose Feliciano. He wrote "Feliz Navidad" in only 10 minutes.

While the composer may rely on their quiet-inner voice for an idea, it may still take considerable effort to make the right choices. Making the right choice was the area of research Daniel Kahneman explored.

Dr. Kahneman, author of *Thinking Fast and Slow* is an Israeli-American psychologist and behavioral economist. He was



awarded a Nobel Prize in 2002 for his work on the psychology of judgement and decision-making. Behavioral economics integrates economics with psychology to understand how and why people make decisions the way they do. It differs from neoclassical economics, which assumes that most people have well-defined preferences and make well-informed, self-interested decisions based on those preferences. The stock market is a great petri dish for this experience. All we have to do is take a look at the number of people who under-perform the market as a whole. The average equity mutual fund investor typically underperforms the S&P 500 Index by a margin of 4.7%. In 2016, while the broader market made gains of 11.96%, the average equity investor's return was only 7.26%. If you think about the stock market, there is no other part of your economic life where low cost is bad. Usually when your favorite chocolate goes on sale, you back up the truck and fill it up with chocolate. Not so with your stock portfolio. When the market goes down, you bail out. Then, when the same stock or fund goes back up, you go back in. So you are buying high and selling low, and that makes no rational sense.

According to Dr. Kahneman, systematic errors are known as biases and they recur predictably in particular circumstances. When the handsome and confident speaker bounds onto the stage, for example, you can anticipate that the audience will judge his comments more favorably than he deserves. It's called "the halo effect."

We are often confident even when we are wrong, and an objective observer is more likely to detect our errors than we are. As a financial advisor, I like to suggest that people test important decision with someone they trust, like a family member or friend.

From my 20 years of helping to educate thousands of individuals, when it comes to money, a John Williams approach to making decisions, will result in making "sound" financial decisions.

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Jaimie Blackman – a former music educator & retailer – is co-founder of BH Wealth Management. The organization offers 401(k), insurance, and succession planning services. Download your complimentary copy of End Your War With Money at .bh-wealth.com/moneycapsules Registered Representative, First Allied Securities, Inc. Member FINRA/SIPC

“Tenacity will get those of us who are not geniuses, but mere mortals, over the finish line.” – John Williams

Charlie Watts & Don Everly

An Invitation to Play and Sing



By
Menzie
Pittman

It is hard to put into perspective the impact of Charlie Watts or Don Everly, but it's important to reflect on the gifts these musicians brought to the music industry and to recognize their special contributions. When an artist inspires others to play music or they make you want to sing, they have served our industry in a special way. Charlie Watts and Don Everly did just that; they impacted the world through their personalities, unique performances, and the quality of their musical contributions.

As different as their music may appear, the two legends had one common trait. Time and time again, they made the idea of playing music accessible. They made performing music look possible. Because of their larger-than-life personas, and their ease of artistry, both Watts and Everly invited you to play music.

Here's a simple truth. If it weren't for the song "Satisfaction," you wouldn't be reading this column because, without The Beatles and The Stones, I can guarantee my world would have been very different, and I would not be writing this. As for The Everly Brothers, simply put: they were just cool.

It was just two weeks before Don Everly passed that I had asked two very talented students to perform an Everly Brothers' duet. These young artists have extremely unique voices, and I could think of no better vehicle to showcase their talents than to have perform an Everly Brothers' song. The key was to have the two voices blend as if they were one. The Everly Brothers were the gold standard for this sound, but don't take my word for it: Beatles superstar Paul McCartney said, "When John and I first started to write songs, I was Phil, and he was Don." Singer and country artist Vince Gill is quoted saying, "That's my favorite sound of two voices ever. I've never heard two voices that were more compelling or angelic. I've spent my whole life chasing that beautiful blend." We can sum up these great artists and the gifts of their craft in three words: unique, original, and authentic.

To honor Charlie, let's reflect on words from John De Christopher who was a friend of Charlie Watts. John was a former Zildjian VP and is currently president at Viper Representation where he is the artist representation for Steve Gadd. John's reflections on Charlie shed perfect light on this very special music icon:

When people ask me who my drumming influences were

growing up, it's impossible to name them all. But when people ask me who my all-time favorite drummer is, that's easy: Charlie Watts. Seeing Ringo on TV made me want to be a drummer, but hearing Charlie on Exile on Main Street in 1972 made me want to play the drums. I was instantly captivated by both his style and his sound. As a teenager my dream was to meet Charlie and tell him how much his drumming meant to me.

Fast forward to 1997. I had been working at Zildjian for about 10 years and sent Charlie a set of vintage 1940s A. Zildjian cymbals as a gift, no strings attached and no expectations. He used some of them on the Bridges to Babylon album. I stayed in touch with Charlie's tech, the late Chuch Magee, and through Chuch, Charlie invited me to their show in New Jersey, since I was going to be in New York at the time.

I remember meeting Charlie that first time in 1997 like it was yesterday. We had a lovely chat after sound check. I saw him again before the show, and he asked if I was coming to the Boston show, to which I said, "Yes, both shows." He said, "Great, then I'll see you there." Afterward I thought, "I've met my hero and he couldn't have been nicer, and that's that."

I didn't think or expect anything more to come of it, though I hoped it would. What happened to this day still blows my mind: we became friends. Charlie let me into his orbit. Even after leaving Zildjian in 2013, we stayed in regular contact and Charlie always invited me to Rolling Stones shows. We last spoke on June 2nd when I called to wish him a happy 80th birthday. We had a wonderful chat and hoped to see each other on the road.

I'm deeply sad that he's gone, but thankful for the countless memories with him. Every single moment with Charlie was a treasured gift. Rest easy, Charlie. And thank you for making my dream come true more times than I can count.

Let's fittingly close with the words of his dear friend, Paul McCartney, "Love you Charlie, I've always loved you. You were a beautiful man."

And to both Charlie Watts and Don Everly; A tip of the top-hat to these unique legends, thanks for inviting us to play. 🎧🥁

Menzie Pittman is the owner and director of education at Contemporary Music Center in Virginia (CMC). Following a performance and teaching career spanning more than 32 years, he founded CMC in 1989 and continues to perform, teach, and oversee daily operations. He has 50 years of musical experience as a drummer and drum instructor. Menzie is a frequent speaker at NAMM's Idea Center, and a freelance writer for MMR's "Small Business Matters."

“Time and time again, they made the idea of playing music accessible. They made performing music look possible.”

You Need to Hire and Train Sales People

By ...?

Well – here we are in part two of Tales From the Unknown MI Sales Rep. What wonderful words of wisdom, advice, or tom-foolery shall we discuss today? I think it would actually be a good idea to talk about something that is close to all of our hearts – whether we are a vendor or a store owner/manager – and that is sales... more importantly, the sales process and the sales person. We all know that a good sales staff makes a great store, and a great sales staff makes an amazing store – a store that performs above and beyond all expectation – and not only to the store owners and stockholders, but to the customers! If a truly great salesperson does what he/she should do, then they know their stores customers (and hopefully all of their friends) – their wants and needs – what they already have, their likes and dislikes, what they are passionate about, and how you can help them obtain the products they need to encourage their creativity in music making. If that sounds like too much to expect, well... It isn't – because when you look at the alternative... What does a bad salesperson bring to the table? (just read the last few sentences here and consider the polar opposite.)

Why do I care about some store's salesperson? If my "job" is to "get the order" and just sell stuff, then my job is done, right? WRONG. Part of the vendor/store owner relationship is (or should be) making sure that your store is a good fit for my products. It's important that your store represents my brand in a positive light. Can you give my gear a premium spot in the store, (and most important) does your sales staff have the chops necessary to proudly represent my products? Will you uphold the "value" my brand name deserves? Manufacturers pay a lot of money to get into the public eye, and in most cases they aren't the ones who present them to the buyer. Those folks on the front lines are the store's sales staff, and trust me that if I don't think the staff can do that job well, then you won't see my product in your store no matter how much money you throw at me.

Most times, if a store wants to carry my product, I will "secret shop" that store. I want to experience what shopping in that store is like. I want to see how I am greeted, what the store looks like on an average day, and what the overall "vibe" is. What I normally find is great store potential, but a sales staff that won't cut it. Why are these "bodies" called "sales people" when they are key members of the "sales prevention" team?

OK – I've circled the airport, and now I'm going to land. Here it comes... ready? *Just because a person can PLAY an instrument doesn't mean that person can SELL an instrument.* Read that again. One more time. Get that in your head in bold and 48-point font. It's called a "sales floor" for a reason. SALES are supposed to happen there. But you know what I witness? Guitarists, drummers, band, or keyboard players who would rather show off their latest chops that they learned or telling a customer what "they think" about a brand or how something sounds. Are you kidding me? Are you freaking kidding me?!?!? Oh – and my all-time favorite – "I love these because... you know... all we have to do is take them out of the box, and they're, like, perfect, man... It's like they never break – these things just sell themselves." Congratulations, Sherlock. You just told this customer that he might as well find the lowest price anywhere online and have it shipped. Ya know why, you idiot? It's because you just told him it would be perfect and that he doesn't need you.

(In my best Rod Serling voice) "Consider, if you will, a store ready to go out of business because their owners or managers don't train their staff to sell."

You can teach someone facts and figures, and you can even get them to explain features and benefits, but what is hard (sometimes impossible) is training to be a good listener, and truly try to help people. Most sales prevention leaders are too busy trying to plan what they are going to say next, than to actually listen to the customer and get to know them. I have an assigned territory by my company to find stores that will represent my brand to the highest standard possible. The best salesperson in my whole territory doesn't even play the instrument that he sells. He's their top salesperson and he isn't even a player. He just loves music and understands sales. He doesn't back away from available sales training and he actively listens to his vendor reps. He NEVER tells his customers if something sounds good or bad – he asks them what they think, and what they hear – he reminds them what they came in looking for, and he does his best to fulfill that need. His customers love him and the store.

Store owners: take heed to what I am trying to say – you need to hire and train sales people – not performers: people that are teachable and know how to listen. Many companies don't let new sales people engage with a customer without proper sales training. Why should you be any different?



“Here it comes... ready? Just because a person can PLAY an instrument doesn't mean that person can SELL an instrument.”

For Your Consideration



The 2021 Dealers' Choice Award Nominees

Submit your vote for the 29th Annual MMR Dealers' Choice Awards. Only subscribers to *Musical Merchandise Review (MMR)* magazine get to participate.



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FRETTED

Godin Launches the A4 & A5 Ultra Fretless Basses

Godin Guitars has announced the launch of the A4 Ultra Natural and A5 Ultra Natural Bases as part of its high-quality bass lineup.

The semi-acoustic A4 and A5 basses are both outfitted with a two-chambered Canadian Laurentian Basswood body, Solid Spruce top, Hard Rock Maple neck, and Richlite fingerboard. The A4 and A5 are also equipped with top-mounted thumb rests to ensure a comfortable playing position.

What sets both the A4 and A5 apart is the two-voice pickup system and on-board controls. This allows the player to choose between the low-profile Lace Sensor magnetic pickup for a modern and dynamic sound, or the individual LR Baggs saddle transducers in the bridge that offer an authentic acoustic double bass sound.

The magnetics are controlled by volume and tone knobs mounted on the side of the body, with the LR Baggs saddle transducers being controlled by a custom-designed top-mounted preamp. These ergonomic sliders allow you to adjust : volume, treble, mid, and bass EQ, as well as saturation control to give your tone more warmth. There is also a "Fat switch" selector to provide a mid-low boost, which reinforces the presence.

The A4 and A5 both offer two individual output jacks as well as a combined "mix" output for added versatility.

A4 Ultra Natural Fretless – U.S. MSRP PRICE: \$2,600; U.S. MAP PRICE: \$2,150

A5 Ultra Natural Fretless – U.S. MSRP PRICE: \$2,700; U.S. MAP PRICE: \$2,300

www.godinguitars.com

Guild Guitars and Marley Family Release Bob Marley Acoustic Guitar

In collaboration with the Bob Marley family, Guild Guitars releases the Guild A-20 Marley acoustic guitar paying tribute to the legendary global music icon.

The guitar, designed in collaboration with the Marley family, is modeled after a Guild Madeira A-20 – the songwriting guitar Marley kept at his house on 56 Hope Road in Kingston, Jamaica. Guild is reissuing the guitar with a few additions to pay homage to Marley. It will come with a recycled nylon gig bag featuring custom artwork, custom guitar picks, a making-of booklet featuring chords to "Three Little Birds", and a Bob Marley poster.

The Guild A-20 Marley acoustic guitar features a dreadnaught body shape with a thin satin finish, solid spruce top, mahogany back and sides, Guild script logo, "MARLEY" fretboard inlay and Madeira pickguard shape complete with "Bob Marley" signature.

As part of the collaboration between Guild and the Marley family, Guild Guitars is supporting One Tree Planted to help global reforestation. One tree will be planted for every Marley guitar made (onetreeplanted.org). In addition, Guild Guitars has shown support for the Alpha School of Music in Kingston by donating instruments to their music program (alphamusicja.com).

www.guildguitars.com

Fender and Lexus Partner to Release the Fender Lexus LC Stratocaster

Fender Musical Instruments Corporation's (FMIC) Fender Custom Shop (FCS) has announced the launch of a limited edition



Fender Lexus LC Stratocaster guitar, the newest custom-built piece from principal master builder, Ron Thorn. Chosen for their passion for bold design, intuitive technology, and Takumi craftsmanship, Fender's, Fender's alliance with Lexus brings to life the Fender Lexus LC Stratocaster. Fender Custom Shop will be releasing 100 team-built Fender Lexus LC Stratocaster guitars globally.



The Stratocaster guitar includes an omnidirectional Structural Blue finish, a spectral range that produces light metallic blue to deep midnight blue that was originally inspired by the Morpho butterfly. The paint on the Stratocaster guitar is the same paint that was used on the Lexus LC 500 coupe and convertible Inspiration Series, of which only 200 total vehicles were produced for the US. Structural blue paint brings to life the rich curvature of the LC 500 body, and now the guitar body. The paint does not contain any blue material – it looks blue only because of the interference of light. Layers of colorless materials come together to generate the ultimate color, hence the name "structural".

The neck is fashioned from beautiful 3A flame maple and finished in high-gloss urethane, imparting a hint of Fender wood-working tradition in contrast with the instrument's other advanced visual elements. The fingerboard is made of deep-blue polished Richlite, a composite material known for its tonal properties, structural stability, and resistance to wear and moisture, and used by the Fender Custom Shop for the first time. The fingerboard has a flatter 12" radius and 22 medium-jumbo stainless steel frets. On darkened stages, the white Luminlay fingerboard inlays glow in vivid blue.

Additionally, the fasteners on the pickguard are black button head machine screws that create a clean automotive appearance, while the pickups are Fender's latest version of our Noiseless Single Coils, another first for the Fender Custom Shop. To top it off, the headstock face is finished in Structural Blue with a chrome Fender logo while the custom case is wrapped in carbon fiber textured vinyl, with black leather ends and the Lexus logo embroidered inside the lid.

www.fender.com

Spector Introduces Euro RST Bases

Spector Musical Instruments announces the introduction of its new Euro RST ("roasted") series basses. The latest additions to Spector's acclaimed Euro series, these four- and five-string models bring Spector's classic design into a new era with updated tone woods, enhanced electronics, and a fresh palette of exclusive stain options.



Neck-through construction has long been central to the Spector design, and the 24-fret Euro RST takes this concept to the next level with a three-piece Roasted Maple neck and fingerboard with mother-of-pearl inlays, which not only gives this design a distinct look but also offers enhanced stability and rigidity. This perfectly tempered tone wood is paired with a uniquely figured Flame Maple top and Empress wood back, for striking visual presence, resonance and lightweight, balanced performance.

For electronics, Euro RST models are loaded with Aguilar Super Double pickups and OBP-2 pre-amps for an added mid-range focus that's sure to cut through any mix. These are the first

Euro models to feature Super Double pickups. These hum-cancelling pickups feature two rows of Alnico V magnets to provide a dynamic, growly tone. When paired with the OBP-2, players can cut and boost frequencies to sculpt their ideal tone.

Featuring professional-grade Spector hardware, these exciting basses are available in three all-new striking colors that bring out the unique grain patterns of the instrument's tone wood: Sienna Stain, Turquoise Tide, and Sundown Glow, each complemented with a matching headstock and sporting a soft matte finish that feels broken-in from day one.

Euro RST specifications:

- Roasted maple neck-thru basses, available in four- and five-string models
- Flame maple top / Paulownia (Empress wood) body
- Roasted maple three-piece neck and fingerboard
- 34-inch scale length on four-string; 35-inch on five-string
- Mother-of-pearl crown inlays
- Aguilar Super Double pickups with OBP-2 pre-amp
- Natural satin neck finish (to show roasted neck)
- Matching flame maple headstock
- Available in three finishes: Turquoise Tide, Sundown Glow and Sienna Stain Matte
- Chrome hardware; Gotoh GB-350 tuners

The Spector Euro RST series basses are now available in four- and five-string models with U.S. MAP pricing starting at \$2,899.99.

www.spectorbass.com

Gibson Generation Collection

Gibson has completed a new evolution in sound for acoustic guitar players, originally conceived in 1964. From the Gibson Lab, Gibson presents the new Gibson Generation Collection of Acoustic guitars. Inspired by a 1964 blueprint from the Gibson archives and continuing Gibson's iconic history of innovation, the Gibson Generation Collection offers a new sonic experience, featuring balanced tone woods, and a slim comfortable neck at accessible price points.



The Gibson Generation Collection is handcrafted in Bozeman, Montana, by the highly-skilled craftspeople who make all Gibson acoustic guitars. Comprised of four models, G-00, G-45, G-Writer, and the G-200, the Generation Collection is equipped with the Gibson Player Port on the upper bout: an original 1964 Gibson concept refined today by the Gibson Lab. The Gibson Player Port delivers a truly unique and immersive sonic experience by projecting sound to the player.

The Gibson Player Port allows players to hear more of themselves as the audience hears it. With a tone that is crisp and resonant, all of the Gibson Generation Collection acoustics are designed to be comfortable to hold and play for long periods of time. All Generation Collection guitars feature the Gibson Player Port, slim, lightweight bodies, a flatter fingerboard radius, Walnut back and sides, Sitka spruce tops, and a stunning Natural finish. The G-200 and G-Writer are equipped with LR Baggs Element Bronze pickup systems which amplify deep bass and crystal-clear highs.

The most accessible price point in the entire Gibson acoustic line-up, all Gibson Generation Collection guitars are available worldwide now.

www.gibson.com

ACCESSORIES

Vic Firth Launches the Nate Smith Signature Series Stick

The Avedis Zildjian Company, parent company of Vic Firth, has announced the release of the new Nate Smith Signature Series sticks.



For nearly two decades, Nate Smith has been impacting the music scene with his visceral, instinctive, and deep-rooted style of drumming. From jazz to fusion, R&B to hip-hop, from pop to rock and everywhere in between Nate Smith grooves like wind around the drum set. Now Nate brings that same energy and versatility to Vic Firth with his new Signature Series drumsticks.

Being slightly thinner than a 7A in the grip, with added length and a medium taper for a smooth response and impeccable balance, this stick is great for sitting right in the pocket. Crafted with made-in-the-USA hickory wood, the Nate Smith Signature Series sticks offer a strong tried and true composition. The rounded barrel tip allows for articulation at any angle and lets you pull serious sound out of your cymbals.

The Nate Smith Signature Series sticks are available at vicfirth.com, authorized dealers, and international distributor partners.

www.zildjian.com

The Meyer Bros. New York Alto Mouthpiece from jj Babbitt is BACK

The all-time favorite Meyer Bros. New York alto sax mouthpiece from jj Babbitt has been reintroduced and is now available through local music dealers. This specific model is regarded as the finest Meyer Bros. hard rubber mouthpiece ever made by jj Babbitt and is among the industry's most sought-after mouthpiece.



A popular choice of top alto professionals this model is the original Meyer Bros. New York mouthpiece played by renowned jazz musician Cannonball Adderley during the peak of his career. Cannonball's mouthpiece developed a cracked shank and was retrofitted with a brass retention ring. To his surprise it not only served to repair the shank but also improved its performance and projection. The brass ring is now standard equipment on the re-released model and adds an extra element of style. This is not a copy or replica, it is molded in the original mold, with the original cores, and faced with the original facing cams.

In keeping with the original, this model features a Bonade style ligature. The Meyer Bros. New York mouthpiece is available in these popular alto sax facings:

- 5M – .071
- 6M – .076
- 7M – .081
- 8M – .086

This easy-blowing Meyer Bros. New York mouthpiece offers outstanding control, sound, and playability for a variety of skill levels. It is a product of jj Babbitt's consistent, high quality manufacturing and over 100 years of experience in the craft of mouthpiece making. It is designed specifically to deliver the vintage jazz sound players still seek.

Professional alto sax player, Mike Smith, is an artist partner with the jj Babbitt Company, Inc. and plays the Meyer Bros. New York

newproducts

model. Widely known as the lead alto sax player for Frank Sinatra and Frank Sinatra Jr. during 35 years of his career, Smith will be present at upcoming shows and other events to demonstrate the look and sound of this exciting legacy mouthpiece.

www.jjbabbitt.com

BOSS Announces IR-200 Amp & IR Cabinet and SY-200 Synthesizer Pedals

BOSS announces the IR-200 Amp & IR Cabinet and SY-200 Synthesizer, two powerful new models added to the popular 200 series pedal lineup. The IR-200 brings next-level performance to direct sound for guitar and bass, offering exceptional audio quality, premium amps, and over 150 hi-res speaker cabinet impulse responses from BOSS and Celestion Digital. The SY-200 delivers a massive library of expressive synthesizer sounds for guitar and bass, onboard memories for storing sounds, and numerous options for real-time control.

The IR-200 and SY-200 are the latest members of the BOSS 200 series, a growing lineup of premium-quality pedals that combine simple operation and streamlined size with advanced capabilities like programmable memories and MIDI control support. Other current models in the 200 series include the DD-200 Digital Delay, EQ-200 Graphic Equalizer, OD-200 Hybrid Drive, and MD-200 Modulation.

The IR-200 and SY-200 will be available in the U.S. in January 2022 for \$399.99 and \$299.99 respectively.

www.boss.info



CASES & BAGS

MusicNomad's GOMAD Guitarist Gig Bag

MusicNomad's GOMAD Guitarist Gear Bag has all the backstage and onstage organization needed to play and maintain your equipment. The two large and sturdy stacked compartments not only store a ton, but it's easy to find what you need quickly. The rugged, weather-resistant exterior features 1200D recycled polyester (rPET) made from recycled water bottles. No detail is overlooked, including 15 sidewall storage compartments all easy to see and access, plus straps to store your work mat, guitar stand, and cables. Additional features include an impressive 36 liters of total storage, high quality external zippers, 1/2" padded construction on all sides to protect your gear, thick air mesh comfort shoulder and hand straps, and a moveable padded divider partition. Load it up and take it wherever you go: the studio, home, shop, gig, and rehearsal. Music Nomad GOMAD Guitarist Gear Bag with Backpack Straps (MN285) – \$189.99 USD

www.musicnomadcare.com



Gator Cases Unveils GL Brand Series Redesign

Gator Cases makes it effortless to protect and carry your instrument in style with the newly redesigned GL Band Series. The GL series cases are made of lightweight nylon with a plush-covered foam interior for premium protection. The interlocking handles and ergonomic, no-slip shoulder strap help transport your favorite instrument with comfort, ease, and style. The reinforced d-rings are perfect for attaching and removing the shoulder strap during travel. The bag



also features an exterior storage pocket for carrying your favorite accessories. The new, modern style band cases are available in trumpet, cornet, French horn, oboe, trombone, saxophone, and clarinet.

www.gatorcases.com

BAND & ORCHESTRA

XO Releases Their First French Horns the New XO Professional Double Horns

KHS Music, the manufacturer of XO Professional Brass Instruments, is excited to announce the official launch of the XO Professional Double Horns (1650 and 1650D), the first French horns in the line. After over a decade of engineering and design, XO has unveiled a horn featuring superior slotting and intonation of notes in all ranges, with unparalleled consistency of feel and tonal balance across both sides of the instrument.



The 1650 horns with Geyer wrap feature a one-piece leadpipe, and a continuous F side tube crafted from a unique 3D bending technique that facilitates an even response throughout the range of the instrument. Multi-axis adjustment of the thumb level and pinky finger hook maximize player comfort, refined string linkages, and phosphor bronze bottom caps ensure years of smooth, quiet valve action. An XO lightweight designer case rounds out the package. XO Professional Horns are available with a fixed bell (1650) and a detachable bell (1650D).

The XO Double Horns are available at retail now. Further expansion of the XO Professional Double Horn line is anticipated in the spring of 2022.

www.xobrass.com

AMPLIFICATION

Warwick Gnome Compact Bass Cabinets

The Warwick Amplification Gnome Cabinet is the ideal cabinet for the Warwick Gnome amplifier and a compact, lightweight addition to any bass rig. The Gnome Cabinet series was designed to offer a transparent, crisp and defined bass sound in combination with an ultra-portable design for discerning musicians, including seasoned professionals. While originally developed for use with the Gnome amplifier, the Gnome Cabinet will compliment any manufacturers' technology. The dual function bass reflex opening can also be used as a carrying handle and with the adjustable piezo tweeter level, the sound of the Warwick Gnome Cabinets can be perfectly adapted to your own wishes and the rest of the equipment. Specifications:



- compact bass amp cabinet
- ultra-portable, lightweight construction
- dual function bass reflex opening and carrying handle
- adjustable Piezo tweeter level
- Piezo tweeter
- 35 mm (1/4") TS jack input socket

Warwick Gnome CAB 10/8 – Compact Bass Cabinet, 1x10", 150 Watt

- frequency range 90 Hz to 19 kHz
- dimensions (W x H x D) 385 x 305 x 350 mm (15 5/32" x 12 1/64" x 13 25/32"), weight 9.55 kg / 21.05 lbs

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- U.S. pricing is \$ 256.48
- Available from end of October

Warwick Gnome CAB 2/8/4 – Compact Bass Cabinet, 2x8", 200 Watt

- frequency range 70 Hz to 19 kHz
- dimensions (W x H x D) 550 x 260 x 310 mm (21 21/32" x 10 15/64" x 12 13/64"), weight 10.9 kg / 24.03 lbs
- U.S. pricing is \$ 314.26
- Available from end of October

Warwick Gnome Pro CAB 10/4 – Compact Bass Cabinet, 1x10", 200 Watt

- frequency range 90 Hz to 19 kHz, dimensions (W x H x D) 385 x 305 x 350 mm (15 5/32" x 12 1/64" x 13 25/32"), weight 9.55 kg / 21.05 lbs
- U.S. pricing is \$ 283.33
- Available from end of January 2022

Warwick Gnome Pro CAB 12/4 – Compact Bass Cabinet, 1x12", 300 Watt

- frequency range 45 Hz to 19 kHz
- dimensions (W x H x D) 475 x 350 x 350 mm (18 45/64" x 13 25/32" x 13 25/32") weight 13.4 kg / 29.54 lbs
- U.S. pricing is \$ 350.04
- Available from end of January 2022

Warwick Gnome Pro CAB 2/10/4 – Compact Bass Cabinet, 2x10", 300 Watt

- frequency range 65 Hz to 19 kHz
- dimensions (W x H x D) 650 x 305 x 350 mm (25 19/32" x 12 1/64" x 13 25/32"), weight 16.6 kg / 36.6 lbs
- U.S. pricing is \$ 392.91
- Available from end of January 2022

www.warwickbass.com

PRINT & DIGITAL

Alfred Music Supports and Encourages Self-Care and Reflection with *A Music Teacher's Gratitude Journal*

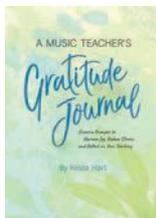
Alfred Music has announced the release of an incredible and mindful resource, *A Music Teacher's Gratitude Journal: Creative Prompts to Nurture Joy, Reduce Stress, and Reflect on Your Teaching*.

The ability to experience thankfulness and joy can be developed, and the practice of keeping a gratitude journal will help. This guided process of self-reflection invites educators to focus on the positive aspects of being a teacher, musician, and human being.

A Music Teacher's Gratitude Journal is offered in a flexible format, which allows for entries on any schedule or frequency. It's a personal resource that will remind users what's truly important and inspire positive change in their life and work. It includes inspiring quotes, habit trackers for gauging progress, and simple yet insightful writing prompts that guide appreciation, reflect on teaching, and ignite the joy of making music.

A Music Teacher's Gratitude Journal is available for \$24.99 at music retail stores, online retailers, and alfred.com.

www.alfred.com



Hal Leonard Releases Matching Sheet Music Folio to Barlow & Bear's Viral *The Unofficial Bridgerton Musical*

Dearest readers, the time has come to announce *Barlow & Bear: The Unofficial Bridgerton Musical Songbook* to be released by Hal Leonard! With these songs, you can relive your favorite series through the music as imagined by composers Abigail Barlow

and Emily Bear. Hal Leonard is publishing the matching piano/vocal songbook for *The Unofficial Bridgerton Musical* album this month.

On September 10th *The Unofficial Bridgerton Musical* album was released and within two hours was #1 on the iTunes albums chart, a top 10 album in the world, and had over 7 million streams in 5 days. Barlow & Bear composed 15 songs in 6 weeks – live on social media in real-time from their living room. The incredible viral worldwide attention that the project created inspired them to record and self-release an album of their music.

The songbook features all fifteen songs written for the musical, arranged for piano and voice with guitar chord frames. Titles include "Burn for You," "Ocean Away," "If I Were a Man," "Balancing the Scales," and more. Their ability to write catchy ear-worm melodies and marry today's pop sensibilities with classic musical theater, has created a sound that can cross from Broadway to the pop charts.

The Unofficial Bridgerton Musical songbook retails for \$24.99 and is available for order by calling the Hal Leonard E-Z Order Line at 1-800-554-0626.

www.halleonard.com



PRO AUDIO

Roland Announces V-02HD MK II Streaming Video Mixer

Roland announces the V-02HD MK II Streaming Video Mixer, a simple and affordable solution for bringing higher production values to computer-based livestreaming. Compact and easy to use, the V-02HD MK II allows users to connect and switch two high-quality HDMI cameras and send them directly to a favorite streaming platform over USB-C. It's also possible to mix in audio sources via dedicated inputs and HDMI, apply video effects and transitions, and more.

With its intuitive control layout and T-bar fader, it is very simple to operate. The USB connection is plug and play, ready for instant streaming with popular platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitch, and Zoom or advanced workflows such as OBS Studio, Streamlabs OBS, StreamYard, and Restream. It also includes a 10-channel digital audio mixer with Roland's legendary sound quality and control. There are two audio inputs with 3.5 mm jacks, and each supports a microphone – including lavalier mics that require plug-in power – or stereo audio from a smartphone, mixer, or other devices. Users can mix embedded stereo audio from HDMI sources as well, including microphones connected to cameras. The V-02HD MK II supports hands-free control with up to two optional BOSS footswitches, a convenient feature for creators who perform or give demonstrations during streams.

Out of the box, the V-02HD MK II provides the dedicated controls needed to switch cameras and make basic adjustments to video and audio sources. But for users who want to dive deeper, there's a world of advanced features and custom assignments to explore. Connecting an HDMI monitor provides a display for setting up a wide selection of audio and video effects, footswitch assignments, and more. Roland's free remote control apps let users operate it via an intuitive graphical interface on their iPad or computer. (Remote control apps for macOS and Windows will be available in late 2021.)

It comes with free access to Roland's new AeroCaster Switcher for iPad, a powerful video and media expansion solution for select Roland hardware switchers. Available in the U.S. now for \$395.

www.roland.com



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Fig. 4

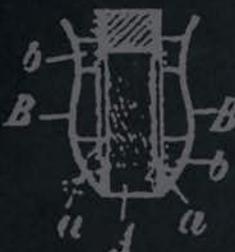


Fig. 5



The legend turns 125!

Fig. 3



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Armadillo Enterprises/Dean Guitars	C3	deanguitars.com
Bourns Inc.	20	bourns.com
Evet's Corporation	C2	snarktuners.com
GuitarSlipNoMore	27	guitarslipnomore.com
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Hunter Music Instrument Inc.	27	huntermusical.com
JackTrip Labs	1	jacktrip.org
JodyJazz Inc.	20	jodyjazz.com
Kawai America Corp.	9	kawaius.com
KHS America	7, 41	khs-america.com
Korg	44	korg.com
Little	23	little.com
MIRC LLC	15	mircweb.com
NAMM	39	namm.org
Pearl River Pianos	17	pearlriverusa.com
TASCAM	13	tascam.com
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Operate websites that compete with my combo business?



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A man is seated at a desk in a music studio, playing a Korg Nautilus synthesizer. The desk is cluttered with a computer monitor displaying a digital audio workstation (DAW) interface, a keyboard, a mouse, and two speakers. A pair of headphones is on a stand to the left. The background features a wall with posters, including one with the Korg logo, and a large potted plant. The lighting is dim and focused on the workstation.

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