

SHOWS

4% — The rise in overall registration from last year's NAMM Show, with a total of 88,128 total registrants.

1.6% — The rise in exhibitors from last year's NAMM, with a total of 1,560 companies displaying products.

7% — The rise in international attendance from last year's NAMM, with a total of 10,605 registrants.

THE INDUSTRY HERO?

By Zach Phillips

The biggest product at the 2008 NAMM Show wasn't a musical instrument, and it didn't have a formal exhibit. Yet *Guitar Hero* dominated supplier booths and show floor conversation from Jan. 17–20 at the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, Calif.

Talk centered around how to harness Red Octane's popular video game and its competing counterpart, *Rock Band*, in converting video gamers into real musicians.

"We ended up bringing in about 150 people to [our *Guitar Hero II* tournament]," said James Bethea of Baton Rouge, La.-based The Perfect Bass/The Perfect Guitar. "We had high traffic in the store on the day of the event and better than average sales."

Many suppliers featured the video games at their booths to draw attention while others launched peripheral products. Hal Leonard received top honors during the closing NAMM University breakfast session, "Best In Show," for its new

Mergers, partnerships and video games pervaded the 2008 NAMM Show

Guitar Hero and *Rock Band* songbooks. Allegro Multimedia and SoundTech partnered up to debut *Guitar Wizard*, a similar video game with one major point of departure: players use real guitars.

During the Guitar & Accessories Marketing Association's annual meeting, Guitar Center CEO Marty

1. Rock artist Ben Harper; 2. Menchey Music Service's Joel Menchey; 3. The NAMM University 'Breakfast of Champions' panel, from left: Guitar Center's Marty Albertson, Fender's Bill Mendello, NAMM's Joe Lamond, Kaman's Ed Miller, Skip's Music's Skip Maggiora and Gibson's Henry Juszkiewicz; 4. From left: Universal Percussion's Lloyd McCausland, Tom Shelley and Jim Bickley; 5. Guitarist Slash; 6. GC's Marty Albertson; 7. From left: Super-Sensitive's Ellen and John Cavanaugh and Mary Nell Chadsey





Albertson even mentioned that *Guitar Hero* was his company's top-selling SKU during the 2007 holiday season. It's anyone's guess as to whether that momentum will last or if *Guitar Hero* will go the way of many video game relics. (Does anyone still play *Pitfall*?) For now, it's putting live rock 'n' roll front-of-mind with a text-messaging demographic that's inundated with entertainment choices.

"*Guitar Hero* and [video games] like that can bring some new life into the industry," said CJ Averwater, general manager of Memphis, Tenn.-based Amro Music. "I've joked about it, but I would honestly love to see something like *Bassoon Hero* or *Trumpet Hero*."

NAMM NEWSMAKERS

The influence of music video games can't be downplayed, but the NAMM Show was home to plenty of other breaking news. At show close, it reported a 4-percent boost in overall registration from 2007, for a record-breaking 88,128 total registrants. International attendance received a 7-percent increase from the previous winter show, for a total of 10,605 registrants. NAMM University also had a record turnout with 9,026 total attendees, as compared to 8,872 last year.

"Traffic was slamming," said Fishman Transducers President Larry Fishman on the second day of the show. "It was the best Thursday opening day we've seen in 20 years."

'It was the best Thursday opening day we've seen in 20 years.'
— Larry Fishman, Fishman Transducers

Corporate mergers, acquisitions and partnerships also dominated headlines in *UpBeat Daily*. Among them, Taylor partnered with Fender for its European distribution, Gibson and TC Group merged and Roland acquired a major share of Cakewalk. (For the full low-

1. *Music Inc.*'s Frank Alkyer (left) and NAMM's Morgan Ringwald; 2. Hamilton Stands' Steven Maines (left) and William Carpenter; 3. Rick's Music's Chris Zarlenga (left) and Rick Santos; 4. The Donnas' Brett Anderson (left) Torry Castellano; 5. Fishman's Larry Fishman; 6. E.M. Winston's Don Rhodes; 7. From left: Middle C Music's Myrna Sisen, Mississippi Music's Rosi Johnson and Art's Music's Jessica Freehling-Kazzie during NAMM University's 'The Retail Apprentice'; 8. Remo's Brian LeVan (left) and Bob Yerby; 9. Ronnie Winter perform's at Sennheiser's party; 10. From left: D'Addario's Gina D'Addario, Rick Drumm, Jim D'Addario, Larry Tarica and Suzanne D'Addario; 11. NAMM's Joe Lamond (left) and Amro Music's Chip Averwater; 12. Kahler's Gary Kahler (left) and Peavey's Hartley Peavey

down, see pages 23 and 39.)
 2008 Summer NAMM returns to Nashville, Tenn., after a three-year hiatus in Indianapolis and Austin, Texas. It will be held June 20–22 at the Nashville Convention Center. **MI**