

- + The 2009 RPMDA convention drew in roughly 200 total registrants, a 30-percent drop from last year's 286 attendees.
- + It attracted roughly 40 first-timers, as compared to 31 last year.
- + This year's show also drew in 45 exhibiting companies, down from last year's 58 exhibitors.

SHOWS




RETAIL PRINT MUSIC DEALERS ASSOCIATION | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

PRINT FIGHTS BACK

A sunny group of print music retailers and publishers recently gathered in Salt Lake City to share best practices and snag some face time with one another. The occasion was the 2009 Retail Print Music Dealers Association (RPMDA) convention, held April 30 through May 2 at Salt Lake City's Downtown Marriott hotel.

The meeting opened with a concert from the Mormon

Recession, Internet woes, brand-new competition? Retailers at RPMDA came prepared

Tabernacle Choir and continued with a string of parties and cocktail receptions — even a

visit from *Sesame Street*'s Bob McGrath. The festive atmosphere, however, undercut deeper concerns among attendees about the economy and increased online competition.

Attendance, in fact, dropped 30 percent from last year's meeting. (The show drew in roughly 200 total attendees.) Still, as Madeleine Crouch, RPMDA's executive director, pointed out, the general energy levels and mood were unquestionably positive.

"Those who attended were there to learn and become more competitive," she said.

1. Long & McQuade's Christie Smith models her 'pimped' briefcase; 2. Hal Leonard's Keith Mardak receives the 2009 Dorothy Award, the print music industry's highest honor; 3. Friedman, Kannenberg & Co.'s Beth and Alan Friedman; 4. Alfred's Bryan Bradley, who was recently appointed as COO (left), and Ron Manus; 5. The RPMDA board, from left: Jeff Stonier, Carol Wilbur, Gayle Beacock, Lori Supine, Steven Loweth, Myrna Sislén and David Jahnke; 6. Creative Music Center's Liz Reisman; 7. Advance Music's Veronika Gruber and Kendor's Craig Cornwall; 8. NAMM's Dan Del Fiorentino receives the Sandy Feldstein Service Award

Their timing was spot on. Chain booksellers and forward-thinking, deep-pocketed music retailers continue grabbing up market share for print product online. This has left many independent print dealers hungry for an Internet strategy — one that goes beyond investing millions in a cutting-edge e-commerce site or finding the alchemical formula for high Google rankings. But as this year's RPMDA meeting showed, there's more than one way to harness — and compete against — the Internet.

NEW WEB STRATEGIES

Several indie retailers attending the convention recently altered their Web sites and business systems. Ruby Beeston of Best In Music, a three-store, full-line dealership in Orem, Utah, said she just finished networking her stores with Radiant's CounterPoint business software for faster communications.

"I see a trend where we will have to work much harder to earn our business, and also we have to shift our focus to more young people and follow the technology," she said.

"We got a new computer system so that we will be qualified for a lot of promotional sheet music referrals, so we can get more business from the Internet. We have a new e-commerce Web site, and we are focusing to build it up and do better at that.

"If you're the fastest one, you'll get the business. If you're the slower one, it's gone."

Richard Gore of Denton, Texas-based indie print music giant Pender's Music said that his company recently redesigned its Web site.

"Hopefully, as we adjust our budget to more pay-per-click search engine advertising, our company will see continued improvement against the online competition," he said. "I estimate that 25 percent of all print music sales are now researched or conducted via our Web site."

Gore added that he's encouraged by steps print publishers are taking to send referral orders from their Web sites to music retailers.

Hal Leonard announced one such service at the convention, its new Order Referral Program. The initiative features two programs, one to accommodate traditional, brick-and-mortar retailers, the other

+ BEACOCK SHARES THE BUZZ

"Defying gravity is what we've been doing since the day we opened." So began Gayle Beacock's session, "Give Your Business an Energy Drink!" — partly based off of the musical "Wicked." Equal parts better-business seminar and inspirational sermon for independent retailers, the discussion gave practical advice on the elusive topics of creating store culture and selling "attitude." Highlights:



Gayle Beacock

ON SUCCESS IN A TOUGH ECONOMY:

- "Getting [recognition] in the community is the way to get through these times."
- "The most important thing you can do is get out of the store. Do your customers know that you are here [at the RPMDA convention]? That you're learning?"

ON POPULARITY:

- "If you want to be successful in life, it's all about presentation. We get so bogged down in details. But it's all in the presentation."
- "Being popular is created, manufactured and figured out."
- "What do we have to do to be popular? You have to be a little mad, a little crazy. Crazy is good. You have to find a way to stand out."

ON SALES:

- "People buy from someone who is happy, nice and excited about sales."
- "We're through with accepting limits because someone says it's so."

Profit-making Online Tool for our times: **Order Up!**

- ▶ Transmit customers' online orders direct to all vendors.
- ▶ Freely choose vendors with best margins and drop-ship services.



1.800.691.8172
info@retailup.com

Here's another one of many others: **Lessons Up!**

- ▶ Sign up students right online
- ▶ Students can select teacher by profile, choose & reserve appointment, pay for lessons & music camps.

RETAIL UP! Websites . POS . Success!



1. RPMDA's Madeleine Crouch; 2. From left: Alfred's Michael Finkelstein, Elisa Palladino, Antonio Ferranti, Holly Anzalone-McGinnis and Daniel Frohnen; 3. Best In Music's Ruby Beeston with Carl Fischer's Hayden Connor; 4. Consultant Danny Rocks; 5. From left: Carl Fischer's Hayden Connor and Rachele Gayer, West Music's Nathan Ersig, and Carl Fischer's Anne Sobel and Chris Scialfa; 6. Frederick Harris' Les Portelli, Tim Sellers and Ellen Reeves; 7. FJH's Kevin Hackinson (left) and Dave Olsen; 8. Dowling's James Li (left) and Rick Valentine; 9. From left: Beacock's Dianna Rogers, Susan and Gayle Beacock, Cierra Roberts, and Michele Dwiggin; 10. From left: Northeastern Publications' Randy Navarre, LuAnn Clouser and Bill Heese; 11. Shawnee's Tony Bakker receives the Ed Adams Scholarship; 12. Retail Up's Gordon O'Hara (middle) with Alta Loma's Genett and Pete Gamber; 13. From left: Hal Leonard's Doug Lady, Keith Mardak, Mary Vandenberg and David Jahnke; 14. Schott's Bernhard Muller; 15. Friedrich Hofmeister's Stefanie Eva Clement; 16. From left: Lorenz's Kris Kropff and Geoff Lorenz with Musical Innovations' Tracy Leenman; 17. From left: Kjos' Karl Kjos, David Gereghty and Timothy Kjos; 18. Aim Gifts' John Fullerton

for Internet dealers. The Preferred Retailer program lets any Hal Leonard retailer with a physical store and e-mail address fulfill consumer orders that come from Hal Leonard's Web site. The Full-Line Internet Provider program is designed for Internet retailers and will drop an order from Hal's site directly into the dealer's online shopping cart.

Doug Lady, Hal Leonard's vice president of sales, said roughly 200 dealers had already signed up for the service at the time of the convention. He added that it's free, and dealers make the same margins that they would in-store.

THE YOUTUBE CONUNDRUM

Gore cited legal and illegal sheet music sites as a major factor in reduced pop folio sales. He explained that these sites have made it less likely for customers to purchase a full book for one or two songs. And he's equally concerned about the effect of online video hub YouTube on print sales.

"People are also using YouTube to learn a song by viewing online videos," Gore

said. "This trend is really negative, as no one makes a sale and it is perfectly legal. Unfortunately, YouTube may be the killer application for learning to play a song on the guitar without purchasing the sheet music."

Still, some retailers are taking an if-you-can't-beat-'em-join-'em approach to YouTube, posting videos about their businesses on the site. At RPMDA's annual "Best Ideas" session, Stanton's Sheet Music's Julia Moessner won first place for suggesting that retailers post YouTube videos about their products and services. She mentioned that it's also an effective way to get a higher Google search engine ranking.

Publishers have stepped in, too, with new titles aiming to

+ SISLEN'S PROMO STRATEGY

Myrna Sislen of Middle C Music in Washington, D.C., has fast established herself as one of independent retail's star promoters. She shared her knowledge in the session "Make the Most of In-Store Events and Double Your Press Coverage."

Sislen emphasized that there are two ways to make the most of in-store events: get press on them and make your customers love you. Referencing the latter, she explained that she joined a youth rock band to sing "Wild Thing" at a recent student recital. "It's good to let your customers see you in a different context," she said.

She added that she has also held in-store *Guitar Hero* tournaments and art exhibits for local photographers, as well as marched in local parades to give away gift certificates to her store.

In terms of getting press, Sislen offered some guidelines for writing a press release and communicating with editors and reporters.

- Use proper press release form. Include the phrase "For Release (DD/MM/YY)" and all relevant contact information.
- Include a headline. Imitate your main local paper, use action verbs and keep it as short as possible.
- The first sentence should make absolutely clear who is doing what, where, when and why.
- Include a quote from someone other than the contact.
- Don't be afraid to follow up with a call to editors and reporters.
- Go over your draft with someone to make sure that it is clear.
- You can't send too many press releases.



Myrna Sislen

DAVA
CONTROL
GRIP TIPS

Dava's Grip Tips combine a thin profile with medium flexibility and incredible grip! One try and you'll never want to put them down.

And Now in a Smaller Size!

JAZZ GRIPS

Tiny Pick!
Huge Grip!

Dava's new Jazz Grips are smaller and a lot stiffer than our other models. The sharp tip plus Dava's rubber grip gives you the ultimate in precision and control.

CALL YOUR DISTRIBUTOR TODAY!

SUMMER ESSENTIALS

John Pearse String Swipes
Extend String Life
For Musical Instruments
with METAL STRINGS

Cleans & Protects Metal Strings
Easy & Safe to Use

Breezy Ridge Insts. Ltd.
PO Box 295
Center Valley, PA 18034
610.691.3302 www.jpstrings.com

BenedettoGuitars.com
Handmade
Savannah, GA USA
Tours available:
912.692.1400

Benedetto
The signature of jazz guitar.



add even more value to printed product. Alfred showed several new books designed to serve as one-stop, bang-for-your-buck packages. The company's *Billboard Magazine Hot 100 50th Anniversary Songbook* features more than 250 pages of definitive hits in a piano/vocal/guitar edition for \$24.95. The Rolling Stone Sheet Music Classics series is based off of the magazine's 500 greatest songs of all time list. And the company continues adding to its 10 For 10 series, which Alfred Senior Account Executive Michael Finkelstein called "one of our biggest series in this recession." It gives consumers 10 songs for \$10.

Hal Leonard's exhibit featured dozens of new titles in its Play-Along and Sing With series, including *Christian Rock Guitar Play-Along* and multiple Classical Play-Along, Big Band Play-Along and Sing With The Choir books. These include play-along CDs with high-quality, full backing tracks (bands, choirs, orchestras) that users can jam with. As of now, YouTube can't compete with that.

In the same vein, some publishers made a special effort to cater to the same customers they lose to YouTube. Frederick

Harris, for instance, debuted *Fiddleworks*, a fiddle repertoire collection with a book and CD aimed at younger players.

Craig Cornwall, president of Kendor Music, said his company is re-promoting several of its classic jazz ensemble titles specifically to reach younger musicians who may not be familiar with the pieces.

E-MAIL MASTERY

Ron Cates, a marketing specialist for Constant Contact, pointed out that e-mail's return on investment is 20-times higher than direct mail. During his session "The Power of E-mail Marketing," he offered dealers the following advice on maximizing their e-mail impact.

Use every opportunity to add e-mail addresses to your database. Every time someone calls your store, make sure you or your employees ask for the person's e-mail address. Add a visible link on your Web site's homepage where customers can sign up for your e-newsletter. Also, display a print-out of your e-newsletter or e-blast at the front of the store. "Show them what they're going to get," Cates said.

"Put a note at the top the first time you send it. 'I'm sending this to you because you [signed up] at the trade show last week.' And you must have an opt out."

Develop a strategy for content on paper. As Cates explained, if you develop engaging content, people will never think you're a spammer. Develop a strategy on paper. "This is not a business plan," Cates said. "You can do it in 10 minutes."

Determine whether your goal is to drive traffic to your Web site, promote a future product or service, or just stay top-of-mind. "Present yourself

1. Bethel Music Center's Dana and Bruce Treidel; 2. Arpeges' Pierre Cotelle (left) and Trognon Sebastien; 3. Duck's Deluxe's John Duck; 4. From left: Shawnee's Mark Cabaniss and Tony Bakker, Music Sales' Steven Wilson, Shawnee's Krista Montgomery and Music Sales' Phil Smith; 5. Alfred's Antonio Ferranti (left) and Johann Gouws; 6. FreeHand's Chaim Rubinov (right) explains the company's latest product; 7. From left: Steve's Music's Norm Zimmerman, Robert Martin's Max Desmurs and Mayfair Music's Lucie Stubbington; 8. Hutchins & Rea's Don Eubanks and Senseney's Lori Supine, who also serves as RPMDA's president; 9. From left: NAMM's Dan Del Fiorentino, Schenectady Vancurler Music's Rhonda Luborsky and NAMM's Eric Ebel; 10. Lauren Keiser Music's Lauren Keiser; 11. Stanton's Sheet Music's Julia Moessner (left) and Musical Innovations' Tracy Leenman; 12. From left: Tri-Tech's Dave Cox, Ward-Brod't's Connie Smith and Tri-Tech's Ron Koppes

as the expert. Show that off.”

Send on Tuesdays. Tuesday has the best e-mail open rate, particularly around 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Cates added that retailers must get their brand name in the body of the e-mail and in the subject line. He also stressed keeping subject lines no more than 49 characters long.

FAST & EASY STORE DESIGN

And despite all the talk about the Internet, brick-and-mortar still got its due at RPMDA. Multiple sessions focused on simple, inexpensive store design ideas.

Print industry veteran Danny Rocks of The Company Rocks presented a panel discussion on retail aesthetics in “Design Your Retail Store on a Dime.”

Panelist Gayle Beacock of Beacock Music in Vancouver, Wash., discussed two slides of displays at her store. One showed a bunch of drumsticks in a paint bucket, which was covered with stickers of the particular brand. Another showed a display table at a fiddle event. All the fiddles for sale were laid out on a black velvet sheet for a luxurious look.

Fellow panelist Valerie Johnson of West Music in Coralville, Iowa, explained how all of her store’s signage features the same fonts for consistency. Its roadside sign also says “Lessons for All Ages” beneath “West Music” to promote the music lesson program. (The sign also includes West’s Web address.) And panelist Bob Kohl of Long and McQuade in Vancouver, British Columbia, emphasized the importance of changing displays regularly to keep return customers’ interest.

Rocks added that chain bookseller Borders recently initiated three times as many face-forwards with its book selection, cutting 5 percent of its inventory to do so. He applied the same idea to print music merchandising.

“It’s a turn on the old adage, ‘You can’t judge a book by its cover, but you can sell a book by its cover,’” Rocks said. “If it’s something that you strategically want to sell a lot of, face out.”

Liz Reisman of Creative Music Center in Monroe, Conn., encouraged retailers to make their stores more appealing to moms in her seminar “Creating a Mom-Friendly Atmosphere in Your Store.” While planning

the session, Reisman had several moms visit music stores and provide feedback. Using that information, she listed the attributes of mom-friendly stores. These include:

- Salespeople who approach customers and explain product in simple terms.
- Clean bathrooms.
- A location with other activity and shops around.

- A clean, organized waiting room with women’s magazines, comfortable chairs and pictures of kids playing instruments.

- Adequate lighting.
- Soothing colors on the wall.
- Neutral music. No hard rock. And it can’t be too loud.

Next year’s RPMDA convention will be held in Oklahoma City from April 14–17. **MI**

Save 10% on all Flow Pack Singles!

For the month of July, all 50 pack Flow Pack singles are 10% off from these distributors:

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| DANSR, inc. | KMC Music/Musicorp/M&A Sales |
| Davitt & Hanser | U.S. Band/St. Louis Music |
| Harris-Teller | Yamaha Corporation |

Flow Pack Singles - more flexibility, more margin

Vandoren
PARIS

© 2009 Vandoren S.A.S. • www.vandoren.com