

BLUES BUSTERS: SUMMER PROMOTIONS TO DRIVE TRAFFIC, SALES **PAGE 50**

FOR PROGRESSIVE MUSIC RETAILERS

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JUNE 2009 | MUSICINCMAG.COM

What Went Wrong With The Piano Industry

...And How to Fix It

BY GREG BILLINGS

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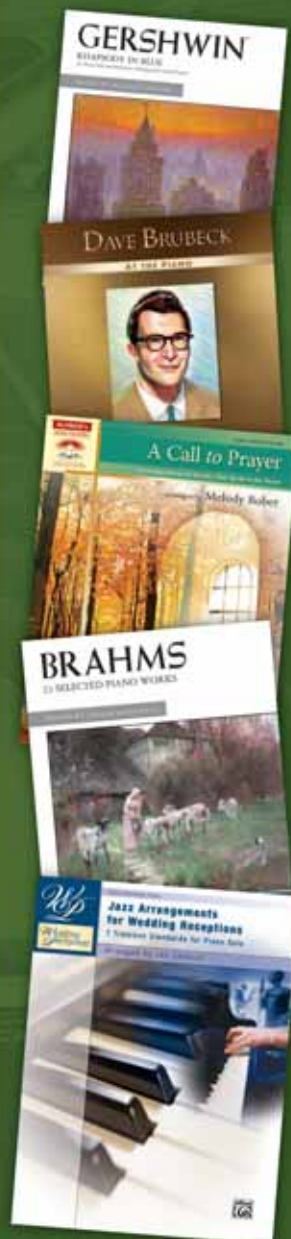
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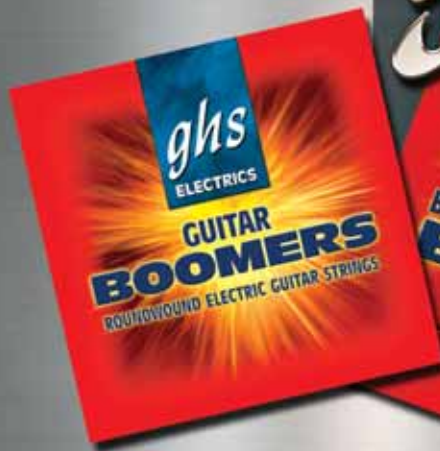
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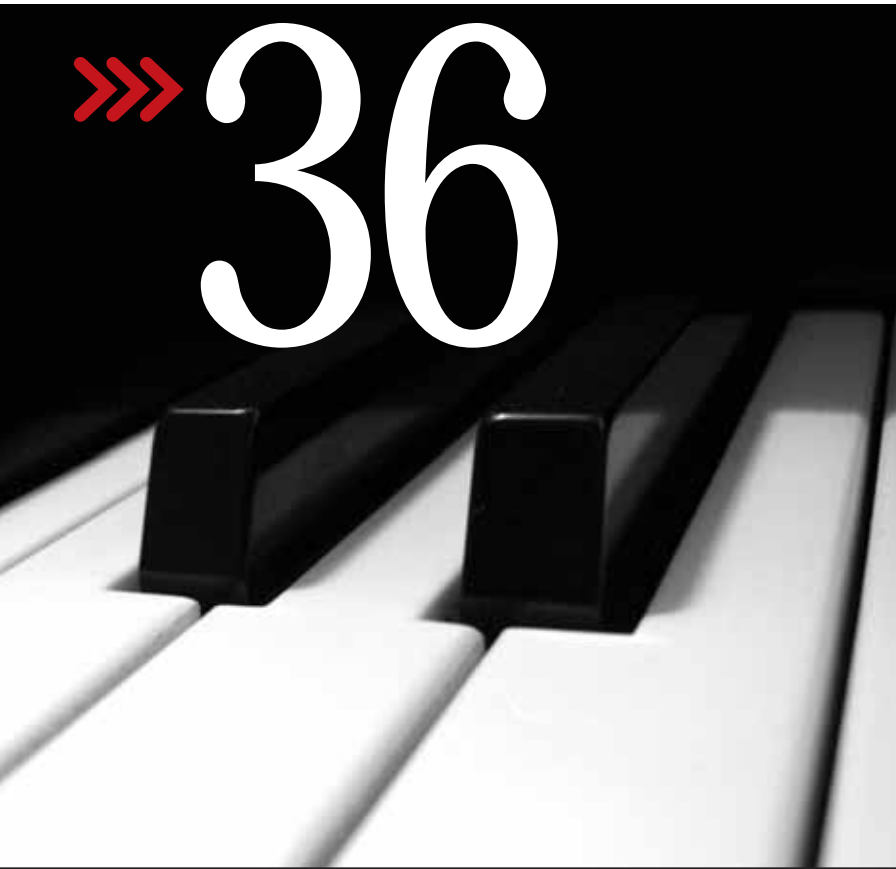
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by Warwick

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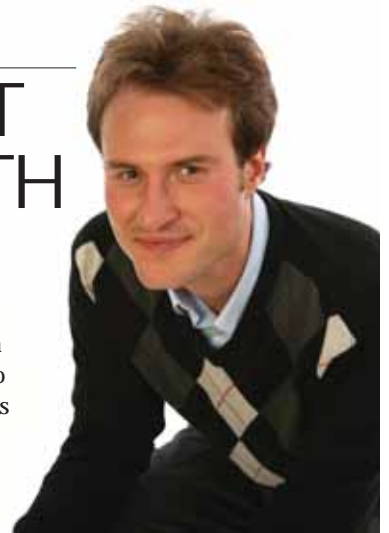
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PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

WHAT WENT WRONG WITH PIANOS?

You might have noticed that this issue of *Music Inc.*'s on the slim side. We'd prefer it to be thicker, but in a way, it's fitting. This is our annual piano issue. And here, folks, is the state of the piano industry — as reflected in our modest page count.



Over the past few years, we've watched many of our piano retail friends go from four stores to two, two stores to one, one store to none. We've seen great dealerships forced to slash half their staff just to stay in business. It's easy to blame the recession and housing slump for these woes, except the piano market was in decline long before last September's Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac debacle. Even during better times, we started hearing from dealers saying their steadfast piano promotions weren't working anymore. Something fundamental had changed.

Greg Billings, piano retail veteran and author of *Music Inc.*'s popular "The Customer Whisperer" series, may have answers. He has written this month's cover story, "What Went Wrong With the Piano Industry," and the follow-up, "The Piano Industry Recovery Plan." (The story begins on page 36.)

In the article, Billings suggests that the piano industry's current problems stem from deeper symptoms than the recession, chief among them being a lack of piano instruction in elementary schools. The article is bold, plain-spoken and guaranteed to set the stage for future debate. It's one of the most important stories ever published in this magazine.

You may not agree with Billings' outlook 100 percent of the time, but you will be bowled over by the sheer scope of his assessment. He also delivers a convincing action plan that the industry can use right now. In other words, it's exactly the shot in the arm that the piano industry needs.

And despite the doom and gloom, I'm hopeful. In early May, I spoke with Skip Daynes, owner of Daynes Music in Midvale, Utah. He'd just come off the best day in his company's 150-year history in piano retailing, bringing in \$300,000 in sales. Not surprisingly, Daynes has been taking advantage of the ideas Billings poses in "The Piano Industry Recovery Plan" for years — getting pianos into schools, connecting with influential community leaders and promoting the piano as a fun activity. He's currently excited about the potential of QRS's new PNOscan technology in showing students and consumers how easy it is to play piano.

"We show people that they can play," Daynes said. "Tomorrow, we are doing a promotion for the Utah Arts Council. We're promoting PNOscan on a vertical piano. We will have a player come and play and make this piano sound like a whole orchestra [with PNOscan]. When people get through with dinner, they're going to say, 'You got all that sound from this piano?' And we're going to say, 'Yes. Do you want to play it?' It's about creating the desire to buy something." **MI**

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LETTERS

THE FACTS ABOUT CALLING SERVICES

To Call or Not to Call?

Any chance you could further elaborate on how companies that are using automated dialing services are dealing with a state's Do Not Call list ("Investing in Tomorrow," March/April 2009)? Thanks and keep up the great work.

*Cayle Yonce
Instrumental Influence/13 Audio Visual
Sedalia, Mo.*

PM Music Phones in the Answer

As I understand it, the No-call laws are for cold calls or purchased lists. Companies doing business with particular consumers are not regulated against calling their own customers. We only use Voiceshot [automated calling service] with PM Music Center customers.

Although we primarily use Voiceshot for rental-late-pay calls, we have also used it for promoting sales and events. In fact, we just sent a Voiceshot to nearly 1,500 brass renters about an in-store Bach day. I didn't restrict the pace of calls, as I do with our late-pay calls, and the system made all 1,500 calls in 10 minutes. Isn't technology amazing?

*Michael Schaner
PM Music Center
Aurora, Ill.*

Praises From the PMC

Please accept our thanks for the marvelous article on the Percussion Marketing Council (PMC) that appeared in the February 2009 issue ("Want More Drummers?"). The coverage of the organization and its Roots of Rhythm, Percussion in the Schools and Play Drums programs is very much appreciated.

The success and growth of

the organization is very encouraging to the percussion industry, as it portrays our members' beliefs and commitments to building and creating a future for all percussion products. While the members enjoy reading about the visibility and success of the programs, there is a huge retailer base that is not aware of the PMC's efforts to grow the market. This editorial coverage in

Music Inc. certainly brought the PMC into full focus.

At the same time, we are indebted to NAMM and the NAMM Foundation for their original and ongoing support in helping the PMC achieve these goals. Their continuous support and guidance began in 1996 and has since contributed funds meant to create more percussion players through the PMC programs.

THE FTC'S LAST CALL

- Because of limitations in the jurisdiction of the Federal Trade Commission and Federal Communications Commission, **calls from or on behalf of political organizations, charities and telephone surveyors would still be permitted, as would calls from companies with which you have an existing business relationship.**
- By purchasing something from the company, you established a business relationship with the company. As a result, even **if you put your number on the National Do Not Call Registry, that company may call you for up to 18 months after your last purchase or delivery from it, or your last payment to it, unless you ask the company to not call again. If that company subsequently calls you again, it may be subject to a fine of up to \$11,000.**

Source: The National Do Not Call Registry at ftc.gov

This investment in the PMC has touched every facet of the percussion industry through our programs. Creating 100,000 new percussionists is a self-made benchmark we all work towards, which benefits the entire industry. Thank you for providing your readers this insight about our goals and achievements.

Your printed recognition of our Roots of Rhythm, Percussion in the Schools and PlayDrums Lesson Lab programs and positioning for the future will help bring our message to many audiences in the vast music products industry we have not been able to reach and inform in the past.

The Percussion Marketing Council looks forward to providing your outstanding publication continued success stories about our accomplishments, collaborations with NAMM and opportunities created for music merchants. Thank you for this great PMC coverage.

*Karl Dustman
Executive Committee
The Percussion Marketing Council*

Correction

We listed PureSound incorrectly in *The Source* (May 2009). As an affiliate of D'Addario, the correct address is: Farmingdale, N.Y. 11735. The phone number is 631-439-3300, and the fax number is 631-439-3333. *Music Inc.* regrets the error.

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Jim Pinkston Music, Gulfport, MS

Pictured: David Devaney, Jim Pinkston (owner), Derek Fountain



Jim Pinkston Music

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"Audix has been our go-to mic for over 10 years now and they've definitely helped us grow our mic business. Not only are the products great, profitable, and trouble free but the company always gives us fast, friendly service."

Sticks n Strings, Tuscon, AZ

Pictured: Chip Schnarr, Dan Hartman, Brandon Neumaier, Kane Flint, Justin Bernard, Tony Bernard

"For years we have recommended Audix OM microphones for their unsurpassed performance, exceptional gain before feedback, and rock solid durability. All I have to do is let a client try one and they're sold!"

Stage Sound, Roanoke, VA

Pictured: Don Clifton, Paul Thompson, Jeff Moore, John Thompson, Doug Thurman



Sound Stage

Gelb Music



"For 20 years Audix has consistently provided us with great products, great service, and great margins. We love the stuff!"

Gelb Music, Redwood City, CA

Pictured: David Vogel, Adam Jarvis, Kevin Jarvis (owner), Tommy LeMar, Don Frank

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RETAIL

SCOTT'S MUSIC | BY JEFF CAGLE

SURVIVING IN PIANOS

Last year, Steve Thomas learned his prime, center-court mall location would be given away to a tenant willing to pay more in rent. Thomas, president and owner of Scott's Music in Grand Forks, N.D., could've panicked given the state of the economy. Instead, he decided to sign another 10-year lease at the mall — and take on an additional 1,300 square feet of space.

"We could have just moved our whole facility to our downtown location, which we own," said Thomas, referring to the company's second store. "Being based in North Dakota, where weather is such a factor, we need to be where the people are. I knew if we went downtown, the traffic wouldn't be there.

"We were teaching 250 students private lessons [at the downtown store]. With our violins and education downtown and our pianos in the mall, we thought this was an opportunity to bring everything under one roof, and we could finally see those families that come through our store for lessons that we never see [at the mall]."

The larger, consolidated mall spot opened on Feb. 2. (The downtown building is



Scott's Music's Steve Thomas

Scott's Music consolidates, diversifies to boost retail traffic

currently being rented to a church.) It offers a larger retail area, six sizeable lesson stu-

dios, a conservatory room for grand pianos and a humidity-controlled string vault for storing the company's high-end violins and guitars.

ADDING ORCHESTRA, COMBO

Traditionally a piano dealer, Scott's Music got into string and guitar sales earlier this decade after opening an education facility in 1997.

"If you're going to teach

people, they begin to ask for those instruments," Thomas said. "And [if] you don't carry them in your store, you're driving people to your competition. We were teaching people violin lessons and then sending them down the street to the company that sold violins. It was a logical progression [to add strings and guitars]."

Thomas admitted that his guitar and stringed instrument

operation won't appeal to the boutique shopper looking for a \$50,000 viola, but he's comfortable with a limited offering of all ranges.

"We've let the customers have all the say in the music industry," he said. "We bend to them. I'm all for having the customer get what they want, but in the end, for those of us music stores who are going to survive, we're going to have to provide great service but limit the things we provide. We carry a good entry-level violin, a good mid-range violin and a good high-end violin, but I'm not going to have 35 different samples of each one. [Dealers are] going to have to have some sort of say in the matter."

COMBATTING RECESSION

In the wake of the economic downturn, Thomas has put effort into developing his instrument rental program rather than relying strictly on sales.

"When credit is tough, you don't talk about low payment plans, you talk about low-cost rental programs," he said. "In every ad we talk about low-price rental programs, and we talk about the low cost of education so that we can get people interested in music making. If they become interested, they will spend the money."

He has also re-examined people's perception of his store and reorganized merchandise accordingly.

"If the first thing customers see is a piano that's \$5,000 in a recessionary period, they're going to smile and immediately say, 'Not a chance,'" he said. "We have taken the grand pianos out of the front, and we've put in a \$1,595 Clavinova, then a \$2,195, then a \$2,795 and then an entry-level piano at \$2,995. [Customers] can walk in and see these and say, 'Well, that's maybe doable. I can afford

\$60 a month.' We're getting out and providing a lower entry point for consumers to be able to consider getting in."

Finally, Thomas said he has gone back to what he instinctively knows works, which is

'We have taken the grand pianos out of the front, and we've put in a \$1,595 Clavinova.'
— Steve Thomas, Scott's Music

getting out to the community and spreading the word about the value of music making.

"I go and press palms, and I go and do outside promotions — not selling opportunities as much as getting out at a home show and shaking hands with people and talking with them instead of waiting for them to come to me," he said. "Some will say it's the recession that's killing the piano industry. It's not; it's a lack of interest. In the last recession, the music industry didn't thrive, but it survived because people couldn't afford to go out but turned inward toward their families and did family-oriented activities. Today family-oriented activities are Nintendo Wii, not standing around the piano and singing.

"This industry has so much value. Music is something that brings people spiritually, physically and emotionally to a higher level of life. The product that we're selling has unbelievable value, and we really have to believe that and start to sing the praises of what music does for people." **MI**

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BANKRUPTCY

Stockdale Closes

Stockdale Music of Bakersfield, Calif., filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy on March 27. At press time, the store still had some customers' instruments and equipment in its building. According to Stockdale's MySpace page, the trustee plans to return all of the gear to its owners.



Wayne Barry (left) and George Quinlan Jr.

EDUCATION

Barry Gets Grant

George Quinlan Jr. — president of Quinlan & Fabish in Burr Ridge, Ill., and a NAMM board member — presented a grant check on behalf of the NAMM Foundation to drama teacher Wayne Barry this past March. The grant is aimed to help students at Barry's school, Troy Middle School in Plainfield, Ill., produce an adapted stage version of "High School Musical." The initiative, "Disney's High School Musical: The Music In You Grant Program," is a collaboration between the NAMM Foundation and the Disney Channel.

APPOINTMENT

Land at Alta Loma

Alta Loma Music of Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., recently added jazz pianist Harold Land Jr. to its teaching staff. The company is charging \$78 a month for lessons with Land.

PROMOTION

Ritmüller Gets Nod

R. Kassman of Berkeley, Calif., hosted members of the Bay Area Piano Technicians Guild on Jan. 30 to teach them about the Ritmüller piano line. The session, conducted by piano designer Lothar Thomma, featured a question-and-answer period for nearly an hour. Afterwards, attendees had a dinner with live piano music.

Music therapists listen to a presentation at the 'Empowerment Workshop'



WEST MUSIC | EVENT

MUSIC, HEALING MEET AT WEST

Twenty-four music therapists gathered at West Music's Coralville, Iowa, location in late February for the "Empowerment Workshop." Sponsored by the Iowa Chapter of Music Therapy, the day-long event attracted therapists from Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska and Missouri.

West Music's 11 board-certified music therapists and a music therapy intern conducted the workshop.

It focused on running an effective contractual business and covered expanding music therapy services; working with hospice and geriatric patients and developmentally disabled adults; establishing key centers of influence; and recreational music therapy. An afternoon roundtable discussion let therapists share their knowledge from running their own businesses.

GUITAR CENTER | EDUCATION

GC OFFERS MUSIC LESSONS

Guitar Center has entered the music lessons business with GC Studios, a lessons facility and practice space for bands in Woodland Hills, Calif. The company hosted a grand opening for the facility on April 16.

GC Studios offers lessons in guitar, bass, drums, keyboard, vocals and Pro Tools. It also features ChopShop, a program designed to help people learn how to form and be in bands. The facility has a 21-foot stage for regular workshops and clinics, as well as jam nights. Lesson studios range from 350 to 550 square feet and are acoustically treated by Auralex.

According to GC Studios' Web site, its curriculum was co-created with music publisher Hal Leonard. gcstudios.com

GC rolls out its first entry into music instruction with GC Studios

TODD TRENT'S DRUM OASIS | OPENING

Trent Unveils Drum Oasis

Ontario Music in Ontario, Calif., recently converted its drum department into an all-out, full-service drum specialty shop. The brainchild of drum industry veteran and Ontario Music President Todd Trent, the new operation has been named Todd Trent's Drum Oasis. It features all the major lines, knowledgeable staff and a range of services, including rentals, instruction, repairs and restoration. A grand-opening celebration for the shop was held in March.

Trent served in various capacities at Ludwig Drum from 1983 until 2008, at which point he returned to Ontario Music, where he began his career in the music industry in 1979.

"We've really expanded the drum department," Trent said. "We've doubled its size. It rivals any normal-size chain store's department.



Todd Trent (second from right) with drummers (from left) Frankie Banali, Jon 'Bermuda' Schwartz and Corey Miller

So we're really starting to push it."

The grand opening featured a sale, cymbal polishing service and drum clinic with Frankie Banali of Quiet Riot.



A Boys & Girls Club of Palm Beach County

KRETZER PIANO | OUTREACH

Kretzer Saves the Music

Kretzer Piano of West Palm Beach, Fla., launched a musical instrument drive for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County in late March.

The company collected gently used keyboards, pianos, violins, drums, flutes, trombones, clarinets and guitars. The drive ran through May.

Kretzer is also offering music lessons to kids at the Boys & Girls Clubs. The drive aims to give kids instruments to use for practice.

"Playing an instrument, studies show, provides academic, self-confidence and even wellness benefits," said Kathi Kretzer, president of Kretzer Piano. "We developed this program, in conjunction with our friends at Yamaha Corp. of America, because we want to give every child with an interest in playing a musical instrument the opportunity to do so."

CLINICS & APPEARANCES

Alvas Music in San Pedro, Calif., hosted an all-day charity benefit performance with guitarist Carl Verheyen on April 25. It was co-sponsored by Vox.

Verheyen offered a clinic and live show, and Vox reps were on hand to demo the company's products.



Carl Verheyen

In related news, Vox also hosted JamVox Nights in late April and early May at several U.S. music dealers. These free "guitaraoke" events let guitarists try out the JamVox guitar entertainment/training system.



Jeff Coffin

Saxophonist Jeff Coffin stopped by Cascio Interstate Music in New Berlin, Wis., for a live performance clinic. He played for hundreds of onlookers on Cascio's Main Stage. The event

was held on Feb. 14 and co-sponsored by Yamaha.

Guitar Center held clinics with guitar amp designer Reinhold Bogner at its New York and Hollywood, Calif., locations on April 16 and April 23, respectively. The events were sponsored by Line 6 and held as part of GC's educational series, Guitar Center Sessions.

Hudson Music teamed up with drummer Tommy Igoe to present the Groove Essentials Clinic Tour in April. The tour stopped by six North American music product retailers, including Hauer Music, Drums2go, Just Drums, Campbells Morell Music, Sam Ash Music and Long Island Drum Center.

Jackson launched its Jackson Bloodline Tour on April 23 at Leitz Music in Fort Walton Beach, Fla. The tour, which runs through late June, will hit more than 10 music retailers nationwide. It features "Metal Master Classes" with Chris Cannella, Jackson's product manager and artist relations rep.

To celebrate its 85th anniversary, Sam Ash Music is hosting a series of celebrity appearances at multiple locations. Co-hosted by Gibson and Epiphone, these events run through May 29. One was a special guest appearance by Les Paul himself at Sam Ash's Paramus, N.J., location on April 28. It celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Gibson Les Paul guitar model.

Guitarist Adrian Belew debuted his Parker Adrian Belew Signature model guitar at Sweetwater in Fort Wayne, Ind. He offered a special presentation and concert for Sweetwater's sales staff, along with a free public concert at the company's Performance Theatre.



Adrian Belew

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SUPPLY

MACKIE | BY JENNY DOMINE

RUNNING STRONG

Loud Technologies has had a rough road lately. First, its supply chain was disrupted last December when one of its contract manufacturers ceased operations. Then Loud voluntarily delisted from the NASDAQ in January and fought off unfounded bankruptcy rumors. However, it remains undeterred and committed to its core markets and brands, including Mackie, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. This milestone, coupled with promotional events and new products, has given Loud and Mackie some good news worth celebrating.

CELEBRATING RETAILERS

"There will be cake and balloons, for sure," said John Boudreau, MI brand group vice president for Mackie. "But we plan to celebrate by doing what got us here."

Mackie got its start in 1989 when founder Greg Mackie saw a need for mixers to match the high-quality, affordable electronic instruments entering the market. The company's LM-1602 line made the brand synonymous with mixers. Customers could walk into a music store, ask for a "Shure and a Mackie" and the clerk would know what they wanted.



"Independent retailers were key to building the Mackie brand and continue to be an important part of our distribution," Boudreau said.

Honoring its tradition of quality, affordability and sellability, Mackie recently released the new HD1531 and HD1521 high-definition powered loudspeakers. Mackie has also launched a Web initiative, "Buy It Now," which will let end-users find local dealers through a zip code search at mackie.com.

"It allows smaller dealers to compete alongside larger ones through the click-to-buy online

Mackie's 20th anniversary means fun promotions, serious gear

function," Boudreau said, "And a very simple Web interface that we call Dealernet makes it easy for dealers to update their storefront and Web site information."

For the physical store, Mackie will offer P.O.P.s that serve as silent salesmen directly out of

the box. The company has also partnered with the John Lennon Education Tour Bus to co-host clinics and VIP customer tours at retail locations.

"We're also investing in our 'Musicians' Stimulus Package' that includes aggressive manufacturer rebates to drive sell-through," Boudreau said.

CELEBRATING MACKOIDS

The Mackie brand prides itself on walking the line between intense professionalism and unconventional silliness. That combination is at the core of its offbeat marketing and customer loyalty. Mackie fans even have a name: Mackoids. And for the 20th anniversary, Mackie is shining the spotlight on them.

"We have some fun stuff planned, like our '20 Years Running' photo/video contest," Boudreau said. "We've heard some great stories involving Mackoids and their gear, from beer-drenched mixers that still perform to a guy in Africa that has the world's largest collection of Mackie swag."

The winning Mackoid will receive a pair of new HD series powered loudspeakers and a 1604-VLZ3 compact mixer.

"After all, we wouldn't be here without our devoted gear friends," Boudreau said. "Did I mention there will be cake?" **MI**



MUSIKMESSE | SHOWS

MESSE STAYS THE COURSE

The Musikmesse and Prolight and Sound 2009 trade fair ran from April 1–4 and showed a 1-percent increase in the number of visitors, as compared to last year's show.

"This year's edition of Musikmesse and Prolight and Sound could not have been better, as shown by the large number of exhibitors — 1,560 at the Musikmesse and 850 at Prolight and Sound," said Detlef Braun, a board of management member for Messe Frankfurt.

"Many dealers have told us that the springtime awakening of the musical instrument sector at the Musikmesse will motivate the sector and ensure good business until well into the autumn business season." [{musikmesse.com}](http://musikmesse.com)



LEGAL | PRICING

Minimum Pricing Ban

According to an April 28 *Wall Street Journal* article, Maryland has passed a law that prohibits manufacturers from requiring retailers to charge minimum prices for their goods. It will take effect on Oct. 1.

Under the new state law, retailers in Maryland will be able to sue manufacturers that impose minimum pricing agreements. The law also covers transactions in which Maryland consumers buy goods on the Internet.

The legislation is one of several recent efforts to bypass the Supreme Court's 2007 decision that no longer made minimum price agreements automatically illegal under federal antitrust laws.

"We're making it clear to the judges in this state that Maryland



was not adopting the Supreme Court decision," said state Sen. Brian Frosh, who introduced the bill.

[{online.wsj.com}](http://online.wsj.com)

SHOWS

AES Booth Packages

In a move to provide exhibitors with a cost-effective exhibit solution at the 127th Audio Engineering Society (AES) convention, AES will offer turnkey booth package options for this year's exhibit floor. 2009 pricing has also been frozen at 2007 rates. The 127th AES convention will take place from Oct. 9–12 in New York. [{aes.org}](http://aes.org)

CHARITY

Gibson Teams With Oprah

The Gibson Foundation, the philanthropic division of Gibson Guitar, has announced a five-year commitment to work with the music department at the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa through 2012. The foundation will provide instruments and financial support to the school's music program. [{gibsonfoundation.org}](http://gibsonfoundation.org)



DISTRIBUTION

RS Berkeley Adds Meisel, Mozart

Erwin Otto Stringed Instruments, a division of RS Berkeley Musical Instruments in Scotch Plains, N.J., has added Meisel and Mozart stringed instruments to its product lines.

The Meisel 6109 violin and 7294 viola series will remain the same instruments Meisel had previously sold. There will be new Mozart models, as well as the Meisel Spitfire four- and five- string electric violins. [{rsberkeley.com}](http://rsberkeley.com)

ONLINE

Auralex Joins Amazon.com

Auralex Acoustics' acoustical treatments are now available through Amazon.com.

"This agreement gives us an avenue to further expand Auralex's brand awareness and availability throughout the consumer market," said Dave Paxton, director of operations at Auralex Acoustics. "Auralex is moving closer to becoming a globally recognized brand." [{auralex.com}](http://auralex.com)





PARTNERSHIP

Flaxwood Goes Global

IBCT Trading is the new international sales arm of Finland-based Flaxwood Guitars. IBCT will manage sales and distribution throughout the world except for North America, which is handled through Flaxwood's own U.S. subsidiary, Flaxwood USA. IBCT will seek international distribution partners for these instruments. flaxwood.com

GRANTS

\$600K Award to Moogseum

The Buncombe County Tourism Product Development Authority has awarded a \$600,000 grant to The Bob Moog Foundation for the capital costs involved in building the Moogseum in Asheville, N.C. The funding will be dispersed when construction is expected to begin in 2012. moogfoundation.org

CLINICS

Fender Shred-ology

Fender and Squire signature guitarist John 5 hit the road for a 14-date series of in-store shred-ology clinics in May.



An official Fender University faculty member, John 5 demonstrated his techniques, broke down his signature gear, engaged in audience Q&A sessions, autographed posters and performed songs from his 2008 solo album, *Requiem*. fender.com

PROMOTION

Roland Connects to Free Download

The FG Connects project is now available on the Roland U.S. Web site. This free download provides new content for Roland's Fantom-G owners. It includes new rhythm patterns, rhythm kits, chord memories and edits of popular arpeggio phrases.

"The FG Connects download gives Fantom-G owners more tools to express their creativity," said Product Marketing Manager Vince Ladauca. rolandus.com

MUSEUM OF MAKING MUSIC | EXHIBIT

Museum Turns ON!

On April 24, the Museum of Making Music opened its exhibit "ON! The Beginnings of the Electric Sound Generation." The exhibition displays early electrified instruments from 1900 to 1965, including iconic electric and electro-acoustic guitars;

lesser-known electric instruments, such as banjos, violins, basses, keyboards, amplifiers and effects pedals; and unusual applications of electrification, such as the electric zither. The exhibit will run through March 31, 2010. museumofmakingmusic.org

APPOINTMENTS

Bradley Named Alfred's COO

As the new chief operating officer at Alfred Publishing, Bryan Bradley said he intends to grow the vitality of the organization.

"It is a great opportunity," Bradley said. "The music industry is in the middle of massive changes across the board, and Alfred is well positioned to be at the forefront. I'm excited to be a part of it."



Bryan Bradley

American Music & Sound has appointed Ralph Goldheim as its national sales manager for Focusrite and Novation products in the United States.

D'Addario has promoted David Via to vice president of sales and marketing.

Former Guitar Center CEO Larry Thomas has joined the Fender board of directors and will head The Fender Music Foundation.



>>> Steve Dachroeden

Hanser Music Group has named Steve Dachroeden as artist relations director for all of the company's brands.

Lab.gruppen has named Ulf Larson as its new CEO, effective July 1.

Rodgers Instruments has appointed Rick Anderson as sales manager, Roy Hanson as product support manager and Jennifer Brandon as marketing services manager.

St. Louis Music has named Jim

Eaton vice president of Knilling and orchestral sales, Devin Pelton as vice president of Blessing and educational sales, and Rich Dumstorff as vice president of combo product and inside sales.



>>> Jim Eaton (left) and Rich Dumstorff

Wyman Piano has appointed Lowell Simpson and Doug Thiel as regional sales managers.



>>> Lowell Simpson

Yamaha Corp. of America's Keyboard Division has appointed Mark Barrett and Moses Levy as district sales managers. It has also named David Pocock as its new academic and institutional sales representative.

HAL LEONARD | E-MAIL

Hal Goes Shopping With Order Referral Program

Hal Leonard has unveiled the Order Referral Program, which lets customers browse and buy more than 100,000-plus publications online.

Two programs are available to accommodate both traditional and e-commerce dealers. The Preferred Retailer Ordering (PRO) program lets

any dealer with a physical store and a valid e-mail address fulfill orders from the Hal Leonard Web site. Retailers must subscribe to at least two Hal

Leonard premium new-issue categories to qualify. The Full Line Internet Provider (FLIP) program is designed for online retailers. (halleonard.com)



Orange's Cliff Cooper (left) and Damon Waller

ORANGE, G7TH | AWARDS

ROYAL RECOGNITION

Orange Music Electronic has been awarded, for the second time in three years, the Queens Award for Enterprise: International Trade.

This honor was approved by England's Queen Elizabeth II after the country's prime minister recommended Orange. The company has doubled its export earnings over three years and sells nearly 80 percent of its products to more than 50 countries.

CROWNED CAPOS

U.K. capo company G7th was also honored with the 2009 Queens Award for Enterprise: International Trade. G7th's exports have doubled over two years, and 85 percent of G7th's production is now exported to 30 countries. Its sales are projected to increase by 30 percent this year despite the economic downturn. (orangeamps.com; g7th.com)



Toca's proud to introduce the new additions to its very popular Djembe family.

Freestyle Mechanically Tuned Djembes in Antique Silver & Gold

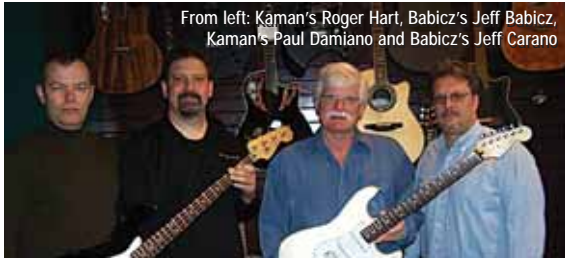
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- New extended collar hoop for greater tuning range
- Hand painted and decorated
- Patented

Pro Africa & Mali Art Rope Tuned Djembes

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- Mali Art djembe features 4 hand painted African symbols around the base of the drum

For more information on djembes other additions to our family, visit our newly designed Website.

tocalpercussion.com
myspace.com/tocalpercussion
 ©2009 Toca Percussion



From left: Kaman's Roger Hart, Babicz's Jeff Babicz, Kaman's Paul Damiano and Babicz's Jeff Carano

KAMAN MUSIC | PARTNERSHIP

FULL CONTACT DISTRIBUTION

Kaman Music has formed an agreement to serve as the exclusive distributor to North America and Latin America for the new Full Contact Hardware by Babicz Design. Full Contact is a bridge saddle system for solid body electric guitars and basses. The patent-pending technology will also be available for license for aftermarket and OEM products. {kamanmusic.com}

TRIBUTE

Thank you for your contributions to the music industry. You will be missed.

⊕ Dennis Harburn

Dennis Harburn, the managing director of Shure U.K. distribution, recently passed away. He was 59.

Harburn joined Shure, now located in Niles, Ill., in 1972. He rose through the ranks, serving as assistant sales manager, sales manager and sales director before being named managing director in 2000.

"His professionalism and his personality will be missed by all of us," said Markus Winkler, managing director of Shure's Europe, Middle East and Africa business unit.

Harburn is survived by his wife, Nicky, and their three children.



⊕ Harry Benson

Harry Benson, former president of William Lewis and Sons Violin, passed away on April 9. He was 98.

Benson began working with the company in 1926 when he was a 15 years old. Over the years, he worked his way to becoming president and played a key role in the company's merger with Chicago Musical Instruments. He is survived by his wife of 74 years, Wilma.

⊕ Edmond Bauthier

Edmond Bauthier, vice president of international sales for Pro-Mark and Aquarian, passed away on Feb. 4.

Bauthier was a 25-year veteran of the music industry. This included four years as the president of Italian cymbal-maker Tosco. In 1985, he joined Sabian as its vice president of sales. He held this position until 1997.



Kyser + Klassics

K-Lever

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Alternate guitar tunings are catching on fast. That's why we decided to go all out and bring you four new tools to create sounds you never thought possible. The K-lever is a partial capo with the ability to press down the uncapoed string/strings whenever you want. All you have to do is press the lever... It's just that easy.

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What's Your Color?
WWW.KYSERMUSICAL.COM

WEBNEWS

Interactive Sites

Five supplier Web sites with new sights, sounds and community-based content

{shermusic.com}

Sher Music's Web site now offers a series of playlists containing 200 contemporary jazz tunes that customers can listen to for free. New playlists will be added every month or two.

{facebook.com}

Jupiter Band Instruments' brands are now on Facebook. Brand pages for Azumi Flutes, Jupiter XO, Jupiter Quantum Marching Brass, Majestic and Mapex Percussion include artist videos, product information and events. Facebook groups for Jupiter woodwinds and brass and the Quantum Field and Marching Percussion brand are also active on the site.

**{emgpickups.com}**

EMG's new, streamlined Web site is more interactive with EMG TV. It will air live performances, technical tips and tricks.

{apps.facebook.com/harmonize}

Yamaha Corp. of America, Band & Orchestral Division, has launched Harmonize, a new Facebook application that gives subscribers the ability to connect with other instrumentalists worldwide.

**{lifewayworship.com}**

A resource for houses of worship, Life Way's new SongMap lets users choose specific sections of songs in the keys they prefer and download sheet music and audio files that correspond to the custom arrangement.

YAMAHA | VENUES

Yamaha at the Blue Note

The original Blue Note Jazz Club in New York City has selected a 7-foot, 6-inch Yamaha Concert Collection grand as its official piano.

"I'm thrilled we were able to ful-

fill the venue's need," said Chris Gero, vice president of Yamaha artist affairs. "We consider it an honor that they chose Yamaha as their official house piano." yamaha.com

Is this what your cash flow feels like?

Everyone knows the feeling. You invest in product for back to school or for the holiday season and then hope to see a revenue stream before all the bills pile up. It's a vicious cycle.



At DANSR we understand and can provide a wide array of financing plans that can put your payments in your cash flow season. Of course, great financing plans wouldn't be much use to you if we didn't supply world-class products like Vandoren reeds and mouthpieces and Denis Wick mouthpieces and mutes. With great products and flexible, sensible ways to manage ordering and paying, DANSR can make sure every season is a cash flow season.

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NAMM[®] News

MAY 2009

"We're Going After the Freeway..."

NAMM Battles on All Fronts for Music Education

Successful music programs and empowered music teachers lead to a vibrant music industry. NAMM and our Members work daily to keep this important cause top-of-mind with parents, elected officials and the media.

Note from Joe

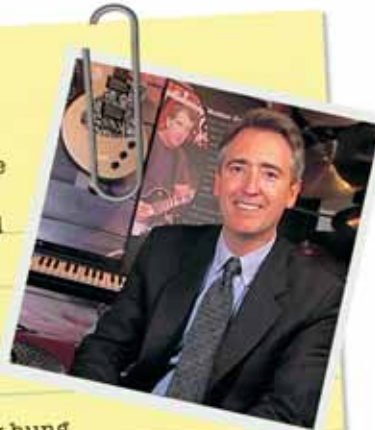
Music Educators—The Key to Our Future

My earliest memories as a NAMM Retail Member were of servicing the music teachers in the Sacramento School District. I learned early on that great teachers resulted in great music programs, and we were lucky to have some of the best. We had a close relationship with most all of them; they hung out in the store on "official school business" and were members of our musical Cheers Bar, "where everyone knew your name." By helping them successfully do their job, we saw a steady stream of new music makers and new business. It was a win-win situation and demonstrated how important music educators were to the health of our industry.

NAMM and our Members have worked side by side with music educators for over a century in a never-ending job of fighting to keep music programs in our schools. We've partnered with MENC, the PTA, the National School Board Association, MAC, NASMD and many, many others. We've lobbied federal and state government, and funded and promoted research that links music with a host of educational benefits. These efforts have resulted in strong programs that gave millions of children the opportunity to study music. And those efforts—led by your association—continue each and every day.

Our challenge is convincing more industry members to become active partners in supporting music teachers and music education. Gallup polls show that the majority of music makers got their start in a school music program. No matter what your business category, most likely your customers can trace their musical experiences back to a quality music teacher. If we want a vibrant, thriving industry, it is important to keep planting those seeds and supporting music educators everywhere! Please go to www.supportmusic.com to learn how you can get involved today.

Joe Lamond
NAMM President/CEO



HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN GET INVOLVED:

FEDERAL ACTION



NAMM's First Virtual Fly-in, May 12

- **Tune in** to NAMM's first "Virtual Fly-in" to show your support for music education advocacy efforts.
- **Get** briefings about music education policy via live Webcast from Washington, D.C. Viewable at www.namm.org on May 12.
- **Contact** your congressional office to urge their commitment for music education throughout the year. Let your voices be heard!
- **Help** protect music education for all children. Now and in the future, our industry will be there to serve them as lifelong music makers and tomorrow's leaders.

STATE ACTION



Connect with supportmusic.com

- **Access** the many valuable tools provided by NAMM in partnership with MENC.
You can use:
 - advocacy guides
 - downloadable fliers
 - video PSAs to run in your store
 - instrument luggage tags
 - "Why Play Music?" fliers
 - music research DVDs
- **Fact:** Almost 1 million advocacy materials have been distributed, mostly to NAMM Members who work with their communities to keep music education strong.



LOCAL ACTION

Rocking Local Opportunities— While Reaching Your District School Boards!

- **Encourage** your local schools to take part in the “Best Communities for Music Education in America” survey, which identifies schools committed to music education and creates positive media attention.
- **Check out** what the NAMM Foundation can do for your community—efforts like the “Disney’s *High School Musical: The Music in You* Grant Program” enables middle and high schools across the United States to put on their own school stage production.
- **Use** local advocacy action alerts posted on www.supportmusic.com, which provide you with easy-to-send e-mail alerts on topics important to saving and protecting our school music programs. These open the lines of communication with your local politicians. Encourage your customers to log on too!



VISIT SUPPORTMUSIC.COM TODAY—LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!!

As a NAMM Member, you are an important link to music education in your community. Supportmusic.com is your easy-to-access portal to all the materials you need to advocate for school music. Visit www.supportmusic.com today, and get the word out locally.



For more information please visit www.namm.org/summer



IDEAS

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ASK ALAN | BY ALAN FRIEDMAN

BANKRUPTCY IS RARELY THE ANSWER

Here's the blatantly obvious: The U.S. economy is struggling, and in 2008, U.S. retailers had their worst holiday season in 35 years. The Federal Government has reported that we've been in a recession since December 2007. No kidding.

But everything is relative. I don't think we're entering another Great Depression, as there are governmental systems and financial tools to prevent that. President Obama is attempting to improve our monetary and fiscal policies by bringing back the financial leaders who helped get us out of the recession in the early '90s. And the Federal Reserve has helped small- and medium-sized businesses by aggressively lowering the Fed Funds Rate over the past year and a half. Frankly, these measures needed to be taken, given the financial failure of several major lending institutions and the stock market's drop.

But the rate cuts and bailouts, in my opinion, won't be enough to stop the down-



ward spiral in the short-term. There will be more retail store closings, more layoffs and probably increased litigation due to loan defaults, fraudulent financial statements and bad investment advice. These troubles, coupled with people buying less or not buying at all, could keep our economy down for at least another year. But as with all bad economies that force out the weak, those who can hold on by improving their business operations and modifying or even overhauling their business models will flourish when our economy turns around. And it

will turn around.

So what can we do now? Even if we're able to reinvent ourselves over the next year, we probably need more capital, bank loans and/or supplier credit to get through the dark days ahead. These factors are causing many small business owners to freak out and jump to the conclusion that filing for bankruptcy is their only answer. This is misguided. I want to offer three things to consider before resorting to declaring bankruptcy — potentially the biggest mistake you could make.

Fact: Stress and worry don't make anything better, only worse. If you're like most small business owners, you're worried about running out of money to pay your employees on time. So you start thinking about solutions, and when answers don't come easily, you start asking yourself a million questions.

Is bankruptcy the right answer? Is your attorney and/or accountant giving the right advice? Should you pay payroll taxes before paying bank loans? What happens

when the Internal Revenue Service or another taxing authority padlocks the door? Should you tell vendors what's really going on with your cash flow and inability to pay them? Will they stop shipping to you?

The problem with worrying about all of these issues is that it's taking away time you could be spending on saving your company. It's a vicious cycle — the worrying stops you from being productive, which causes more things to worry about. This, in turn, causes your business to decline further, which causes even more worry and less action. So stop worrying!

Fact: Bankruptcy lawyers have some answers but not all of them. I once heard a client in Texas call bankruptcy lawyers "buzzards in three-piece suits." Of the companies that file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, only one in 10 survives the process, and the one lucky company survives because it has a ton of cash.

But as you might guess, most companies that file for Chapter 11 don't have much cash, and what little they have

usually gets spent on attorney fees. With little cash, the business owner becomes tired of fighting creditors every day. Within the next few months, the company runs out of cash completely. The creditors' attorney, who the bankrupt company also has to pay for, then files a motion to convert the Chapter 11 into a Chapter 7 liquidation bankruptcy. The judge has no choice but to order the company's liquidation, as it has no cash in the bank.

But that's not all. Most small business owners have personally guaranteed some of the corporate debts, such as bank loans and vendor credit lines. So, angry bankers, creditors and investors sue the business owner until he or she has no choice but to file personal

bankruptcy. The moral of this story: Filing Chapter 11 is seldom the best choice.

Fact: Innocent mistakes often kill troubled companies. You're probably not an expert in crisis management, so you're certain to make honest but ultimately dumb mistakes while trying to bring your business above water. Do you know what to do, for instance, when a sheriff seizes office equipment or vehicles you're leasing? The bank calls your loan? You can't make the rent payment? The IRS padlocks your door? You're out of cash after depositing a big customer check? A creditor is asking you to make good on your personal guarantee? Your primary vendor won't ship you any more product and is now suing you for payment?

You can imagine all the problems for which you don't have answers. Unfortunately, when you decide wrong, you could get yourself in worse trouble and, ultimately, have to shut your doors and pay creditors out of your own pocket.

Now, you need to know who to call *before* the wolves start knocking at your door. Do call your corporate lawyer, your accountant, your banker and, yes, the credit managers of your largest suppliers for their advice and help. While it's always better to contact these people before you're in the thick of a cash-flow crisis, don't stick your head in the sand, even if you're in over your head. (That's the worst thing you can do.) You'd be surprised how much these people want to help

you. They often need your business to survive, too.

Stop worrying about things beyond your control. Don't immediately jump to the bankruptcy option when times get tough. Start seeking help for financial matters beyond your knowledge and experience. As my dad used to tell me, "What we all want in life is to be happy. Happiness comes from good judgment. Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from making mistakes." My addendum to my father's advice: While you're learning from the mistakes you're bound to make, at least try not to make big ones. **MI**

Alan Friedman, CPA, provides accounting and financial services to music industry clients. He is a frequent speaker at NAMM U. seminars and can be reached at 860-677-9191 or alan@fkco.com. Visit his Web site at fkco.com.

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THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Where's 'Piano Hero?'

Guitar *Hero* and *Rock Band* video games have had a monumental influence on our culture's awareness of playing guitar and drums. Why not apply this to pianos and keyboards? "Living On A Prayer," "Smoke On The Water" and "Won't Get Fooled Again" have keyboard parts, so what's the problem?

At Vans Warped Tour 2007, I spoke with kids who quit playing piano because they said it was boring, even after four years of lessons. I asked them if they wanted to learn to play like the pro keyboardists on stage. "Hell, yeah!" they said.

Over the years, we've changed the way we teach guitar but not the way we teach piano. Guitar methods now come with play-along CDs; feature famous rock songs; and show chords, notes and tablature. However, most of us teach piano the way my 90-year-old mom learned it with method, theory and scale books. I recently visited a high school keyboard lab and watched the World War II teaching approach keep boring piano lessons alive and well. The kids hated the class.

THE RIGHT METHOD FOR THE RIGHT STUDENT

The traditional method still works for the beginning elementary school kid, but what about the *Guitar Hero*-playing age group? And what about the adult who wants to play for fun?

At the recent National Association of School Music Dealers convention in Tucson, Ariz., a guitarist friend of

mine asked about taking piano lessons for fun but wasn't interested in taking "traditional" lessons. I was stumped. We can teach people how to play guitar for fun but not piano? Doesn't every method start with five fingers and the five white notes? So what difference does the musical content make? Why can't we

teach piano and keyboards the same way we teach guitar?

THE RIGHT STAFF, BOOKS

The *Piano Hero* video game concept can breathe new life into your music lesson program and create new music makers. But you need to get students up and running fast. Do you have teachers with traditional training who play keyboards in bands or worship groups? These teachers are your best bet. A staff of classical pianists probably won't buy this concept. You need teachers who can teach both sides of the street.

You also need to have a method book for this alternative piano student.

The traditional books won't cut it. Check out the Hal Leonard FastTrack series. These books get students playing with a CD and use classic rock songs.

HOW TO MARKET 'PIANO HERO'

Where can we market this concept? Junior high and high school piano classes are a good place to start. One of your teachers could offer a weekly how-to clinic to a class. The school's piano teacher is probably a band or choir director who got stuck teaching piano and might welcome the outside resource. Help school teachers by introducing fun materials they may not have known existed. Show students that piano is fun, and pick up some new lesson sign-ups along the way.

THE RIGHT AND WRONG LESSONS

I know arguments about the right and wrong way to teach will surface with a *Piano Hero* teaching method. So, how do I know this will work? In 1964, I wanted to play piano in a rock band. Luckily, I ran into a jazz organ player who gave me lessons the wrong way. I played keyboards all through college to pay for my trumpet degree. I also see in my own teaching how wrong can often be right. **MI**

Pete Gamber is the owner of Alta Loma Music in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. He welcomes questions and comments at pete@altalomamusic.com.



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INDEPENDENT RETAIL | BY TED ESCHLIMAN

Innovations With Impact

PBS's "Nightly Business Report" recently published an intriguing list, "The Top 30 Innovations." It went through 30 technological developments that changed our lives and businesses since the program's 1979 premier. Since I've been in music retail for 29 of those 30 years, I wanted to offer a condensed list of the top five innovations that have affected music retail, particularly independent retail.

Toll-free telephone numbers. You might recall the days prior to 1980 when calling Grandma on her birthday cost a morning's salary. It was a considerable disincentive for interstate commerce. So when 800 numbers became widespread, calling around to price shop took on a much broader dimension. I recall being a college student and hearing discussions around campus about new places to call (for free) to get "warehouse pricing" on a professional model trombone.

FedEx and UPS shipping efficiencies. Effective shipping exploded in the '80s with the competitive energies of UPS, RPS and FedEx for relatively inexpensive, immediate goods transportation. You no longer had to wait for the Pony Express (or the U.S. Postal Service) to ship product. We used these services routinely as retailers, but their widespread use among consumers also diluted our role as middlemen. Last month, a mandolin builder in Idaho sent me an instrument from his bench on Thursday at noon. It got to my shipping room in Nebraska before 10:00 the next morning — at a nominal percentage of the mandolin's purchase price.

Specialty music print publications. We take for granted the gamut of consumer music periodicals, but I recall when *Modern Drummer* and *Guitar Player* were more niche than mainstream. The explosion of print technologies, mass distribution and specialty interest (*Celtic String Musician*, anyone?) has taken the exchange of niche information once monopolized by the local music dealer to the masses. Even prior to the cyber highway, customers had

become equipped with full-color pictures and the latest manufacturer news.

Bar coding (computerized inventory). In the retail industry, handwritten tickets are tantamount to keeping the day's cash deposits in old socks. The Stone Ages are behind us — except when the power goes out. We are now fated to keep our inventories and daily accounting computerized. Auto-replenish reports are standard and affordable. Never before has keeping inventory tight and restocking "just in time" been more effective.

The Internet. (Duh.) Consumers' opportunity to acquire information

now seems to undermine our role in the supply chain. Manufacturer Web sites, list-serves, and domestic and international access to competitive storefronts threaten to subvert our mission of bringing goods to customers. The trade off: We have new ways and methods to "reach out and touch" customers with e-blasts, cyber-advertising and video demos, all at unprecedented low advertising costs.

These developments might be misconstrued as a menace to businesses, but smarter dealers have exploited these advances rather than let themselves be victimized by them. Toll-free numbers let us market to other ends of the state, not to mention across the nation. The shipping industry has made it possible to redraw local trade boundaries. Specialty print creates an educated (and preconditioned) customer, meaning less selling and more providing. Computerized inventory offers the opportunity to be more business-like, virtually eliminating inventory holes. The Internet has freed us from exploitative *Yellow Pages* advertising and mainstream media costs. Change can be a good thing. **MI**

Got an addition to the list? E-mail tede@dietzmusic.com or the *Music Inc.* editors at editor@musicincmag.com.

Ted Eschliman is a 29-year veteran of music retail and co-owner of Dietze Music in Southeast Nebraska. Mel Bay published his book, *Getting Into Jazz Mandolin*.



The five most influential innovations to affect music retail in the last 30 years

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THE CUSTOMER CONNECTION | BY RAVI

Virtual Networking

Summer can be tough in any economy, but this one might just be the pits. A cyber presence can help pick up slack when floor traffic drops off. A store's Web site is its home base online, but social networks can be more effective and certainly cheaper than a *Yellow Pages* or local newspaper ad. Major networks, such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, enable you to hit the cyber streets and pal around with existing customers and "friends." However, you can also provide a virtual in-store experience by creating your own social network.

Consumers are scaling back and reluctant to burn gasoline to shop brick-and-mortar, but your customers and their friends can still "hang out" in your store. A store-branded social network enables them to do product and service reconnaissance under your roof. They can share opinions on inventory, teachers and policies. Sound dangerous? Only if you're not doing your job. Nothing is more valuable than customers endorsing your products and services. Not to mention a social network gives you the ability to track their opinions.

GETTING NETWORKED

Ning (ning.com) makes it easy to create social networks for free. It takes time to organize one intelligently, so first explore others to understand the tools and potential uses. For example, Graph Tech has built a comprehensive social network specifically for artists. Official endorsers and

players of all levels can discuss guitar products at graphtech.me.

Incorporating a discussion board encourages customers to review products and policies. They can express themselves and provide you with valuable feedback. A general discussion category for community events serves as a way for customers to post fliers about their local gigs digitally.

How about creating a separate group — a members-only club — for each teacher? It could resolve scheduling issues and enforce a no-cancellation/no-makeup-lesson policy by letting students ask their group members to swap lesson times. That would ease rescheduling for students, teachers and lesson coordinators.

You could also establish groups for your different brands. DigiTech users might like to debate pedal settings, and Martin guitar fans could compare notes on vintages. Alternatively, keep it broad by having one group per instrument.

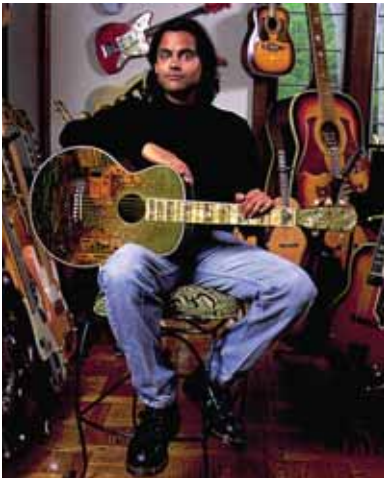
BEYOND BUSINESS

The most functional social networks stretch into common interests. I discovered the value of this five years ago when I couldn't conduct business as usual. My mother was ill, and I spent months in the hospital coordinating her care instead of touring. My career came to a standstill, and my sizable e-mail list became stagnant. I started sending out e-mails bimonthly about the lack of social conscience in corporate America. (I guess health-care and society in general were getting to me!) I encouraged recipients to respond by e-mail and posted their responses online at cultureofintegrity.org.

Interestingly, I heard from list members who hadn't been responsive before. Web traffic and sales increased, and most important, I stayed relevant to customers. It eventually segued into my first monthly magazine column.

Think of your Web site as the physical store and a social network as the human interaction on the floor — one doesn't replace the other. Maintain profiles on the major networks to draw people to your own network, but spend time keeping "your space" current and complete. Once the economy rebounds, your online "friends" will surely come to experience the real deal. **MI**

Ravi is a musician, clinician and music industry lecturer. Visit him at heyravi.com.



'Think of your Web site as the physical store and a social network as the human interaction on the floor.'

EP3

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MY TURN | BY THERESA PERRY

Piano and the Brain

We're gifted with research that shows a connection between playing a musical instrument and intellectual development. Still, many parents — and customers — don't know that musical training can literally give their children higher IQs and better-functioning brains. Here's some key information that music retail management and sales personnel can use to generate more sales and music lesson sign-ups at their stores.



HIGHER IQS

In an excellent article on Forbes.com, "Sorry, Kids, Piano Lessons Make You Smarter," E.J. Mundell explores the direct link between piano playing, voice lessons and IQ. The article focuses on studies conducted at the University of Toronto. Participants were tested before and after attending first grade. The first grade students who received piano or voice lessons scored approximately 39-percent higher in IQ measurements.

MUSIC PHYSICALLY ALTERS THE BRAIN

Studies have documented brain development from participation in music, and now technology can measure it. Building upon the work of Dr. Frances Rauscher, a recent study at the University of Munster, Germany, demonstrated practicing the piano in early childhood literally alters the brain's anatomy. Germany's University of Konstanz researchers have reported that exposure to music rewires neural circuits. By using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology, researchers have been able to link the effects of music practice to cortex development.

BETTER MATH TESTING

University of California, Irvine researchers worked with public school elementary-grade children in Orange County and Los Angeles. They found that children given only four months of piano keyboard training and time with newly designed computer software scored 27-percent higher on math and fractions tests. The results were not nearly as significant among those without the piano training. And the program helped children regardless of income level, boosting the achievement of all students, including those in low socioeconomic settings.

Like other brain circuits formed early in life, the ones for music endure. The long-lasting effects of early music training are evident in high school music students' SAT scores. According to information compiled by the National Association for Music Education in 2001, SAT takers with coursework and experience in music performance scored 57 points higher on the verbal portion of the test and 41 points higher on the math portion than students with no experience in the arts.

LONG-LASTING IMPACT

There are myriad physiological, intellectual and emotional developments linked to acoustic piano learning in particular. Just a few of these include improved coordination; the ability to learn and interpret a new symbolic language, and coordinate symbolic language cues with mechanical targets along a horizontal plane; fine muscle development from required independent and simultaneous action of 10 individual fingers; and control of speed, touch and volume of each finger independently and simultaneously.

There's no doubt anymore of the value of a musical experience. It has been measured. And when you explain these points to parents and customers, they will be more willing to invest in the piano lessons and the products that you offer. **MI**

BENEFITS OF PLAYING PIANO

Theresa Perry is the CEO of Hailun Distribution.

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STREETWISE SELLING | BY KENNY SMITH

Knucklehead Mistakes

When I go into music dealerships for sales training, I don't teach redcoat — I teach Vietnam. If your world is perfect, I'm happy for you. If not, and you want to make it out of the jungle alive, pay attention and don't whine.

Music retail salespeople often make 10 big mistakes. These are the first problems I address when I walk into a store.

Mistake No. 1: Lateness. This is a big problem in our industry and has a direct affect on a dealer's bottom line. Even one late person throws off the rhythm of an entire store. If you can't get this right, what else can't you do?

Mistake No. 2: Refusing to hang up your opinion hat. I've seen this from day one in the music business. There's always some know-it-all, almighty salesman who expects everyone to bow to his opinion. There's nothing wrong with having personal preferences, just keep them outside where they belong. If you've got one of these knuckleheads on-board, don't let him spread his disease! It's costly and bad for business.

Mistake No. 3: Not having a pen and piece of paper on you at all times. You always need to be able to write down a name, phone number or instrument model. Once, I lost a \$10,000 deal because I left the room for 10 seconds to get a pen.

Mistake No. 4: Underestimating the telephone. Many dealers have bad telephone systems, lousy on-hold procedures and terrible phone skills. Look at it this way. What do you get more of: customers in the store or phone calls? I would estimate that some stores lose 50 percent of their would-be deals right over the phone.

Mistake No. 5: Guessing your inventory. You can't be sure what customers will ask you for, but you can look over your inventory every morning and see what you've got on-hand. Like it or not, you need to sell what you've got in stock. Focus on your aging inventory.

Mistake No. 6: Not enough outreach. You absolutely must do tomorrow's business today. That means prospecting every day. Get in the habit of calling, e-mailing and going out to drum up new business. Too many music stores sit and wait. And wait.

Mistake No. 7: Assuming customers know what the hell they're talking about. Sometimes they do, but many times they don't. Today, because of the Internet, it's even easier for customers to sound like they know exactly what they want. Qualify and don't assume anything.

Mistake No. 8: Forgetting to tell your story. Many stores have a great story to tell, but they rarely tell it. You've got to sell the sizzle, not the steak. Everyone sells the same products, so you need to sell customers on your store. If you don't have a story, get one. If you have one, use it.

Mistake No. 9: Not getting the money. This is for everyone, especially the new folks. Whenever a customer offers you money or a deposit in a music store, take it. The worst that can happen is you'll have to give it back. I've seen thousands of deals go down that would have never happened if not for a deposit.

Mistake No. 10: Giving out your business card. The weakest salespeople hand out the most cards. All they're doing is letting the customer off the hook and making it easier on your competition. Being asked for your card is more of an insult than it is a ticket for the be-back bus. Try this: The next time some pro customer grinds you to death, make them promise to refer at least two customers directly to you, and give them a few of your cards.

These booby traps have been known to kill in the jungle. Go through this list with your people. **MI**

Kenny Smith is an industry veteran and consults both retailers and suppliers. He can be reached at kennysmith8888@gmail.com.



Ten mistakes beginning and seasoned salespeople make that affect a dealer's bottom line

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{WHATWENTWRONG}



What went wrong with the Piano Industry

By Greg Billings

Coming off the worst year any of us can remember, with unit sales of new pianos plummeting and dealerships closing, we may be standing at the precipice of the end of the modern piano dealer. Soon, like the home organ dealer before us, we could be reduced to just a few niche-market specialty stores.

Many of us remember when new piano sales were measured in the hundreds of thousands per year. How did we get to the low tens of thousands? It's time to take a good, hard look at what went wrong and what we can do about it.

IT'S NOT THE ECONOMY

Steve Thomas, president of Scott's Music in Grand Forks, N.D., pointed out that the miserable economy is a temporary factor, at most, in the piano industry's decline. "The economy is the least of our problems," he said. "The decline in piano sales started while the economy was still booming. It is directly linked to a decline in the perceived value of music education among this generation. And many who are interested [in learning music] have been siphoned off by big-box retailers, often with products from our own suppliers."

Certainly the demise of the housing market is a factor, but the housing crash may be as coincidental as it was causal. Through most of the 20th century, it was nearly impossible to get a mortgage for more than four times your annual income without at least 10-percent down or with a payment exceeding one week's pay. By 1990, the rules were rewritten. In the most extreme cases, buyers financed homes they weren't going to live in with lenders who weren't going to hold the paper. Can anyone be surprised that the bubble burst?

“It was apparent in the '90s that easy home-equity dollars drove the sale of grand pianos,” said Craig Gigax, president of Meridian Music in Indianapolis. “Easy cash has dried up, and so have piano sales.”

KIDS, PARENTS & TEACHERS

It's convenient to blame the kids. Some say kids today are more interested in skateboards, karate and video games than in studying piano — or any other serious endeavor, for that matter. But hasn't there always been competition for kids' attention? (My grandmother was convinced that the hours I spent watching “The Mickey Mouse Club” and building tiny log cabins would spell my doom.) And if distraction is the main problem, how can we explain the boom in school band enrollment and the sale of 400 million Harry Potter books?

Paul Calvin, vice president and general manager of Yamaha's keyboard division, said the problem may lie more with parents than kids. “In China, playing the piano is much like soccer is to parents here in the U.S.,” he said. “It's just something you get your kids involved in. The kids feel it is a competitive thing.”

“The Chinese immigrants here also have a strong passion to play piano and are helping drive our sales.”

I see this in Southwest Florida. The Asian population is tiny, but the majority of winners in our annual Steinway Piano Competition have been Chinese for the past nine years.

“Most people would love to play [piano],” said Brian Chung, senior vice president of Kawai America. “But if their time is limited, they'll usually choose the activity that offers the most fun with the least stress.”

And let's not forget to



Steinway's Ron Losby

blame the teachers. I recently heard the director of sales for a major piano manufacturer rant for 15 minutes about the lack of formally certified piano teachers. I asked him if piano teachers were certified when we were kids and piano study was the norm. Of course they weren't. Piano teachers today are generally superior to their predecessors, and you can hear the proof in their student recitals. Blaming piano teachers for the decline in piano sales is like blaming the cows for Mad Cow Disease.

That said, a kid who learns three chords on a guitar might play for the rest of his life, but every day, we see people who had five years of piano lessons and can't play “Happy Birthday.” Many piano teachers have done a good job teaching students to read piano arrange-

‘There has been a concerted lack of music education in our school systems.’
— Ron Losby, Steinway

ments from a score, but they've done a poor job teaching people how to play the piano for fun and enjoyment. Sight-reading music is like typing poetry in real time; it's a formidable skill but of limited usefulness and not emotionally gratifying.

“How many times have you spoken with someone who said, ‘I took piano lessons years

ago but quit because the teacher was forcing me to play in competitions and recitals?’” said George Benson, national sales manager of Wyman Pianos. “Just think of the pianos that could have been sold if those people would have kept playing the piano because it was fun.”

NO PIANO TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS

Our industry must confront an inescapable fact: We have lost most of the last generation of pianists, and we are in the process of losing the next. Our biggest problem — and biggest opportunity — is never discussed. It's the 500-pound gorilla in the living room, the redheaded cousin at the dinner table. Formal piano instruction in elementary school is almost nonexistent.

“There has been a concerted lack of music education in our school systems, both public and private, and this lack of emphasis has led to our children not being exposed to the piano,” said Ron Losby, president of Steinway & Sons and a former piano teacher. “Education is clearly the key ingredient, and we are all culpable in not supporting education at every level.”

Money isn't the problem. School systems, after all, spend exorbitant sums for a bassoon or a tympani. When asked what instrument they want to play, kids will usually say piano (keyboard), guitar or drums. Still, our schools are not institutionally equipped to deal with hundreds of guitar and piano students.

The piano industry has never made a serious effort to establish piano instruction in elementary schools. If schools started students on piano in the first or second grade, they would have flourishing band and choral programs, not to



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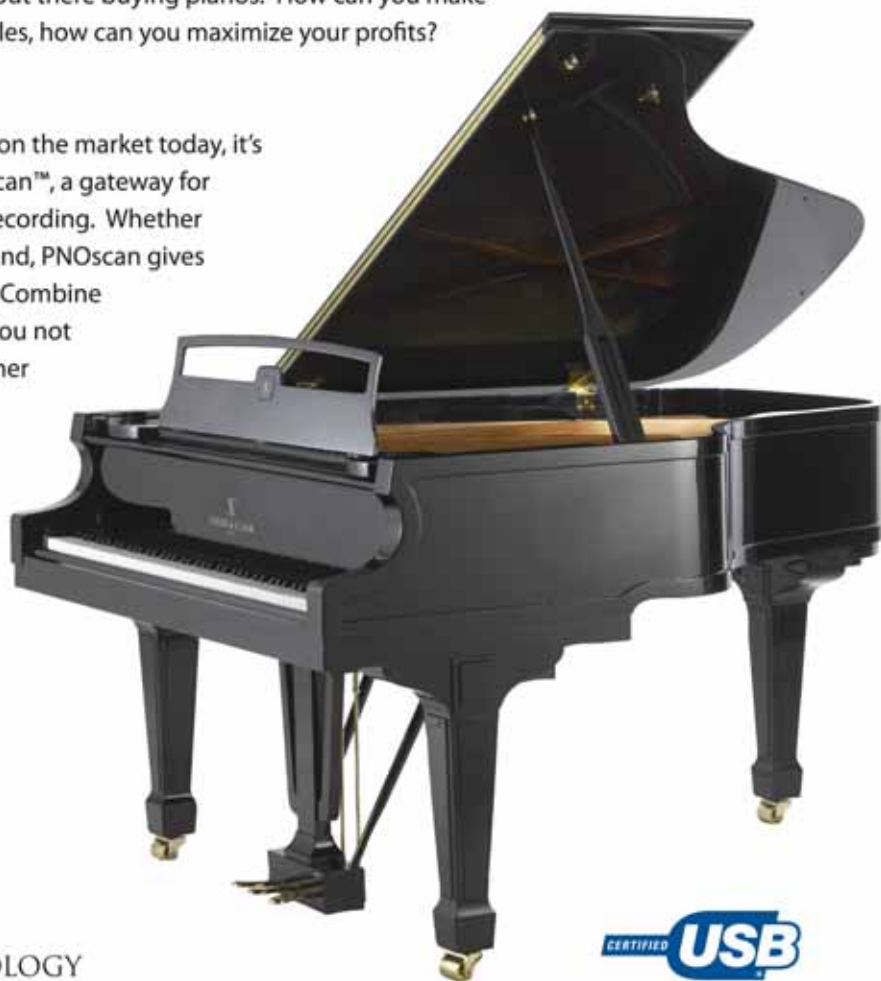
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mention greater academic achievement, by the time those students reached junior high. Predictably, many of the best players in school bands are the kids who take piano or guitar lessons privately.

“As long as the school does not see piano instruction as a high priority, it will take a parent with guidance, time, money and priority for the student to succeed,” said Tom Dolan, president of QRS Music and Story & Clark.

There is no real reason why horns should dominate school music programs. Piano is a better instrument on which to teach elementary music. Prior to the development of piano labs in the 1960s, group piano instruction was impractical. But why we’ve sat out the last 50 years is a mystery. The sooner we start pressing the case for piano instruction in elementary schools, the sooner we will see results.

THE DIGITAL MYTH

We have also failed to make sure beginning students have appropriate instruments. For the most part, digital pianos and electronic keyboards have replaced the 10 million consoles and spinets built during the previous two decades — a period in which piano drop-out rates have soared.

“The advent of the digital piano created the potential for a new product base as a second instrument for pianists and institutions,” Thomas said. “Instead, our industry marketed them as an alternative to a quality acoustic instrument and encouraged consumers to settle for something easier and less expensive for their first purchase. In effect, we devalued our own best seller, and the full potential was never realized.”



Carlson's Piano
World's Ron Carlson

There are many applications where a digital piano is appropriate: class labs, amplified stage performances, and anywhere headphones or computer interfaces are beneficial.

“Today’s digital pianos incorporate video displays, which can be used to read and display music notation,” said Dennis Houlihan, president of Roland U.S. “With simple software, you can easily print out your music. That can be a very powerful motivation to an aspiring piano student. And, we haven’t even talked about the obvious benefits of no tuning, headphone jacks and MIDI.

“Music technology and the digital piano go hand in hand. This is good for the piano business in total. Digital pianos are *not* the enemy of the acoustic piano. Rather, they are an ally.”

“Kids who are succeeding

‘College sales put the emphasis on price and price alone.’
— Steve Thomas, Scott’s Music

are those whose teachers are not afraid of technology,” Gigax said. This is especially true for interactive instruments and those with a USB port.

WHY CAN'T JOHNNY PLAY?

But are keyboards and low-end digital pianos a good choice for beginning piano students? Many experts don’t

think so. “When succeeding is defined as becoming serious students developing lifelong piano-playing skills, digital pianos hurt or at least waste critical learning time,” said Ted Good, CEO of Mattlin Hyde Piano-Cleveland and Steinway Hall-Akron. “When succeeding is defined as being entertained or learning to read and compose music, digital pianos have their place — even their superiority.

“But I wonder why it is relatively accepted for young piano students to start with a digital instrument and not for those children who want to learn the trumpet. Control of touch and tone by the piano student is a fundamental part of creating piano music and requires access to a quality acoustic piano, just as lip control and embouchure are critical to playing music on the trumpet.”

“I don’t blame portable keyboards for our problems as much as I fault our industry for failing to seize the opportunity,” said Brian Chung of Kawai, which makes everything from small keyboards to concert grands. “We haven’t done enough to engage first-time keyboard buyers in the learning process so that they eventually want to try learning on a piano, which is a completely different and more satisfying experience. Because we’ve failed to connect the dots for these aspiring players, their learning has stalled — or stopped — at the portable keyboard level.”

“If they start on a [good] digital piano at home, it is essential that they have access to an acoustic for performance and that they practice on an acoustic by the time they are playing standard literature,” said Joanne Smith, Music Teachers National Association’s National Teacher of the Year in 2002.

“As good as digital pianos are these days, they just cannot match the particular touch that is unique to a fine acoustic piano,” said Dr. Michael Baron, head of piano studies at the Bower School of Music. “When I teach students who have spent many years working with digital pianos, I find a severe lack of artistic touch in their approach.”

The natural sound of a string vibrating over a piece of spruce is a powerful reward for musicians at all levels but never more so than for beginners. If the reward is reduced, outcomes will be diminished. Ironically, like Nero fiddling while Rome burned, the piano teaching community is content to engage in an arcane debate about subtle differences in method books while their students struggle with inferior instruments.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

In the good-old days, a young family would come into our store looking for a used piano, often after considering a few in the private market. We would sell them something for around \$1,000, deliver it, tune it and sign them up with a good teacher. Often, we could convince them to buy a new piano under \$2,000 or trade them up later. The kids learned to play, and many became doctors and lawyers.

Today, moms and dads can find a brand-name keyboard for \$399 or \$699 at their local warehouse club. We never see these people, never get them connected to the right teacher and never have an opportunity to sell them an appropriate instrument. The promise that plastic starter pianos would create a generation of piano players never materialized. We would be overwhelmed with

business if even a small percentage of the 1 million keyboard buyers each year graduated to pianos.

“I’m not sure any of us have done a good job of making [trade-ups] happen,” Calvin said. “As an industry, we need to make whole efforts to get people playing and have them trade up.”

Mostly, keyboards end up under beds or in attics. There’s a classic scene in the sitcom “Friends” where we see Ross’ keyboard leaning against a wall in the corner of the garage. Kids move on to other interests. The opportunity for a lifelong pianist is lost. It’s no use ranting against big-box retailers. Instead, we must acknowledge that we are losing a generation of pianists, and the advent of cheap, unsatisfying keyboards is a part of the reason.

DECEPTIVE SALES

College piano sales have played a major role in the domestic piano industry’s demise. Customers were attracted to these sale events under the premise that they could buy pianos the schools were retiring and that there would be some financial benefit in doing so. Unfortunately, the pianos for sale usually never saw a single day of student use. Few, if any, were really owned by the school. The whole enterprise was based on deception, and unfortunately, university administrators and faculty got an up-close look at piano marketing’s most vulgar practice.

“College sales were a short-term, short-sighted fix to our real problem,” Thomas said. “In truth, they lacked basic integrity.”

Since typical piano stores were not equipped to market

pianos on this scale, teams of opportunistic carpetbaggers picked up the slack. It was not unusual for a dealer to sell a quarter million dollars worth of pianos, often to customers they already knew, only to have the profit leave town with the interlopers.

No one suffered more from the loaner programs than the faculty and students of the music schools. Often, manufacturers provided pianos that would be easy to sell at the end of the year rather than the high-quality studios and grands usually purchased by schools. Furthermore, starting over with new, “green” pianos each year eliminated the possibility of natural maturing that pianos achieve as they are tuned and voiced. (As with rental cars, nobody puts a lot

of work into a piano that’s not going to be around long.)

The biggest problem with college sales was that they diverted dealers from the market-building activities and community involvement that had been and should be the primary thrust of their marketing efforts.

“Long-term, it has hurt,” Good said. “Many dealers and manufacturers transferred their consumer service and market-development resources to the production of quick-fix, big, exciting events.”

“College sales put the emphasis on price alone, and as a result, we trained our customers to shop only during those times,” Thomas said.

It was a bad idea based on deception. In the end, more damage than good was done.

+ IS BIGGER REALLY BETTER?

In 1934, Steinway & Sons introduced a 45-inch mahogany furniture case piano. It was never especially popular, although Steinway sold thousands of institutional versions of the same piano.

In the late '80s, Baldwin, Wurlitzer and Kimball, having sold millions of 36- and 42-inch pianos, all introduced 45-inch pianos in fancy furniture cabinets. These were miserable failures. Eventually, all three companies went out of the piano business — some more than once. For some mysterious reason, our Asian friends copied the error and began building gothic uprights.

Given a choice, consumers prefer small, elegant uprights. (Possibly part of digital pianos’ appeal is their size.) Almost daily, someone tells us the reason they don’t have a piano is they don’t have room for one. And in 35 years, I have not had a single customer ask for a big, ugly piano.

Customers prefer small grands, too. The increase in grand piano unit sales coincided with the introduction of 150-centimeter grands around 1990. Yet second-tier manufacturers insist on marketing 6- and 7-foot grands, and first-tier manufacturers do the same with their economy lines. Maybe manufacturers have spent too much time looking at each other and not enough time asking customers what they really want. I know they have never asked me what my customers want. — G.B.



WebOnlyPiano's Ed Vodicka

+ SILVER LINING IN PLAYER PIANOS

The piano industry's best news of the last 25 years has been the success of modern player piano systems. As the number of grand pianos sold has declined, the percent with player systems has grown. This technology has brought new customers to the market and resurrected an incredible library of music from vintage piano rolls. It's especially encouraging that player pianos appeal to baby boomers, a huge demographic with disposable income that's about to explode.

"People who would never have considered buying a piano have been drawn into the piano market because of player capability," said Craig Gigax.

Unfortunately, manufacturers have shot themselves in the foot by refusing to agree on a standard software format. "In the history of technology, there has never been success until a standard was agreed upon — [be it] railroad track gauges, phonograph speeds, video formats, digital sampling rates or even player-piano formats," said Ed Vodicka, president of WebOnlyPiano, a third-party player piano CD supplier. "Until player system manufacturers stop thinking that they can dominate the market by offering an exclusive format [of essentially the same information], the industry will find its growth stunted."

It has been more than 30 years since the Marantz Pianocorder was introduced. It is long past time to have a standard format. — G.B.

"Some may say that college sales or urgent events smoothed a greater downturn, but my personal feeling is that they have destroyed the image of the piano as a valuable and important part of one's life and home," Losby said. "You will never create the need for a piano by putting it on sale."

A LACK OF DEALER FOCUS

It would be unfair to criticize manufacturers without taking a hard look at piano dealers, too. After World War II, the sons of piano dealers who had survived the Great Depression began to ride the crest of the post-war population and housing boom. New stores opened, and pioneering people, such as Paul and Jerome Murphy Jr., Vern Schafer, Paul Schmitt, Chuck Hale and my dad, Zeb Billings, used creativity and perseverance to sell pianos to our parents' generation.

In the 1960s, piano dealers began to migrate to the higher-margin, lower-expense home organ business. By 1970, many dealers questioned why they even bothered with traditional pianos. To use a sports cliché, the industry took its eye off the ball.

Demographics have a way of normalizing markets. By the end of the 1970s, the bloom was off the rose, and organ sales plummeted, seemingly overnight. Many successful organ dealers never fully adapted to the hard realities of the piano business and were, at best, reluctant participants. Within a decade, a new generation of easy-play electronic products emerged: digital pianos.

But digital pianos appealed to a different demographic, didn't have huge margins and were unlikely to be traded up.

As with home organs, many unsuspecting piano prospects were switched to easy-play digitals and lost as pianists forever. As technology improved and prices fell, digital pianos and keyboards became commodities, and mass merchants became their primary retail channel. The advent of digital pianos left traditional piano dealers with a product that could not sustain them and students with an instrument that made their likelihood of success questionable.

The lesson learned twice, painfully, is the piano business is not the organ business. A piano dealer must be prepared to deliver and service what he sells. Conversely, a home organ or digital piano dealer needs to be able to wow customers with demos of the latest features and engage customers to sell them over and over.

INELASTIC BANDS

In the late '70s, the basic economics of the piano industry changed. Just as the high-margin organ business was fading, lower-priced pianos started to arrive from Asia. Many dealers lowered retail prices rather than boosting margins.

"There was an assumption made that there was an elasticity of demand and that by selling lower-price pianos there would be more pianos sold," said piano industry veteran Bob Jones.

Indeed, dealers sold the same or fewer units at lower prices. Unfortunately, inflation drove up expenses, and the low-cost pianos often had hefty prep and service costs.

"Smaller dealers without financial strength or premium lines found themselves in a position where they could not survive," Jones said.

ADVERTISING TRAP

There was a time when a medium-sized *Yellow Pages* ad, 20 lines in the Sunday classifieds and a few strategically placed sale ads in the local newspaper constituted a marketing plan. Add a few hundred students a week and an organ club, and you could run a nice, profitable business. When my dad produced his own TV show, displayed at home shows and the state fair, and mailed out quarterly newsletters in the early '60s, he was hailed as a visionary. But times have changed. The advertising and promotional vehicles of the past no longer work.

Dealers fell into the trap of believing that advertising should be the most important part of their marketing effort. "The plethora of warehouse sales, college sales, private sales, et al., told the U.S. consumer, 'You never have to pay a decent price for a piano because they are always on sale,'" Houlihan said.

The total universe of piano buyers is just too small to pursue with the same ad tools that automobile, furniture and electronics dealers use effectively. If big media worked, Biasco, Hale, Schaffer and Holcomb-Lindquist would be in business and thriving.

"And maybe dealers have become a little lazy," said Ron Carlson of Carlson's Piano World in Minneapolis. "There were things we did 20 years ago to take our products to the public. We displayed at fairs, home shows and anywhere there was a crowd. Today, our products are so much better and more exciting. When we take products like baby grand player pianos out and show them to people, they become customers. We have to expose our products to more people."

Unfortunately, many dealers and manufacturers believe 10 days on a rug at Costco is a marketing program. And too many dealers are sitting in their stores waiting for the elusive traffic that never seems to materialize.

NO SERVICE

Piano dealers also got out of the service business because they believed they could deliver pianos right out of boxes. This was never true, but Asian suppliers encouraged dealers to hand out a couple of tuning vouchers to independent tuners and kiss their customers goodbye. Piano retail is not a business for the lazy or inefficient. Once technicians became independent, the profit on service was gone, and pre-sale preparation became a big expense. Too often it was forgone. As customers were relinquished to outside contractors, new business previously generated from the service department disappeared.

In a radically changing marketplace, some retailers succumbed to economic racism and made the nationality of the manufacturer an issue. (Very few industries make an issue of where their products are manufactured.)

Customers don't care where products are made and certainly don't want cold water poured on their enthusiasm when they are shopping for a musical instrument. They care about their passion for music, their hopes for their children, having fun, and impressing family and friends. Many customers decided to not buy a piano at all after hearing this nonsense. (Fortunately, the current economic situation is washing out many of the trash-talkers.)

To be fair to salespeople, training has become almost

Customers don't care where pianos are made and certainly don't want cold water poured on their enthusiasm when they are shopping for a musical instrument

non-existent. There was a time when manufacturers and their reps spent countless hours training retail salespeople. Those days are gone, and most dealers haven't filled the void. Today, it's unusual for customers to meet a piano salesperson who is both technically knowledgeable and willing to help them make an intelligent selection. It's even less common to encounter a salesperson with the discretion to know how to apply either skill at the right moment.

"I've watched the decline in new piano sales follow the decline in the number of professional district managers provided by piano manufacturers to train salespeople in prospecting, market development and the presentation of their products," Good said.

Unfortunately, given the lack of training, it's often the greedy and unscrupulous salespeople who survive.

NO LEADERSHIP

Possibly the most important reason for the decline of the piano industry is its lack of lead-

ership. Piano Manufacturers Association International (P.M.A.I.) and its co-conspirator, the National Piano Foundation, are a group of well-intentioned but ineffectual people, often without sufficient support from their employers.

P.M.A.I. also suffers from a lack of industry support. Too many piano manufacturers here and abroad have failed to join, resigned or delegated representation to someone other than their presidents and CEOs. And the policy of a rotating presidency assures no strong leader will ever emerge.

"The P.M.A.I. has the ability to lobby and effect the changes required to shore up institutional interest, promote the industry and make the piano culturally relevant," said Tom Dolan, a P.M.A.I. member. "But the organization has shown an inability to garner support even [among] its peers. It could be that a majority of the manufacturers are not U.S.-based companies, hence are not vested in U.S. culture. The investment required to make the U.S. market a revenue generator is not understood. Lack of participation leads to a lack of funds and a continued spiral downward."

P.M.A.I.'s current efforts and minimal remaining resources are focused almost entirely on recreational music making. This does not address the long-term viability of the organization and only affects a small portion of the business. P.M.A.I. seems ambivalent to the need for programs aimed at the much more promising baby boomer demographic, which buys most of the player pianos, and is clueless about the need for piano instruction in elementary schools. **MI**

THE PIANO INDUSTRY RECOVERY PLAN

Now we must confront the big question: What can we do to reverse the trend and re-establish the piano and piano study to the stature they once enjoyed?

“There’s certainly plenty of interest in playing the piano,” said Tom Schmitt, president of Schmitt Music. “When you go to YouTube and type in ‘How to play Clocks by Coldplay on the piano,’ there are more than 1 million views. ‘How to play Unfaithful by Rihanna’ has more than 2 million views. Gen X’ers and Gen Y’ers are interested in playing, and they’re playing the music they listen to and love. We need to better understand what they want and give it to them. If we can crack that code, I think we’ll find lots of new customers who will buy all sorts of stuff from us, including pianos.”

“We’re finding the demand for piano publications for beginners is staying strong,”

said Larry Morton, president of print music publishing giant Hal Leonard. “Somehow, piano lessons are continuing strong, and new piano students continue to show up, but they must be getting lower-priced instruments, whether they are new or used acoustics, or choosing digital pianos.”

One presumed solution is RMM, or recreational music making.

“Teachers are saying that what we’re doing is not necessarily creating more students,” said Paul Calvin of Yamaha. “We are all seeing that, and so we need to do something different. [Students] want to make music, so how can we get them to where they have some sort of music making fun right away? [RMM] is a great opportunity for us.”

Brian Chung of Kawai said, “the recreational music making movement is critical to our industry. Adults, particularly

baby boomers and seniors, want and need a highly social, stress-free environment in which to learn music. Right now, most of them don’t know where to go to find that environment.”

But does one size fit all? Are socially based RMM programs geared to seniors really going to attract self-indulgent boomers? Whether RMM is an answer or not, it certainly isn’t *the* answer. There are specific steps we can and must take to stop the piano industry’s demise, so it can return to its former, respected place in American culture. A few are easy, some are difficult and most require major changes in how we have been doing business for the last 20 years.

Here is a Piano Industry Recovery Plan.

+ NO. 1: LEADERSHIP

Piano Manufacturers Association International (P.M.A.I.) and the National Piano Foundation (N.P.F.) must either

step up or disband. Until they provide serious, dynamic leadership, they are taking up space and preventing the emergence of real leadership. (See “How to Fix P.M.A.I.” sidebar.)

+ NO. 2: TEACH THE FUN

Teachers and publishers need to take a fresh look at how we teach piano and devise an approach that will get people playing piano for life. A student who has taken a year of piano lessons should be able to play a few songs for fun.

+ NO. 3: MORE GROUP LEARNING

“The way piano is taught to beginners of all ages needs to fundamentally change from private lessons on acoustic pianos to group lessons on digital pianos,” said John Norton, piano training manager for Roland U.S. “Dealers, manufacturers and publishers must aggressively advocate this change by partnering with independent teachers to help lead them and also by making in-store education the foundation of the retail store business model.”

+ NO. 4: GET KIDS PLAYING

Formal piano instruction in elementary schools is essential. Traditional piano dealers may not be the right people to implement this — they have shown little interest in schools over the last 100 years.

+ NO. 5: NEW PRODUCT DISTRIBUTION

Existing school music dealers, on the other hand, have the

+ HOW TO FIX P.M.A.I.

Few trade associations have an uninterrupted record of failure to match the piano manufacturers, and some of their sharpest critics are their own members. Fortunately, many of their problems are systemic and relatively easy to fix. To serve the industry effectively, Piano Manufacturers Association International (P.M.A.I.) must do the following:

- Establish a revenue stream, and devote those funds to market development and real research. NAMM shouldn’t give P.M.A.I. another dime until it demonstrates that it’s willing to put its own money on the line. Tom Dolan of QRS has made a proposal for a revenue stream generated by RFID, or radio-frequency identification technology. P.M.A.I. should embrace his proposal and consider other revenue sources, as well.
- Recruit non-member manufacturers and distributors. Dealers can help by pressing the presidents of these companies to get on-board.
- Open voting membership to digital piano manufacturers. Excluding Roland and other non-acoustic manufacturers deprives P.M.A.I. of revenue and participation from some of the smartest people in the industry — people such as Roland’s Dennis Houlihan, for instance.
- Restrict representation to each company’s chief executive.
- End the musical-chairs rotating presidency. Pick the best leader, and let him or her lead.
- The National Piano Foundation (N.P.F.) must end its incestuous relationship with P.M.A.I. One is a foundation, and the other is a trade organization. Furthermore, the new management at the N.P.F. should be held accountable for doing something useful for its constituents.
- Seriously re-evaluate recreational music making in its present form. — G.B.

relationships necessary to market piano labs and piano instruction to schools. They also have much to gain because piano instruction in the early grades will cause their band programs to flourish in later years. Piano dealers can provide logistical support and might develop significant rental and entry-level piano sales. The largest band instrument vendors are also the largest piano manufacturers. It's time for them to take the lead in marketing piano instruction to elementary schools.

+ NO. 6: BUILD UPRIGHTS PEOPLE WANT

Manufacturers must stop force-feeding big, ugly consoles on us. They need to determine what kind of entry-level,

upright pianos consumers will buy and build them at a marketable price. If the Baldwin Acrosonic were introduced today in an appropriate cabinet at \$1,995, we'd have trouble keeping them in stock — especially if they had a USB port. The same could be said of the Steinway "40" (at a much higher price, of course).

+ NO. 7: INSIST KIDS GET APPROPRIATE PIANOS

We need to be honest with parents about the appropriateness of keyboards and low-end digital pianos for beginning students. And the manufacturers supplying keyboards to non-traditional retailers must establish a protocol for referring consumers to qualified instructors.



QRS Music's Tom Dolan

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+ WHY RMM WON'T SELL MORE ACOUSTIC PIANOS

Group lessons for adult beginners are not new. The home organ industry has built its entire business plan around social learning programs for seniors. But recreational music making is unlikely to reverse the downward trend of new acoustic piano sales. Here's why:

- RMM is backward looking and skews the old. If the acoustic piano industry has a future, it has to start with elementary school kids. Next, it has to address the 77 million baby boomers. If we focus our primary effort on senior citizens, we will just die slower.

- RMM's primary thrust is retraining existing teachers to teach adults to play for fun. Teachers need to teach everyone to play for fun. Rather than trying to teach old dogs new tricks, we must make sure the next generation of piano teachers knows how to give their students instruction that will last a lifetime. Those future teachers are in college now. Let's start with them.

- Teachers don't sell anything to anyone. Adult teach-to-sell programs only work when the teacher is a salesperson or a salesperson masquerades as a teacher.

- Most sales generated from RMM programs are digital pianos and organs. No one's against selling more of both, but how is RMM going to help the acoustic piano market?

- Older RMM participants often already have a piano they are unable to play. While they might trade to a digital piano, it's rare for them to purchase another acoustic piano. Again, how is this going to help the acoustic piano market?

- The name "recreational music making" is terrible. "Recreational" is not how our customers describe their musical activities. It has a negative connotation, reminiscent of recreational vehicles, recreational centers, recreational drugs and recreational sex. Amateur musicians take their music seriously, notwithstanding their level of ability or talent.

A trip to the beach or Disney World is recreational. Playing in a church worship team, New Horizons orchestra or Weekend Warriors band is a serious, creative activity that also happens to be fun. It's insulting to our clients to reduce making music to the level of a shuffleboard game or a trip to the carnival. — G.B.

+ NO. 8: GET TEACHER SUPPORT

Teachers must plant their feet and insist students have an appropriate instrument before they accept them. Athletic coaches insist on proper equipment, as do karate and ballet instructors. Why not piano teachers?

+ NO. 9: STANDARDIZE PLAYER PIANO SOFTWARE

Player piano manufacturers must sit down and agree on a standard software format before they move to the next generation of products. Then, third-party producers will be viable, and the art form will evolve. Software sells hardware, and if we want to sell pianos to baby boomers, they're going to have to be player pianos.

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+ NO. 10: END COLLEGE SALES

Dealers need to abandon college sales and other deceptive marketing practices and focus on developing pianists in their local communities.

+ NO. 11: NO FREEBIES

Everyone needs to stop giving away pianos to schools.

+ NO. 12: FOCUS ON SERVICE

Dealers should put piano tuners back on their payrolls, keep their service customers for life and prep their pianos before delivery.

+ NO. 13: GET COMMUNITY-CENTERED

Dealers should get involved in their communities and cultivate relationships with local centers of influence. Teachers, preschools, churches, interior designers and charitable organizations are good places to start.

+ NO. 14: USE 21ST CENTURY MARKETING

Dealers need to shift their advertising away from radio, broadcast TV, *Yellow Pages* and newspapers. They must figure out how to use cable TV, the Internet and e-mail to reach customers. Most important, they must figure out how to get free PR for their community involvement.

+ NO. 15: RETHINK RMM

RMM is being embraced as the Holy Grail simply because no one has a better idea. There's nothing wrong with getting older adults actively involved with music — every good piano dealer has been doing it for years, and the aging population provides an opportunity to sell more digital pianos. But RMM for seniors is not the magic solution to declining acoustic piano sales. We need to reach baby boomers and kids if we're going to grow. (See "Why RMM Won't Sell More Acoustic Pianos" sidebar.)

"It is all about education for the young and old alike," said Ron Losby of Steinway. "Seventy-seven million Americans are baby boomers looking for life-enhancing experiences, with \$2.4 trillion in spendable income, 47 percent of which is spent on non-essentials. You don't even have to

be that good to sell a couple of hundred thousand units to 77 million people.

"The good news is we have a market. The question is, how do we access it cost-effectively?"

The piano business is in tough shape. It took us a long time to get into this mess, and there's no easy way out. If we're going to survive, we have to look at what hasn't worked and abandon it. We

have to find new ways to reach our customers and present the extraordinary intellectual, physical and societal benefits of playing the piano.

Most of all, we have to get 6- and 7-year-olds playing the piano and playing it well. If we don't do that immediately, we might as well take a ride down to the mall, plant ourselves on a bench in front of the organ store and watch our future. **MI**

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BY JENNY DOMINE

SUMMER BLUES BUSTERS

Summer is finally here, which can mean slow days for music retailers. But this year, people are cutting back and staying home. This presents a golden opportunity for music stores to fill the vacation void.

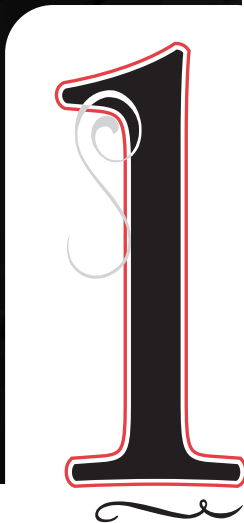
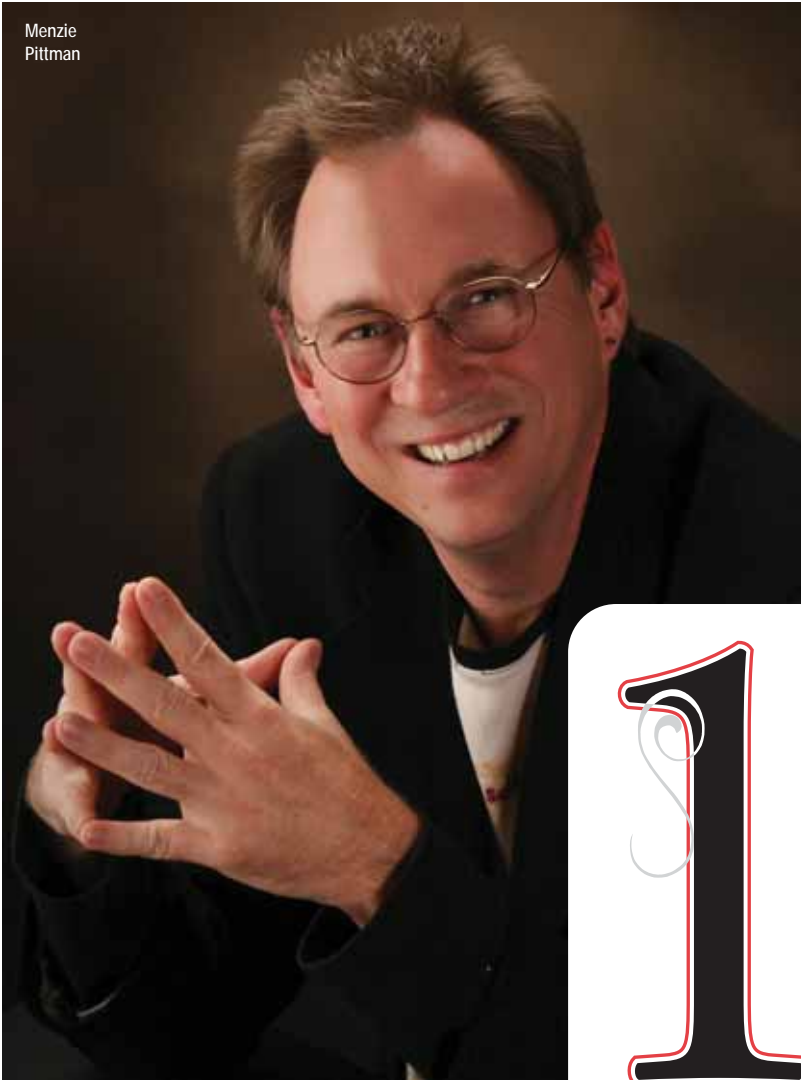
“As the tough times continue in our area, we feel that many families will be holding back on their summer vacations,” said Paul Tobias of Tobias Music in Downers Grove, Ill. “They will be looking for more affordable entertainment.”

Take a look at these 10 ways retailers are driving traffic, generating sales and raising brand awareness during the sluggish summer months.



**10 HOT
PROMOTIONS
FOR THE
DOG DAYS
OF SUMMER**

Menzie Pittman



**MENZIE
PITTMAN**
OWNER
CHANTILLY AND
HAYMARKET, VA.

USE YOUR REPS

On July 23 and 24, Contemporary Music Center's Pearl rep, Ron DePew, will demystify the Pearl Demon Drive pedal while the store hosts a percussion gear sale. Menzie Pittman said it's important for retailers to work with their reps and that this event was DePew's idea.

Pittman is promoting the Pearl Demon Night in-house to regular customers and music lesson students. He also plans to take advantage of free local press. The Pearl Demon Night is part of Pittman's effort to bring more gear promotions into an already demanding summer event schedule. A Roland night is also in the works.

Strike Up the Band

In 1990, schools in Santa Barbara, Calif., stopped offering summer music courses due to budget cutbacks. Nick Rail stepped in, and 19 years later, his summer band camp has become a local institution and a boon to school band directors.

"It generates a lot of community goodwill," Rail said.



NICK RAIL
OWNER
SANTA BARBARA,
CALIF.



TECH CAMP

"2009 marks our 15th year offering Rock Academy Camps. We are always trying to innovate.

"We are now incorporating a tech aspect into our camps and calling it 'MusicTech: Learn. Practice. Perform.'"

"We have a specialist from the local Apple store coming out to work with our rockers on the latest music software, and other tech guests will include studio engineers and a rep from Zoom who will work with them on using the H2 recorder.

"By the time our rockers leave camp, they will have joined a band, written a song, recorded it, placed it on one of the free social media sites, promoted their bands and performed in a Friday-evening concert."



**BILLY
CUTHRELL**
OWNER
RALEIGH, N.C.



RUBY BEESTON
OWNER
OREM, UTAH

Best In Music's
guitar raffle



GIVE AWAY GUITARS

Ruby Beeston suggested that late summer/early fall is the ideal time to host big events.

"Everybody is back in town, people are back from vacation," she said.

Six years ago, Beeston started celebrating Best In Music's anniversary with a guitar raffle. It grew into an annual event and has helped the company attract a growing following. (Last year, the raffle brought in roughly 700 people.)

To celebrate Best In Music's 20th anniversary this year, Beeston has expanded the festivities. In addition to raffling off 10 guitars, she will hold a guitar-playing contest. Divided by acoustic, electric, classical and bass categories, each winner will receive a guitar as the grand prize.

Community Fest

+ SUMMERFEST, MILWAUKEE

Cascio Interstate Music in New Berlin, Wis., hosts a stage that features local professional musicians at "The World's Largest Music Fest."

"We are providing a real showcase of local, original music," said Elliott Hill, Cascio's director of retail operations. "It's a great way to promote your brand and draw the local musicians to become long-term customers."

+ HERITAGE FEST, DOWNERS GROVE, ILL.

Tobias Music hosts a performance stage at the annual, three-day event. Last year, Heritage Fest attracted roughly 100,000 people.

"We used the stage time as an open recital program for our students and teachers," said Ken Tobias, the company's co-owner. "It was great publicity for our store, and inquiries for lessons continued strongly for the entire summer."

+ POTSDAM SUMMER FESTIVAL, POTSDAM, N.Y.

"We provide the [backline] for all of the bands to use," said Jeremy Carney, co-owner of Northern Music & Video. "We run the sound for 30-plus acts during the festival. [Our] foot traffic during the three days is through the roof. We have a sale to coincide with the Summer Festival. It doubles as a chance to move out old inventory."



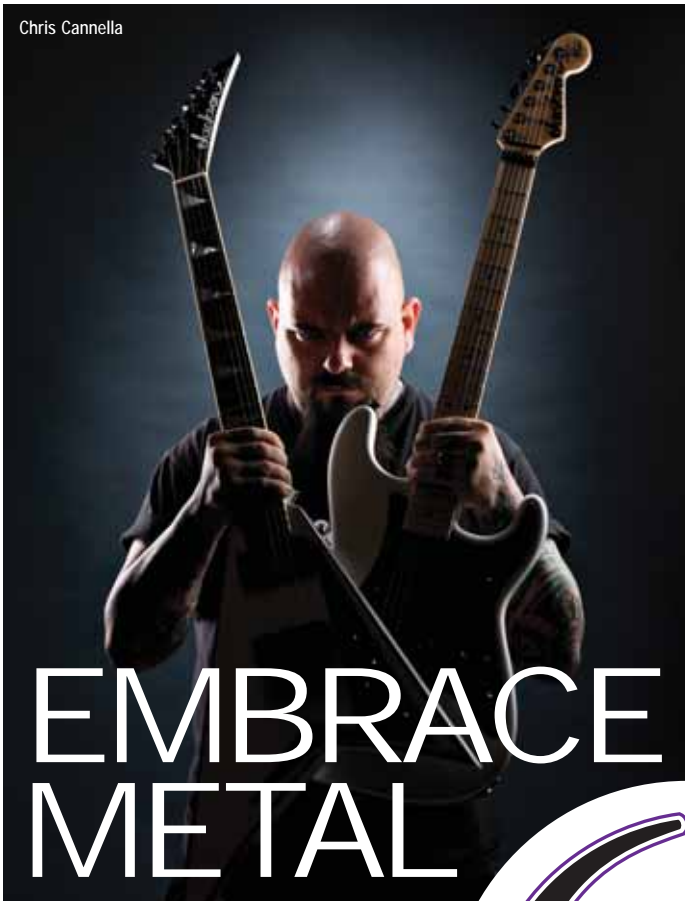
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Chris Cannella



EMBRACE METAL

On June 24, R&R Music will be a stop on Fender's Jackson Bloodline Tour, which features metal master Chris Cannella. The Jackson product manager and artist relations rep also plays guitar in the metal band Autumn's End.

"Jackson is coming into its own again," said Sean Molin. "We've always done Fender for the classic rock crowd, but this is the first thing we've done really aimed toward the metalheads and a younger generation. Summer is a great time to do events because it keeps people in the store."



SEAN MOLIN
ASSISTANT MANAGER
BROWNSBURG, IND.

+ SUMMER OF ROCK

According to Andy Rossi, Fender's senior vice president of global sales, marketing and R&D, Fender is refocusing on its indie retailers.

"We'll do a few hundred events with the independent dealer channels through the summer," Rossi said. "All of these events are well-planned, with supplied materials and advertising."

Here's how Fender plans to keep the summer rockin':

- Fender Soul of Tone. Through the end of June, consumers can test-drive a Fender amp and receive a free T-shirt.
- Fender Days. Fender staff comes out to answer customer questions during this sales promo. Fender helps defray the event's cost.
- Bench Checks. Fender experts provide diagnostic and repair services to any guitar that customers bring in, regardless of brand.



Bands on the Blvd

CO-SPONSOR EVENTS

Blvd-Music keeps its events schedule full all summer long — and it starts early.

"Keep something interesting happening all the time to keep them coming in the store," said Trevor Isetts. With 20 years invested in the local music scene, Isetts has no trouble booking popular, local bands to fill out his summer schedule.

Blvd-Music co-sponsors several events with a local radio station. Together, they put on a Spring Fling event in early May and host a concert right outside the store called Bands on the Blvd in June.

"I can sell shirts," Isetts said. "I can sell CDs, promote the store, do a 45-minute set and have a great time."



TREVOR ISETTS
OWNER
BOILING SPRINGS, S.C.

New Venue

According to Rusty Kephart, taking an event off-site requires extra effort, but it's well worth it when Greg Bennett is the clinician and the venue is free.

"If we had it in the store, right away people would think 'sales promotion,' and they wouldn't come," Kephart said.

But his most recent Bennett clinic drew more than 100 people. Kephart's got the lodgings and event space, a local hotel restaurant, for free because the owner wanted to boost bar traffic.

Kephart even brought guitars to sell. And rather than charge for the event, he asked for canned food donations for the local pantry.

Bennett's presentation focused on guitar design, construction and the art of playing.

"I probably sold 20 guitars," Kephart said. "And Greg was walking around going, 'Oh, this one's one of my favorites. I used to play that guitar with so and so.' What a salesman."



RUSTY KEPHART
OWNER
DECORAH, IOWA

Get Outside

According to Bob Gand, summer is a prime season for events. People have more free time, and free performance spaces are abundant, especially after a Midwest winter.

"If you do this any other time, you'd have to rent a hall," Gand said.

In between the Red Star Tavern and a Starbucks in Deerfield, Ill., is an open air plaza at a major intersection. With the P.A. fully cranked each Thursday evening from June to August, Village Music's Concert Showcase can be heard from blocks away. This will be Gand's sixth year putting on the event.

Students and friends of the store participate. Popular acts include the Bob Gand Smooth Jazz Orchestra, Gary Gand and Blue Truth, and youth bands Minor Chaos, Halo and Bad Boyz.

Two important tips Gand offers anyone that may want to do a summer concert series: Build flexibility into the schedule for the occasional rainy day, and know your local newspaper.

"Last year, we had a problem with publicity because the local paper lists events in alphabetical order," he said. "And Summer Showcase was at the end of the list. This year, we're calling it the Concert Showcase."

10



BOB GAND
OWNER
DEERFIELD, ILL.



Robin (left) and Rick Santos

IMAGINE ALL THE SALES

Right at the end of summer two years ago, we hosted the John Lennon Bus. We talked with them at the January NAMM show. They normally do schools, but they were very receptive to us.

"[The day the Lennon Bus came,] we held a talent show for young bands with members under 18 years old. The winner of the talent show got to record in the Lennon Bus later that afternoon.

"We also had a hot dog concession stand outside. More than 500 people were there, and about 300 of them were new faces. They were families that came to see their kids play and people that just loved The Beatles."

9



RICK SANTOS
OWNER
RAYNHAM, MASS.



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Inside SHOWS

The 2009 NASMD convention in Tucson, Ariz., attracted 259 total attendees, including 33 first-timers and new member representatives.

32% The drop in attendance from last year's convention, which brought in 378 attendees.

57 Dealer companies in attendance.

31 Manufacturer/associate companies in attendance.

SHOWS

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL MUSIC DEALERS | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

WHAT RECESSION?

Don't envy school music dealers. The instrument rental business is a high-investment, slow-cash-flow endeavor where the rewards are often long-term. But don't feel sorry for them either. In the economic recession, school music remains one of the most resilient music industry segments — a business that, done right, can generate profits many combo dealers would die for.

And the only obvious sign of a recession at the National Association of School Music Dealers (NASMD) annual convention in Tucson, Ariz., this past April was a roughly 32-percent drop in attendance. That may be significant, but it doesn't take into account a more important indicator: Most of this year's attendees

Retailers at NASMD keep up with higher learning to succeed in the tough market

reported a strong, if not up, 2008 rental season.

"I've noticed a very positive and optimistic attitude among those attending, including vendor partners," said Bill Harvey, vice president and owner of Buddy Rogers Music.

"The school music business seems to be holding its own — much better than the non-school music segments," said Joel Menchey, president of Menchey Music Service.

To keep that position, this year's NASMD convention, held at Tucson's JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort & Spa, boasted an array of educational sessions that focused less on survival and more on growth and profitability.

"I thought the programs were exceptional," said Beth Houlihan, president of Kidder Music. "Everyone was talking



1. Music educator Marcia Neel; 2. Summerhays Music's Scott Summerhays; 3. Menchey Music's Joel Menchey; 4. Port Huron Music's Barbara and David Teeple; 5. Paige's Music's Sandy and Mark Goff; 6. Beacock Music's Gayle Beacock; 7. From left: Mississippi Music's Rosi Johnson, Ted Brown Music's Whitney Grisaffi and Buddy Rogers Music's Bill Harvey; 8. Amro Music's Pat and D'Ann Averwater; 9. Creative Music Center's Liz Reisman; 10. John Keal Music's Chris Trombley (left) and Zeagler Music's Grayson Zeagler

about setting up Facebook, MySpace and Twitter pages.”

GETTING VISIBILITY ONLINE

Be it in discussions of marketing, inventory management or business systems, that focus on technology pervaded the convention's sessions. In the seminar “Web Marketing,” consultant Mike Stewart encouraged retailers to keep their online strategy focused on getting found locally. “Now, Google is the *Yellow Pages*,” he said.

To get local search engine hits, Stewart suggested starting with Google Keyword Tools to learn the most popular variations of certain keywords. From there, dealers can try Google's AdWords for pay-per-click advertising. Or, Stewart suggested opting for more creative methods to get free hits. These include:

1. Writing an article about a topic relevant to your business and submitting the piece to EzineArticles.com, being mindful to include important keywords in the text.

“Go home and write down 100 problems your business can solve,” Stewart said. “Then, prove [online] that you can solve those problems, and give away some of that knowledge online.”

2. Making videos on topics relevant to your business, such as caring for a trombone, and submitting them to Traffic Geyser (trafficgeyserrocks.com). Include keywords in the video's title.

3. Using social networking. Create MySpace, Facebook and Twitter pages for your business.

4. Contributing to blogs, video blogs and forums.

“These all get people to your landing page,” Stewart said.

Liz Reisman, director and owner of Creative Music Center, discussed an inte-

grated marketing approach during her session, “Ads That Work.” Not surprisingly, this strategy also included using cost-effective online marketing. This means setting up Facebook pages and sending out e-mail blasts in conjunction with using more traditional methods, such as in-store signage, an in-store event calendar, direct mail, newspaper ads and events.

“Having a Facebook page is not making us money,” Reisman said. “It's another way to establish a relationship with a customer. It's another

way to touch the customer. It takes the capitalist right out [of the interaction].”

DOUBLING PROFITS

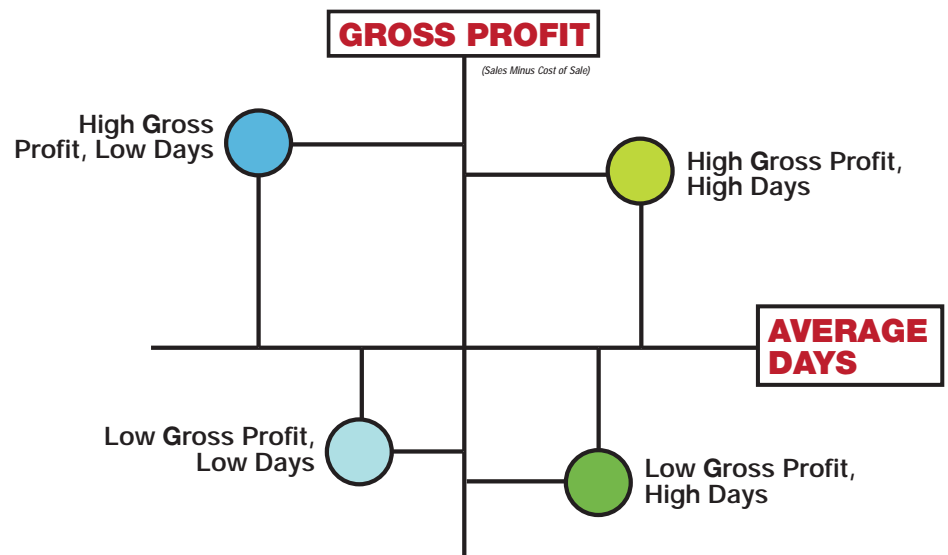
Several speakers aimed to simplify the often complex topic of profitability. Menchey presented “Double Your Profits in Six Months or Less,” based off Bob Fifer's book of the same title. Menchey made the following suggestions:

- **Create a culture for profitability.** Make your organization a meritocracy. Do so by measuring performance by profits.

- **Cut costs.** Cut first, and ask questions later. No cost is too small. Give employees the impression that you're concerned with \$10 expenses, and the larger ones will seem more important to them. Always have employees ask the boss for approval to spend on expenses that aren't budgeted.

Also, take early-pay discounts from suppliers whenever possible. And go to bid frequently with your service suppliers, letting them know that any price increases will trigger a serious, competitive bid.

+ GENERATING CASH



In his session, “Where's the Cash?,” Allan Greenberg, Music & Arts' senior vice president, threw out every awkward financial formula and gave retailers a bare-bones tool for managing inventory and generating profits.

Greenberg suggested dealers break down their inventory into four different categories, depending on gross profit and inventory turns. Then, he discussed how to handle each category to make it more profitable.

- **High Gross Profit, Low Days (upper left)** — These products are cash cows. The goal is to get all product into this quadrant. Also, always look for opportunities to improve these items.

- **High Gross Profit, High Days (upper right)** — These are good products, but you have too many on hand. Lower the number of days it takes to turn them. Also, lower your inventory investment in them.

- **Low Gross Profit, Low Days (lower left)** — These are often small goods. Their profitability can be boosted by raising their prices and lowering their acquisition costs.

- **Low Gross Profit, High Days (lower right)** — This is the purge category. It could include loss leaders that drive customers to more profitable products. But as Greenberg pointed out, “I'm not sure that we need any loss leaders. At least try to break even on acquisition costs.”



• **Increase sales.** Charge customers the most that they're willing to pay. List your top 100–200 products, and see what a difference a 2-

3-, 4-, 5- or 10-percent price increase in those units would be. (Remember: Every price increase goes right to the gross margin.)

Menchey also offered Fifer's five ingredients for closing a sale: show your competence; show that you empathize with the customer; convince the customer that you'll stand in front of a truck for them; make yourself scarce; and use guilt to transform your personal interest in the customer into his personal obligation to you.

INVENTORY IN A BUM ECONOMY

Allan Greenberg, Music & Arts' senior vice president, operations, addressed inventory management in his session, "Where's the Cash?" (See "Generating Cash" sidebar for a full breakdown.)

He recommended keeping inventory extremely lean until the economy picks up again. "These are unprecedented times," he said. "Don't take on any new lines unless it's on consignment or you can return it. And ask [vendors for the deal]. You won't get it if you don't ask."

Greenberg also suggested getting deposits from customers on special orders. And

1. From left: Hal Leonard's Doug Lady, Kidder Music's Jim Kidder and Hal Leonard's Bruce Bush; 2. From left: Music educator Charles Menghini, Quinlan & Fabish's George Quinlan Jr. and Musical Innovations' Tracy Leenman; 3. PM Music Center's Julie and Frank Pampenella; 4. Beacock Music's Russ and Heidi Beacock; 5. Leenman; 6. Music & Arts' Ken O'Brien (left) and Quinlan & Fabish's George Quinlan Sr.; 7. From left: Alta Loma Music's Pete Gamber, Traf Group's Mike Farrell and Music & Arts' Allan Greenberg

as a side note, he praised the value of selling gift cards. "A \$25 gift card, the customer redeems for \$56 at Music & Arts," he said. "We thought, 'Where have gift cards been this whole time?'"

STORE UPKEEP

On the second day of the convention, non-golfers enjoyed a roundtable lunch. (Some nicknamed it "the golfer's revolt lunch.") Gayle Beacock, vice president of Beacock Music, led a discussion on store design and upkeep.

Beacock explained that she has a quarterly clean-up at her store, and employees are required to pitch in. She also creates themed displays regularly. For example, Beacock Music featured "High School

THE ARTS EDUCATION NUMBER GUYS

Industry veteran and NASMD speaker Bob Morrison announced the formation of Quadrant Arts Education Research at the convention. The company, co-founded with MTD Marketing's Mike Danforth, is an arts education research, analysis and market intelligence firm. It will serve the cultural, commercial, educational and governmental sectors.

Quadrant Arts Education Research has a comprehensive visual and performing arts education database, the Arts Education Data Center. This features dance, music theater and visual arts information for more than 120,000 public and private schools and nearly 15,000 school districts that provide arts courses. Quadrant also offers services to help commercial clients improve their marketing return on investment.

"Quadrant was formed to address the substantial need for more comprehensive data, analysis and tracking systems on school music, theater, dance and visual arts programs nationwide," Danforth said.

"Quadrant represents the culmination of our shared passion for research and data as a tool to improve and expand access to music and arts programs for students, while also helping businesses become more efficient in their approach to the market," Morrison said.

Musical” print music books the week “High School Musical 3” hit theaters. The display included different books and had references to the Wildcats, the high school’s mascot in the movie. “A display [at my store] is never up for more than two weeks,” Beacock said.

‘Don’t take on any new lines unless it’s on consignment or you can return it.’

— Allan Greenberg

Pete Gamber, owner of Alta Loma Music, mentioned his own holiday merchandising strategy during the lunch. This past holiday season, he filled his walls with good-looking, inexpensive guitars. The idea was to show that his store was doing well despite the bad economic headlines. And since the guitars were relatively cheap, he didn’t risk taking on a huge inventory investment.

BEST IDEA GENERATOR

Red Schiff, president of All County Music, took home first prize at NASMD’s “Best Ideas” session, hosted by Beacock. Nearly 30 attendees took the podium to present their winning strategies, and Schiff won for his idea: private high school sale nights.

These sales are exclusive to a particular school and held at Schiff’s store after hours on Fridays. Company employees change literally every tag on the wall with a sale price, the name of the event and the school’s team colors. All County Music employees also hang up signage with the school’s logo. The event is promoted with postcards sent to students, and they must present the postcard or a school ID at the door. All County Music also hosts a drawing for a gift card to the store.

“We haven’t had one night that grossed less than \$8,000,” Schiff said. “We’re looking for ways to get people into the store, and what better way than to invite them? It has generated good business. We lose some margin dollars, but I think we truly make up some of it in volume. And we get sales we may not have normally had.” **MI**



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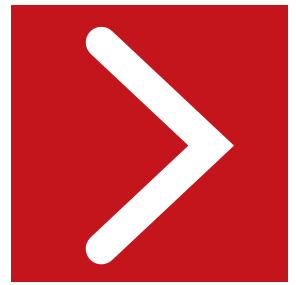
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AKAI | MPK88

Creative Dedication

Akai's MPK88 brings the utility and creative control of its siblings in the MPK series to more dedicated piano and keyboard players. It features 16 MPC pads that are velocity- and pressure-sensitive, and can access four banks of sounds. The keyboard also puts the player in command with assignable Q-Link faders, knobs and buttons. The MPK88 has two assignable footswitch inputs and an expression pedal input. {akaipro.com}



M-AUDIO | DCP-200

Classy Technology

The M-Audio DCP-200 digital piano features on-board sounds sampled from instruments, such as the Steinway Model D. Other instrument sounds include acoustic and electric pianos, organ, harpsichord, bass, and strings. The integrated audio system and full, 88-note keyboard with TruTouch II graded hammer action provide a real acoustic piano feel. The piano's built-in USB connection integrates with computer software for education, notation and music recording. {m-audio.com}

WYMAN PIANO | ORLA DIGITALS

Wyman's New Line

Wyman Piano now distributes the Orla line of digital pianos, which includes the new Stage Ensemble portable piano (pictured). The Stage Ensemble incorporates more than 350 orchestral sounds, including a stereo grand piano sound. The 88-note, hammer-action keyboard; multi-layer sampling technology; and new Touch Sensitivity control system ensure the quality and the feel of a grand piano. A USB memory stick can record up to 16 tracks of musical data or play back commercially available standard MIDI files. {wymanpiano.com}





YAMAHA | DISKLAVIER E3

Easy Elegance

Yamaha Corp. of America's new Disklavier E3 is an entry-level Disklavier that features standard recording, CD-sync recording and video-sync recording, as well as playback. The system includes more than 450 built-in songs and Internet connectivity. Like the Disklavier Mark IV series, the Disklavier E3 supports Yamaha's Disklavier Radio and Music Store, giving users diverse entertainment options. Each channel includes a MIDI feed, enabling the Yamaha acoustic piano to play live, accompanied by specially recorded ensemble parts. yamaha.com



KORG | M50 73-KEY UNIT

Korg Keys In

Korg has added a 73-key unit to its M50 workstation line. The M50's streamlined, modern design includes an angled control panel for easy viewing and Korg's full-size TouchView interface in a mid-priced instrument.

The Extended Definition Synthesis sound engine delivers high-quality sounds and effects. Also new are a number of vintage keyboards, including the classic Korg SG-1 sampling grand and authentic electric pianos and clavs, along with 1960s-era tape playback strings and flute sounds. MSRP: \$1,899. korg.com

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DIVERSI | USB UPGRADES

Diversi Updates

Diversi has upgraded its product line with the integration of DSP (digital signal processing), which allows for future updates via USB. Also, DSP allows for instant turn-on rather than waiting for the boot sequence, which was in the former Linux-based system. In addition, there are enhancements in the sound and new features, such as tone controls, that can be accessed via MIDI. diversiorgan.com

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1 TAYLOR GUITARS SPRING LIMITED EDITION The 400 series of Limited Edition guitars is available as a 410ce-LTD, 412ce-LTD, 414ce-LTD or 416ce-LTD (pictured). Each guitar features honey-colored Tasmanian blackwood back and sides. The 400 series boasts a sloping Venetian cutaway and Taylor's Expression System for high-fidelity, plugged-in performance. MSRP: starts at \$2,698. {taylorguitars.com}

2 KAMAN OVATION 2009 COLLECTORS' SERIES The 2009 Collectors' series features a hand-selected, figured koa top for a full-bodied tone, while its lightweight body provides volume. An additional 200 pieces of abalone frame the top. Ovation's OP Pro Studio pre-amp features expressor/drive controls that accentuate each note when playing fingerstyle or single note passages. MSRP: \$3,599. {ovationguitars.com}

3 CORDOBA GIPSY KING GUITARS The gypsy-flamenco-pop group The Gipsy Kings and Córdoba Guitars have introduced two new signature guitar models that incorporate elements of the flamenco tradition but are ideal for pop musicians, as well. The GK Studio (pictured) is a thin-body cutaway acoustic-electric with a solid spruce top, cypress back and sides, and B-Band pickup system. MSRP: \$1,795. {cordobaguitars.com}

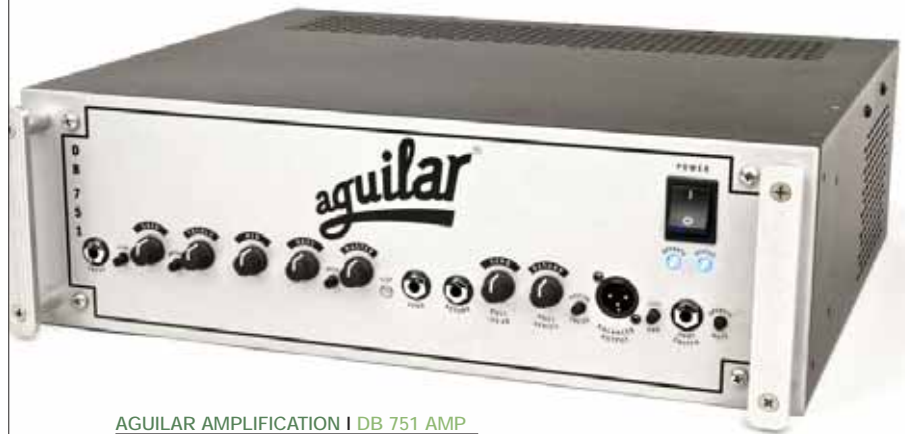
4 GODIN MULTIAC GRAND CONCERT DUET AMBIANCE The next generation of the electro/acoustic nylon string guitar, the Multiac Grand Concert Duet Ambiance features a dual-source pre-amp with feedback control and undersaddle transducer. It also has custom Fishman electronics that let the player select between four blendable sound imaging mic settings. MSRP: \$1,795. {godinguitars.com}



ERNIE BALL | COATED PHOSPHOR ACOUSTIC GUITAR STRINGS

Acoustic Coated

Ernie Ball's new coated phosphor acoustic guitar strings feature a proprietary enamel coating on the wound strings and a rust-resistant plating on the plain strings. In addition to the exclusive coating, all plain strings are reinforced with a patented winding of titanium wire around the lock twist of the ball end. ernieball.com



AGUILAR AMPLIFICATION | DB 751 AMP

Hybrid Amp

Aguilar Amplification's DB 751 bass amplifier features a new hybrid pre-amp that combines the tube-driven tone of the DB 750 with active boost and cut for greater EQ control. MSRP: \$2,695. aguilaramp.com

VOX AMPLIFICATION | TONELAB ST

Tone Laboratory

The ToneLab ST, the latest addition to Vox Amplification's ToneLab line of Valvetronix multi-effects modeling pedals, is a compact tone machine. It features an assignable expression pedal and two footswitches for live performance control. Guitarists can create 50 of their own programs or use any of 50 new preset programs, including 20 song-specific presets for recreating the sounds of classic rock tunes. MSRP: \$275. voxamps.com



AURALEX ACOUSTICS | ROOM ANALYSIS KIT

Sound Doctor

Auralex Acoustics is offering an easy-to-display retail kit that complements the company's Room Analysis Plus program for acoustical analysis. The in-store Room Analysis Kit comes in a user-friendly package that includes a Behringer ECM8000 omni-directional measurement microphone, USB drive with swept sine signals and instructional guide.

Users can record the sweep in any room. The files are sent, via e-mail, with the included room analysis form to Auralex for examination by its acoustical engineering staff. A written report is returned to the user within three to five business days outlining the room's acoustical issues and how to solve them. MSRP: \$299.99. {auralex.com}



AKG | LIMITED-EDITION D 7 LTD MIC

Subtle Voice

AKG has redesigned the limited-edition D 7 LTD vocal microphone. Its new, deep-drawing Laminated Varimotion diaphragm lets it be fine-tuned without extra tuning resonators. The D 7 LTD creates a subtle, full-bodied sound in all frequency ranges, but it also has the powerful resonance to be a dynamic microphone. The integrated high-pass filter eliminates all handling noises, and the acoustical-designed inner windscreen provides users with additional protection from interruptions in live applications. To further expand the durability of the microphone, an additional inner windscreen is included. {harman.com}



SONTRONICS | DELTA

Rugged Classic

The new Sontronics' Delta has been designed to deliver the classic tonality of a traditional ribbon microphone but with the added reliability and consistency that comes with active electronics. The Delta is ideal for miking electric guitar cabinets. Its sensitivity and 48V pre-amplified electronics deliver solid audio consistency combined with a significant improvement in signal-to-noise compared with traditional transformer-based ribbon mics. {sontronics.com}





JBL, GATOR | LOUDSPEAKER CASES

JBL Gets Gator

In an effort to make its portable loudspeakers easier to transport and protect, JBL has teamed up with Gator Cases to develop a line of bags, covers and cases for JBL portable P.A. speakers, including the EON, PRX and SRX series.

Gator will exclusively sell this case line to JBL dealers in the United States and to JBL distributors. The line currently features more than 25 models, including form-fitted bags for the new EON speakers.

{jblbags.com}



M-AUDIO | STUDIOPHILE MONITORS

Studiophiles

The new Studiophile CX8 and CX5 studio monitors from M-Audio are designed to bring accurate monitoring to any mixing environment. Available in 8-inch (CX8) and 5-inch (CX5) configurations, these monitors deliver well-balanced sound and detail. They feature a custom-designed waveguide that delivers flexibility in the production suite. MSRP: CX5, \$399.95; CX8, \$499.95.

{m-audio.com}



PEAVEY | EURO SERIES

Durable Precision

The Peavey Euro series loudspeaker enclosures use a dual voice coil and neodymium magnet design. The two-way, full-range Euro 115 (pictured) and Euro 112 enclosures use this new loudspeaker in conjunction with the Peavey RX 22 titanium compression driver. Patented asymmetrical Quadratic Throat Waveguide technology eliminates distortions commonly caused by drivers pushing high sound-pressure levels to deliver precise sound reproduction.

The Euro series comes housed in light, nine-ply enclosures and is protected by a HammerHead coating. It also features full-length, 16-gauge, powder-coated, perforated metal grilles designed for durability.

{peavey.com}



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TOCA | SHEILA E. SIGNATURE SERIES

Signature Retro

Toça's new Sheila E. Signature series includes congas, bongos and timbales. The congas tune with six tuning lugs and are topped with matched natural bison heads. The heads are seated with traditional rims and extended collars for maximum resonance. The bongos' hourglass shape provides additional comfort for seated players. The timbales have configured steel rims with five recessed tuners, so timbaleros can play rimshots without shattering sticks against the tuning bolts. [{tocapercussion.com}](http://tocapercussion.com)



LUDWIG | LIVERPOOL 4

Ringo Returns

Ludwig's Black Oyster Pearl drum finish made its debut on "The Ed Sullivan Show" with Ringo Starr. In the spirit of that kit, Ludwig is now offering the Liverpool 4 in original Black Oyster Pearl finish.

The Liverpool 4 has a three-ply shell and is the first Legacy kit to feature standard-sized, classic lugs, along with a new Rail Console tom mount. The first 100 sets will feature Ludwig's 100th anniversary badge on each drum. MSRP: \$4,285, stands not included. ludwig-drums.com

SABIAN | ARTISAN TRADITIONAL SYMPHONIC CYMBALS

New in the Vault

The new Artisan Traditional Symphonic cymbals are Sabian's first orchestral models to be included in its Vault Collection. Created in response to calls from top percussionists for cymbals that would equal or outperform current models, the Vault Artisan Traditional Symphonic pairings are crafted from Sabian B20 bronze, feature high-density hand hammering and are available in 16- to 20-inch sizes. sabian.com





TYCOON PERCUSSION | NGOMA DRUM

Africa's Dance

Tycoon Percussion has added the Ngoma drum to its Dancing Drum series. The 42-inch tall drum is of West African descent and is handcrafted from environmentally-friendly Siam Oak.

Tycoon's Dancing Ngoma Drum features an authentic goatskin head and traditional tuning system made from 5-mm, non-stretch rope. It comes with a sound-enhancing drum stand or a self-standing model in an African-style fabric wrap. It's available in a mahogany satin finish.

{tycoonpercussion.com}



MEINL | STUDIO TAMBOURINES

Super-Dry Jingle

The new Meinl Headed Super-Dry Studio tambourines feature hand-hammered brass jingles for an extra-dry, trashy sound. They are mounted on a wooden frame with a goatskin head. They're available with one or two rows of triangle jingles. MSRP: \$94-\$124.

{meinlpercussion.com}

BRADY DRUMS | KOSAKA SNARE

Bamboo Beats

Brady Drums has dubbed its bamboo block snare drum the Kosaka model to honor Tat Kosaka, longtime president of Pro-Mark Japan. The drum is made of bamboo in block (stave) construction. It's available in 14-inch diameter in depths of 4.5, 5.5 and 6.5 inches. The drum has an oil finish that's hand-rubbed with an application of high-grade carnauba wax and buffed. The bamboo offers a much higher note than traditional timbers, allowing for a powerful but sensitive sound. {bradydrums.com.au}



JUPITER | 675N BASS CLARINET

Bass Step-Up

Jupiter has added a new bass clarinet to its intermediate line. The 675N bass clarinet supplements the 673BN as a value-added school bid model. The 675N features an ABS resin body with adjustable floor peg, inline trill keys, adjustable thumb rest and an Eb key on the body that protects it from damage. The bass clarinet has a two-piece body that fits into a multi-compartment case, which makes travel easier.

{jupitermusic.com}



YAMAHA | YCR-9435 CORNET

Transition Cornet

The Chicago Symphony's John Hagstrom helped Yamaha design the new YCR-9435 custom cornet in the key of C. The cornet uses a trumpet mouthpiece receiver. It also features an overall design derived from the Yamaha Chicago model C trumpet, which includes the MC1 leadpipe taper. This design element facilitates an easier transition between trumpet and cornet playing. MSRP: \$4,950.

{yamaha.com}

CONN-SELMER | HAND FLIPPER

Conn-Selmer Flips Over Horns

Conn-Selmer's Conn and Holton Professional horns will now be available with the hand flipper option for the left hand. This new feature will provide players with greater comfort when standing onstage or when they want to take some pressure off their left hands during a performance. The hand flipper can be adjusted with two Allen wrench screws, and the wrench is included.

{connselmer.com}





WILLIAMS FLUTES | FOSTER EXTENSION

Flute Friendly

Williams Flutes' Foster Extension is a new flute upgrade that resolves the discrepancy between the actual physical length of a flute tube and the acoustic-sounding length of the generated wave form. When applied to the end of the flute foot joint, it magnifies projection and adds complexity to the tone. The extensions are designed to improve either a B or C foot joint.

{fosterextension.com}

D'ADDARIO | REED GARD II, IV

Impulse Packaging

Rico's Reed Gard storage cases are now available in compact blister packs that promote impulse purchases. The packs let retailers display the reeds in high-traffic areas. They are also easy to inventory for accommodating mail-order sales.

"The Rico Reed Gard blister packs are a great way for retailers to increase profits in every sale transaction," said Robert Polan, Rico's product manager. "[They] are a great add-on for every sale."

MSRP: The Reed Gard II, \$4.50-\$6.25 for two-packs; Reed Gard IV, \$4.75-\$5 for single packs.

{ricoreeds.com}



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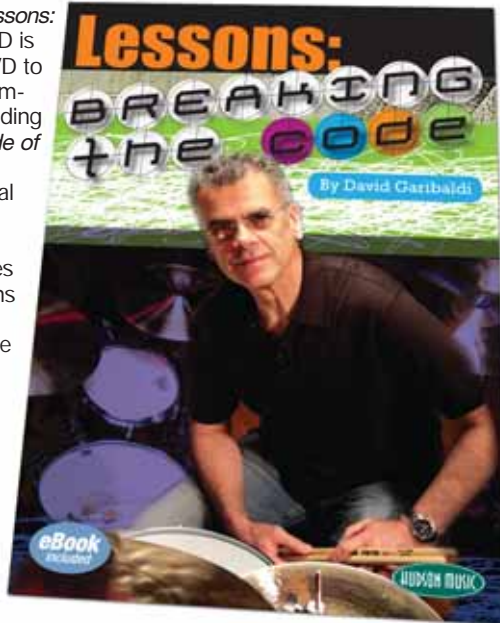
HUDSON MUSIC | 'LESSONS: BREAKING THE CODE' DVD

Know the Code

Hudson Music's new *Lessons: Breaking The Code* DVD is the second instructional DVD to feature Tower of Power drummer David Garibaldi. Expanding on the first installment, *Code of Funk*, *Breaking The Code* offers an overview of general concepts and techniques used to create funk drumming sounds, and it includes Garibaldi's own contributions to the style.

The two-hour, 20-minute DVD includes demonstrations and dissects the patterns Garibaldi used in the classic songs "Page One" and "Pocketful Of Soul." A 47-page, printable e-book is included and covers all the material on the DVD. MSRP: \$29.95.

{hudsonmusic}



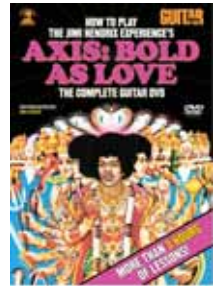
ALFRED | 'GUITAR WORLD' DVDS

Enter Guitar World

Alfred has partnered with *Guitar World* magazine to distribute its DVD series. The *Guitar World* DVD series includes 11 DVDs and new titles that will be released on a quarterly basis. Two of these showcase the music of Jimi Hendrix, including *How To Play*

The Jimi Hendrix Experience's Axis: Bold As Love and *How To Play The Best Of Jimi Hendrix Experience's Electric Ladyland*. Hendrix authority Andy Aledort takes players through both Hendrix albums with more than three hours of lessons. Other DVDS include *How To Play Blues & Blues Rock Guitar*, *Beginning Rock Guitar* and *Learn Shred Guitar*. MSRP: \$14.95; Jimi Hendrix editions, \$19.95.

{alfred.com}



GUY'S PUBLISHING GROUP | 'GUY'S GRIDS'

Grid Guides

Guitarist Guy McRoskey addresses chord mastery in his new book, *Guy's Grids*. It includes more than 2,000 open chord forms and 700 moveable chord forms.

Guy's Grids is divided into four major tabbed sections: Open Chord Grids, Moveable Chord Grids, Open Chord Index and Moveable Chord Index. Each grid page includes a practice progression utilizing the chord forms on that

page. The included CD contains a play-along track for each practice progression. MSRP: \$69.95.

{guysgrids.com}



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AMERICAN DJ | MEGA BAR 50 RGB

Mini Mega Bar

American DJ has added the smaller-sized Mega Bar 50 RGB model to its Mega Bar series. It's a bright, DMX-compatible, indoor RGB mixing bar that's 1.5 feet in length — half the size of the original. The trimmed-down size makes the mixing bar ideal for smaller venues. Despite its size, the unit delivers the same LED technology, such as the ability to create any color via RGB mixing. MSRP: \$259.95.

{american
dj.com}



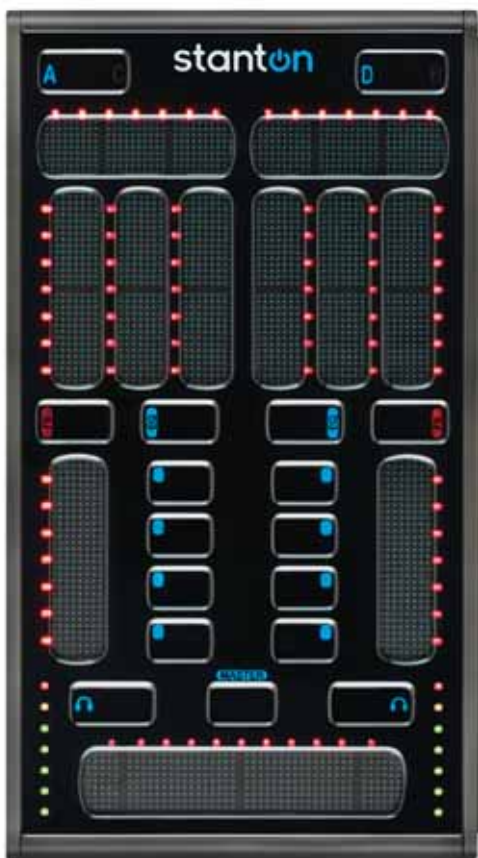
STANTON DJ | SCS.3M CONTROLLER

Touch-Sensitive

Stanton DJ's new SCS.3m is a portable MIDI controller with a unique control surface that emulates the layout of a traditional, two-channel mixer but is touch-sensitive and features StanTouch technology. Each SCS.3m will ship with a new version of Native Instruments' Traktor LE, which is based on the latest Traktor Pro software platform. This lets SC System 3 products work together to create a full DJ system with intuitive control.

The touch-sensitive sliders can be used to tweak EQs, letting DJs bring in different elements of a song during a mix or instantly switch the sliders to control FX parameters within Traktor LE. The wide, touch-sensitive crossfader allows for seamless, slow blends between decks, but it's also able to detect multiple finger presses for quick transform effects in one control surface.

{stantondj.com}



DENON DJ | DN-X1100 MIXER

Caught in the Crossfade

A companion piece to Denon DJ's DN-S3700 digital media turntable, the new DN-X1100 is a 12-inch, table-top, rack-mountable analog matrix mixer. In addition to eight analog line inputs and three-phono-switchable capability, it features a Flex Fader with tension adjustment. Four 60-mm VCA channel faders provide level control, and a 45-mm VCA crossfader offers contour adjustment. The crossfader has A-B post channel assignment capability, and the fader-start trigger is compatible with all Denon DJ CD/MP3 players. The independent PFL channel meters help optimize and match levels for each source, ensuring a smooth transition between sources when crossfading. MSRP: \$799.99. {denondj.com}

NUMARK | HDMIX MOBILE DJ SYSTEM

Traveling DJ

Numark has launched the HDMIX, an all-in-one DJ system that gives users the tools to perform anywhere. It only requires a pair of powered speakers or a connection to the venue's house PA. HDMIX is also a CD player with standard controls, an iPod and USB-device mixing station, and a computer that plays MP3 and other digital files from its upgradeable hard drive. The unit's on-board, high-definition, color LCD and alphanumeric USB keyboard enable DJs to access music tracks easily. MSRP: \$1,299. {numark.com}



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We have been focusing on cross-promotional events. We provided a player piano for a special event at a high-end auto dealer and had a musician perform at a local bookstore author signing event. E-mail is our main source of communication for informing clients in our database of upcoming events. Our recital hall is also used for meetings held by banks and financial groups. We keep positive and find time for laughter each day at our store. We can't change the economy, but we can run an efficient operation, keep costs down and continue networking.

>>>

Camille Scheidemann
Frank & Camille's East
Melville, N.Y.

We are engaged in more seed-planting events in an effort to increase our customer base. For the first time ever, this past November and December, we rented space next to Santa at the mall. We displayed a Yamaha Disklavier and offered a raffle to win a Yamaha portable keyboard or a weekend with a Yamaha Disklavier. This event generated more than 300 new leads.

Another first-time, seed-planting event was when we partnered with Yamaha for the Red Piano Tour. We placed Elton John's red piano at the luxurious Garden City Hotel in Long Island, N.Y. They were delighted to display and play Elton John's Disklavier. The piano created ownership awareness among a wealthy clientele. And the hotel owner is currently negotiating with us to purchase a Yamaha Disklavier for the hotel.

>>>

Grant Billings
Steinway Piano Gallery—Madison
Madison, Wis.

I just went through a process where I had a salesperson who left. I decided that, instead of hiring another salesperson, I'd bring in someone to help me with administration tasks. That has really turned out to be fantastic because now I have time to talk to every customer coming through the door. No one is going to do a better job with customers than you [the owner].



>>>

Kathi Kretzer
Kretzer Piano
West Palm Beach, Fla.

How are you **adapting** your piano business to the recession?

I'm going out into the community even more. We were on the news not long ago because we have a new piano lesson program for young people at the Boys & Girls Club in Riviera Beach, Fla., where 77 percent of the people have household incomes below \$29,999.

The program will provide piano lessons to 48 students, and we envision it will eventually be offered at all six stand-alone Boys & Girls Club facilities.

We've been saving pianos for a couple of years to be donated to the Boys & Girls Club in hopes that we could find children in need who wanted

to play. But I had to wait until I could get a teacher and a lesson program in place, which just happened two months ago.

We were in the news for all this in April. It started when the general manager of the CBS station affiliate called me and [asked], "Can you do me a favor? We're just tired of all the bad news."

So we gave them some good news. We delivered seven pianos to seven children in Riviera Beach. The tuners donated their tuning services, and the movers donated their time, as well. My entire staff and I cleaned up these pianos. Some of them were so nice. I could

have sold one of them for about \$3,000.

A camera crew and a reporter from CBS followed us in their trucks. They came with us to all seven homes, and they scheduled it so we'd visit one home at noon and have a live broadcast. These kids were so thrilled. Everyone was in tears.

And then our NBC affiliate did a full story on the donations that aired April 13.

We always try to get as much media out there as we can because, even if people aren't buying today or tomorrow, when they are ready to buy, we want them to think of us.



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