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SEPTEMBER 2009 | MUSICINCMAG.COM

# THE BIG BEAT

Nine drum retailers,  
one noisy day, a  
year of kick-ass  
sales and publicity

{PAGE 54}

'Best In Show'  
Coverage

{PAGE 36}

Supplier  
Contract Pitfalls

{PAGE 42}

Leveraging  
Boutique  
Drum Brands

{PAGE 62}

The Decline of the  
Piano Industry,  
An Alternate View

{PAGE 48}

Dale's  
Snags Local,  
National  
Clients

{PAGE 13}

Mat Donaldson of  
Drum World Tulsa







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# INSIDE



Photo by Nathan Harmon

Mat Donaldson

## THE DRUMS & PERCUSSION ISSUE

### 54 | MAKING NOISE

Last November, nine retailers joined in The Big Beat, an annual extravaganza of all-things drums and drumming. One year later, the community accolades, positive PR and even residual sales keep on coming.

### 28 | 2009 SUMMER NAMM

2009 Summer NAMM had a scaled-down presence compared to last year's convention, and still, the show has never been more vital. Here's why.

➤ PLUS: 'Best In Show' coverage

### 62 | THE BOUTIQUE ANGLE

Several retailers leverage their boutique drum kit brands to differentiate themselves and create new customers.



Gary Forkum

## GEAR >

65 | DRUMS & PERCUSSION

68 | GUITARS, AMPS & ACCESSORIES

70 | AUDIO & RECORDING

72 | BAND & ORCHESTRA

74 | PIANOS & KEYBOARDS

76 | PRINT & MULTIMEDIA



82 | ASK THE RETAILER

➤ Drum merchandising ideas

## »»» RETAIL

13 | PROFILE

➤ How Dale's Drum Shop sells goodwill

16 | NEWS

➤ Steinway cuts off Jordan Kitts stores  
 ➤ Biascos accused of nearly \$1M in fraud

## SUPPLY <<<

23 | PROFILE

➤ Montreal Guitar Show goes electric

24 | NEWS

➤ Yamaha Percussion turns 25  
 ➤ Mel Bay goes direct, involves dealers

## IDEAS >>>

39 | INDEPENDENT RETAIL

➤ Eschliman offers strategies for celebrating new musicians

40 | STREETWISE SELLING

➤ Smith on how to answer, 'I'm just looking'

42 | LESSONS LEARNED

➤ Rosenbloom reveals the dangers of vendor agreements

44 | THE CUSTOMER WHISPERER

➤ Billings discusses how to put together a talent showcase

48 | MY TURN

➤ Lewis on the demise of the piano market



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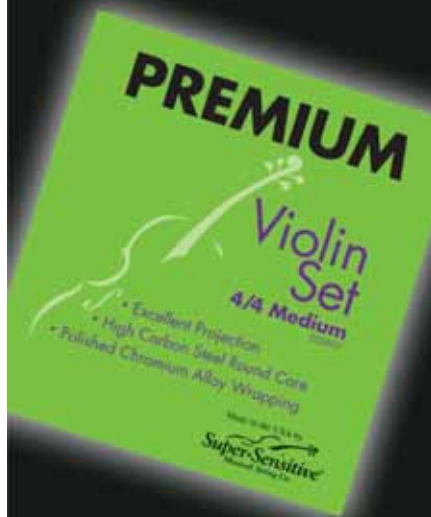


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# PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

## GET FIXED!

Two years ago, *Music Inc.* published “How to Fix Your Business,” a cover story to help prep music retailers for the next decade. We knew the article would hit home with our readers, but it turned out to be a doozy. Not a week went by in the following year that we didn’t get requests for reprints. And right when we thought the article had been forgotten, it resurfaced at this July’s Summer NAMM show.

During the “State of the Industry Address,” NAMM President and CEO Joe Lamond asked *Music Inc.*’s resident

financial expert Alan Friedman how retailers can survive the troubled economy. Friedman referred to “How to Fix Your Business” and the five strategies presented within the article. “If I were going to start a music store today, I would do these five things now,” he said.

These strategies made a lot of sense when the article came out two years ago. Now, they sound like gospel. They bear repeating:

- 1. Focus on music education.** This means offering private and group lessons for a variety of instruments.
- 2. Offer instrument rentals.** They can be extremely profitable when managed correctly.
- 3. Keep overhead low by constantly re-evaluating expenses.** The two exceptions are pay for good employees and rent. (A high-profile location can pay for itself, and then some, in brisk store traffic.)
- 4. Embrace technology, especially the Internet.** It’s an essential aspect of the present and future of retail.
- 5. As an owner, stay involved in your business.** Don’t place your store’s success or failure solely in the hands of managers and staff.

After the “State of the Industry Address,” I mentioned to Friedman how prophetic the article turned out to be. He agreed, adding, “I only wish more retailers had taken heed two years ago when the article came out. It would have made this recession a lot easier.”

If you didn’t take heed then, now’s the time. Dig up the June 2007 issue, or download “How to Fix Your Business” from our Web site, musicincmag.com, in the *Resources* section under “The Features.” It’s as good a roadmap as you’ll find anywhere.

If I had to add a sixth item to that list, it would be to promote regularly. Positive media attention, especially about charitable activities, transforms a company from a business into a local hero. And this edition of *Music Inc.* is full of promotional ideas. The cover story, beginning on page 54, looks at how a handful of drum retailers generated priceless PR and yearlong residual sales by hosting charitable events. Beginning on page 44, writer Greg Billings also discusses how he has turned his dealership’s talent showcases into gala charity balls. Good for community. Good for business. **MI**





Reality  
sets in.

Send

**Ninja92:** dude, a little gaming tonight? bring your drum controller

**Out4w:** can't

**Ninja92:** how come?

**Out4w:** my new Dixon Demon kit is coming in and gotta be home to get the delivery

**Ninja92:** WHAT?!

**Out4w:** LOL yeah I got a REAL kit. its friggin sweet too.

**Ninja92:** OK screw it...we're coming to your place instead

**Out4w:** ok, but you can leave the plastic guitars at home ROFL! 😄



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# LETTERS

## We Got Punk'd!

We thought something was awry with the press release for Moog's MF-106TC Analog Time Compressor. (See page 63 of *Gear* in our August 2009 issue.) And when the company's Marketing Manager Chris Stack extrapolated on the unit's features, saying, "You not only hear your note before the audience does, you actually hear it before you play it," we thought he was just being clever. Believe it or not, we've heard crazier marketing jargon from Mr. Stack.

But then a retailer brought to our attention the press release's date, April 1. The joke was on us. Shame on us for letting it get into the magazine.

As far as Moog goes, there's an old rule in journalism: Never write something in an article that you don't want in print. In that vein, shame on Moog for sending it. It may be next April Fool's day or longer before this magazine runs another Moog article.

— *The Music Inc. Editors*

## Bogus Buyer's Guide

I just received the store copies of the *2010 Guitar World Buyer's Guide*. It should read "Musician's Friend Catalog." The way the prices are printed with the MSRP and the Musician's Friend price on a large number of the major brands makes it seem like MF is the only place to get that low price.

In all cases, the MF price is MAP (minimum advertised price), but you cannot expect the average consumer to know that most independents also honor that price, as well. I'm sure that with the MF banners at the top of the page, it's all



**'I always enjoy Greg Billings' writing, and this one hits at an appropriate time. I'll put the content into action.'**  
— Tom Mapson

paid for, but why would any music retailer sell Musician's Friend catalogs in their stores, to their customers, for \$7.99?

*Bart Wittrock*  
Rockin' Robin Music  
Houston

## Uphill Battle

More of a roar than a whisper, ["What Went Wrong With the Piano Industry ... And How to Fix It," June 2009] was a great article. Most of the piano industry will certainly agree it will be an uphill battle to fix it. For those that are left, it should be doable.

*William Douglass*  
Madison, Wis.

## Right on Time

I just finished Greg Billings' latest article ("Motivating Employees in Difficult Times"),

published in the July issue of *Music Inc.*

Great stuff! I always enjoy [Billings'] writing, and this one hits at an appropriate time. Rest assured, I'll put the content into action during dealer visits. Keep up the good work.

*Tom Mapson*  
Yamaha District Manager  
Colorado Springs, Colo.

## Creating Demand

In reference to the article "What Went Wrong With the Piano Industry ... And How to Fix It" by Greg Billings, it is important to note that what went wrong with the piano industry is the same thing that has gone wrong with fine arts industries across America over the past 50 years. An increase in supply — more fine instruments, excellent teachers and education facilities — has combined with an escalating lack of demand.

Two recent publications that address the issue of the arts supply overwhelming its demand in American society are *Cultivating Demand: Arts Learning, Arts Engagement and State Arts Policy* by Laura Zakaras and Julia Lowell of Rand Research in Arts and *Engaging Art: The Next Great Transformation Of America's Cultural Life* edited by Steven Tepper and Bill Ivey. Both identify the lack of opportunities for meaningful and sustained engagement in arts making for the general public.

Each calls for public policy and private enterprise to develop ways to provide broad-based accessibility for engagement in the arts for people at all ages, community-wide.

We are finding a rich array of partnerships between businesses, education and commu-

nity services, where resources are being built upon each other, causing a positive shift in the business models in both the for-profit and not-for-profit arts sectors. For example: The Levine School of Music in Washington, D.C., a community music school that provides private and group music instruction for all ages; Ruth Eckerd Hall in Clearwater, Fla., a performing arts center with interactive programs and performances developed in partnership with community service groups, as well as local city and county government departments; and Burbank Senior Artists Colony in Burbank, Calif., an urban retirement complex where older adults are engaged as artists, volunteers and mentors.

We applaud recreational music making collaborations that are bringing more opportunities for arts engagement into homes and community centers throughout America. We invite you to join us in expanding this demand for service.

*Gay Powell Hanna*  
Executive Director  
The National Center for Creative Aging

## Correction

Ritmuller was incorrectly referred to as a German piano company on page 80 in the July 2009 *Gear* section. Ritmuller is owned and operated by Pearl River in Guangzhou, China. *Music Inc.* regrets the error.

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**Jim Pinkston Music, Gulfport, MS**

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



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**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*

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**Gelb Music, Redwood City, CA**

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


*Gelb Music*



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- > **Jordan Kitts Music**  
Loses Steinway at select stores  
**PAGE 16**
- > **Biasco Brothers**  
Accused of \$1M in fraud  
**PAGE 17**
- > **Battle of the Bands**  
Bill's, Daddy's, Music & Arts  
**PAGE 18**
- > **Hofman Music**  
Hosts student-run rock camp  
**PAGE 19**



# RETAIL

DALE'S DRUM SHOP | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

## SELLING GOODWILL

**R**ejjie Troup hasn't met some of his most loyal clients face to face.

As the manager of Dale's Drum Shop, he often speaks with these people daily on the phone. They're not Internet buyers — Dale's has yet to launch a full-fledged, e-commerce Web site. They're drummers who've stumbled upon the Harrisburg, Pa., drum shop as a result of its grass-roots marketing and reputation as a drummer's paradise.

"Once you get somebody in, say, Florida who has bought from you on eBay and asked if you had something [rare] and you actually had it, they're going to tell their friends," Troup said, citing his 4,000-square-foot store's deep stock of all things drums, percussion and accessories. "Word of mouth, by treating customers extremely well, is going to be worth more than putting up a great, big billboard."

Still, Troup said he can't stress the importance of Dale's local customer base enough. Gale Wise, company vice president and wife of Dale himself, added that she has lost count of how many times drummers come in to ask about an item that a chain store's staff claimed was discontinued.

"We'll take the time to call



From left: Rejjie Troup and Dale and Gale Wise, with the company's mascots

**That's Dale's Drum Shop's strategy for creating lifelong customers. Here's how it executes that in the day-to-day**

a [manufacturer] and say, 'Can we get this?' And suddenly, we're telling the customer, 'Not only can you get it, but they have it in stock.'

"It makes a huge difference, and that is really the only thing you can compete with, that goodwill."

**SPACE-SAVING MERCHANDISING**

It doesn't hurt that Dale's Drum Shop has one of the largest dedicated drum showrooms in the United States — a space that it uses wisely.

The company's industry-renowned hi-hat display, fashioned from a Paiste marching cymbal unit, holds more than 100 pairs of hi-hats at any given time. Each hi-hat pair on the rack includes a clutch, so customers can just pull off a

model and pop it on the nearby stand for fast try-out. The display lets Dale's show a gargantuan amount of gear in a small, uncluttered footprint.

The company has also rigged up a cymbal splash stand that can hold roughly 40 models. "A lot of stores don't have their splashes out," Gale said. "They're afraid of theft. They keep them behind the counter. But you can't sell them if they're not out. So we keep [that display] close to the counter. If we lose one every once in a while, it's worth it for the amount of them that we sell because people can

actually try them.”

In the company’s largest room, which boasts 25-foot ceilings, drum kits are stacked on industrial shelving and set up on the floor. And throughout the store, halogen track lighting gives product an air of luxury. Gale acknowledged that halogen bulbs are expensive and heat from the lights can add to the air conditioning bill during the summer months. That said, the lights also lower the heating bill during the winter.

“We want it to look like we care — because we do,” said Dale Wise, company president. “You might as well put in that extra effort to make sure it’s obvious.”

Product gets shifted around the store every couple of weeks. This gives gear more face time, bettering its chances of getting seen and sold.

“A guy might have walked in here five times, and for whatever reason, now he sees a drum set for the first time,” Troup said.

Dale’s employees also make a point to dust regularly. “Nobody wants to buy a \$3,000 drum set that looks used,” Troup said.

Gale laughed. “We should own stock in Swifter.”

**DEMOCRATIC PURCHASING**

Gale said her company’s robust selection has been key in keeping sales up this year. (“We’ve been hearing from everybody else that flat is the new up,” she said. “For us, sales are up.”) The Catch-22, of course, is a lot of money tied up in inventory. Here, Dale’s purchasing strategies help prevent inventory mistakes and save money upfront.

Choosing what to buy is a democratic process, according to Troup. All eight staff members



Dale’s Drum Shop’s hi-hat display has received recognition industry-wide. Each hi-hat pair has a clamp for easy try-out on the nearby stands



The company’s largest room has 25-foot ceilings. This is ideal for stacking kits in a way that keeps them visible but saves space

— representing varying ages and levels of retail experience — consult with one another. This checks and balances system has been especially helpful when deciding whether to carry new, untested items.

“We talk it over, see what everybody thinks, see which color might work and go from there,” Troup said. “That way, you’ve got all of your people on-board.”

Gale used the example of a new, striped snare drum that turned off all the older employees. “But the younger guys were like, ‘Wow. That’s really cool.’ You have to look at it both ways.

“Same with cymbals. You can have five guys listen to the same cymbal. Half of them will love it, half of them will hate it. You really need to mix

things up in order to excite at least *half* the folks out there.”

Gale also stressed the benefits of taking early-pay discounts from suppliers, especially in this economic climate. “Some [retailers] don’t do it. That’s crazy.

“The way the market is, if you put money in the bank, you’re not getting more than 2-percent interest. But if you get a 5-percent prompt pay on something, you can literally have money that’s not there.”

And if product doesn’t turn, Dale’s often blows it out at or below cost to generate cash flow.

**SPREADING THE WORD**

Dale’s Web site is decidedly bare bones, but that hasn’t stopped the company from

developing a national presence. In the Northeast alone, customers will drive a full day to visit the drum retail mecca. Word of mouth is largely responsible, but Troup said he also uses targeted *Yellow Pages* ads in major markets outside of Harrisburg.

“This year, I tried going more into the Philadelphia area because we had not hit it before,” he said. “With 8th Street Music Center having had a flood that closed the store, [Philadelphia] didn’t really have a pro drum shop.”

In October 2008, Dale’s invested in a drum kit played by Rush rock god Neil Peart to drive a little more traffic into the store. The piece of rock memorabilia, which Peart used at the Buddy Rich Memorial Concert, is set up on a 9- by 9-foot stage and has become a local attraction for fans looking to get their pictures taken amid its glory.

As far as events go, Dale’s was one of a handful of drum retailers to host the inaugural Sabian Vault Tour five years ago. The event gave customers an up-close look at the cymbal-making process and resulted in approximately 100 cymbal sales that day.

“As far as the long-term [sales] go that came after that, those were just gravy,” Troup said.

He also cited selling gear via Craigslist and eBay as being critical in expanding the company’s national customer base. All ads on these sites include a promotion for Dale’s, explaining that the store carries hundreds of drum sets and cymbals.

“I’d be crazy to spend the money to list the ad on eBay if I didn’t want to promote the shop,” Troup said.

Which is why he’ll keep taking calls from local and out-of-town fans alike. **MI**



NEW



# ROCK YOUR SALES



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## ROCK YOUR CUSTOMERS

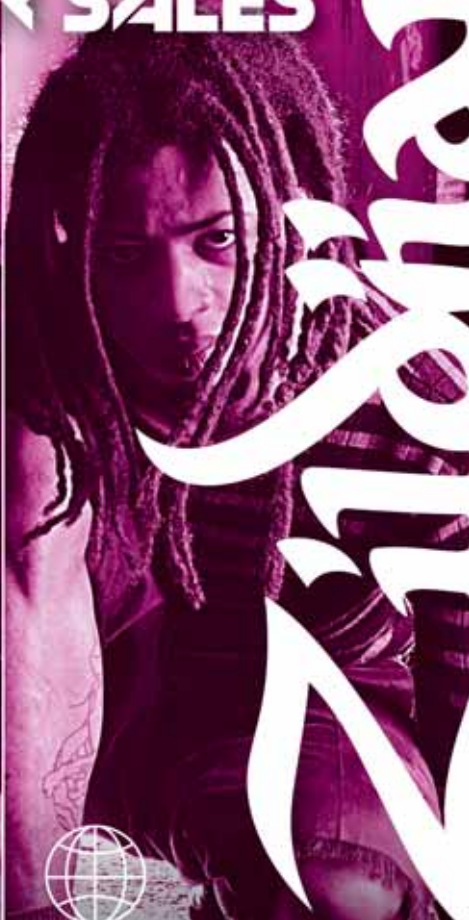
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Dealers will receive one Z3 DVD for each Z3 sku purchased, while supplies last. A great way to incentivize your sales.

### Lars Ulrich of Metallica Sweepstakes.

Consumers can enter to win a replica of Lars' kit courtesy of Zildjian and Tama. Entry coupons can only be received at participating Dealers, driving customers directly to you. The attractive counter card highlights the sweepstakes in your store.



## ROCK YOUR WORLD

Z3 is the third installment of the legendary Z line of Rock Cymbals. Made from the legendary Zildjian 80% copper/20% tin alloy, Z3 brings an unparalleled amount of Power, Projection and Playability. Oversized bells, large sizes and aggressive profiles provide ear splitting presence. Optimum thicknesses and advanced metalworking allow the cymbal to flex so that it doesn't feel like you're hitting a manhole cover.



# Zildjian



CULTURE

**A Cut Above**

Guitar Center has released its new compilation CD, *Fresh Cuts Volume 4*. The fourth edition in GC's *Fresh Cuts* series, the album is part of GC's GAIN program, which aims to give employees an outlet to pursue their goals in the music business.



The disc features recordings by GC employees that were hand-picked by alternative rock band Weezer.

EDUCATION

**Rick's Got Talent**

Rick's Music World student Mia Boostrom recently appeared in the NBC reality show "America's Got Talent." The singer/songwriter performed "Georgia On My Mind" during the first round of auditions in New York, and next, she'll progress to the Las Vegas round. If Boostrom wins this round, she will move on to Los Angeles where she'll compete in the public voting portion of the show. She frequently performs at Rick's Music World's open mic night.



AWARDS

**Keeping the Beat**

On June 12, Tracy Leenman, CEO of the newly formed Musical Innovations (above, third from right), received the Keep the Beat 2009 Music Advocacy Award from the Key's Program, a national initiative committed to improving the quality of life for seriously ill children through the power of music. Musical Innovations, Leenman's brainchild, is based in Greenville, S.C., and provides musical products and services to music educators, students and their families. She is currently South Carolina's representative to the Support Music coalition and the state's liaison for The VH1 Save the Music Foundation.

JORDAN KITTS MUSIC | DISTRIBUTION

**STEINWAY CANCELS KITTS IN D.C. AREA**

Steinway recently cancelled its distribution to Jordan Kitts Music's retail stores in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area.

This includes Kitts' locations in Fairfax and Sterling, Va., and College Park, Lutherville and Rockville, Md. Jordan Kitts will continue selling Steinway at Steinway Piano Gallery of Atlanta; its stores in Richmond and Virginia Beach, Va.; and Steinway of Chicago.

Steinway Piano Gallery of Washington, D.C., operated by David Slan and Gerry Malzone, will become the authorized Steinway dealer in the Washington, D.C., market.

Jordan Kitts executives said they believe acquiring the Yamaha piano brand played a large part in losing Steinway at their D.C.-area stores.

"Some months ago, Jordan Kitts Music had an opportunity to replace its mid-level Japanese piano offering, Kawai, with Yamaha after a competitor left the market," said P.J. Ottenritter, Jordan Kitts' vice president of sales and marketing. "At the

urging of our sales associates and music educators, this substitution was made, and Jordan Kitts was subsequently informed by Steinway that they would be seeking other representation in metropolitan Washington."

Todd Sanders, Steinway's vice president of sales and marketing, said the changes in Steinway's Washington, D.C., dealer network were made with careful consideration. He added that Slan and Malzone "have successfully represented the family of Steinway-designed pianos in the St. Louis and central Illinois markets for over 25 years."

Jordan Kitts is currently hosting Steinway liquidation sales at its metropolitan D.C. stores.

"Having been Steinway's most trusted retail partner for more than three decades and [the] recipient of its most prestigious awards, including Dealer of the Year last year, we look forward to representing Steinway product once again in metropolitan Washington at the earliest opportunity," Ottenritter said.

SWEETWATER | HONORS

**The Indiana Arts Advocate**

On July 15, Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels and the Indiana Arts Commission (IAC) announced that Fort Wayne, Ind.-based Sweetwater will be among the recipients of the 2009 Indiana Governor's Arts Award. The company will be honored, along with other recipients, during a ceremony on Sept. 25 at the Cornerstone Center for the Arts in Muncie, Ind.

"I am honored to recognize Sweetwater Sound for their significant investment and contribution to the arts in their community, our state and beyond," Daniels said.

The IAC awards program honors individuals, organizations, partnerships, businesses and communities that have made contributions to the arts in and beyond Indiana. Sweetwater has supported local arts organizations via donations, sponsorships, and in-kind products and services, such as free recording time in its studio and during live performances.

"The arts have been a major focus of my personal and professional life," said Chuck Surack, president of Sweetwater Sound. "This award, to recognize Sweetwater's support of the arts, is a great, great honor."



Sweetwater's Chuck Surack



## »»» ■■■■ RETAIL

PIANO EXPERTS | LEGAL

### BIASCOS ACCUSED OF \$1M IN FRAUD

**P**aul and Peter Biasco, the brothers who ran the now-closed Piano Experts of Naperville, Ill., are being sued for allegedly defrauding customers of roughly \$1 million. Members of Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office filed the lawsuit on July 30 in DuPage County Circuit Court in Wheaton, Ill.

According to a July 31 article in *The Naperville Sun*, Paul and Peter Biasco are being sued as representatives of the company and as individuals. They are being charged with violating the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act. According to the lawsuit, the Biascos had approximately 174 outstanding orders totaling more than \$975,000 in sales when they closed the Piano Experts' doors in January 2008.

The suit aims to bar the Biascos from selling pianos again in Illinois and fine them \$50,000 for every violation of fraud. According to *The Naperville Sun* article, Madigan's staff worked with credit card companies to eliminate more than \$300,000 in charges to the Piano Experts customers. Still, 36 complaints involved cash transactions, and that money has yet to be recouped.



From left:  
Stan and  
Jerry Keyawa  
with Mapex's  
Joe Vasko

PROFESSIONAL DRUM SHOP | ANNIVERSARY

### PRO DRUM'S GOLDEN BIRTHDAY

**P**rofessional Drum Shop in Hollywood, Calif., recently celebrated its 50th anniversary at the Avalon Theater in Hollywood. Several hundred attendees came out to hear the music of Emil Richards Big Band and Ronald Bruner Jr. Band. Mapex Vice President and General Manager Joe Vasko presented Pro Drum Shop owners Stan and Jerry Keyawa with a one-of-a-kind, commemorative Mapex snare drum. The 14- by 8-inch drum features a collection of graphics and photos documenting the dealership's history.

# ORLA

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Participants in West Side Music Center's Band Camp

WEST SIDE MUSIC CENTER | EDUCATION  
**NOT YOUR PARENTS' BAND CAMP**

Instead of playing *Guitar Hero* this summer, several kids in Joliet, Ill., opted to try the real thing at West Side Music Center's Band Camp. The program began in May and ended on Aug. 16 with a performance at St. Paul the Apostle School, dubbed Minipalooza '09.

Band Camp included six groups of guitar, drum and vocal students, arranged based on musical abilities and preferences. They met at West Side Music Center once a week after the store closed, where they were taught by the store's instructors — all gigging musicians.

Minipalooza '09 was free and open to the public. The showcase featured a demo of the new Bose L1 line array P.A. system. Concert attendees also got a chance to win a free spot on Band Camp's 2010 roster.

"We want to keep this experience as real as possible for the kids," said Mark Scherf, owner of West Side Music Center. "The instructors are only there to share their experiences, guide them and keep them on track."

# BATTLE OF THE BANDS

## MUSIC RETAILERS MAKE NOISE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES WITH SUMMER CONTESTS

### + BALTIMORE'S JAM-OFF

In July, Bill's Music of Baltimore and DayJams music camp hosted the annual Jam-Off, a battle of the bands competition. Contestants ranged in age from 8–15 years old. Primevil won best band and took home a \$500 Bill's Music gift certificate. Alex Cotsaris won best solo performer and received a free week's tuition to DayJams music camp.

### + BATTLE FOR BERKLEE

Daddy's Junky Music recently teamed up with Berklee College of Music to hold its second annual high school guitar competition, Battle for Berklee. Eleven performers competed at Daddy's Boston location. The winner, 19-year-old Cory Sterling of Portland, Ore., (pictured above, second from left, with Daddy's, Fender and Berklee executives) received a scholarship to Berklee's Summer Guitar Session Program, a \$500 gift card to Daddy's, a Fender amplifier and an Ovation iDea guitar.



### + HOLLYWOOD TALENT

Music & Arts of Cypress, Calif., and Musicorp sponsored a battle of the bands contest on May 31 at the Roxy Theatre in Hollywood, Calif. Eleven bands competed, all Music & Arts students ranging in age from 10–52 years old. The Rock Nerds, which consisted of 6-year-old guitar player Masyn Avila and bass player Matt Cesena, won first place.

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From left: Hofman Music's Tommy Baudoin, Pearl kit winner Jack Jambon, kit recipient Chris Rome and Hofman's Troy Percle



HOFMAN MUSIC | EVENTS

## Hofman's Student-Run Show

Hofman Music recently held a two-session Rock 'n' Roll Summer Camp at its Thibodaux, La., location.

No lessons were given during the camp. Instead, participants, who ranged from ages 10-18, took an active role in putting on a concert, where they managed, promoted and performed in the production.

At the end of the second session,

camp sponsor Pearl held a drawing for all participants. The grand prize, a VX Vision birch drum set, went to Jack Jambon. Jambon, not a drummer himself, gave the grand prize away to his friend and fellow camper, Chris Rome.

Co-sponsor Hofman Music gave away a flame-top electric guitar to the runner-up.

## »»» RETAIL

### CLINICS & APPEARANCES

#### Numero Nuno

Funky Munky Music held a meet and greet with Extreme guitarist Nuno Bettencourt on July 23 at its Shawnee, Kan., location. He signed autographs and posed for pictures.

#### Cosmic Clinic

Galaxy Music in Cumming, Ga., hosted the Yamaha Jeff Lorber/Motif event, where Lorber conducted a clinic and performed several songs. Pictured above (from left) is Galaxy's Darryl Crawford with Lorber and Buzz Williams, who won a Yamaha Audiogram 6 computer interface.



#### A Night of Famularo

Rieman Music hosted drummer Dom Famularo at its Urbandale, Iowa, location on July 14. The night opened with Famularo soloing, followed by a discussion of how he developed his style and technique. It concluded with a meet and greet.

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# NAMM<sup>®</sup> News

SEPTEMBER 2009

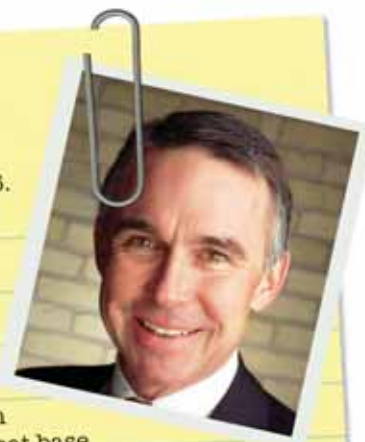
*"We're Going After the Freeway..."*

## NAMM Resources to Grow Your Business

You know about the NAMM Show, where the industry gathers to network with peers, learn valuable business strategies at NAMM U and Idea Center sessions, and conduct buyer meetings to build your inventory. But did you also know that NAMM provides savings on everyday business services like shipping and merchant credit/debit processing? Or that NAMM is encouraging the general population to become active music makers? These efforts help bring customers right to your door each day. During these challenging economic times, be sure to take advantage of these great opportunities...

### Note from ~~Joe~~ Tom

Schmitt Music has been helping people become music makers for life since 1896. We operate ten stores in Minnesota and six stores across the Midwest with nearly 400 employees, many of whom are professional musicians. It's our privilege to help more than 10,000 children join their school band or orchestra each year, and teach over 5,000 lessons each week. But even with our many years of experience and a great base of loyal customers, I can honestly say that being a business owner is tough right now. It's times like these that challenge all of us to manage every aspect of our business better than we ever have before.



I've found that taking good care of our customers and employees, conducting our business with dedication, enthusiasm and integrity, and providing products and services that help our customers pursue their musical dreams have all been keys to our success. In addition, our years of Membership in NAMM have provided us with a wealth of resources. We've grown the strength of our company and our brand by attending NAMM shows, sitting in on every possible NAMM U session, networking with our peers and taking advantage of the association's customer-building market development programs, which have helped grow the music making population across the nation.

It's an honor for me to assume the role of Chairman of the NAMM Board of Directors and, as I do, I am again reminded of the many wonderful business-building resources available to all active Members of NAMM. I thought I'd take this opportunity to remind you as well. After all, in times like these, all of us can use all the help and support we can get. Take it from me—NAMM is here to help.

**Tom Schmitt**  
**President & Chairman of Schmitt Music**  
**Chairman, NAMM Board of Directors**

### Member Services

On behalf of its Members, NAMM has negotiated with companies to provide the most competitive business products, rates and services possible. You can participate in one or more of NAMM's endorsed business service programs, including merchant credit/debit processing, check services, gift cards, shipping and freight services, store-branded consumer financing, workers' compensation insurance, school lease/purchase plans, and NAMM's newest Member benefit: access to health insurance options through Mercer.

### Public Affairs and Government Relations

NAMM actively represents the needs of business owners on Capitol Hill by addressing causes that affect our industry, such as healthcare reform, sales tax issues and Internet purchase legislation. Additionally, NAMM campaigns for music education, which not only helps kids grow and learn, but also supports the growth of our industry.







## Market Development Initiatives

One of NAMM's many goals is to provide Retail Members with marketing tools and opportunities to help increase store traffic, broaden and strengthen your customer base, and encourage community involvement through direct-to-consumer marketing. Programs like Vans Warped Tour, Drum Corps International, the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus and SchoolJam USA are all designed to help drive brand-new potential customers into your store. Be sure to get involved today.

## Wanna Play?

NAMM's consumer-facing *Wanna Play?* campaign shows the 82 percent of people who think they can't play but would like to that they can! This PR-based initiative puts music making into the media spotlight. Member stores can benefit from this effort by participating in Wanna Play Music Week activities each May and by promoting *Wanna Play?* contests and events throughout the year. Hangtags and brochures can also help inspire would-be musicians to pick up an instrument and play. Order materials for your store and see all the cool initiatives NAMM is a part of by visiting [www.wannaplaymusic.com](http://www.wannaplaymusic.com).

Not sure which programs are right for you? Visit [www.namm.org](http://www.namm.org) for program information and to order support materials, or call NAMM's Member Contact Specialists at 800-767-6266 and they will be happy to help.



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NAMM News is published by NAMM. To keep up-to-date on the latest breaking industry news, sign up for our PLAYback Digital e-newsletter at [playbackdigital@namm.org](mailto:playbackdigital@namm.org).



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## MARK SCHULMAN (P!NK)

As an in demand drummer, Mark Schulman has manned the traps onstage and in the studio for such artists as Sheryl Crow, Stevie Nicks, Destiny's Child, Billy Idol, Simple Minds, Cher and since 2006, international superstar P!NK.

P!NK's current "Funhouse" world tour is a marathon trek that will keep Mark on the road into late 2010.

Throughout his arduous schedule, Mark relies on Staggcase® drum, cymbal and hardware cases to keep his signature drumset safe.



- > **Yamaha Percussion**  
Celebrates 25th anniversary  
**PAGE 24**
- > **Mel Bay**  
Sells direct online, involves dealers  
**PAGE 25**
- > **Fender**  
Appoints V.P. of international sales  
**PAGE 26**
- > **Tribute**  
Jim Chapin, George Fullerton  
**PAGE 27**

# SUPPLY

MONTREAL GUITAR SHOW | BY ED ENRIGHT

## MGS PLUGS IN

The Montreal Guitar Show (MGS) embraced some major changes this summer, welcoming electric guitar luthiers for the first time and moving to a larger, more suitable venue. Organizers also presented the show's first Tribute Award, which was received by British guitar hero Jeff Beck.

The third edition of MGS took place from July 3–5 at the Palais des congrès de Montreal, a grand, colorful exhibition hall located right down the street from the Festival International de Jazz de Montreal. More than 130 luthiers exhibited their handcrafted acoustic and electric instruments to a steady stream of guitarists and enthusiasts, who were eager to play-test and purchase what they saw.

**ALL THINGS GUITAR**

In addition to product exhibits, MGS presented dozens of workshops, mini-concerts and conferences hosted by guitarists, manufacturers, specialists and collectors. All MGS activities took place in one centralized location on a single floor of the new venue.

"Without a doubt, this is the best guitar show I've ever participated in," said Benedetto



Clockwise from top: BC Kingston's Brian Kingston, Godin's Robert Godin and Benedetto Guitars' Robert Benedetto

Guitars' Robert Benedetto, a first-timer who came with a cross-section of models, including the classic Cremona and the 16-inch non-cutaway Sinfonietta. "There is so much traffic, from the minute they open the doors in the morning until they close them at night."

Benedetto noted that his guitars range in price from afford-

able \$2,500 models to super high-end instruments that appeal mainly to collectors.

**A PLAYER'S SHOW**

Electric guitar-maker Robert Godin of Richmond, Quebec-based Godin Guitars was another show first-timer.

"These are strictly guitar lovers," said Godin, who exhib-

ited the Passion RG-3 single-coil guitar. "Here, you have the pulse of the musicians. They help us to see if we're going in the right direction. And I'm amazed: The first day at 11 a.m., it was full like this. It has been a very good experience."

Archtop builder Brian Kingston of Prince Edward Island, Canada-based BC Kingston gave out 500 business cards in the first two days of MGS.

"What I like most is the family that I belong to now," he said, noting the camaraderie among exhibitors. "I get more from the masters of the art here, who are only too willing to tell me things. I've only sold a couple of guitars at the show, but I've gotten tremendous interest from it, and it has put my name all over the place."

This year, Kingston showed his Cavendish Road line of 17-inch archtops (models P, E and I) and his Fusion double-cut-away thinline series.

"We all come here hoping to do business," Benedetto said. "It's very much a bottom-liner for all of us. But it's also to maintain a presence. Touchy-feely, happy — that's good. I meet a lot of old friends when I come to these events. I'm able to stay in touch that way." **MI**

VENTURE

**Edgy New Resource**

Hal Leonard and Premier Guitar have created *Guitar Edge*, a multimedia magazine resource for guitarists. *Guitar Edge* will make its debut with the September 2009 issue.



{[premierguitar.com](http://premierguitar.com)}

PERSONNEL

**Moore Flies Solo**

With more than 25 years of experience with Fender, Kaman and Ultimate Support Systems, Jeff Moore recently announced the launch of JMore Enterprises. He will use his knowledge to aid and implement sales and marketing strategies for companies looking to develop and distribute musical instrument accessories. {[gtrplyr36@aol.com](mailto:gtrplyr36@aol.com)}

SHOWS

**NASMD 2010 Meeting**

The National Association of School Music Dealers' next annual convention will be held March 24-27, 2010, at the Hilton Head Marriott Resort and Spa Hotel in Hilton Head, S.C. {[nasmd.org](http://nasmd.org)}

YAMAHA | ANNIVERSARY

# YAMAHA 25 YEARS ON THE MARCH

This year, Yamaha is celebrating 25 years of providing percussion instruments in national, collegiate and youth drum corps across the country.

"The enduring legacy of Yamaha percussion is closely linked to our rewarding collaborations with individual artists and groups all over the country," said Troy Wollwage, percussion marketing manager at Yamaha. "We're proud to celebrate this significant milestone."

EDUCATION FIRST

Promoting percussion education in the United States since 1984, Yamaha Percussion solidified this role by focusing on percussion clinics, summer percussion camps, its Sounds of Summer program, and support for drum corps and school music programs.

It has also worked with many collegiate marching bands, including The University of Arizona Marching Band, Duke University Marching Drumline

DCI contestants celebrate 25 years of Yamaha Percussion



and The University of Connecticut Marching Band, to name a few.

CELEBRATING ONLINE

To commemorate its 25th anniversary, Yamaha will launch a Web site later this year. A 25th anniversary banner can currently be seen around the country at national percussion events, parades and the Sounds of Summer camps. Yamaha is also highlighting the top 25 moments in Yamaha percussion on its Facebook page at [facebook.com/yamaha-percussion](http://facebook.com/yamaha-percussion) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/yamahaperc](http://twitter.com/yamahaperc). {[yamaha.com](http://yamaha.com)}

FENDER | CONSUMER

# FENDER RECALL

Fender issued a recall of about 90 units of its SWR Natural Blonde acoustic bass amplifiers on Aug. 3 due to a possible fire hazard. At press time, no incidents or injuries had been reported.

The recall involves model number 44-60600-000. The number can be located on the top rear panel of the amplifier. The amplifiers were manufactured in Mexico and sold by authorized Fender retailers between April 2007 through May 2009.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is advising consumers to stop using the amplifiers immediately and to contact Fender for a free inspection and repair. Fender is also directly contacting consumers. {[swrsound.com](http://swrsound.com); [consumerrelations@fender.com](mailto:consumerrelations@fender.com)}



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**WEBNEWS**



{coverband2010.com}

# Cover Band Online

Latin Percussion, Toca, Sabian, Genz Benz, Ovation, Gretsch Drums, Audio-Technica, Hercules, Schecter, Gibraltar, Musician's Friend and Harmony Central have joined forces to sponsor coverband2010.com, an online talent contest, which will provide an opportunity for aspiring musicians to perform at the 2010 NAMM Show in Anaheim, Calif.

Individual musicians can upload a video to coverband2010.com until Sept. 15 for voting by the public, which will occur between Sept. 16 and Oct. 15. The top five finalists in each instrument category will then be judged by a celebrity panel. The winners will receive more than \$40,000 worth of prizes, including an all-expenses-paid trip to the 2010 NAMM Show, gear from the sponsoring brands and the opportunity to perform before a live audience at the show.

{azumiflutes.com}

Azumi Flutes debuted a new Web site in August. The updated site offers product features and benefits, an educational resources section, and links to social networking, including free downloadable flute ringtones.



{blackswamp.com}

Black Swamp's new Web site includes increased product information and images, along with expanded snare drum navigation, audio samples, endorser information with an event calendar, and audio and video pages.

{halleonard.com}

Hal Leonard recently unveiled its redesigned Web site with new searching and browsing capabilities. Modeled after Hal Leonard's catalogs, the Web site's advanced search page uses 16 distinct criteria, including new fields (format, level and publisher code), to find products.



MEL BAY | TECHNOLOGY

# Mel Bay Gets a Shopping Cart

Shopatron, a provider of e-commerce solutions, has added Mel Bay Publications to its roster of clients. Shopatron will provide secure online checkout services that will attach to Mel Bay's existing product catalog.

Initially, Mel Bay will make products available for purchase with shipment or in-store pickup in the United States. It expects to launch e-commerce in the United Kingdom later this year. "With Shopatron, Mel Bay dealers will make additional sales and profit from consumer orders placed online," said Bryndon Bay, president of Mel Bay. {melbay.com}

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JOSEPH S. KNAGGS GUITARS | VENTURE

## PRS's Knaggs Starts Biz

In July, Joseph Knaggs, formerly the director of R&D and Private Stock at PRS, launched Joseph S. Knaggs Guitars. For the past 25 years, Knaggs designed and built instruments for PRS Guitars.

"I really look forward to utilizing

my skills as an artist and a luthier to create themes, ideas and designs that are close to my heart," Knaggs said. "The fact that these concepts and products are for my own company in the future make it that much more exciting." [jskguitars.com](http://jskguitars.com)

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## APPOINTMENTS

### FMIC Sends Gold Global

Fender Musical Instruments Corp. (FMIC) has appointed Jon Gold to the new and expanded role of senior vice president of international sales and market development.



In this new role, Gold will be responsible for driving growth in the Asian, European, Latin American, African, Middle Eastern and Indian markets, as well as FMIC's direct European territories.

He will also help with the integration of KMC products and the distribution of Taylor Guitars in Europe. Gold will serve as the primary liaison between FMIC and its partner companies.

Alfred has appointed Bob Durkee as the director of distributed products.

Hal Leonard has named Joseph Martin as the director of sacred publications for Shawnee Press, the company Hal Leonard acquired in June.



LudwigMasters Publications has named Joseph Galison as its director of sales.

Loud Technologies has appointed veteran salesman Kurt Metzler to the position of North American sales manager for EAW.

Lace Music Products has appointed Chris Adams to the position of vice president of international sales.



Rotosound has named David Phillips of A & R Marketing to handle its worldwide public relations.

Shure's Rick Renner has been named regional sales manager. In this role, he will be responsible for managing sales for Shure in the Northeast United States.



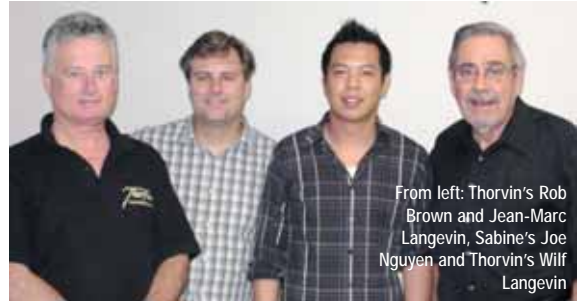
SABINE | DISTRIBUTION

# SABINE PICKS THORVIN

Sabine named Thorvin Electronics as the exclusive Canadian distributor for its professional audio, microphone and wireless system products, effective Aug. 1.

“With their professionalism and 35

years experience, I have no doubt that Thorvin Electronics will bring a new level of support to Sabine technologies, as well as our Canadian clientele,” said Doran Oster, founder, CEO and president of Sabine. ([sabine.com](http://sabine.com))



From left: Thorvin's Rob Brown and Jean-Marc Langevin, Sabine's Joe Nguyen and Thorvin's Wilf Langevin

## TRIBUTE

### George Fullerton

George Fullerton, co-founder of G&L Guitars and long-time friend of legendary guitar maker Leo Fender, died on July 4. He was 86.



Fullerton worked for Fender Guitar from its inception. While Leo Fender tinkered with designs that led to the creation of the Telecaster and Stratocaster electric guitars, Fullerton was charged with making those innovations practical for mass production.

When Fender sold his company to CBS Musical Instruments in 1965, he teamed up again with Fullerton to form G&L Guitars.

### Jim Chapin

Jim Chapin, jazz drummer and educator, died on July 4 in Florida at 89 years old.



In the early 1940s, Chapin began working on a drum instruction book that was published in 1948 called *Advanced Techniques For The Modern Drummer, Volume I, Coordinated Independence As Applied To Jazz And Be-Bop*. Still in print today, it became known among drummers simply as “The Chapin Book.”

Chapin also published *Advanced Techniques For The Modern Drummer, Volume II, Independence—The Open End* in 1971.

He spent his time teaching and presenting seminars around the world. In 1995, Chapin was inducted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame.

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- + 26% The decrease in attendance from 2008 Summer NAMM, which brought in 17,473 registrants as compared to this year's 12,967.
- + 21% The drop in exhibitors from last year's convention, which attracted 483 exhibitors as compared to this year's 383.
- + 145 The approximate number of first-time exhibitors at Summer NAMM.

# SHOWS



2009 SUMMER NAMM | BY ZACH PHILLIPS & JENNY DOMINE

## THE INDIE SHOW

Summer NAMM didn't break any records. Everything about the show was small: the attendance, the exhibit spaces, even the product itself, as suppliers showed accessories galore to help boost dealer margins in the slow economy. And yet most independent retailers who made the trek to Nashville, Tenn., couldn't have been happier.

Several big-name suppliers

2009 Summer NAMM opened up the playing field for small exhibitors

— Fender, Gibson, Kaman, Roland, Peavey and Korg — were absent or opted for a tabletop presence in The Club, NAMM's meeting room for

buyers. This opened up the playing field for newbies, many of which made a big noise at the Nashville Convention Center from July 17–19.

"This was probably one of the best shows that I've ever been to," said Rick Santos, owner of Rick's Music World in Raynham, Mass. "Because it wasn't as crowded, it really gave us time to look at the other vendors that we normally would walk by — because we didn't

1. Easy Music's Peter Dods; 2. From left: Kala's Rick Carlson, Levy's Harvey Levy, Mapex's Joe Vasko and Levy's Nikki Levy; 3. Bob Negen; 4. Hal Leonard's Larry Morton (left) and Amro Music's Chip Averwater, who recently completed his tenure as NAMM chairman; 5. Quinlan & Fabish's George Quinlan Jr. (left) and Jupiter's Tabor Stamper; 6. Willis Music's Dan Herbert; 7. From left: Amro's CJ Averwater, Heid Music's Todd Heid and West Music's Ryan West; 8. From left: Schmitt Music's Adam Grath, Tom Schmitt and Joerg Hermsen. Schmitt was recently appointed NAMM chairman; 9. The Music Room's John Giovanni and Chris Mitchell; 10. Music Freight's Nick Isasi; 11. From left: Rockley Music's Liane Rockley, NAMM's Joe Lamond, Friedman, Kannenberg & Co.'s Jen Lowe, and Music Inc.'s Kevin Maher



1. 3rd Power's Jamie Scott; 2. Ernie Ball's Kevin Scales; 3. Kyser's Nick Palmer; 4. CruzTools' Dan Parks; 5. StageTrix's David Ngo (left) and Leo Kopelow; 6. Wheatware's Katherine Patton and Warren Kirsch; 7. Fleabass' Doug Williams (left) and Dave Lee; 8. From left: XP Audio's John Fisher, Rick Bos, John Johnson, Paul Howard and Jeremy Geisler; 9. Lashbrook's John (left) and Larry Lashbrook; 10. Strings and Things' Chris Lovell; 11. S.I.T. Strings' Bryan Trembley; 12. Levy's Garth Giesbrecht (left) and Harvey Levy; 13. DBZ Guitars' Dean Zelinsky (left) and Diamond's Jeff Diamant; 14. Kay's Roger Fritz; 15. From left: Tanglewood's Erik Lind, Jeff Sazant and Jeff Cowherd; 16. Tregan's Tony Guarriello; 17. Crafter's Joey Arias (left) and Ryan Colton

have enough time — and spend some time with them. In many cases, some of the products they offered can really benefit a dealer in this economy.”

Some exhibitors reported slow booth traffic, including Dean Zelinsky, founder of DBZ Guitars, and Jeff Sazant, vice president of sales and operations for Tanglewood Guitar. More, however, said they had a strong convention business-wise, especially those who took advantage of pre-show promotions to drive retailers to their booths.

“The show has been outstanding, considering that there has been a drop in exhibitors,” said Bryan Trembley, an account rep with S.I.T. Strings. “We sent out 500 mailers, where if you brought them to the booth you got a free T-shirt. We blew through our giveaway stuff on the first day. It turned out to be a complete success. We closed about three to four new accounts the first day.”

“For us, this show has actually been better,” said John Lashbrook, a luthier who manned the Lashbrook Guitars booth. “I think we’ve had more people and more of the right people here than we did at winter NAMM 2008. For smaller companies, [Summer NAMM] gives that advantage: There’s not as much competition. You’re kind of lost in the shuffle at the big show. Here, I feel





like people are willing to make the rounds.”

“We signed up more new stores just in the first day than we did in the previous three NAMM shows,” said Warren Kirsch, co-founder and CEO of Wheatware.

Yamaha, the largest exhibitor at the show, kept its exhibit room outside of the convention hall. According to Rick Young, the company’s senior vice president, boost-

ing R&D efforts recently has been key in getting through the economic climate.

“We made a conscious decision to attend the show, knowing that other large and small manufacturers were not going,” Young said. “We were able to trim some expenses last year, which we did this year, as well, so while it is still expensive, we thought it was important for us to be there to connect with our retail partners, launch new products and show solid support for NAMM.”

at previous shows, the convention was big on innovation in small goods.

XP Audio launched the Morpheus DropTune pedal, which lets guitarists drop pitch on all six strings simultaneously for up to three and a half steps in half-step increments. It lists for \$260.

Lashbrook debuted the Naturacoustic

1. RoboKey's Alan Ox; 2. Zildjian's Ron Allman (left) and Gerard Donegan; 3. From left: Meinl's Chris Brewer, Alexander Meinl and Adam Anderson; 4. Yamaha's David Jewell; 5. Kelly Concepts' Jeffery and Kathleen Kelly; 6. Aquarian's Roy Burns; 7. From left: Dream Cymbals' Rodney Booth, Andy Morris, Jessica Anderson, Jim Simonian and Will Barnes; 8. Tama's Ed O'Donnell (left) and Bill Reim; 9. Panyard's Randy Kerns; 10. Tarpley Music's John Tarpley (left) and Remo's Bob Yerby; 11. From left: Ludwig's Kevin Packard, drummer Tony Hammons and Ontario Music's Todd Trent; 12. Paiste's Tim Shahady; 13. Sabian's Greg Zeller (left) and Peter Stairs

### SMALL IS THE NEW BIG

Huge things came in small packages among guitar and accessories exhibitors at Summer NAMM. More than

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piezo system, which John Lashbrook called “a self-contained acoustic guitar.” With a minimum advertised price (MAP) of \$370, this tiny device provides full, balanced tone on any guitar. To prove the point, the company let players demo the unit on a guitar with a concrete slab for a body.

“You can put it on anything you want, and you’ll get a great, acoustic sound,” Lashbrook said, gesturing to the guitar.

Capo makers got especially creative at NAMM. Spider Capo made its debut with a capo of the same name. This gadget lets guitarists capo each string individually, allowing for hundreds of alternate tunings without detuning. It lists for \$40, with a MAP of \$29.95. Weaseltrap released the

1. Alfred's Ron Manus (left) and Antonio Ferranti; 2. Charles Dumont's Agnes Widmann (left) and Michele Parker; 3. ProActive's David Hall; 4. Rock House's Joe Palombo (left) and John McCarthy; 5. MJS's Rich MacLeod (left) and Mark Sternal; 6. Farley's Dustin Cheatham (left) and Michael Farley; 7. From left: Freehand's Kim Lorz, Sarah Shreve and Chaim Rubinov; 8. From left: Hal Leonard's Courtney Van Der Ploeg and Brandon Lorenz, IK Multimedia's Dan Boatman, and Hal Leonard's Peter Carlson and Luke Edstrom

Harmonic capo, which features six individually adjustable soft rubber pads, letting guitarists produce harmonic tones when playing open strings. Kyser showed a series of partial capos, including the K-Lever Short-Cut. It gives players instant DADGAD tuning.

**SIMPLE SOLUTIONS**

Other small goods guitar suppliers pitched the convenience factor of their new wares. GuitarGuard launched





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## SHOWS | Summer 09 NAMM



1. American Way Marketing's John Musselman; 2. RS Berkeley's Ken and Gina Fragner; 3. From left: Olympus' Amy Leslie, Rob Baker and Thomas Miller; 4. Yamaha's Travis Goodwin; 5. EMD Music's Bert Wall (left) and Daniel Barker; 6. Reverend's Ken Haas (left) and Joe Naylor; 7. Alesis' and Akai's Eric McGregor (left) and Jim Norman; 8. D'Addario's Josh Touchton; 9. AIM Gifts' Perry Pinto

the NeverKink cable management device, which keeps guitar and bass cables secure. It can also be imprinted with a band or company logo and lists for \$3.

Ernie Ball rolled out a fishbowl-style dealer display for its Wonder Wipes. This includes an assortment of 100 instrument polish, string cleaner and fretboard conditioner packets.

"The wipes will street for a quarter a piece," said Kevin Scoles, who handles artist relations and marketing for the company. "Dealer cost is \$12.88 [for the full display], so the dealer makes about 13 cents a piece."

StageTrix used its first NAMM show to exhibit the Modular pedal riser. A simple steel frame that lists for \$20, it elevates stompboxes on a pedalboard's back row, so players avoid stepping on a pedal in the front row by accident.

Wheatware expanded its selection of biodegradable picks. The company now offers heavy guitar picks and thicker picks for bass.

"And if you put them into a compost

bin, after 90 days, they're going to turn into fertilizer," Kirsch said.

In straps, Levy's Leathers aimed for the house of worship market with new Christian-themed models. (Think cross and fish designs.) Reunion Blues also showed straps made from 100-percent merino wool.

### UKE CRAZY

In related guitar industry news, ukuleles were all the rage at the convention, with guitar and drum manufacturing stalwart Hoshino rolling out a uke line.

Major Music Supply also added the Limited series to its Makai uke line, with models featuring an ebony fingerboard, Aquilla strings, and a bone nut and saddle. Kala exhibited the U-Bass, a short-scale bass on a baritone uke body. And in other four-string news, Tanglewood drew some attention to its booth with J Bovier electric mandolin prototypes.

### AUDIO'S SHRINKING FOOTPRINT

Like guitar and accessory exhibitors, audio and recording vendors showed a robust selection of add-ons and smaller-profile, MI-oriented products.

In the why-didn't-I-think-of-that category, BreezSong's JamHub was among the show stealers. An attractive-looking silent



practice device for bands, JamHub connects instruments and mics and gives each player his or her own dedicated mix. It comes in three levels, ranging in street price from \$300–\$700, the most expensive of which records to an SD RAM card.

Akai's LPD8 laptop pad controller and LPK25 laptop performance keyboard controller are tiny USB-MIDI controllers, measuring less than 13-inches across. They require no software driver installation or wall power and can simply be plugged into computers. Each has a street price of \$70.

Carrying on the trend of portable audio recorders, Olympus launched the LS-11 digital linear PMC recorder. An upgrade from the previous LS-10 model, the LS-11

1. Nord artist Chris Martirano; 2. Hammond's Dennis Capiga (left) and John Gamino; 3. PianoDisc's Allen Guyot; 4. From left: Yamaha's Rick Young, Athan Billias and Tom Sumner; 5. Wyman's Tim Laskey

includes 8 GB of built-in memory. It has an estimated street price of \$399. Sony's new PCM-M10 model is 96-kHz, 24-bit capable. It has electret condenser stereo mics, 4 GB of internal flash memory and a Micro SD/memory stick slot. The unit lists for \$399.

Audio exhibitors also piggy-backed on the popularity of iPhone and iPod touch products. Peterson showed the iPhone and iPod touch adapter cable, which plugs an instrument or mic with a 1/4-inch cable directly into one of the Apple units via the headphone jack. Steinberg debuted a Cubase iC remote controller





**STARPHONIC**  
THE NEW SOUND FROM THE GOLDEN AGE

Tama takes a bold step with its new Starphonic snare drums. These four different snares represent the best of both worlds: modern technological advancements delivering the much-desired subtleties and nuances of vintage snare sounds.

Starphonic snares boast new features such as a quick release Freedom Lug, Claw Hook and Grooved Hoop for rapid drum head changes and enhanced tone. Plus a "Linear Drive" strainer with calibrated Ratchet Style tension adjustment knob. Super Sensitive Hi-Carbon Snappy Snares and a detachable butt plate are standard on all Starphonic snares.

The ultra-thin shells provide optimum resonance and pristine performance in any situation. The PBC146MNC features 8ply Bubinga with 1 outer ply of Matte Natural Cordia (7mm). The PAL146 offers a Seamless Aluminum shell (1.2mm). The PBR146 features a Nickel-plated Brass shell (1.2mm). The PMM146STM features 6ply Maple with 1 outer ply of Mappa Burl (6mm).

**TAMA**  
tama.com

PMM146STM

PBC146MNC

PAL146

PBR146

app for iPhone and iPod touch products. It controls Steinberg's Cubase and Cubase Studio 5.0.1 production systems.

## TWEAKED DRUMS

Drum and percussion vendors had smaller booths at Summer NAMM, but they were as loud as ever. Tama raised a big ruckus with its Starphonic snares. Based on a vintage design from the 1930s and '40s, they include new snare technology, such as a non-loosening, rubber gasket; detachable butt plate; and ratchet-style snappy tension adjuster.

"These are probably the most sensitive snares we've ever made," said Terry Bisette, Hoshino's U.S. division manager. "We're targeting a very different customer than the typical Tama heavy metal guy. It's all about being ultra sensitive for recording session drummers, maybe even jazz guys."

Ludwig was also blending vintage looks and new technology. Its Element SC drum kit features a new cherry and gumwood combination with revived classic finishes, including Mod Orange and Citrus Mod.

Mapex showed off the versatility of its snares with the new Black Panther "Big Cat," which is 14 inches in diameter and 8-inches deep. "The thing that makes this so special is the enormous tuning range," said Jeff Ivester, director of marketing for Mapex Drums.

## CYMBAL DOMINATION

All four major cymbal companies — Zildjian, Sabian, Meinl and Paiste — were at NAMM, along with several niche vendors trying to break into the market.

Zildjian prominently featured its new heavy-hitter, the Z3, while Sabian put R&D to work to create new cymbal

packs for the praise-and-worship market. Meinl showcased its Benny Greb Signature 20-inch sandride.

Supernatural Cymbals made its debut at Summer NAMM. "All of our cymbals are hand-made in Turkey," said David Hill, company CEO. "We have seven different series and entry-level, hand-hammered Turkish cymbals. It's a lovely show. People here have been really friendly."

## SCHOOLS KEEP B&O AFLOAT

Despite economic upheaval and a small showing at the convention, the B&O market remains strong, according to NAMM vendors who reported steady sales.

"The school music segment is strong because very few schools tell children not to get an instrument to play in the band program," said Steve Smith of Hunter Musical Instruments. "Because the economy is down, [retailers] are looking for less-expensive instruments, while still keeping their margins up and making the sale."

"We are worried about budget cuts, but it's still staying strong," said Yamaha's Travis Goodwin about the school B&O market. "Schools that have historically supported their arts programs are continuing to because it is driven by the parents."

## PIANOS GO TO CHURCH

Among the small gathering of piano vendors, organs and church-friendly keyboards were the dominant force at Summer NAMM.

Hammond unveiled the XK-3c, an affordable organ reminiscent of the classic B3. "This line is probably the hottest-selling line in Hammond history," said Dennis Capiga, senior vice president of Hammond.

"We're seeing young kids



[interested in organs], a lot more than I would have expected," said Mike Papa, national sales manager for Nord, which showed the red Nord C2 with Vox and Farfisa organ sounds.

The Yamaha 88-key S90XS and the 76-key S70XS fit the church market with their direct USB record and playback function. A combo input jack adds vocals or guitar to live performances.

The new Akai MPK88 keyboard at the Alesis booth came about after consumer requests. "We had a lot of requests for a fully weighted, hammer-action controller," said Eric McGregor, Akai product specialist manager. "There is no power supply. It's bus powered. The entire unit runs off your computer, and you're up and running."

## TIMELY PRINT SELECTION

Following the death of Michael Jackson, Alfred saw a huge spike in demand for the pop star's sheet music, according to the company's CEO Ron Manus.

"All the album [folios] are being put back in print as we speak," Manus said. "We have the *Number Ones* and *Thriller* in stock and ready to role."

1. From left: Bassists Quintin Berry and Vuyani Wakaba with Essential Sound Products' Michael Griffin and Will Taborn; 2. Peterson's John Norris; 3. Heil Sound's Bob Heil; 4. From left: BreezSong's Veronica Pierni, Chuck Nemitz, Steve Skillings and Dave McCarthy

Other timely Alfred selections included the new *Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince* movie songbook, official Woodstock 40th anniversary books and *Rolling Stone 100 Greatest Guitar Songs Of All Time*.

"Media is what keeps retailers relevant week to week to their customers," said Antonio Ferranti, Alfred's director of sales, national accounts.

Freehand Systems announced that its Novato Music Press catalog will be available for the Amazon Kindle. It also released classical sheet music for its portable, USB Sheet Music on a Stick series.

Hal Leonard's latest products were the result of recent distribution deals. These products include Music Sales guitar packs, IK Multimedia's Fender Amplitude software, Hohner harmonicas and Korg tuners.

"We're expanding more into accessories," said Peter Carlson, a district sales manager at Hal Leonard. **M**



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This two-channel, all-tube guitar amplifier is equipped with the best the world has to offer: rugged NOS tubes from Russian military suppliers, a powerful Celestion G12T loud-speaker, a genuine Accutronics long-spring reverb, and it's manufactured in Germany.

If you're asking why this high quality package comes with such a low price tag, well, it's our 25<sup>th</sup> birthday and we would like you to join the party!

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### MIKE GUILLOT

DIRECTOR OF PURCHASING,  
MISSISSIPPI MUSIC; HATTIESBURG, MISS.



#### + SOMETHING SMALL

**Kelly Shu Microphone**

**Shock-Mount and Isolation System**

This product has an internal microphone mounting system for all bass drums, accepts any microphone and offers an easily adjustable position for the microphone.

HONORABLE MENTION:

**GuitarGuard NeverKink**

GuitarGuard NeverKink cable clip keeps any size cable out of the player's way using a simple plastic device that clips to the player's guitar strap.

#### + GOTTA STOCK IT

**BreezSong JamHub**

It's a silent mixer with multi-input and individual mix control — five to seven inputs built in. JamHub includes XLR and other inputs on each channel, headphone outs, effects, metronome, phantom power, USB, a 4 GB disk recorder and more.

#### + COMPANIES TO WATCH

**Music Freight**

This company has unheard of customer service, and it saves retailers money on freight — that goes straight to the bottom line. You can also get online access to freight quotes and comparisons.



#### + BEST IN SHOW

**Yamaha S70 and S90 XS**

These retail at \$3,699 and \$3,799, respectively. The S70 XS is a 76-note, balanced, hammer-action synthesizer, and S90 XS is an 88-note, balanced, hammer-action synth. Both offer easy operation for split points, layering and transposition.

### TODD SKAW

OWNER, GUITARS ETC.;  
LONGMONT, COLO.



#### + SOMETHING SMALL

**Peterson iPhone Products**

Peterson's iPhone products include an adapter cable that lets instruments plug into an iPod touch or an iPhone and a tiny external mic that plugs into an iPod touch or an iPhone. There are currently over 100 iPhone apps for guitar. With an MSRP under \$15, I thought it would capture purchases from students, parents and non-musicians.



#### + GOTTA STOCK IT

**Pick Stick Guitar Pick Holder**

The cool thing about this product is the buyer doesn't need to know anything about the musician's likes or dislikes. It appeals to a female buyer, as it is a classy, small item that can be purchased in a variety of woods to match the home.

#### + COMPANIES TO WATCH

**Sensaphonics Hearing Conservation**

It has a genuine, heartfelt concern for the protection of hearing. The products are great for churches, schools and live acts in concert and club settings.

HONORABLE MENTION:

**G-Wiz Foot Loose**

#### + BEST IN SHOW

**Collings Guitars**

Collings is producing the greatest guitars the world has ever seen. Recent additions over the past couple years are electrics, mandolins and ukuleles. Hands down the best in show.

HONORABLE MENTION:

**Bourgeois Guitars**

Dana Bourgeois and Bonni Lloyd have a real passion for both their instruments and their dealers.

### MYRNA SISLEN

OWNER, MIDDLE C MUSIC;  
WASHINGTON, D.C.



#### + SOMETHING SMALL

**Score Marketing Squeeze Ball**

I picked it because it could help to build strength in the hand, but if it doesn't, it can't hurt you. I have had it in my store, and it sells well.

HONORABLE MENTION:

**Crafter Tuner**

I love this tuner. I sell a gazillion of them.

#### + GOTTA STOCK IT

**Souldier Guitar Straps**

These straps are made using recycled seat belt, vintage fabric and salvaged vinyl and leather end tabs. Company owner Jen Tabor has the rare Neil Young strap fabric, and her designs are very cool.

#### + COMPANIES TO WATCH

**Freehand Systems**

Freehand Systems Sheet Music on a Stick is a nifty flash drive that plugs into your computer. Freehand was the first company to have retail downloadable sheet music, and it continues to be very innovative.

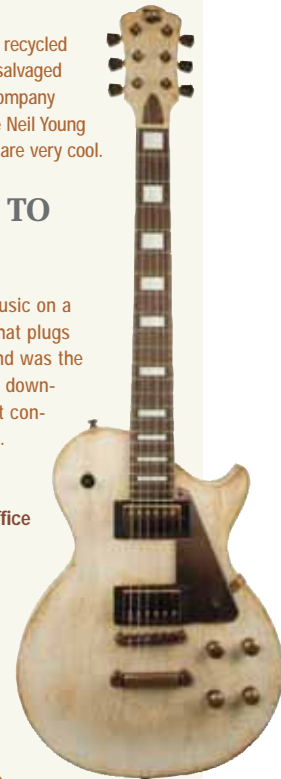
HONORABLE MENTION:

**U.S. Patent & Trademark Office**

#### + BEST IN SHOW

**AXL Badwater Single-Cutaway Guitar**

It's a great-looking guitar at a reasonable price from an excellent company. It has an MSRP of \$299. The Music Link has given me excellent service for the past five years. *And they came to the show.*





## GEORGE HINES

OWNER AND PRESIDENT, GEORGE'S MUSIC; BERWYN, PENN.



### + SOMETHING SMALL

#### Spider Capo

It capos each string individually, which enables open-string tunings, and you can finger above and below the capo.

### + GOTTA STOCK IT

#### On-Stage Stands RS7500 Amp Stand

It's a mass-appeal product that should get great turn and profit.

HONORABLE MENTION:

#### Kala Ukuleles

This is a company that carries a great selection of quality ukes. I like its breadth of selection and quality of product.

### + COMPANIES TO WATCH

#### Hoshino

Hoshino is a company that always stays fresh, looking for market niches and opportunities through constant research of industry trends.



### + BEST IN SHOW

#### BreezSong JamHub

This is a portable and affordable mixing console that allows musicians to practice in virtual silence, and each musician has his or her own private sound mix. It's a unique product that looks to solve an age-old problem for practicing musicians who need to control practice volume.

## JOHN GRABOWSKI

DIRECTOR OF PURCHASING, SWEETWATER MUSIC; FORT WAYNE, IND.



### + SOMETHING SMALL

#### D'Addario EXP Strings

It's easy to take a staple accessory like EXP strings for granted, but D'Addario reduced the coating of EXP strings by 50 percent. Not only does this greatly improve the string's performance, but for customers, these strings can improve the performance of the instrument and the customer satisfaction related to that instrument, too.

### + GOTTA STOCK IT

#### Alesis DM10 Pro Electronic Drum Kit

It's an upsell from the rest of Alesis' electronic drum kit line, which means more money in the register. The real story with this kit, though, is the new DM10 drum module. Not only does it have an all-new sound set, but it also has a USB connection on the back, and there are going to be additional sounds that drummers will be able to buy and import into the module.



### + COMPANIES TO WATCH

#### Akai Professional

A lot of dealers may hear "Akai" and immediately think of kids making beats on MPCs, but Akai Professional has a strong, expanded direction that includes a full range of keyboard controllers. I think the integration of hardware and software is going to be an important trend to watch.

### + BEST IN SHOW

#### BreezSong JamHub

The JamHub has all the features customers will want, without a bunch of extras that they won't want. Another thing I really like about the JamHub is it increases the times and places that people can play — and the more they play, the more they'll want to buy more music gear.

## JIM RUPP

OWNER AND PRESIDENT, COLUMBUS PRO PERCUSSION; COLUMBUS, OHIO



### + SOMETHING SMALL

#### Tama Cymbal Mate

This replaces the wing nut on the top of a cymbal stand, and allows drummers to quickly and easily remove the felts and cymbals underneath it. It's small, inexpensive, and it allows drummers to save time when packing up. These will sell at the cash register display.

### + GOTTA STOCK IT

#### Future Percussion Concepts KickPort

This product really made a huge difference in the sound of a bass drum. It fits in the hole cut in the front bass drum head and works like a ported bass amp cabinet. We will sell these, as they really work, and they can be easily moved from head to head when changing heads.

### + COMPANIES TO WATCH

#### Meinl

This company, against formidable competition, has become a player, first in the hand percussion arena and now with cymbals. It has created and dominates the cajon market. It has brilliant and creative leadership that can think outside the box. Meinl also works very closely with its dealers.

### BEST IN SHOW

#### Zildjian Z3 Cymbal Line

Zildjian took its already established Z Custom heavy hitter line of cast cymbals, and R&D head Paul Francis has done a complete overhaul. These new cymbals really open up and are much more musical than the old Z Customs. Drummers' tastes have changed in this heavy hitting arena, and Zildjian has changed to match what these hardest-hitting drummers wanted.





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# IDEAS

>>> **Inside IDEAS**

> Streetwise Page 40

> Lessons Learned Page 42

> The Customer Whisperer Page 44

> My Turn Page 48

INDEPENDENT RETAIL | BY TED ESCHLIMAN

## CELEBRATE THE PLAYER, PART II

An unfamiliar patron cruises into your store slinging an Internet-auction renegade or a nearly unidentifiable guitar-shaped object from the local toy shop. He gets the third degree — called a traitor — from an employee. Or worse, the snipe comes from one of the owners.

In July, I discussed this fatal intolerance and the importance of “celebrating the player.” Now, let’s look at constructive ways to implement this mantra.

**Leave the (music store) attitude in the breakroom.** It’s easy to get carried away with our own prejudices on what constitutes acceptable equipment. We offer good, better and best options, but with imprudent good intentions, we often squeeze the customer further up the food chain, past his or her comfort level, not because we make more money but because we tend to impart our values. Worst case, we become condescending in our proselytizing, and we risk losing business to alternative out-



lets, simply because we serve a buying culture that does not want to be “sold.” Today’s clients want to buy. They want our advice, but they don’t want us to decide for them.

**Be open and tolerant to a diverse continuum of customer goals and needs.** Not every golfer wants to work as hard as Tiger Woods. Some like to strut the fairways for the air, exercise and socializing. In the same way, some musicians want to pick on the porch or play “Happy Birthday” on piano at a party — that’s it!

They don’t want to master all the Hanon exercises. We need to celebrate all hacks, hobbyists and hone-ers. They don’t have to be good to spend money, so why not simply rejoice in their interest in music?

**Welcome a stranger to a foreign land.** Folks are intimidated by the wide range of products in our stores. A “first contact” experience by the alien newbie or nonmusician can be sensory overload. We, on the other side of the cash register, live in our stores 40-plus hours a week. Walk that fine line between pouncing on them and making them feel welcome. Don’t just tolerate their ignorance, embrace it as an opportunity to meet a brand-new, lifelong friend.

**Offer community-wide extensions.** If our focus is on the broader goal of validating and spreading music activity, we need to wire our stores as conduits for this purpose and not be seduced by the immediate sale close. Counter this terminal myopia (pun intended) by offering musician bulletin boards, in-

store and online; sponsoring concerts; presenting workshops; and making your sales floor an inviting place for musicians to hang.

**Focus on the next sale by creating an atmosphere of discovery.** People access information differently than they did in the pre-Internet era. Slammed with multichannel marketing and advertising, smacked routinely by spam not only in e-mails but in billboards and mainstream media, their inner guard is always up. They Google to get their information and are prone to explore, mining facts and features in this information frontier. They expect to see educational details on your point-of-sale signs and are loathe to ask your staff questions. This is a major cultural paradigm shift. You will guide your customers’ journey far more effectively with information they can uncover for themselves. **MI**

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*.

STREETWISE SELLING | BY KENNY SMITH

# 'I'm Just Looking'

For salespeople, “No thanks, I’m just looking” can be one of the most frustrating statements to hear from a customer. Some of these people are just lookie-loos, but the vast majority are potential buyers. Still, your chances of hearing this at least once a day in a music store is about 100 percent. That’s never a good thing. Or is it?

Understand, someone who isn’t used to going into music stores requires time to decompress. Depending on your store’s environment, he or she may feel at odds in these surroundings. Normally, it takes two minutes for new customers to drop their shields and let one of us interrogate, I mean, qualify them.

Does this mean we should wait two minutes before approaching a customer? Absolutely not. The biggest “deals” will use this time to size you up, as they’re looking over your inventory and prices. And would-be buyers may end up walking because no one came back to help them after they said, “Just looking.” Salespeople, in fact, get so used to hearing, “Just looking,” that they start assuming all customers who say it will ask for help once they’re ready, but that’s not true.

## GIVE A TOUR, TELL YOUR STORY

If you want to turn “I’m just looking” into “What I’m interested in,” you can. It takes skill and practice, but once you get it down, it works like a charm. I’m going to credit Nick Hanich, who’s no longer with us, for teaching me how to do this. He would make

me give customers a complete tour of the store and tell them our story. I used to despise doing this when I was a kid working at Hanich Music in West Covina, Calif., as it seemed like a big waste of time. Later, I realized it was genius.

It took me years to figure out that when a customer said, “Just looking,” I had another option besides slithering away quietly or cold-qualifying them. Introducing

the store to customers before diving into qualification increased my closing ratios. Much of what separates brick and mortars from Internet and catalog dealers is the face-to-face relationship, so this is your big opportunity.

The next time a customer says, “That’s OK, I’m just looking,” you reply, “Great. Let me show you around the store.” Customers aren’t used to this because nobody does it. Sometimes, you’ll need to take the bull by the horns and lead them. Even if they resist a little, keep moving, and they will follow. Look at it this way: You’ve got nothing to lose. They would have just milled

around the store for a while anyway. Even big stores don’t take long to tour, and this couple of minutes will do wonders.

Tell your story. Have compelling things to say about your dealership. Mention all the great products you offer and how you support making music. This plants positive seeds, relaxes the customer and helps you qualify in an amazing way. If you want to score major brownie points, introduce your customers to the owner or manager during the tour, whenever possible.

## WATCH FOR SIGNS

Don’t be a salesman yet. Concentrate on being a great host. As you’re showing them around the store, watch their body language, and look for their reactions to any particular items or departments. If at any time during your tour the customer says, “That’s what I’m looking for” or “The reason I’m here is . . .,” stop touring. Listen and start selling. This usually doesn’t happen, but it can.

At the end of the tour, switch hats and say, “Did you see anything you want to take a closer look at?” Many times, they’ll spill the beans on the spot. So, next time you hear a customer say, “I’m just looking,” try giving the tour. You’ll see just how well it works. **MI**

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



If customers utter that frustrating line, great. It’s an opportunity to show them all that you do



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LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLIOM

# Read the Fine Print

**H**ow many dealer agreements have you signed in your career? Did you read every word? Me neither. In my business, I let time constraints dictate that I be somewhat lax in studying the documents that I signed. There were a few items I looked for, but in the end, my thinking was, “Do I want to do business with this company?” If the answer was “yes,” I signed on the dotted line.

Here’s the rub. Besides defining the rules of doing business, most dealer agreements contain language designed to protect the manufacturer in case something goes awry. I felt invincible and naively assumed that nothing would ever go wrong with my company. And it did.

Having an attorney review every contract is ideal, but it’s a financial burden. Here are some down-and-dirty guidelines. They *don’t* replace legal counsel — they don’t even resemble it — but they may keep you from overlooking some major pitfalls.

## PERSONAL GUARANTEE EQUALS PERSONAL LIABILITY

**W**hen you see a personal guarantee, “Run, Forrest, run!” This onerous aspect of dealer agreements is a supplier’s inducement to grant credit. It gives them the right to collect an unpaid company debt from you personally (i.e. your personal bank accounts and your assets). Assuming that you have established a protective corporate structure for your business (you have, haven’t you?), signing a personal guarantee undermines safeguards you thought you had in place. Vendors have every right to protect themselves, but so do you.

A more reasonable form of protection for suppliers is a security agreement. Many dealer agreements include this, and it gives suppliers the right to remove their products from your premises if you don’t pay your bills. Read this carefully, as many suppliers write these agreements in a way that lets them

remove any items from your store, including items bought from other vendors and/or fixtures and equipment. You’ll need to be the judge of fairness.

## CONFESS NOTHING

**O**ne of the single most potentially damaging clauses in any contract is the confession of judgment. This is one of those clauses that shows up in the agreement long after you’ve experienced EGO (eyes glazed over). Like so many legal clauses, it’s written in terminology that’s usually difficult for the

layman to interpret. But if you see these words together in any clause, you are likely signing away any rights you would have had to defend yourself. Sound scary? It should.

## ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

**T**here are countless other contract clauses that space doesn’t allow for that are no less germane. So I’ll leave you with a few important overall guidelines.

Your rep’s explanation is not a substitute for reading the contract. Reps will try their best, but they’re just the gofers in most cases.

Just because you don’t understand something in the contract doesn’t make it any less significant. If you don’t understand it, you need to. Likewise, just because you think you understand it doesn’t mean that there isn’t some meaning beyond the obvious. If you don’t understand something, ask the supplier’s lawyers to explain it to you. But remember: Their primary interest is their client, not you.

Ultimately, your best advice will come from your own legal counsel. But once you learn this stuff, you’ll see the same basic language over and over again in many agreements. **MI**

Gerson Rosenbloom is the president of Spectrum Strategies, a consulting firm serving the music industry. He’s former president of Medley Music and a past NAMM chairman. E-mail him at gersonmusicinc@gmail.com.



Misunderstanding a vendor agreement can be fatal. Take heed of these guidelines



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THE CUSTOMER WHISPERER | BY GREG BILLINGS

# Music Store Idol

I don't like "American Idol." It aggravates me when people talk about it as if it were something important or significant. I'll confess that I've never watched more than three minutes of it. I'll also confess that the reason I don't like "American Idol" is because I'm a snob. I'm not even that good a musician, but I've been playing and listening long enough to know when it's real and when it's not.

That said, I love what "American Idol" has done for our culture. Fascination with this musical melodrama has brought about a democratization of how we view talent. Now, everybody believes anybody can be a star, and they believe *they* can be stars, too. America is not only willing to watch amateurs, but we'll forgive their flaws — even root for them.

The "American Idol" phenomenon presents a wonderful opportunity for music dealers. No one is more susceptible to the allure of spotlights and applause than our customers, so talent shows are a perfect vehicle for community-oriented dealers who want to build their local reputation and strengthen their customer relationships. We can put our customers and prospects onstage and make them "music store idols." Best of all, we can generate valuable PR, the kind you can't buy.

## THE TALENT SHOW FORMAT

Almost five years ago, we stumbled into our first talent show, mostly by accident. We were at a Steinway dealer meeting and saw a short presentation about an innovative way Schmitt Music was cultivating doctors — an important but elusive demographic to piano and high-end guitar dealers — with a physicians' piano recital. My wife is a nurse, and through her job at the hospital, she's acquainted with most of the doctors in town. She told me that she could recruit doctors to perform if we supported the right charity, and she started putting out feelers.

One of the docs said, "That sounds boring. Why don't you do a talent show instead?" In that moment, the Physicians' Talent Show was born. (I later found out that Schmitt Music's piano recital also evolved into a talent show.) What followed had a dramatic effect on our presence in the community; our relationships with clients, vendors and prospects; and our advertising budget.

## GETTING OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY

Our first task was to select the right charity. We wanted to benefit our own Steinway Piano Society Scholarship Fund, but we also needed something the docs could identify with on a gut level. We selected the Neighborhood Health Clinic (NHC) because hundreds of physician volunteers work there. The hospital was happy to support the NHC because it keeps uninsured people out of the ER. Plus, NHC is easy to work with and grateful for support.

Community involvement eventually comes down to money. There are only two kinds of philanthropy: the kind where you are giving away your own money and the kind where you are giving away other people's money (or OPM, as I call it). As music dealers, we can't do much good with the amount of our own money we can afford to give away. The key to getting OPM is partnership.

By partnering with NHC, a door opened to partner with the local physicians' association and gain access to its well-guarded list of doctors' home addresses. That relationship opened a door to bring the hospital on as a principal sponsor (\$5,000 of OPM), which opened the door to get additional sponsors (even more OPM).

Partnership can be very use-



Talent shows are a perfect vehicle for dealers who want to build their local reputation, strengthen their customer relationships



ful for a dealer without a 501(c)(3) charter because the dealer can take tax-deductible contributions and sell tickets under the partner's charter. If you pick the right partner, it may be willing to do the book-keeping, provide volunteers and conduct a silent auction. Not-for-profit organizations pay less for everything, from theater rent to advertising. Not to mention the press loves not-for-profits.

Using the physicians' association list, we mailed a postcard to all the local physicians inviting them to perform. This also promoted the event. We approached the local newspaper, city magazine and public radio station and offered them the opportunity to become in-kind (non-cash) sponsors for our "charity" event. The PR machine was in motion.

In addition to free advertising, we've had newspaper stories before and after the shows, magazine articles, society page pictures, and full-hour National Public Radio affiliate interviews. Last year, the local PBS TV station produced an 18-minute segment about our show for its video magazine, *Connect*. It filmed physicians in our Gallery talking about the importance of music in their lives and about our commitment to the community. The program ran more than 20 times. It's hard to put monetary value on that kind of PR.

#### TALENT SEARCH

We had four business objectives in producing the Physicians' Talent Show: raise awareness about our Gallery among the medical community; raise our stature among the medical community; generate favorable, free press; and benefit the NHC and our Steinway Piano Society.

To our surprise, and initial

disappointment, the talent applicants represented a broad spectrum. We heard from many guitarists and singers but only a few pianists. We also heard from horn players, comedians and dancers. We even had a magician and a dentist who played the musical saw. It quickly became apparent that this was going to be a variety show. I wouldn't have been surprised to see a juggler or a dog act.

We found physicians who had bands, some who had put themselves through medical school playing in saloons and many who hadn't played for years. Soon, we realized the small number of pianists wasn't a problem, after all. Greater variety made the show more entertaining and the entire event more festive.

Once we had a talent roster finalized, we began rehearsing in our recital hall. When people visit your store three times, they begin to identify with it and are much less likely to visit a competitor — ever. They are also much more likely to recommend your store to others. And docs are likely to seek referrals from other docs.

We needed about four weeks of rehearsal since physicians' schedules are so erratic. Rehearsing here is broadly defined. Some acts, such as the magician and the Klezmer band, were self-contained and required no work at all. A few hadn't played for years and needed the band to carry them. Many needed help selecting appropriate material. Almost all of them required encouragement and cheerleading. Clearly, the doctors had ventured beyond their comfort zones, and we were able to use our calm, assertive leadership to guide them.

We promised each physician that we would make them look



## + TALENT SHOW CHECKLIST

- Pick a date four to six months in advance when your business is off-cycle. You'll need to devote time to the event.
- Select a venue big enough to accommodate the show but small enough that you can fill it, where your talent will be proud to perform.
- Find the right charity to benefit. (Ask your talent for suggestions.)
- Identify a principal sponsor, and go after the big bucks.
- Identify other sponsors, and start pitching.
- Set up a Web site to post rehearsal schedules and other information.
- Start recruiting talent. When in doubt, schedule informal auditions. Mail postcards to doctors on your mailing list, and find appropriate partners with lists.
- Get free recruitment and show ads from local media by making them in-kind sponsors.
- Make personalized posters your talent can display in their offices, and give them tickets to sell. (Keep careful track. No free tickets for anyone until 24 hours before the show and only if you need to fill the house.)
- Every time you send an e-mail, thank people for their support and participation.
- Put together a backup band, and appoint a music director. Use your employees and customers. Worship bands are a great place to find volunteer musicians.
- Encourage the talent to do material they can do well and that translates well live.
- Recruit volunteers: sound people, stagehands, ticket sellers, servers, silent auction staff and PR people. There are many college students who need community-service hours, and some of them are probably your customers.
- Select a venue for the dress rehearsal. Churches are good because they have sound and are happy to help.
- Host a cast party after dress rehearsal, hopefully at your house. Let your charity provide volunteers to do the work.
- Start rehearsals four weeks out. Record rehearsals on a simple recorder, such as an Edirol R-09, and e-mail talent their tracks. This is remarkably effective and also helps time the acts.
- Write a script, and time the show. Keep it under 90 minutes. A rule of thumb is the show will run double the sum of the time of the individual acts.
- Make sure the emcee knows he has to stick to the script, and drill it in that it's his responsibility to keep the show moving.
- Record the dress rehearsal rather than the show, and post the tracks where your talent can get them.
- Take lots of pictures, and post them, too. Send thank-you notes.
- Recognize from the beginning that you are the show's producer. Lead with calm assertiveness. Be firm, friendly and fair, but most of all, be decisive.
- Err on the side of simplicity.

and sound great. Often, this meant suggesting the song that he or she wanted to do wouldn't work in a live setting and that executing something simple well is preferable to executing something complicated poorly. (It's vital to gain their trust.) More important, we promised them that they would have fun!

## FINDING VOLUNTEERS

As we accepted talent applications and narrowed the material, a few things became clear. If I was going to keep that promise, I was going to need a pretty good band. And that band would have to be able to play everything from country to jazz to Broadway to gospel. We were also going to need a vocal coach, accompanists, an emcee and many other volunteers.

The great thing about being in a music store is that you can find all the help you need among your employees and customers. This has the added benefit of getting prospects and customers involved with your staff. And when you ask your friends to contribute their talents to a worthy charity, it's hard for them to say "no."

To keep things manageable and to encourage camaraderie, we asked the more talented physicians to help back up the other acts. We also arranged duets and ensembles. By show time, we had a large group of committed people working toward a common goal — and doing so in our store and looking to us for leadership. They started getting their associates, friends and family to buy tickets, and they started buying strings, cables, wireless kits and wardrobes.

Soon, the show took on a life of its own. By dress rehearsal, friendships had formed, and the perception of our Gallery was enhanced. For

two weeks surrounding the event, we were the No. 1 topic at water coolers all over town.

## RAISING FUNDS

Fund raising also benefitted our image. Even at \$75 per ticket, we could only raise so



much money in a 300-seat theater, and a certain number of tickets got gobbled up by the cast. (We give two free tickets to each performer, and they almost always bought more.) The best ways to increase revenue are selling sponsorships and holding a silent auction in the lobby before the show. This is community outreaching at a grass-roots level.

You may recoil at the idea of asking others for money, but when you ask someone to purchase a \$1,000 sponsorship — or, if that's not possible, to contribute a gift item to a silent auction — you've taken your stature up several notches. You've transcended being a businessperson and become a philanthropist in everyone's eyes.

There are many businesses thankful for the opportunity to take their messages directly to an elite medical audience: pharmaceutical companies, assisted living facilities and home health service providers. Also, banks, financial service providers, high-end designers and furni-

ture stores, restaurants, and wine merchants are good candidates for sponsorship.

It is a lot easier than you think to sell sponsorships. Sponsors get a one-page ad in the program, four preferred seating tickets and an acknowl-

edgment from the stage. More important, they get to schmooze with the medical community's elite before and after the show.

## ALTERNATE FORMATS

Talent shows aren't the only way to get your customers onstage. Schmitt Music has done a great job with its Physicians' Piano Recital, and R. Scott Schoppert, keyboard manager of its Sioux Falls, S.D., location, found a way to escape local medical politics. By benefiting the Children's Care Hospital, he was able to sell \$5,000 sponsorships to both of the big competing hospitals in town. More than 800 people attended his fifth show this year. "Originally, we leveraged it into a selling event, but now I get residual sales from physicians almost every month with no overt marketing," he said.

And physicians aren't the only group worth featuring. Jim Foster at Foster Family Music in Davenport, Iowa, has created Piano Celebration, an annual fundraiser for Ronald

McDonald House.

"It brings together teachers, students and professional musicians to a common cause: raising awareness for the benefits of piano study," Foster said.

Ellen McDonald of Hartland Music Center in Wisconsin has been conducting a Hartland Idol talent contest for high school kids, complete with local celebrity judges, for the last two years. Other dealers have hosted open mic nights.

We recently presented our second Pastors' Talent Show. It has drawn a much bigger audience (at a lower ticket price and with a different group of sponsors), and we're seeing a similar benefit to our reputation among the church community. Of course, the local Christian radio station was happy to partner with us.

What caught us by surprise, though it shouldn't have, was the profound effect being in the show had on the performers. For many, their love of music was reawakened. For some, standing onstage in front of their friends, families and peers was the fulfillment of a dream. And for most, the camaraderie of preparing the show forged strong bonds with their fellow performers and with us. I'd be surprised if any of the physicians, pastors or volunteers in any of our shows ever patronized one of my competitors. We have become friends — trusted friends.

Dealers that want to do more than just talk about community involvement will find presenting a talent show a natural vehicle. It's a great way to embrace and motivate your staff, your customers and your prospects. Most of all, it's fun. **MI**

Greg Billings whispers to customers at the Steinway Piano Gallery in Bonita Springs, Fla. He welcomes questions and comments at [greg@steinwaynaples.com](mailto:greg@steinwaynaples.com).



# VIC FIRTH DEALER NEWS

## Vic Firth's Sales Support Helps You Earn More Money

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#### WEB FEATURES

CBS featured Vic Firth on the Sunday Morning Show: Russ Mitchell visited the Vic Firth plant to learn more about Vic, his company and his success. [www.vicfirth.com/features/CBS\\_3-29-09.html](http://www.vicfirth.com/features/CBS_3-29-09.html)

Our Dealer and Distributor Support section features new key dealer information such as available merchandising displays, high rez photos and much more. [www.vicfirth.com/b2b](http://www.vicfirth.com/b2b)

Check out the recent photos/video of Vic Firth artists at the Frankfurt Musik Messe, New England Metal Festival and the Meinl Drum Festival in Russia! [vicfirth.com/features/MESSE09.html](http://vicfirth.com/features/MESSE09.html)  
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Many make claims, Vic Firth makes sticks. See how the best sticks are made during your factory tour. Get a factory tour DVD for your store's customers! [www.vicfirth.com/features/factorytour.html](http://www.vicfirth.com/features/factorytour.html)



FEATURED ARTISTS

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#### VALUE PACKS AND PROMOTIONS



MEDIA COVERAGE

MY TURN | BY TERRY LEWIS

# What Went Wrong With the Piano Industry: An Alternate View



*Music Inc.'s June cover story looked at the decline of the piano market. Industry veteran Terry Lewis offers a different take on the situation*

In times of crisis and grave business challenges, it is tempting to try to find scapegoats and poster children to blame for the state of affairs. The steady decline of piano business, which has accelerated during the past couple of years, appears to have produced at least one example of this, *Music Inc.'s* June 2009 cover story, “What Went Wrong With the Piano Industry ... And How to Fix It” by Greg Billings.

The problems facing the piano business are indeed serious and real, but they are not new. Piano suppliers, associations and some retailers have worked together tirelessly to try to reverse a general long-term trend. But many of the elements driving this trend are beyond the control and the resources of those who produce and sell the product.

Sometimes, there's just no one to blame. How inconvenient.

#### CHANGING TRENDS

The musical products industry relies heavily on consumer discretionary income and, to a degree, the economic health of educational institutions and commercial businesses that buy traditional pianos. For this reason, the piano market has always disproportionately reacted to swings in the economy, the stock market and real estate. This is especially true for big-ticket instruments.

In an apparent aberration (like most of the phenomena in the current economy), the recent housing bubble should have produced more business for acoustic pianos. Typically, robust real estate markets have increased the appetite for items to furnish these newly acquired homes, and equity lines should have provided ready cash for large purchases. While there was some evidence of this, new business was limited by the destruction of discretionary income as a result of the very high cost of homes and burdensome mortgage payments, as well as the highly leveraged situation and poor credit quality of many home buyers dur-

ing the past few years.

Changing social trends have also continued to provide resistance to piano market growth. There are many more products and activities today competing for everyone's leisure time, in all age groups. While it's true that Mr. Billings and I grew up watching “The Mickey Mouse Club” and playing with Lincoln Logs, these were small potatoes compared to today's distractions. Experts predict that the video game industry's annual revenues alone will surpass those of the film industry in the foreseeable future.

#### PRODUCTION COSTS

In the June cover story, there were numerous references to price. The price-versus-quality-and-service debate has raged endlessly for decades. I agree that low prices don't create new customers, and many of the industry's most successful retailers continue to overcome lower-priced competitors with superior customer care and service. But this ignores a much longer-term trend regarding cost: The high relative cost to produce an acoustic piano today is staggering when compared to other products,



especially electronic products.

There are some fundamental forces at work here that none of us can control. In 1928, just after the historical peak of the U.S. piano market, the average cost of materials as a percentage of the total cost of durable goods was 68 percent. The piano, at that time, was about average. By the mid 1990s, this ratio was down near 20 percent for the average product. But the piano did not benefit from this trend, owing to the fact that, by its very nature, the piano is comprised of massive volumes of metal, expensive woods and other materials that are not easily substituted or compromised in quality.

Today, the material cost ratio remains more than 50 percent for pianos, and woods, such as maple and spruce, have risen astronomically over the past couple of decades, as have the materials that are used to produce the furniture where at least some substitution has been feasible. On top of this, acoustic piano production is labor-intensive.

I am painfully and personally aware of the fundamental cost problem for acoustic pianos. Having traveled to Thomaston, Ga., in February 2007 to close one of the last domestic piano factories in America, I can say that it was the most difficult task that I had to face in my 38 years in this business. This decision was directly related to the monumental challenge to control the cost to produce an acoustic piano, which has a direct relationship to the decline of the traditional market for these products.

Hence, the relative cost (not relative price) of an acoustic piano has outrun the purchasing power of the middle-class family in most developed global markets. To highlight a quote from the June issue, "If the Baldwin

Acrosonic was introduced today in an appropriate cabinet at \$1,995, we'd have trouble keeping them in stock." Sure. Also true for a good, full-size automobile at \$6,995, in an appropriate style and color, of course. Sorry, the good old days are gone.

The bottom line is that the average middle-class American

less, and today the message is loud and clear: Digital pianos are here to stay. They have excellent piano tone and touch, and they are a legitimate alternative for the vast majority of consumers who would like to play. They are affordable, versatile, low-maintenance, easy to move and highly reliable.



A recreational music making class for teens

family can no longer afford to buy an average-quality acoustic vertical piano as it once could. I believe that many would still like to. In my opinion, we have not "lost most of the last generation of pianists," as Billings put it. Since only 7 percent of the U.S. population actually plays a musical instrument with any proficiency at all, I'm not persuaded that there ever was such a generation. What we have lost is a key market segment as the industry continued to try to make a product that moved beyond the financial reach of Middle America. From a unit standpoint, keyboard interest still remains very high, but the market has been forced to seek acceptable substitutes driven by cost.

**THE DIGITAL MYTH?**

Since the introduction of the Yamaha YP-40 digital piano in 1983, the trend toward digital has been steady and relent-

Software has opened up exciting, new horizons for enhancing one's musical performance and also for sharing musical experiences with others. Headphones encourage household harmony and embolden the bashful beginner. Moreover, most digital pianos offer additional features that other family members may be attracted to.

There is no doubt that digital pianos have taken enormous market share from acoustic verticals during the past two decades. Study after study has provided irrefutable evidence that, whatever we think as an industry, the market thinks that digitals are a pretty good alternative.

There is nothing wrong with having a love affair with the traditional acoustic piano, but from a business standpoint, it can be deadly. It's like buying stock in a company that makes a product you love even though the company itself

may perform poorly.

In my experience, I have not encountered strong resistance to digital pianos from the educational community in recent years. Quite the contrary. There will always be a few among the academic elite who scorn anything that's not made of wood, felt, copper and glue. I am not suggesting that serious students and teachers shouldn't continue to show a preference for acoustic pianos or that digitals will one day replace concert grands in the concert halls of the world. But these are relatively small segments of the traditional piano market.

Wise retailers and suppliers will recognize that an "appropriate piano" is an instrument that the market will buy. To think that we can change the market is absurd. It is we that must change and adapt.

**WHY RMM WORKS**

This underscores another fundamental challenge for the piano market. The widespread expectation that one should be a serious student to justify making a piano purchase has cost the industry tens of thousands of sales. It's a cultural problem that will only be conquered when our industry and the educational community join hands and fully embrace the concept of recreational music making (RMM). And it is already happening, despite the naysayers. There is powerful scientific research concerning the benefits of RMM that points to a bright future if it's properly implemented and promoted.

Many will agree that the name "recreational music making" is cumbersome and lacks sufficient marketing impact, and I am among them. Perhaps the RMM critics can use some of their energy to propose a better name. It should also be

pointed out that RMM is an internal industry term. It was never intended to be the name of an actual RMM program.

In the June cover story, two of the 15 initiatives in the author's "Piano Industry Recovery Plan" recommend "Teach the Fun" and "More Group Learning." These are key elements of RMM. The author also assumed that RMM is for older Americans. It would have taken the author only minutes to review NAMM's RMM Web site at [namm.org](http://namm.org) or the Yamaha Music and Wellness Institute mission statement at [yamaha.institute.org](http://yamaha.institute.org) to discover that RMM is for participants of all ages. Yamaha's successful Clavinova Connection center in Lake Forest, Calif., welcomes participants covering a wide age range. The statement that RMM should be targeting "77 million baby boomers" is also puzzling. This, in fact, is a well-publicized, major objective of RMM.

Lastly, although RMM tends to be keyboard-oriented, nowhere is it written that the objective of RMM is to "sell more acoustic pianos." The objective of RMM is to expand the number of active music makers significantly. Sales will follow for all categories, including acoustic pianos. Anyone who expects RMM to be a hot-wire to jump-start acoustic piano sales will be disappointed, and its advocates have never made such a claim.

RMM is working where properly promoted, implemented and supported. To succeed requires persistence and dogged determination, just like any successful program. It is the industry's greatest opportunity to make inroads into the 93 percent of the U.S. population that does not play a musical instrument. That's a lot of headroom.

## PMAI & NPF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I am mystified by Mr. Billings' disdain for the Piano Manufacturers Association International (PMAI) and its "incestuous co-conspirator," the National Piano Foundation (NPF). In his eagerness to



attack, he may have forsaken the homework. PMAI has had an extraordinary record of achievement, particularly in view of its meager assets and small membership.

Over the years, this association has done more than any single force in the piano industry to bring previously diverse entities, such as Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), Piano Technicians Guild (PTG), Retail Print Music Dealers Association and others, together. As a result of PMAI's influence, MTNA has co-sponsored seminars and sessions on group teaching and RMM at annual MTNA conferences. (MTNA serves more than 24,000 piano teachers.) This inspired the PTG to offer RMM scholarships at recent conferences. PMAI also produced several excellent DVDs, which were filmed at MTNA's 2008 conference. Orders for these programs come in every day at the NPF headquarters in

Dallas. It is having measurable impact on the traditional teaching community.

PMAI also drafted a code of ethics for manufacturers. It serves as a model for the entire industry, and I can personally attest to the fact that it made a

difference because I was there. This initiative eventually led to a dealer code of ethics, which hundreds of retailers signed onto. They now proudly display their ethical commitment to reputable sales conduct in their stores across the country.

PMAI also sponsored individual group teaching seminars across the nation for private teachers who wanted to start group teaching programs but did not have a road map. Scores of traditional piano teachers attended these seminars. PMAI and its members discovered that, contrary to popular belief, there is virtually no resistance to group teaching in the traditional educational community — only a lack of information, training and support.

One of PMAI's best initiatives was the After School Group Piano Program. It was launched in 1998 and continued through 2001, and in my opinion, it was an unqualified success. In the last year, 132

students from 128 families were enrolled at four participating elementary schools. A total of 49 digital and acoustic pianos were rented, and 26 units were sold by the program's end. Additional sales were also made in the following months. And the local ABC television affiliate did a marvelous story on the program.

Everything that was accomplished in the PMAI After School Group Piano Program was replicable elsewhere, and PMAI produced a comprehensive manual with all of the necessary steps for successful implementation. But PMAI had neither the human or financial resources to roll out the program nationally. This depended on retailers, most of whom were enjoying very good piano business during these years. After vigorous promotional efforts to move the program beyond one market, only one dealer seized the opportunity.

I still believe that this innovative program could have worked anywhere, but a small, underfunded industry association cannot be expected to do everything alone. It is an extreme irony that the June cover story, coming from a retailer, stated, "The sooner we start pressing the case for piano instruction in elementary schools, the sooner we will see results." Indeed.

There have been several other successful PMAI/NPF programs over the past 20 years, and they are too numerous to mention. I believe that PMAI/NPF has done an amazing job considering the limited resources at its disposal.

## DISPELLING PMAI MYTHS

The relationship between PMAI and NPF is also nothing unusual, evil, "incestuous" or conspiratorial. I cannot



grasp what is being questioned. NPMA (which later became PMAI) was chartered in 1896, and in 1962, NPF was created as the informational and educational arm. NPF distributes a vast amount of materials to prospective piano buyers and other interested parties, such as writers. The fundamental relationship between PMAI and NPF is no different than that which NAMM has with its NAMM Foundation.

It has been suggested that PMAI "open voting membership to digital piano manufacturers." Roland became an associate member under my watch some time ago, and we were very glad to see Dennis Houlihan's enthusiasm for participating in association business and delighted to have Roland's input. While PMAI bylaws specify that only dues-

paying acoustic piano manufacturers have a formal vote, that decision-making format is quite rare. In practice, initiatives are typically approved through voice vote, which includes associate members. PMAI has also aggressively recruited new members directly and through member companies for as long as I can remember, and it continues to do so.

The improved revenue stream for PMAI that has been strongly urged is a more difficult issue. The association's budget has suffered from both a decline in dues and the number of active manufacturers. A few years ago, PMAI members voted to cut dues by 50 percent, which remains in force today. Compounding the problem, some members have simply chosen to not pay dues on time or at all. An industry associa-

tion, such as PMAI, however innovative, cannot be expected to do heavy lifting with the dearth of resources it has faced during the past few years.

But not all associations are in such a predicament. I'd like to invite retailers and suppliers to call on NAMM to lend more assistance to this most troubled sector in the musical products industry. NAMM was birthed by the piano industry more than 100 years ago, and I believe that it has an obligation to place the plight of PMAI, its members and piano retailers as a higher priority for attention and support.

Again, another serious gap in understanding about NAMM support was revealed in the statement, "NAMM shouldn't give PMAI another dime until it demonstrates that it's willing to put its own money on the line."

Apparently, the author didn't know that NAMM's monetary grants to PMAI were provided as matching grants only.

Leadership of PMAI has also been called into question. Retiring Executive Director Don Dillon, assisted by his wife Brenda, a prominent music educator, served the organization with dedication and humility. A lack of knowledge about the supplier side of the industry and PMAI is again apparent in the following statement: "Restrict representation to each company's chief executive. End the musical-chairs rotating presidency. Pick the best leader, and let him or her lead."

What?

First of all, CEOs and presidents of all PMAI member companies have always been strongly encouraged to attend PMAI meetings, and their full

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participation has always been welcomed. But I can tell you firsthand that few of them are interested in or able to occupy the PMAI presidential chair. Moreover, they are often not the best candidates to do so (particularly in the case of off-shore suppliers), and they know it. Bruce Stevens of Steinway was one exception and exemplary of a heritage of strong PMAI leadership, which I have also observed first-hand for more than 25 years.

Some CEOs freely delegate piano industry relations to senior managers who are directly in charge of their piano businesses. These managers are the most qualified and can make good decisions and solid contributions. It's one of the many reasons that these people get hired in the first place.

The two-year rotating PMAI presidency is typical of industry associations, and it is similar to the system that NAMM uses to select a chairman every two years.

Perhaps PMAI's most notable "failure" has been the fact that it has not effectively and publicly proclaimed its successes and accomplishments loudly enough, but Don and Brenda Dillon have always been more interested in results than self-promotion.

"Fix PMAI?" It appears that it's only the record that needs fixing, along with adequate funding and industry support to carry forward the PMAI mission more effectively.

**EVENT SALES**

Anyone with any exposure to the retail piano business during the past few years will know that store traffic has steadily declined, and with few exceptions (such as Midtown Manhattan), walk-in traffic is no longer sufficient to support a storefront without supple-

mental promotional activity outside of the store.

Outside sales events have become a necessary part of the business in today's market. But like anything else, these promotions can be done effectively, or they can turn into an utterly depressing and wasted effort.

Solid experience and lots of energy are required to be successful in outside sales events. Suppliers are increasingly entering the warehouse club arena directly, helping their retailers avoid some of the pitfalls of these shows and sharing the experience necessary for successful execution. (Costco now has a membership that exceeds the population of Italy. Just one warehouse club location is a compelling treasure trove of qualified prospective buyers.)

College sales have also accounted for an increasing share of the retail sales pie. June's cover story recommended that, "Dealers need to abandon college sales and other deceptive marketing practices and focus on developing pianists in their local communities."

I was heavily involved with the development of the college sale promotional model and the supplier support programs that enabled the promotions to succeed. My experience has been that those who are opposed to college sales generally do not have a suitable local institution within their territory, are not financially strong enough to qualify for the required inventory to host them or simply don't have the ambition.

I shudder to think how much more difficult selling pianos would have been in the last decade had it not been for this successful formula for outside merchandising. But there are other silver linings. It is a win-win-win situation (note that there are four "wins") in a

'Ultimately, college sales may prevent a going-out-of-business sale.'

way that other outside promotions cannot match.

The institution and its students win because the school has a continuous supply of fresh, serviceable pianos that are far superior to the battered and neglected warhorses that they replaced. (I had never heard of the "green piano" problem at schools until I read the June issue of *Music Inc.*)

The retailer wins because it can support a larger selection of instruments, and it has a credible location to present them. The program also encourages dialogue and relationship-building between the retailer and the institution, which can be an important marketing ally. And students that use these instruments are more likely to be future customers for the sponsoring retailer and its brands.

The supplier wins, as well, because it has the opportunity to generate more business and gain market share. Pianos that would otherwise sit in a warehouse are out in the community. Finally, customers win because they get moderately used pianos at a reduced price with a new-piano warranty, and otherwise skittish prospects can make their purchases in a more comfortable environment.

Sometimes, outside professional event salespeople are retained to assist with college sales, but this is normally done at the dealer's discretion. No

sales promotion is inherently deceptive unless performed as such. Like any other outside promotion, it's expected that college sales will be done with honesty, integrity and competent execution. And ultimately, they may prevent a going-out-of-business sale.

**HOW DO WE COPE?**

We are a small industry, but we have exciting products and have historically demonstrated brilliance in marketing and merchandising. Despite this, it may not be possible to restore an acceptable level of business vitality as soon as we would like, no matter how hard we try. But we must lay the groundwork now for future success for when the turnaround arrives — and it will. Not all suppliers and retailers will still be there when it happens, but those that survive will be stronger, better at what they do, and ready to take advantage of the next phase of growth and prosperity just as in previous cycles.

One thing is certain, however: We won't get there spreading blame around among ourselves for the current situation. As an industry, we need to recognize the true market situation for what it is, and we need to be realistic and honest about what we, as an industry, can do about it. Things that are beyond our control can still be managed. I am hopeful that the industry will join together in a powerful partnership of unity and purpose as never before and effectively prepare itself for better times ahead. **MI**

Terry Lewis retired from Yamaha Corp. of America as executive vice president in June 2008 after 26 years with the company. He'd previously worked for Schmitt Music and is currently president of International Business Relations, a business consulting firm. He's also a director for the Yamaha Music and Wellness Institute.



# + AN ALTERNATE PIANO INDUSTRY RECOVERY PLAN

## 1. GET INVOLVED IN RECREATIONAL MUSIC MAKING (RMM) — NOW

Call RMM whatever you want to call it. (I happen to like NAMM's "Wanna Play?") Only 7 percent of the U.S. population plays a musical instrument. Almost all of the other 93 percent would like to. Just another 1 percent would translate into 15-percent market growth for musical products. And the magic of a properly implemented RMM program will soon become apparent to anyone who is willing to make a sincere effort.

## 2. CALL FOR MORE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION SUPPORT

The piano industry needs its own stimulus plan. Unlike the government, the musical products industry can't print money. But whatever financial resources are available should stay in the U.S. market and support the product categories that need the most help, including pianos.

## 3. REDEFINE 'PIANO'

Digital pianos are fine for the majority of players — and, in some ways, even better. Don't cling to acoustic pianos with a passion that clouds your best business judgment. If you don't have a strong digital line, get one. Then, let the market decide.

## 4. SHOW A PLAYER PIANO TO EVERYONE

Pianos with player capability are now a respectable double-digit percentage of the market, and that share is growing. They are capturing customers that would have otherwise never considered an acoustic or digital piano. Many customers are not even aware that these products exist, and those that do know aren't always aware of the dazzling array of features that make them so enjoyable.

## 5. BE CLEAR AND DIRECT WITH YOUR SUPPLIERS

Tell them what products you need now and what you would like to see in the future — not occasionally but constantly. Ask them to support outside promotional activities, and present them with a good plan. Ask for favorable terms that can sustain a reasonable inventory to do bigger and better promotions without breaking your budget. Let them know that you are willing to go out and find business aggressively.

## 6. EMBRACE THE WEB

Even if dealer agreements do not permit online sales, there are many things that the Web can do to increase your local exposure. In addition to your own store site, give attention to online business directories, lists, customized e-mail campaigns, linking opportunities and local search engine optimization for your business and its products. If you don't have the expertise, local colleges are full of affordable whiz kids who would love to have a summer job.

## 7. REACH OUT TO EDUCATORS AND SCHOOLS

Almost all of the teachers and retailers that I know love to talk. With current business conditions as they are, this is a great opportunity to use extra time to get out and cultivate relationships with teachers and schools, or improve the relationships that you already have. I have personally observed that recreational music making is a subject that will be of interest to nearly all of them — but do your RMM homework first.

## 8. DO COLLEGE SALES

Do college sales and any other event sales that have been known to work in your market. As long as the volume of floor traffic remains low and the cost of getting people to come in remains high, this may be the most decisive factor in a retailer's ability to survive the current downturn. Be sure to work closely with your suppliers on all of your outside promotional ideas.

## 9. MANAGE FOR SURVIVAL

Don't risk losing your best people, but painful steps may have to be taken to adjust compensation or reduce non-essential staff. If you're not on the sales floor yourself, consider personally taking your share of drop-ins until you're sure that the clouds have passed — and don't be above working outside events. Also, consider renegotiating your lease, and review all outside services — accountants and lawyers — for a better deal. And, of course, watch your inventory every day.

## 10. BE READY FOR THE REVERSAL

When I was at Yamaha, we experienced recessions in the early 1980s and another in the '90s — nothing like the current situation, but the keyboard business was down significantly and the business mood was gloomy. We went ahead with market-building programs and products, which paid off big when the market came around later. When business rebounded, it exploded, and our market share shot ahead.

# THE DRUMMER'S CAUSE

BY JENNY DOMINE  
PHOTO BY NATHAN HARMON

How The Big Beat made nine Five-Star Drum Shops and their communities a better, louder place

If you feel a slight tremor beneath your feet on Nov. 1, it's not an earthquake. It's the reverberations of hundreds of drummers playing in sync across 11 cities for charity — a.k.a. The Big Beat.

This annual Five-Star Drum Shops event kicks off November's International Drum Month and should give the participating drum shops not only a big boost in visibility and sales but also tons of community goodwill. Last year, the nine participating retailers raised more than \$48,000 for a host of charities.

"The first time we did it six years ago, we kind of joked, 'Wouldn't it be cool to have everybody hooked up by satellite and have them all play together at the same time?'" said Donn Bennett, owner of Donn Bennett Drum Studio in Bellevue, Wash., and one of the pioneers of The Big Beat formula. "And now, that's exactly what we are doing. Of course, not with a satellite but by Internet." (His original event, called Woodstick, set a Guinness World Record in 2006 with 533 drummers drumming the same beat at the same time.)







THEBIGBEAT

Mat Donaldson of  
Drum World Tulsa

This year, two more drum shops will join The Big Beat ranks for a total of 11 participating stores. Each retailer will run its event a little differently, with clinics, performances, contests and raffles. But at a designated time, all the locations will come together

via Web cams and, with the help of conductors, rock out to the same beat. It's a sound that, according to Mat Donaldson of Drum World in Tulsa, Okla., is "a hurricane."

"The bottom line is it gets these drummers together because drummers usually

don't get to see each other," Donaldson said. "So this is a time that people get together, check out each other's gear, swap stories, learn from the older drummers and teach the younger drummers. The level of feel-good at this event is just amazing — and audible."

#### MAKING NOISE

Undertaking an event of this magnitude is not for the faint-hearted. Bennett estimated it has taken him two full months to plan and prep for The Big Beat.

"Concerns are the resources, personnel and the time," said Five-Star Manager Rob Birenbaum. "A lot of our members teach and play and run their stores."

One of the greatest challenges for retailers new to The Big Beat is promoting it. Jeffrey Lee, owner of Resurrection Drums in Hollywood, Fla., held his first Big Beat last year.

"I was a little scared in the beginning," Lee said. "How many guys would be interested in bringing their drum kits, taking a Sunday for something like this with no pay? It's not a gig."

The key to promotion among veteran Big Beat retailers is the charity angle. The Big Beat has picked The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation as its national charity, but each drum shop also picks a local cause. This helps generate local media attention.

Five years ago, Donaldson found out that Oklahoma had the third-largest food-deprived population of any state, and 40 percent of that number were children. He launched his own food-drive drumming event, Tulsa Drum Day, which has since merged into The Big Beat.

"Last year alone, we fed more than 7,000 people," Donaldson said. "From a one-day event, all totaled over the last five years, we've donated over 17,000 pounds of food."

The drumming-for-charity angle has earned him TV spots on the local news, and one year, the anchors even delivered their broadcast

## THE FOUNDING FATHER

# Donn Bennett

DONN BENNETT DRUM STUDIO;  
BELLEVUE, WASH.  
CHARITY OF CHOICE:  
CAMP KOREY

BIG IDEA: TURNED A LOCAL DRUM FESTIVAL INTO A MODEL FOR A MULTI-CITY PROMOTIONAL EVENT.

'The first event didn't have more than a few weeks of planning. We sent out a few e-mails and some posters, and made some phone calls. That's how it started. At one point, we had three celebrity drummers. Now, we have 10.'

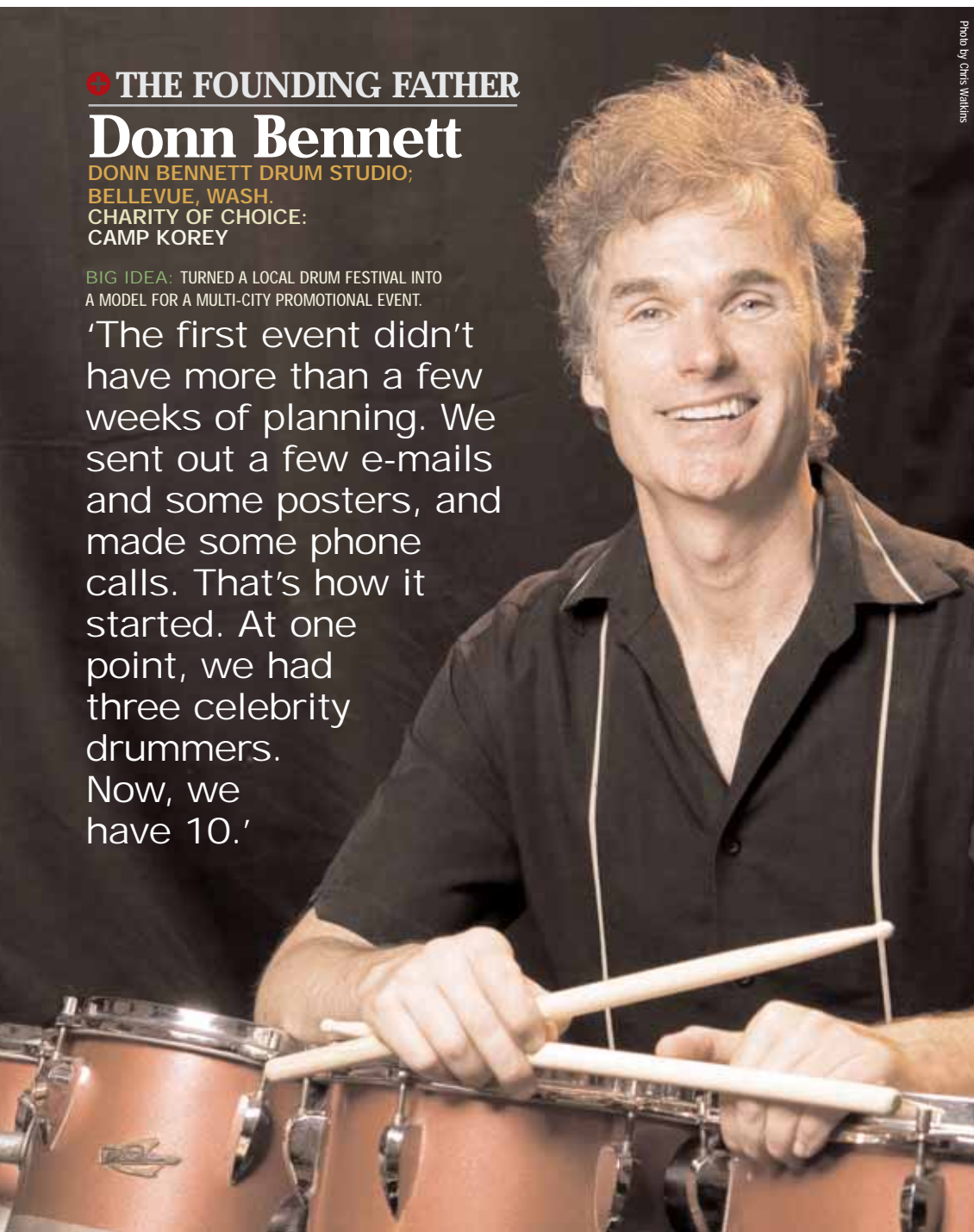


Photo by Chris Watkins



wearing Tulsa Drum Day stickers on their suits.

To prep for this year, Donaldson hauled drum sets to the local pro baseball team's outdoor stadium in July. There, he treated the Tulsa Drillers' crowd to live music, banging out songs, such as "We Will Rock You," to rev them up for The Big Beat.

Donna Fisher and Mike Henry of The Percussion Center in Houston ensure drummers come out by hosting a pre-registration event at the Houston Hard Rock Café. According to Fisher, the idea came from Pro-Mark's Pat Brown, whose band, Hit-n-Run, volunteered to play at the Hard Rock.

"People could register to sit in with the band, and that had a

really cool feel," Henry said. "It really generated a lot of excitement about [The Big Beat]."

Percussion Center also used star power to get drummers out in force. Last year, Terry Bozzio served as the Texas Big Beat celebrity drummer, and ZZ Top drummer Frank Beard was presented a Texas Big Beat Hall of Fame Award.

Lee's Big Beat event was graced by Iron Maiden drummer Nicko McBrain. According to Lee, McBrain was so touched by the day that he told everyone to shop at Resurrection Drums. He also volunteered to organize a future golf outing with Lee to raise funds for music education advocacy. McBrain will be returning to Lee's event this year.

Donaldson observed that

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- **DRUM HEADQUARTERS** ST. LOUIS
- **DRUM WORLD** TULSA, OKLA.
- **JUST DRUMS** TORONTO
- **LEMMON PERCUSSION** SAN JOSE, CALIF.
- **RESURRECTION DRUMS** HOLLYWOOD, FLA.
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- **THE PERCUSSION CENTER** HOUSTON

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**+ THE PROMOTER**

# Donna Fisher

THE PERCUSSION CENTER; HOUSTON

CHARITY OF CHOICE: **CHERISH OUR CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL**

**BIG IDEA:** HELD A PRE-REGISTRATION PARTY AT A HARD ROCK CAFÉ. THE EVENT GRABBED ATTENTION, RAISED AWARENESS AND GOT SIGN-UPS FOR THE BIG BEAT.

'We were able to invite people to come in, and if they registered that day, drummers could go up and jam with the band onstage. It was a way to promote The Big Beat event and to register ahead of time.'

once drummers experience drumming for a charity, they're hooked. "The camaraderie, the feeling of really doing something for your community, is fantastic," he said.

**MAKING THE BIGGEST BEAT**

In short, bringing hundreds of drum kits to a single location is a logistical nightmare. It requires a lot of extra hands, and every retailer coordinates it differently.

Bennett has rented out 30-40 drum sets at the event to people who didn't want to bring their own. He also relies heavily on volunteers.

"Fortunately, there are a lot of drummers that are local here that want to be a part of it," Bennett said.

Donaldson has developed

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## {THEBIGBEAT}

a loyal crew of 25–30 people who work the sign-up tables, collect food donations and move drum kits. His “carpet crew” covered the entire UMAC Arena with carpet, boxed-off 7- by 6-foot square sections and numbered the sections. This way, drummers didn’t have to bring their own rugs.

Lee recruited friends and neighbors to help him. He also beat down doors at city hall; got the mayor on-board; and ended up with \$20,000 worth of donated park space, police officers and clean-up crews.

Paul Musilli, owner of Buffalo Drum Outlet in Depew, NY., has developed close ties with his local charity, Response to Love Center. The charity sent out its own volunteers to sell pizza and soda and auctioned off gift baskets at Musilli’s event to raise more money.

“We do everything on a volunteer basis,” Musilli said. “Even performers volunteer their time. The employees are not required to be there. We keep our expenses down.”

John Stebal, owner of Stebal Drums in Willowick, Ohio, advised retailers hosting an event like this for the first time to keep costs as low as possible and to look to their communities for resources.

“I got a hold of our local church, and they let me use a little stage,” Stebal said. “If you go out and rent a stage, it could be \$50–\$1,000. They also let us use a hot dog maker and tables.”

Another logistical hurdle is finding affordable venues that are large enough to house 70 to 200-plus drummers. Fisher got her venue, the George Ranch Historical Park, to sign-up as a Big Beat sponsor, and it donated part of the facility’s expense.

“As a platinum sponsor, one of the things they got was a drum set donated to the school of their choice,” Fisher said.

### SWAG FACTOR

Vendors and sponsors also play a key role in providing gear for raffles and prizes. More than 20 drum manufacturers act as national sponsors for The Big Beat.

“Rob, Donn, Mat and I are on The Big Beat board,” Fisher said. She explained that they divvy up calls to vendors, so vendors “aren’t called by 15 different people.”

Last year, suppliers provided more than

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\$162,000 in product, giving about \$18,000 in prizes and giveaways to each location.

Dave Hamilton, owner of Just Drums in Toronto and the only Canadian retailer in the Five-Star network, said changing his Drum Daze event

into a Big Beat event gave him better access to swag. This gear was given away to the most active donators.

"[With Drum Daze], we didn't have the scope of prizes, nor the scope of donations, and that's where Five-Star, as

a group, has really been beneficial, by putting a name and an organization behind it," Hamilton said.

Stebal was also able to score free T-shirts for his drummers by looking to local businesses for sponsorships. "We made a

Big Beat commemorative shirt," he said. "Each participant got a free shirt, and it was paid for by sponsors."

#### THE RESULTS

The long-term impact of The Big Beat is difficult for retailers to gauge, but some have seen their hard work boost the bottom line.

"Our numbers in November last year were better than our Christmas numbers," Donaldson said. "We've seen it for the last two years. I think it will be a trend that will continue.

"What we see is people preparing for The Big Beat. People will come in a month before and say, 'Hey, I want to get a new cymbal for Big Beat' or 'I want to fix this snare for Big Beat' or 'I'm trying to get another kit, so both my wife and I can play.'"

And it doesn't necessarily take years to get Donaldson's results. Lee's first-year efforts also gave him a better November than December business-wise. "It was absolutely incredible," Lee said.

Fisher noted another benefit of using The Mr. Holland's Opus as the national charity: Months after The Big Beat, promotional opportunities continue as schools receive their instruments.

"We had an opportunity to go to one of the high schools here in the Houston area and present them with instruments that came from the money that was raised for The Big Beat," she said. "We went and surprised the band class."

However, several retailers who participated in The Big Beat said that this type of promotion is ultimately not about sales. "It was much more of a big picture-type event with long-term impact," said Jim

## + THE CIVIC LEADER

# Jeffrey Lee

RESURRECTION DRUMS; HOLLYWOOD, FLA.  
CHARITY OF CHOICE: THE MR. HOLLAND'S  
OPUS FOUNDATION

**BIG IDEA:** PROMOTED HIS BUSINESS AND THE BIG BEAT TO CITY HALL. HE GOT \$20,000 WORTH OF DONATED POLICE AND CITY SUPPORT.

'Since then, I've been on the event-planning staff for the city of Hollywood. I have exceeded a couple of its events. I've done my share to give back. It's just getting your name out there, being involved in the community.'





{THEBIGBEAT}

Rupp of Columbus Pro Percussion in Columbus, Ohio.

According to Henry, while at a gig 70 miles from Houston, a kid walked up to him and said, "Hey man, weren't you at the Texas Big Beat?" The boy was wearing a Texas Big Beat T-shirt.

"I asked, 'Did you have fun?'" Henry said. "He said, 'Man, it was awesome.' So that's why it's worth it."

"With the economy the way it is, I kept thinking of John F. Kennedy saying, 'Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country,'" Lee said. "You can't sit back and expect the government to do this. We can do something ourselves. We're drummers, and we can make a lot of noise." **MI**

## + THE FUND-RAISER

# Paul Musilli

BUFFALO DRUM OUTLET; DEPEW, N.Y.  
CHARITY OF CHOICE: RESPONSE TO LOVE CENTER'S SOUP KITCHEN

**BIG IDEA:** VOLUNTEERS FROM RESPONSE TO LOVE CENTER SOLD PIZZA, AUCTIONED GIFT BASKETS AND HELD 50/50 RAFFLES AT THE BIG BEAT TO RAISE ADDITIONAL CASH.

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Gary Forkum of  
Fork's Drum Closet



BY JEFF CAGLE, PHOTO BY RICK MALKIN

# GOING BOUTIQUE

Looking for a product with limited distribution to distinguish your store? If you're a drum retailer, Rob Birenbaum, co-founder of the Five-Star Drum Shops network, said look no further than the high-end, boutique kit market.

"[Boutique drum manufacturers] just don't have the capacity, so there are some built-in values to the dealer," he said. "Exclusivity can have an impact on a consumer and, hopefully, lead to sales of other unrelated items, but it brings them into the store and makes them feel good about the dealer because they're perceived as

High-end, boutique drum kits are one weapon in weathering the harsh economy

being on the cutting-edge."

Birenbaum added that, unlike smaller manufacturers in other instrument sectors, boutique drum makers are more concentrated at the highest ends of the quality spectrum.

"For the stores that have

access to the major drum lines, there's really no need to get into smaller drum brands at an entry or middle price point because the major drum manufacturers have really done a great job of hitting every price point," he said. "There are six or eight major drum manufacturers, and it's hard to represent all of them, so if you represent half or three-quarters, you really don't need to carry a smaller brand at a middle price point on top of that."

#### SUPPLIER SUPPORT

Gary Forkum, owner of Fork's Drum Closet in Nashville, Tenn., carries kits

from smaller companies, such as Canopus, Joyful Noise and Pork Pie. He said Australia-based Brady Drums has performed especially well at his dealership and cited the company's use of woods indigenous to the continent as a major selling point.

"I've always tried to focus on things that you're not going to find in every single store in America, and Brady has a real mystique about it," Forkum said. "Not only because they're made in Australia [from native woods] — it's not your typical maple or birch or what most of the other drum companies have — but also because of the many great players who've



played them over the years.”

Forkum said that while many players have heard of Brady, few have likely seen its instruments in person or had a chance to play them. So last year, he hosted a Brady night, where Kelly Brady flew in and talked about the company her father built and the manufacturing process that shapes its signature drums.

“We had probably 30 snares and a kit in stock,” Forkum said. “She had done a lot of promoting on the [Brady] Web site and on Facebook and got a lot of drummers to come in. They’ve been real supportive as far as networking and helping me promote the inventory that we have.

“Kelly spoke about how her dad makes the stuff with the different woods and the sounds it produces. It was informative, but it wasn’t a clinic in the traditional sense where somebody comes and plays. It was just a night to showcase all of the drums and let guys come in and play all of the different models with the different woods. We had great attendance and sold several drums in the ensuing weeks because of the seeds that were planted that night.”

**ONLINE ANGLE**

Dana Bentley, owner of Bentley’s Drum Shop in Fresno, Calif., echoed the sentiments about high-end, boutique brands giving customers a reason to walk into the store. But he also mentioned another route dealers can take with their boutique products: e-commerce.

“We probably sell just as much of our small, boutique brands online [in our eBay store] as we do out of the brick-and-mortar store,” Bentley said. “Some of these smaller, boutique companies aren’t in many countries, so someone from Sweden could easily see a Canopus or a Shine drum in our e-store, and we’ll ship it to them internationally without a problem.”

Bentley suggested that the best way to move high-end products in-store or online is to carry a range of them.

“If someone is looking for a high-end product, they are probably the most discriminating shopper — they want to come in and touch or view multiple, different, high-end products in your online store,” he said. “The more high-end you have, the more high-end you’re going to sell.

“If a consumer only sees a couple of

options, he’s likely going to choose from what you have in a larger selection. The key is selecting the right boutique product for your store based on your customers and what you’re already carrying.”

**NEW BRAND LOYALTY**

Dave Levine, a drum industry consultant and former executive director of the Percussion Marketing Council, said he sees an opportunity for boutique brands to attract a younger generation, which may want to distance itself from its parents’ brands.

“One good aspect of the economy right now is that people are more willing than ever to accept value as opposed to just blindly buying a brand,” he said. “There’s more opportunity and openness now in the marketplace.

“There’s also a young generation of musicians who aren’t necessarily tied to older brands and are looking for their own. Dealers have to look at the big pic-

ture and see where they can get the best of each end of the spectrum. Obviously, dealers need to keep their core business, but they also need to look at what’s happened that has gotten us to this point and what can happen in the next five to 10 years that can expand our business.”

On top of the exclusivity and cool factor that many of these brands bring to the table, Jeffrey Lee of Resurrection Drums in Hollywood, Fla., said boutique drum companies simply provide an opportunity to connect with customers.

“I need to create a new experience every day for our clientele,” he said. “I need them to know that we have gone to great lengths to find the most unique and handmade instruments obtainable, [whether] from the actual country of origin, made by a monk on top of a mountain [or] prayed over as it was created. The integrity aspect of being serious about what you are offering adds serious value to creating a customer for life.” **MI**

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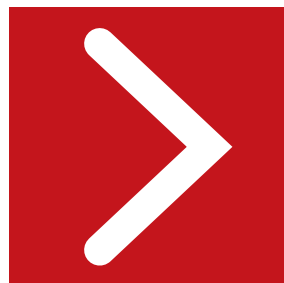
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# GEAR



## PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

SONOR | PHIL RUDD AC/DC  
SPECIAL EDITION

### Back in Black

Celebrating a 40-year collaboration, Sonor and AC/DC drummer Phil Rudd have teamed up to create the Phil Rudd Special Edition drum set. It features a 22- by 18-inch no-mount bass drum, 13- by 12 1/2-inch tom tom, 18- by 17 1/2-inch floor tom and 16- by 17 1/2-inch floor tom in a gloss black finish. A bass drum pedal, two mini-boom stands, a tom stand and a hi-hat stand are included.

"I have always preferred the big, powerful sound of large toms and floor toms," Rudd said. "This new set certainly delivers on that philosophy." MSRP: \$1,659.

{[sonor.com](http://sonor.com)}

## Inside GEAR

- > **Drums & Percussion**  
The Music People ignite Drumfire kit  
[PAGE 66](#)
- > **Guitars & Accessories**  
Martin 1 series returns  
[PAGE 68](#)
- > **Audio & Recording**  
Zoom Q3 recorder adds video  
[PAGE 70](#)
- > **Band & Orchestra**  
Jupiter lightens trombone slide  
[PAGE 72](#)
- > **Pianos & Keyboards**  
Yamaha PSR-S710 evolves workstations  
[PAGE 74](#)
- > **Print & Multimedia**  
eMedia distributes Guitar Lab DVDs  
[PAGE 76](#)

THE MUSIC PEOPLE | DRUMFIRE DK7500 MODEL

### Ready, Set, Drum!

Drumfire has launched the DK7500, a five-piece drum kit comprised of a 22-inch kick drum, 14-inch snare, 16-inch floor tom, and 12- and 13-inch rack toms. These standard sizes will help give students a well-rounded experience. The six-ply poplar shell construction is durable but light enough for easy tuning. Cymbals are included with a 16-inch ride and 14-inch set of hi-hats, each paired with a heavy-duty, double-braced stand. Supplied accessories include a drum throne, kick drum pedal, drum key and 15.5-inch birch drumsticks. MSRP: \$675.99. {musicpeopleinc.com}



ALESIS | DM10 ELECTRONIC DRUM SET

### The New Electric

The new Alesis DM10 Pro kit sound module contains true drum, cymbal and percussion sounds built from real samples of classic studio drums and prized cymbals. The DM10 Pro kit has acoustic-feeling RealHead pads in 8- and 10-inch sizes. The dual-zone pads feature real mylar drumheads and triple-flanged counterhoops. The ErgoRack is large enough for drummers to add on additional drum pads and Surge cymbals. {alesis.com}

MAPEX | MERIDIAN SERIES SHELL PACKS

### New Shell Packs

Mapex has expanded its product offering by making the Meridian maple and Meridian birch series five-piece configurations available as shell packs. All shell packs include a TH676 tom holder.

"We realize that our customers want choices that make sense for their own unique situation," said

Joe Vasko, Mapex USA vice president and general manager.

"Given the high quality and the affordability of the Meridian series, this option puts a superb second set of drums well within reach of most players." MSRP: maple shell packs, \$1,079.99; birch shell packs, \$899.99. {mapexdrums.com}



LUDWIG | ANNIVERSARY EDITION STAINLESS STEEL PRO BEAT

### Rare Steel

Celebrating its 100th anniversary, Ludwig has released the Ludwig Anniversary Edition stainless steel pro beat outfit. Only 100 of the drum kits will be made available. All of them are hand-rolled and tooled by drumsmith Ronn Dunnett. The first 50 made will feature a polished chrome steel finish and brass hardware. The second half will feature a brushed stainless finish and chrome hardware. This ultra-thin stainless shell and bearing edge on each drum creates an enormous tone. {ludwig-drums.com}





FORD DRUM | CORIAN-KOENIG SHELL SNARE

## Built Like a Rock

Ford Drum's new Corian-Koenig shell snare drum uses Corian, a premium, granite-like material that's often used in custom kitchens and other home remodeling applications. The structural integrity and reflective sonic nature of Corian makes it ideal for snare drums. The snare is available in 13- and 14-inch diameters, and from 4.5–7 inches deep. MSRP: starts at \$1,895. [forddrums.com](http://forddrums.com)



ZILDJIAN DRUMSTICKS | NEW DISPLAY

## Hot Display

Zildjian now offers the "Play With Fire" countertop stick display. It's designed to provide product exposure and customer access for easy product selection. It will fit in a compact footprint on most store countertops. Due to its revolving base and clear plastic construction, customers can view a 360-degree complement of Zildjian's sticks. Up to 54 pairs of Zildjian drumsticks are organized in three tiers, each in its own compartment. [zildjian.com](http://zildjian.com)



PRO-MARK | AUTOGRAPH SERIES

## Celebrity Sightings

Pro-Mark has added two models to its line of Autograph series sticks.

The Keith Harris model is made of American hickory. It's 16 1/8-inches long and 14 mm in diameter with a round wood tip. The Billy "Thunder" Mason model is also made of American hickory. It's 16 1/4-inches long and 15.2 mm in diameter with a barrel-shaped wood tip. The Mason model, similar in diameter to a 5B, is made for heavy hitters who want durability and volume without a big stick feel. MSRP: \$13.75 per pair. [promark.com](http://promark.com)



TAMA | STARPHONIC SNARE

## Snappy Snares

Tama's new Starphonic snare drums offer projection and resonant tones combined with crisp snare response. Tama incorporated new grooved hoops, freedom lugs, claw hooks and shells available in maple, bubinga, brass and aluminum.

Another unique feature is the redesigned Tama Super Sensitive Hi-Carbon Snappy Snare, which fits more closely to the snare side head for greater sensitivity and a crisper sound. [tama.com](http://tama.com)

# GEAR >

STRINGS, AMPS & ACCESSORIES



PARKER | DF842AD

## Parker Engaged

Designed for Killswitch Engage guitarist Adam Dutkiewicz, Parker Guitars' new DF842AD is made of a mahogany body and top, mahogany neck with a Parker fingerjoint set neck, and carbon composite fretboard. It has a Parker tremolo bridge, Sperzel locking tuners, an EMG 85 pickup and an EMG 81 bridge pickup. It comes with either a black ice or dusty black finish with black hardware. [parkerguitars.com](http://parkerguitars.com)



YAMAHA | NCX, NTX GUITARS

## Aging Well

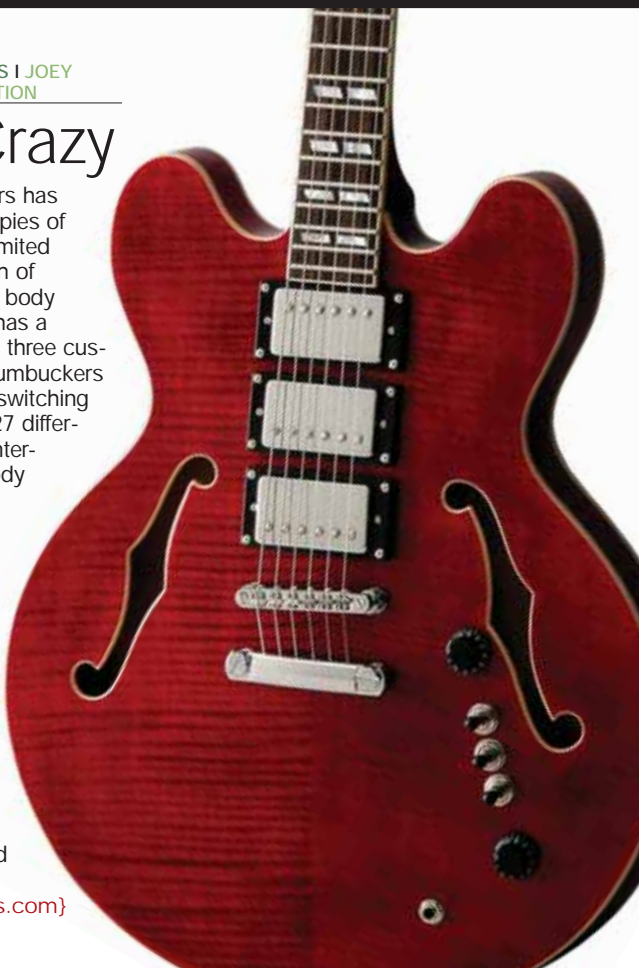
Yamaha's NCX (pictured) and NTX lines of nylon string acoustic-electric guitars were designed with the guitar duo Rodrigo y Gabriela. Both new models are outfitted with an A.R.T. transducer-based pre-amp system. The NCX series includes models in both rosewood and flamed maple back and sides. The NCX2000R and NCX2000FM are made with master-grade solid Hokkaido spruce tops treated with Yamaha's Acoustic Resonance Enhancement process, which accelerates the maturing process of the guitar. [yamaha.com](http://yamaha.com)

EASTWOOD GUITARS | JOEY LEONE LIMITED EDITION

## Tone Crazy

Eastwood Guitars has released 50 copies of the Joey Leone Limited Edition guitar. Each of these semi-hollow body collector editions has a serial number. The three custom coil tapped humbuckers combine with the switching system to create 27 different tones. The center-blocked hollow body features a flame maple top, back and sides, and has a one-piece set mahogany neck with a rosewood fingerboard. The Joey Leone Limited Edition is completed with a Tune-O-Matic bridge and ergonomically placed volume and tone controls.

[eastwoodguitars.com](http://eastwoodguitars.com)



MARTIN GUITARS | 1 SERIES

## The One

C.F. Martin has brought back the 1 series acoustic guitars. Initially introduced in 1993, the 1 series is an affordable, traditional, solid wood guitar in the spirit of the Style 15 and Style 17 models that Martin introduced during The Great Depression.

Constructed from solid tonewoods, including a sitka spruce top, book-matched sapele back and sides, as well as an East Indian rosewood fingerboard and bridge, all four new models feature Martin's modified hybrid scalloped top bracing. [martinguitar.com](http://martinguitar.com)







REUNION BLUES | MERINO WOOL GUITAR STRAPS

## Comfort Colors

Reunion Blues has unveiled three new, natural fiber guitar strap colors. All straps are made from 100-percent merino wool. These additions come in beige with brown tab, black with red pinstripe and black with blue pinstripe. They have rugged construction and an elegant design. {reunionblues.com}



LEVY'S LEATHERS | SLIMLINE SONIC-ART GUITAR STRAPS

## Skinny Straps

Skinny ties are back in style, and Levy's has designed guitar straps to match. A narrow 1 1/2-inch polyester webbing is used for printing Levy's Slimline Sonic-Art designs, which feature decorative black binding and leather ends. Pictured is model MPS1 in two of the many designs available. {levysleathers.com}



LASHBROOK | NATURACOUSTIC BRIDGE

## Acoustic Vibrations

Lashbrook's Tune-O-Matic-style Naturacoustic bridge has specially developed piezo elements that power it in a passive circuit. There is no need for a battery or pre-amp. {lashbrookguitars.com}



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# GEAR >

## AUDIO & RECORDING

### ZOOM | Q3 RECORDER

## Movie Magic

The new Q3 video recorder brings Samson's Zoom audio technology to the camcorder. It uses the same microphone capsules as the H4n recorder. The Q3 can be used for recording live musical performances, rehearsals, interviews, conferences, video podcasts or recitals.

Designed with everything needed to make movies right out of the box, the Q3 includes HandyShare software for editing and a 2 GB SD card for up to one hour of video recording time. The Q3 will accept up to 32 GB SDHC cards for 16 hours of movie making. [samsontech.com](http://samsontech.com)



### CAD | EQUITEK E100S CONDENSER MIC

## CAD Classic

CAD has debuted the Equitek E100S large-diaphragm super cardioid condenser mic. It features a bootstrapped, full differential Quadra-FET front end to ensure high sensitivity and low distortion. Additional features include an 80 Hz hi-pass filter and a 10 dB pad. A twin 5087 output driver provides low-drive impedance. RoHS compliant, the E100S also features RF immunity. The E100S includes a shock mount and comes in a cherry wood carrying case. MSRP: \$799. [cadmics.com](http://cadmics.com)

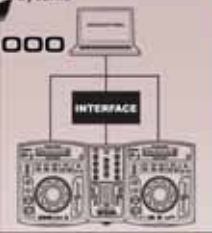
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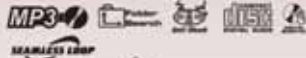
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ON-STAGE STANDS | TM01 TABLE, STAND CLAMP

## For Tight Spots

On-Stage Stands is now offering the TM01 microphone table and stand clamp. The TM01's design helps mount microphones horizontally or vertically on round, cornered or flat surfaces. It also works for miking an acoustic guitar while singing or getting a drum mic into a tight spot. The flat side mounts securely to flat surfaces, while the V-shaped side grips round and cornered surfaces, such as mic stands and trusses. MSRP: \$26.99. [onstagestands.com](http://onstagestands.com)

SOLID STATE LOGIC | X-DESK

## Tech Desk

The new Solid State Logic X-Desk is a portable compact mixer. It combines a 16-channel SSL SuperAnalogue summing mixer with a compact analog audio hub. The unit has 100-mm faders and professionally featured artist and studio monitoring with dim and cut buttons. [solid-state-logic.com](http://solid-state-logic.com)



101 Guitar Case Solutions

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VANDOREN | B50 BASS CLARINET MOUTHPIECE

## Big, Easy Sound

Vandoren unveiled the B50 bass clarinet mouthpiece at this year's Oklahoma Clarinet Symposium. The B50 creates a compact, focused sound and is even in all registers. This offers easy blowing and generates a rich, colorful sound with minimal effort, even with harder reeds.

"Every now and then a mouthpiece comes along that makes it fun to play a particular instrument," said David Gould, a Juilliard-trained clarinetist and the artist relations manager for Dansr. "The B50 is that mouthpiece for bass clarinet. It gives such a big, lush sound with such little effort that almost makes it seem too easy." MSRP: \$264.95. {[vandoren.com](http://vandoren.com)}



RICO | RESERVE CLASSIC CLARINET REEDS

## For Classy Clarinetists

Rico has added the Reserve Classic to its Reserve line. These reeds were produced with the help of New York Philharmonic clarinetist Mark Nuccio. Developed using 3-D reed-modeling software, they differ from the original Reserve reeds in that they feature increased warmth and lightened articulation by way of a newly designed tip radius. MSRP: \$55 for a box of 10 reeds. {[ricoreeds.com](http://ricoreeds.com)}



JUPITER | XO SERIES ADD-ON

## Super-Light Slide

Jupiter now offers a lightweight slide for its professional XO series trombone models. The slide, which weighs 6 ounces less, gives horns a more professional feel and improved balance. The slide is available for the 1032 and 1028 XO models at no extra cost.

Jupiter artist Michael Davis, who backs The Rolling Stones, helped test demos of the slide. The XO models are an ideal option for high school players who plan to pursue music education. MSRP: \$1,895–\$2,025. {[jupitermusic.com](http://jupitermusic.com)}



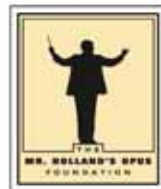
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## PIANOS & KEYBOARDS



AKAI | LPK25

### New Portability

AKAI has launched the LPK25, a USB-MIDI controller for musicians, producers and DJs. Each model measures less than 13-inches across and weighs less than 1 pound to fit easily into a laptop case, backpack or messenger bag. The LPK25 is made up of 25 miniature, velocity-sensitive keys with synth action. The controller requires no software driver installation or wall power for operation. {[akaipro.com](http://akaipro.com)}



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BÖSENDORFER | AUDI DESIGN

### Designer Notes

To celebrate its 100th anniversary, Audi has partnered with Bösendorfer to create a uniquely designed concert grand piano. The Bösendorfer grand features a closed bass side rim that not only lends the instrument presence and stability but also helps it project stronger bass sounds. To create this lid shape, Bösendorfer design engineer Otto Haller developed a custom press mold that is unique in piano manufacturing. {[audi.bosendorfer.com](http://audi.bosendorfer.com)}



ROLAND | VP-770

### Endless Possibilities

ROLAND's VP-770 vocal and ensemble keyboard features newly developed vocal designer effects and high-quality ensemble sounds powered by the company's SuperNatural technology. The keyboard is also equipped with high-resolution vocoder modeling, which can be used to generate signature vocal effects for a variety of genres. MSRP: \$2,199. {[rolandus.com](http://rolandus.com)}



YAMAHA | PSR-S710

### Evolutionary Leap

Yamaha's new, 61-key PSR-S710 blends functionality and affordability. With its sonic palette and realistic styles, it's an ideal arranger in a home or on stage. High-end features include dozens of effects, a 16-track sequencer, an audio recorder and Internet connectivity. MSRP: \$1,399. {[yamaha.com](http://yamaha.com)}



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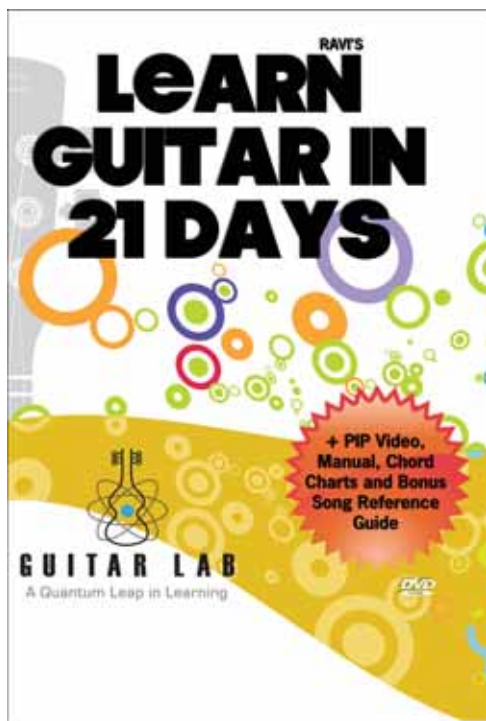


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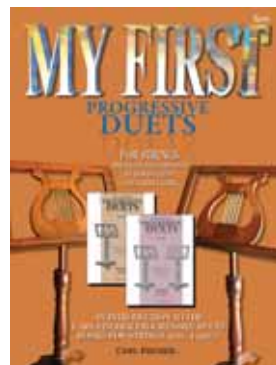
Media Music will distribute the new Guitar Lab series of guitar instruction DVDs. Lesson content and learning tools are powered by TrueFire. The six titles include Ravi's *Learn Guitar In 21 Days*, Frank Vignola's *50 Jazz Guitar Licks You Must Know*, Rich Maloof's *50 Acoustic Guitar Licks You Must Know*, Jeff McErlain's *50 Blues Guitar Licks You Must Know*, Joe Dalton's *50 Country Guitar Licks You Must Know* and Chris Buono's *50 Rock Guitar Licks You Must Know*. All six Guitar Lab titles feature picture-in-picture video, standard notation, tab, power tab files, practice rhythm tracks and bonus material. MSRP: \$24.95.

{[emediamusic.com](http://emediamusic.com)}

CARL FISCHER | MY FIRST PROGRESSIVE DUETS FOR STRINGS

## Early Progress

Carl Fischer is offering a new series designed to introduce beginning players to the Progressive Duets For Strings series. My First Progressive Duets For Strings introduces beginning players to the Progressive Duets For Strings teaching method, while remaining at an appropriate skill level.



My First Progressive Duets For Strings is compatible with all stringed instruments and can be played with any combination of two. Each collection starts with beginning-level pieces and gradually progresses to the level of *Progressive Duets For Strings, Volume 1*, building ensemble skills at an early level. MSRP: \$9.95.

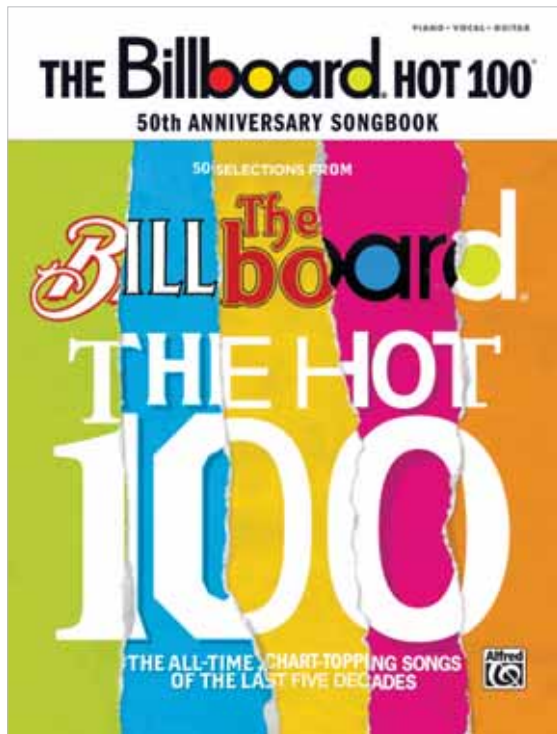
{[carlfischer.com](http://carlfischer.com)}

ALFRED | 'THE BILLBOARD HOT 100' SONGBOOK

## Alfred's Hot 100

Commemorating the 50th anniversary of *Billboard* magazine's Hot 100 chart, Alfred has released *The Billboard Hot 100 50th Anniversary Songbook*.

With more than 250 pages of sheet music from Chubby Checker to The Beatles to OneRepublic, this songbook is a summation of 50 years of pop culture. It comes in a piano/vocal/guitar edition and an easy piano edition. The easy piano edition contains 20 simplified hits arranged by piano educator Dan Coates. MSRP: easy piano edition, \$17.95; regular, \$24.95. {[alfred.com](http://alfred.com)}



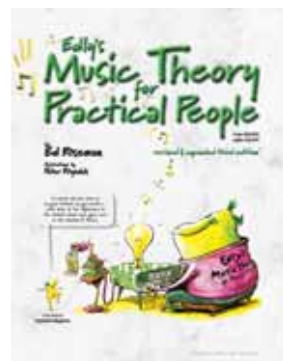
EDLY'S | 'MUSIC THEORY FOR PRACTICAL PEOPLE' THIRD EDITION

## Music Theory Makeover

The *Edly's Music Theory For Practical People* book has been revised and expanded in its third edition.

The book has 40 pages worth of new chapters on topics, including chord extensions and alterations, voicings, voice leading, harmonizing a melody, analyzing chord progressions, and reharmonization.

The original chapters have also received a makeover with improved layout and graphics, as well as significant rewrites. MSRP: \$25. {[edly.com](http://edly.com)}





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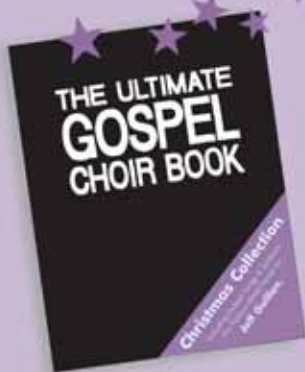
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Direct Sound	4
Dixon	9
EMD	22
Fishman Transducers	38
Friedman, Kannenberg & Co.	75
G7th	17
Gator Cases	71
George L's	59
(Hoshino) Tama	31, 33
Hughes & Kettner	35
Hunter Musical Instruments	61
Jody Jazz	74
Kala Ukelele	24
Kyser	69
Levy's Leathers	43
LP Music	15
Marathon	70
MBT Lighting	41
Mott Audio	17
Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation	73
NAMM	20-21
Off-Set Bass Drum Pedal	61
Perri's Leathers	57
Peterson Tuners	4
Promark	5
Remo	26
Retail Up Music	59
RimRiser	58
Roc'n Soc	18
Roland	2
Samson	84
Sennheiser	64
SHS	30
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**Tom Robertson**  
Tommy's Drum Shop  
Austin, Texas

I have used a lot of tubing, the kind that you can get from drum suppliers that can be used for front sets or hand percussion. You can use it to create anything you want to.

I basically categorize the store by the type of instrument, so when people focus in on a certain type of instrument, they know where to look.

Sometimes, my workers give me good ideas, as well. I am always one to listen if they have some idea of what they think will work. And I have been complimented on the way that the store looks — that's for sure.

I do look at magazines and listen to what other people say. I talk with [other drum retailers] about how they do things and try to pick up ideas from them. I will change things up, but the footprint and the basic layout of the store is kept the same.

I like there to be a really clear view of as much [of the store] as possible. I want people to see every different aspect of what we carry in the store but still be able to walk directly to where they want to go if they just need to pick up something on the fly, and get in and get out.

>>>  
**John Johnson**  
Drum Center of Lexington  
Lexington, Ky.

We had an elaborate setup of hand percussion. It included all kinds of reeds and bamboo sticks. We used an upside-down hand drum as a planter that almost looked like a coffin. We got a lot of compliments from customers who walked in. We also have a lot of female influence since the owner's wife likes to decorate. We are located under a stoop, and she made the outside of the store a bistro-like setup with tables, chairs and plants. We get many compliments on that, too.



>>>  
**Jeff Huffman**  
Chops Percussion  
Indianapolis

## What was your most effective **drum or percussion display**?

For drum sets, we had a drum wall. There were different level risers with kits filling them up. The highlight was a Gretsch USA Custom kit in the center that was used by Stanton Moore during one of our clinics. It was a great conversation piece.

It's interesting to see something that stands out a little bit. Sometimes, it's something like the Stanton Moore kit, where someone has done a clinic or performed on a kit. Other times, it might be a vintage kit that a store might have.

We also had an effective marching drum display. The complete number of drums in the

display was 16 snares, nine tenors and 11 bass drums. These were set up on two levels on a very long shelf, high in the store. It took a little trial and error getting everything to fit in the amount of space available. The highlight of that display was a custom Yamaha line that was used by the Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps during a season when they won the DCI World Championships.

Anytime you have anything like that as part of your display, it sparks conversation. It lets the customer get to know us a little bit. We get to know them. They tell other peo-

ple about it.

We're still new — only three years old — and a lot of promotion is by word of mouth. A good conversation helps us get a return visit. What we find is that since we are small and privately owned, we get those customers that really prefer the more intimate environment.

You have to approach [drums] almost like a piece of art or a nice piece of furniture you're putting on display. We have lots of spotlights in here, and sometimes, it's just a matter of being creative with which lights you turn to get the right sparkle out of the kit.





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