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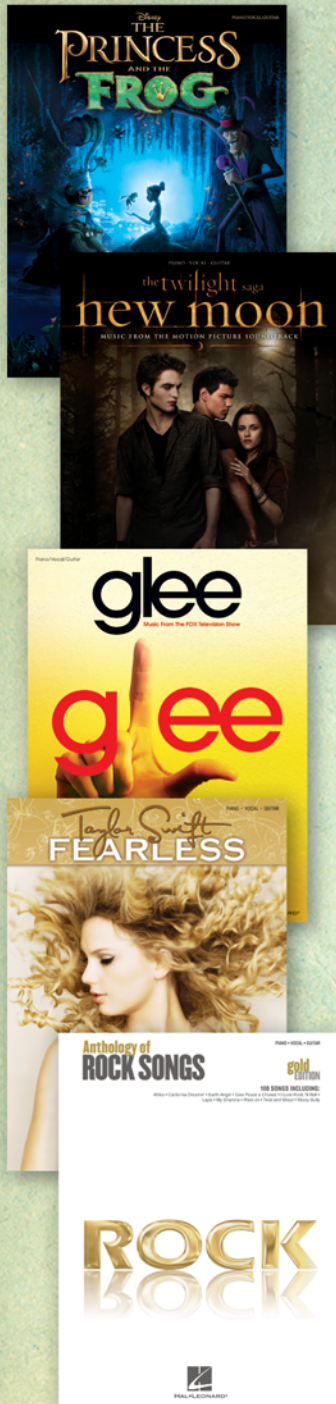
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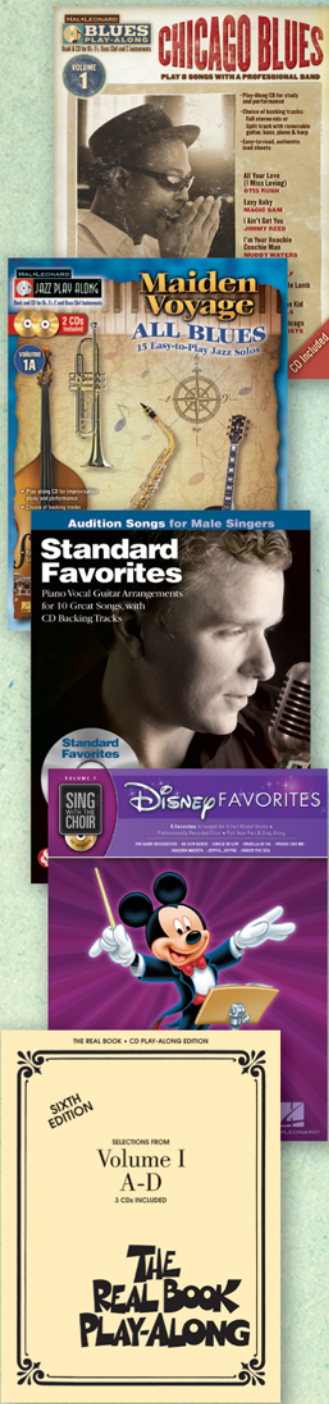
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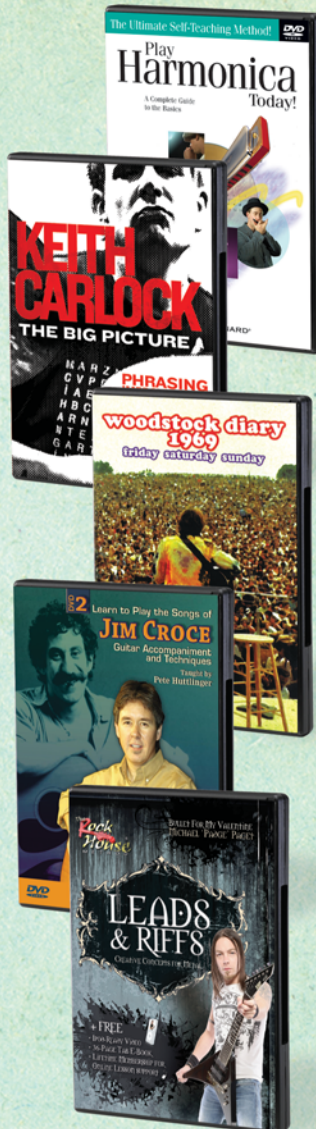
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Tom Schmitt

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In the wake of the recession, Schmitt Music has tightened its operations to become a faster, nimbler operation designed to ride through tight times and continue growing.

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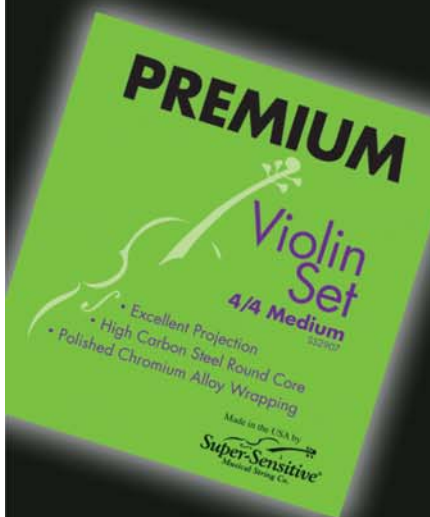
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PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

'THE BLACK CLOUDS ARE LIFTING'

Last October's issue of *Music Inc.* featured a cover story on tried-and-true holiday marketing ideas ("Holiday Promoters"). Two retailers in that article, West Music and Music & Arts, had planned Black Friday blitzkriegs that included newspaper inserts, doorbuster sales and first-come, first-serve giveaways. I checked in with both dealerships after the Thanksgiving weekend to find out how their efforts paid off, expecting no miracles in light of the still-sluggish economy. And both of them surprised me.

Robin Walenta, president of Coralville, Iowa-based West Music, reported record sales for both Black Friday and Cyber Monday before writing, "We think the black clouds are lifting!" An executive at Frederick, Md.-based Music & Arts said the company's in-store and online sales were "up nicely."



Elsewhere, a representative of Internet and mail-order retail giant Sweetwater said Black Friday marked the best one-day online sales in the company's history. He added that the Fort Wayne, Ind.-based dealership topped those numbers on Cyber Monday.

The picture was equally sunny in some corners of indie retail. Dale's Drum Shop of Harrisburg, Pa., had what store manager Rejjie Troup called a "very solid" Black Friday and a better Saturday. Gale Wise, Dale's vice president, said sales were up 20 to 25 percent that day, and in a range of drum kits — not just entry-level sets.

Even the piano industry showed a few glimmers of hope at the end of 2009. This month's cover, Schmitt Music of Minneapolis, had been battling the dreadful piano market alongside everyone else. That began to change this past fall. Savvy promotions, priced-to-move product and a slight rebound in consumer confidence helped give the company a double-digit piano sales boost in September. At press time, Schmitt Music was also coming off a November that Tom Schmitt, company president, compared with its best years. (The story begins on page 50.) Greg Billings, *Music Inc.* columnist and owner of Steinway Piano Gallery of Bonita Springs, Fla., added that Thanksgiving weekend was his "best ever" for business.

Certainly, mall-based stores and large-format retailers tend to reap greater benefits from Black Friday than music dealers. As Chris Gleason, senior vice president of Manchester, N.H.-based Daddy's Junky Music, pointed out, Thanksgiving weekend has never been a spot-on omen of his company's overall holiday business. That said, recall that one year ago the Dow had nearly bottomed out and consumers were clutching their wallets in fear of economic doomsday. I'll go out on a limb and suggest that a decent Black Friday is a sign of better things to come in 2010.

If your holiday weekend was disappointing, down or dreadful, take heed: People are buying again. Keep checking in with *Music Inc.* throughout 2010 to learn how to capitalize on those potential customers. **MI**

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LETTERS

Creating Good Conversation

I just finished reading the rebuttal (“What Went Wrong With the Piano Industry: An Alternate View,” September 2009) and some of the discussions surrounding Greg Billings’ original article (“What Went Wrong With the Piano Industry,” June 2009). I thought the letters in November’s issue were also very interesting.

I believe Billings’ observation about new leadership at the manufacturing level not being vested in past errors is an excellent one that must also be applied by remaining retailers (“The Next Step,” November 2009).

If I’ve learned anything during the past months, it is that sometimes we must simply drop a “bomb” on things as they are, clean the slate and ask, “What if?” and “Could we do this?” In other words, try to pretend we’re creating a new industry because, in essence, we are.

Being an avid history buff, I value the past and firmly believe that we must keep the lessons of the past in mind, but, in today’s world, we simply cannot be tied to it.

The beauty of Billings’ initial “What Went Wrong With the Piano Industry” article was that we got a good conversation going. We have some serious disagreements among ourselves that should be celebrated — not discouraged — because that is how individuals, companies, industries and, yes, countries create, improve and thrive.

Now if we can all just grow some thicker skin, keep the finger pointing to a minimum,



‘We got a good conversation going. We have some serious disagreements among ourselves that should be celebrated, not discouraged.’
— Brad Witthuhn

not take criticism too personally and listen, we might create something better for our mutual future.

Thanks for starting the conversation.

Brad Witthuhn
Henri’s Music
Green Bay, Wis.

Embrace Change

The piano article by Terry Lewis (“What Went Wrong With the Piano Industry: An Alternate View,” September 2009) was a catalyst that stim-

ulated thinking in many minds. Hopefully, it will be enough to re-energize that segment of the market. I also particularly enjoyed Bill Hinely’s comments (“Piano Exposure,” *Letters*, November 2009).

We have seen dramatic change, and much of it has been good. There are still fine-quality instruments out there for those who want acoustic pianos, though that number has diminished significantly, at least for now.

I don’t think the number of people who want acoustic pianos will change anytime soon, if ever. All one has to do is pick up a *Pierce Piano Atlas*, and that says it all. We only have a handful of acoustic piano manufacturers compared to the 2-inch-thick *Pierce* offerings.

Of course, how many people want something in 2009 that has remained the same since 1909? There are very few products that remain the same and consumers con-

tinue to want for long periods of time.

Just walk into Best Buy, and you can purchase a refrigerator with a TV built in, a washer and dryer unit that looks like a spaceship, or some fabulous flat screen LED TV that doesn’t look anything like a TV did 10 or 20 years ago. Even hot tubs now come with a flat screen TV, DVD player and AM/FM stereo with pop-up speakers.

We all have to embrace change. Fortunately for the music business, we also have the ability to educate our customers. Lessons are the key to creating a market and building a world of music makers. Regardless of the instrument, the rush that you get from making your own music is something that cannot be described — it can only be experienced.

Music retailers have an excellent opportunity to capitalize on the off-the-chart sales of video games, such as *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band*, but we need to encourage the game players to get into the game and learn what playing music is all about. Those video games are even delivering baby boomers to us with *The Beatles: Rock Band* game and the latest karaoke version.

Mike Guillot
Director of Purchasing
Mississippi Music
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EDITOR’S NOTE: MUSIC INC.

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RETAIL



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JACKSON'S MUSIC | BY JEFF CAGLE

LOCATION, LOCATION

Atlanta-based Jackson's Music has been a part of Doug Dryden's life since elementary school. He and his sister rented instruments from the dealership, and in the early 1960s, Dryden's mother left her job as a bank teller to work at the store.

Wesley Jackson, the original owner, eventually retired and sold the store to Dryden's parents. But in 1996, after 18 years of practicing dentistry, Dryden got a phone call from them.

"It was like, 'Who's selling the business, you or us?'" he said. "I had always enjoyed my time at the music store, so I decided to make a major change in my life and take over the store. I wanted to see what I could do as far as growing the business, and if I liked it, I would keep on doing it. It would be the second half of my working life. And if I didn't [like it], I would just sell the business and go back to practicing dentistry."

Once Dryden took the reins, he immediately began expanding. The full-line dealership, which had been a single store since opening in 1958, now has two metro Atlanta-area locations and a third location run by Dryden's



Joey and Doug Dryden

sister, Mari-Jo, in Winston-Salem, N.C.

OWNING VERSUS LEASING

Dryden owns all of his company's buildings. In his previous life, he got involved with home building and said building was a key part of Jackson's business plan. But his initial success was elusive.

"At first, we leased space in a strip center that was not that

far from where we were, which didn't work out, and we ended up closing the store," he said. "But in the meantime, I was continuing to look for other locations, and I found one that I thought would work out in Douglasville. It was an old Chinese restaurant and had high visibility, so we decided to take a chance. Some of the things that we had learned from not being successful we were never going to do again."

One lesson learned was the importance of location. The new property offered greater visibility, and Dryden mentioned "it has worked out real well" since opening in 1998.

He added that owning versus leasing his buildings has given his business a tremendous long-term investment.

"With my dental practice, every time the lease was up, the rate went up," he said. "My vision of owning the buildings was to be able to lock the building costs to a set amount, and there would be a point in time that the buildings would be paid for. My angle was always that if I'm going to buy inventory to sell at similar costs as competitors and I'm going to have similar advertising costs and similar costs for associates who work for us, we're going to be competitive by locking

Jackson's Music finds a new revenue stream, more competitive prices by owning its real estate

▶▶▶ RETAIL



The electric guitar department in Jackson's Music's Buford, Ga., store



The Buford showroom



The Buford store's movie marquee

down the building costs. The further time goes on, the more competitive we become because our building costs go down.”

Owning buildings also gives Jackson's Music a separate revenue stream, as Dryden leases out extra space to other businesses. He said his dream is to lease out space solely to music-related businesses and create a kind of music mall. It hasn't happened yet, but he has rented out all his excess space.

“The music business is a destination,” he said. “Few people go out to the movies or grocery store and then decide they want to buy a guitar. In a strip center, the grocery store is usually the attraction, but music stores don't seem to need that because they are a destination themselves. If people can see you and you have a good supply of inventory and a knowledgeable, courteous sales staff, and by holding costs down you are able to pass on good prices to your customers, you will be able to develop relationships with them.”

BUILDING A DESTINATION

Jackson's Music's flagship Buford location opened in August 2008. It sits in a 10,000-square-foot space and features a 6,000-square-foot showroom. When customers walk through the doors, they're greeted by a movie marquee complete with chasing lights. It's used to advertise in-store events.

Dryden's original plan called for recreating the front of a home, with a porch for customers to sit and pick guitars. “We like for customers to see and touch and hold anything in our store,” he said. “The more I thought about it, the more I thought it would be great for acoustic guitars, but that's about all it would be good for. Rather than being old-fash-

ioned and having to build Bass Pro Shops inside our store, [we went with] the exterior of a movie theater, so we could do a slicker, more modern look.”

The focal points of the location are the high-end acoustic and electric guitar rooms, but the store also features space for band and orchestra and combo instruments. Plus, it houses 10 music lesson studios, a band instrument repair shop and office space.

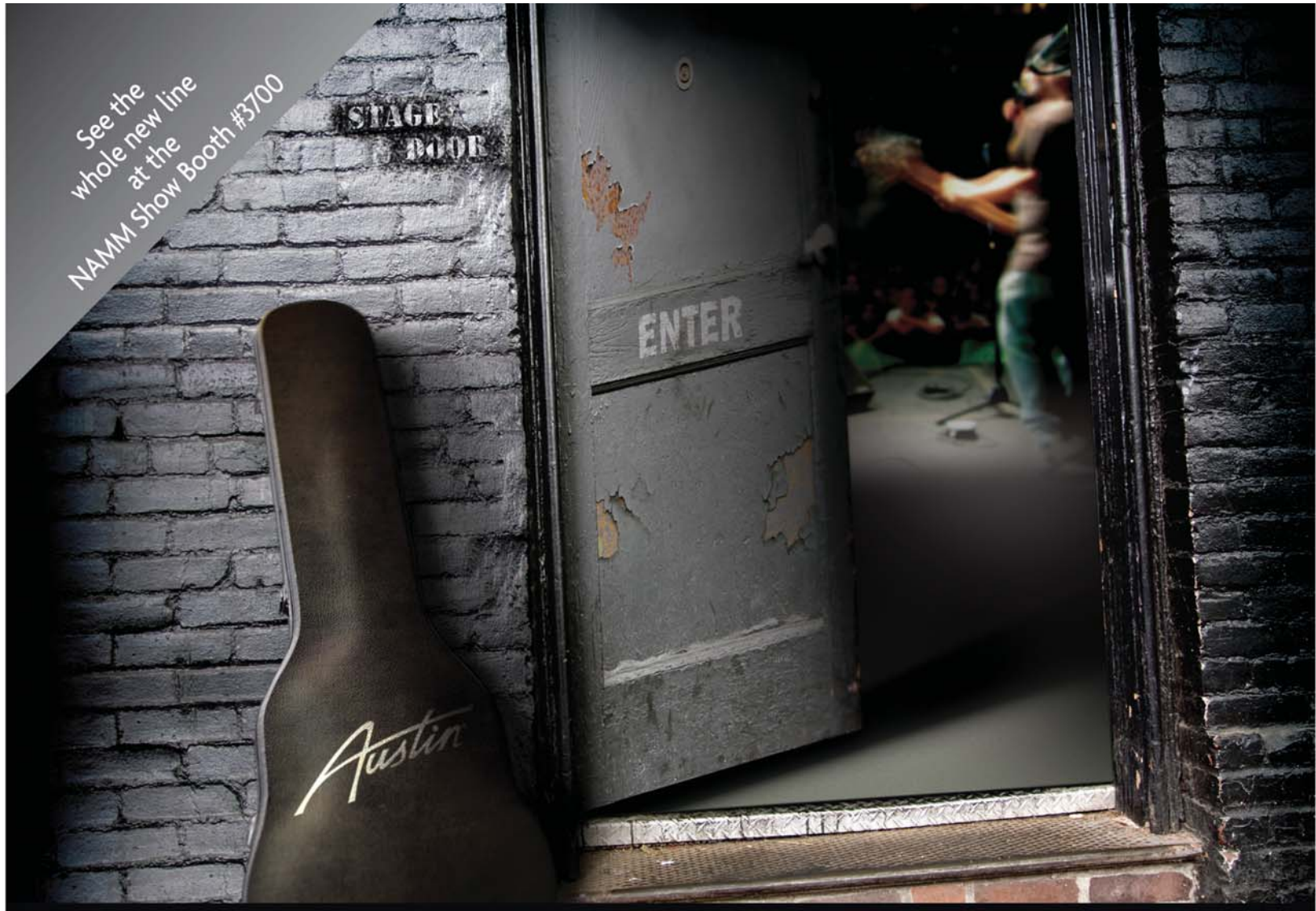
SIGN OF THE TIMES

Dryden said he's cautiously optimistic about the state of the economy. At his stores, accessories and items below \$800 have sold consistently since the recession's onset, but over the past couple of months, higher-end sales have been turning around slowly. According to Dryden, weathering a recession is a matter of buying right and managing inventory.

“Suppliers know that the economy is slow and that the higher-end equipment is turning slow, so it's just trying to make sure that you don't get top-heavy,” he said. “We've had to quit buying so many high-end things, but you have to have some of those items because customers like to see them. But you can't have tons of it if it's not turning.

“We always keep a good supply of inventory and try to buy what people want. We have good pricing, and we offer our opinion when we're asked. But we're a low-key [store]. If someone wants to come into any one of our stores and hang out, that's fine. It's not like, ‘If I can't sell you something, you've got to go.’ If you want to come in and buy something, that's great. If you want to come in and hang out, that's great, too. We try to make it as friendly an atmosphere as possible.” **MI**

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»»» ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ RETAIL

◀ BRIEFS

OUTREACH

Grand Donation

The Steinway Piano Society of Madison, Wis., recently received its largest donation to date when an anonymous donor contributed a nearly 100-year-old Steinway & Sons Model A grand piano. After restoration, the donated piano is estimated to be worth more than \$57,000. Proceeds from its sale will be used to support the Steinway Piano Society's mission of supplying needy piano students with instruments. The Steinway Piano Society is the non-profit branch of Steinway Piano Gallery of Madison, which is owned and operated by Grant Billings.



Grant Billings

OPENING

New Knoxville Store

Musician and radio host Matt Morelock recently opened Morelock Music in Knoxville, Tenn. The music dealership sells guitars, amps, banjos and fiddles and will also offer instrument repairs and music lessons. Morelock plans to move into a larger location down the street in the near future, according to a Nov. 7, 2009, article in the *Knoxville News Sentinel*. After the move, he said he plans to install a bolted-down stool and a tip bucket outside the shop for performing musicians.

HONORS

Beacock Awarded

In November 2009, Beacock Music of Vancouver, Wash., received Oregon State University's Austin Family Business Program's Excellence in Family Business Award.



Russ and Gayle Beacock of Beacock Music

Beacock was one of nine recipients, and nearly 200 nominations were submitted. The award recognizes the achievements of family businesses in innovation, entrepreneurship, commitment and community involvement.



Music Authority drum competition winner Garrett Hunt

MUSIC AUTHORITY | CONTEST

DRUMMING UP A WIN

Music Authority of Cumming, Ga., held a drum competition on Nov. 14, 2009, in celebration of International Drum Month. Students in Music Authority's lessons program competed in two age groups: 14 and younger and 15 and older.

Garrett Hunt won in the younger age bracket, Jacob Royal in the older. Competitors were judged on several criteria, including stage

presence, style, technique, originality and overall effect. The winners received new cymbals, and all competitors were awarded prize packages for their efforts.

"We've been working on a routine for the last four weeks," said Brian Weaver, a Music Authority drum instructor. "But when [Garrett Hunt] showed up and played today, even I was impressed."

MUSICIAN'S FRIEND | CORPORATE

MF TO SLASH ROUGHLY 75 JOBS

Musician's Friend recently announced plans to eliminate approximately 75 jobs from its Northland distribution center in Kansas City, Kan.

The distribution center includes a call center that will close at the end of February and a retail clearance store that will close Dec. 30, 2009. Galen Erickson, vice president of fulfillment at Musician's Friend in Kansas City, said the company's goal is to retain 25-30 of those employees by moving them into repair, returns processing and warehouse positions.

"We've been moving some associates that wanted to move right away," Erickson said. He added that Guitar Center, Musician's Friend's parent company, has two area stores, which might hire some of the employees.

"It's important that we gave such advance notice," Erickson said. "It would be easy for a company to say, 'We'll wait until the last minute to get through peak and deliver this news after Christmas.' When I've talked with employees, they've said they don't appreciate hearing the

news but like the advanced notice."

All employees who remain until the closing dates will be provided severance benefits based on tenure.

IT'S NOT THE ECONOMY

According to Erickson, this decision was strategic rather than a reaction to the recession. The brick-and-mortar clearance store, in particular, suffered due to online competition.

"The purpose of the retail clearance store was to sell returns that were either never opened or lightly used and get some value out of it," Erickson said. Since its clearance products were turning up on eBay or Craigslist at higher prices, Musician's Friend decided to take its clearance operation online, too.

"This summer, we started hiring repair technicians, guitar luthiers, and band and orchestra people who could repair instruments [for online sales]," Erickson said. "That's also where we will be looking to rehire some of our employees."

MADISON MUSIC, YAMAHA | OUTREACH

TROOPS GET MUSIC AID

On Oct. 27, 2009, Yamaha donated 20 new FG700 guitars and two DD-65 drum kits to Operation Music Aid, an organization that provides musical instruments to wounded military personnel. The gear was presented at Madison Music in Madison, Conn., which serves as Operation Music Aid's headquarters.

Madison First Selectman Al Goldberg, Sen. Ed Meyer, country-pop singer Nicole Frechette and Native American flutist Joseph FireCrow all came out for the presentation.

Operation Music Aid has distributed more than 1,500



From left: Michael Robertson Foundation's David Robertson, Yamaha's Mark Maulucci, singer Nicole Frechette, Madison Music's George Hauer and Operation Music Aid's Clark Kniceley

musical instruments to injured active-duty military personnel. Yamaha has pro-

vided 120 guitars, keyboards and electronic drum kits to the program.

"Yamaha understands the powerful connection between wellness, healing and music, and one of the company's key goals is to support wellness in all people, especially those in need," said Carol Baker, Yamaha's vice president of human resources and head of Yamaha Cares. "It's gratifying to know that our instruments are providing wounded soldiers with music as a healing tool."

Yamaha Cares is an employee-based initiative dedicated to charitable work, including community development in areas where employees live and work.

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»»» RETAIL

◀ BRIEFS

PROMOTION

Rocker's Wish List

This past holiday season, Guitar Center launched the Wish List Poster Creator. The feature let musicians log onto guitarcenter.com/wishlist, choose a poster style and drop items from GC's merchandise onto their poster. Users could also include a message and upload their own photographs to the poster. The poster could then be uploaded to Facebook, Twitter and MySpace or e-mailed directly to friends and family. Musicians who create a wish list also received a coupon for 10-percent off a single item at GC.



From left: Full Compass' Susan Lipp, Jeffrey Ryan and Jonathan Lipp

PERSONNEL

FC Honors Vets

Full Compass Systems recognized three 25-year veteran employees at the opening of its new 140,000-square-foot facility in Madison, Wis., on Oct. 1, 2009. They included Vickie Harper, national sales professional; Jeffrey Ryan, government sales professional; and Mark Nash, newly appointed company president. CEO Jonathan Lipp addressed the crowd of more than 400 employees and guests and highlighted the honorees' achievements. Each honoree was presented with a watch that fit his or her individual personality.

ANNIVERSARY

Kutz Turns 50

Kutz Music in Pittsburg, Kan., celebrated its 50th year in business in 2009, while its owners, Marion and Bernice Kutz, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. They opened their first shop in Parsons, Kan., in 1959 and sold grand pianos and church organs. Now, Kutz Music is a full-line store. "It's a little different when you're not just living together but working together, too," said Bernice Kutz to local newspaper *The Morning Sun*.



Central Instrument Co. of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, recently unveiled a 10- by 40-foot mural of the Cuyahoga Falls Tiger Marching Band.

The mural, located on the east side of the company's building, is affixed to 10 aluminum panels with a special laminate and is illuminated at night. Central Instrument Co. specializes in school music retail.

"As a former high school band director and as a former member of the Tiger Marching Band, I know firsthand the hard work and dedication that it takes to reach the high level of perfection that this band achieves year after year," said Jim

Central Instrument Co. pays tribute to local marching band with artwork

Stahl, owner of Central Instrument Co. "Our community and school are very proud of the accomplishments of these fine students.

"It is my honor to present this mural as homage to the Cuyahoga Falls Tiger Marching Band."

CADENZA MUSIC | EVENT

Cadenza Party Benefits Local Schools

Cadenza Music of St. Paul, Minn., welcomed nearly 400 customers, friends and vendors on Oct. 25, 2009, to celebrate its 35th anniversary. The party also served as a fund-raiser for St. Paul public schools' instrumental music programs, which were threatened by budget cuts last year.

Attendees donated more than \$3,000 in cash, checks and gifts to the struggling school district. St. Louis Music even donated a violin.

"We realize that we can't just respond when a budget crisis comes along," said Eugene Monnig, owner



Cadenza Music's Eugene Monnig

of Cadenza Music. "This party was a chance to beat the drum and keep the community's attention on music education."

»»» ■■■■ RETAIL

««« TRIBUTE

⊕ **Gordon Keller**

Gordon Keller, founder and owner of Gordon Keller Music, died on Oct. 25, 2009, at his home in Alexandria, Va. He was 82.

Born in 1927, Keller grew his business to seven stores throughout Northern Virginia. He sold it in 2004 and retired in 2009. Keller served on the NAMM board and as a spokesperson for piano technicians.

He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Mary Alice Sweet Keller; their children, Daron Keller and the Rev. Holly Keller Davis; and five grandchildren.

⊕ **Ben Jack**

Ben Jack, founder and owner of Ben Jack's Arkansas Music of Fayetteville, Ark., died on Nov. 6, 2009. He was 75.

A pedal steel guitar player, Jack opened Ben Jack's Arkansas Music in 1965 and later operated a string of additional stores in and around the Fayetteville area. According to a statement from NAMM, his store remains the oldest Peavey dealer still selling its product today.

WHITE'S MUSIC CENTER | CLOSING

WEEK OF TRAGEDY FOR WHITE'S MUSIC

Tragedy struck twice for Tulare, Calif.-based White's Music Center during the week after Thanksgiving 2009.

After closing its Tulare store for good on Nov. 30, Keith White, son of the store's original founders, was declared dead on Dec. 2. The cause of death was self-inflicted, according to the Tulare County Coroner's Office.

Two other White's Music Center stores in Porterville and Hanford, Calif., also closed recently. Robert White, grandson of the store founders, told *The Visalia Times-Delta* that the company's remaining store in Visalia, Calif., would liquidate its inventory after Christmas.

Chamber of Commerce CEO Donnette Silva Carter said the Porterville store's closure was a sudden event, according to a Dec. 2 article in *Porterville Recorder*.

"We didn't receive any prior notice of it," she said.

Tulare City Manager Darrel Pyle also called the Tulare store's closure shocking, according to a Dec. 2 article in *The Visalia Times-Delta*.

White's Music Center, a school music and print music retailer, was founded in 1947 by Cyril and Irma Mae White and run by four generations of the White family.

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Note from Joe

Get Ready to Make the Most of the NAMM Show... and Increase Your Chances for a Successful New Year

Congratulations to all of you who've made the choice to join your industry peers for the 2010 NAMM Show. Making the commitment to invest in yourself and your business could well be the smartest decision you make all year.

Each January brings with it the promise of a fresh start, and while no one is predicting a quick recovery the economy is showing signs of life. With this in mind, I am confident that this NAMM Show will position you and your business for success in the coming year. Networking with your friends and peers, launching the latest products that will excite the market and learning from the industry's best and brightest by attending as many NAMM University classes as you can will undoubtedly give you the competitive edge in the year ahead. I truly believe that this moment is critical for the long-term health and development of your business and our industry. Opportunity is all around us, and this NAMM Show will help the industry "get ready" to fulfill its potential for growth and success.

The NAMM Show is so much more than the typical convention. We're music people at heart, and there will be more talent and star power at this show than I can ever remember from shows past. The exhibitors are pulling out all the stops and bringing their biggest artists to inspire us all. The NAMM Show is also the industry family reunion, where friendships and camaraderie truly matter and have lasting value to us all.

We have packed this year's NAMM Show with new features and activities to provide your business with the tools and support it needs, allowing you to make the most of your decision to attend. Be sure to plan your schedule to guarantee that your store has the must-have inventory for spring. Attend NAMM U sessions to ensure your business is prepared for the "new economy." Visit the *Wanna Play?* Booth and find out how to promote music making to whole new markets, and meet music business students from all over the U.S. who are eager to enter our workforce with new ideas and energy. Stop by the new H.O.T. (Hands-On Training) Zone to meet with business mentors who can help guide you and your business to the next level. And enjoy the hundreds of musical events we have scheduled, designed to remind us all why we're in the best business in the world!

Thanks again for your continued Membership, support and friendship. We're looking forward to seeing you at the show and helping you succeed in 2010!

Joe Lamond • NAMM President/CEO

New Audiences=New Sales

- We are expecting a strong turnout from our core retail and commercial Members.
- We've extended invitations to houses of worship from across the country.
- NAMM welcomes music educators who'll be looking for the best music products and materials for their schools.
- This year, buyers will be happy to find gear from 170 brand new exhibitors, in addition to 1500+ booths.
- Visit the H.O.T. (Hands-On Training) Zone, providing custom solutions targeted to professionals in the live audio, house of worship, and stage and lighting industries.

Member Quote

"I think the NAMM Show helps every size of retailer. Being face-to-face with your vendors is so important to show you're in it, a part of the industry and you're serious about business."

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SUPPLY



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BEDELL GUITARS | BY KATIE KAILUS

TWO OLD HIPPIES BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO GUITAR LINE

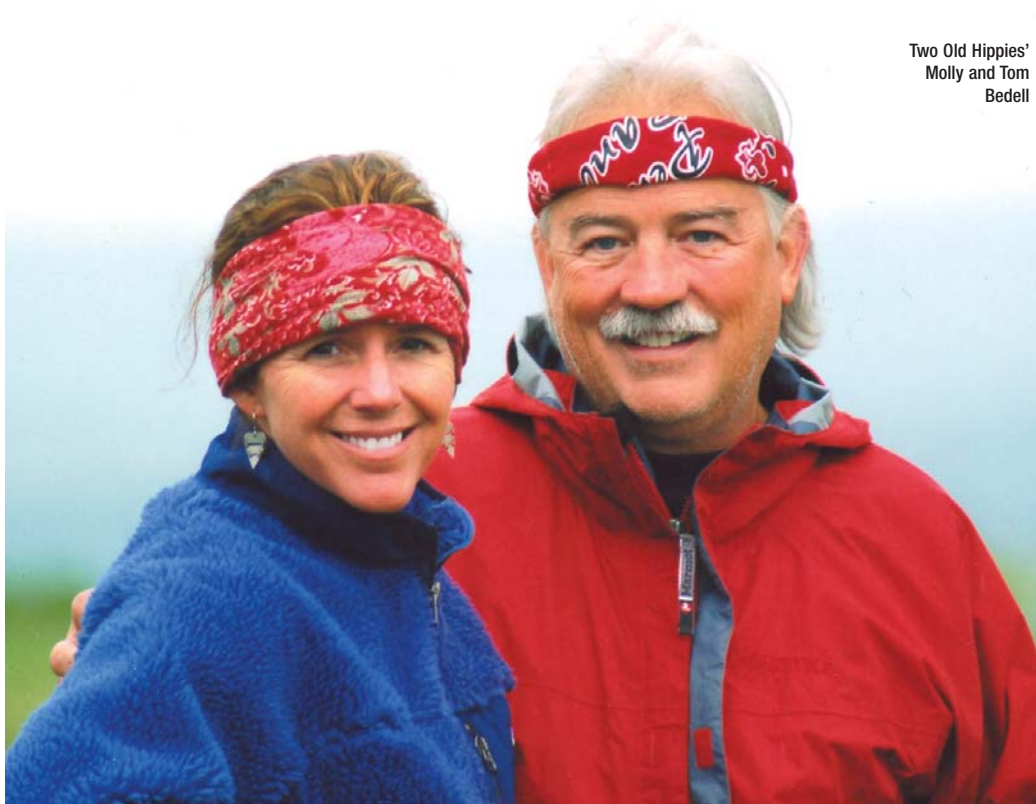
“Peace, Love and Rock ‘n’ Roll” is the Two Old Hippies corporate slogan, and head hippie Tom Bedell embraces that spirit in every part of his recently resurrected company, Bedell Guitars.

No stranger to the industry, Bedell launched the Bedell Guitar Co. in 1964 at the age of 14. Now, 45 years later, he and his business partner and wife, Molly, are reviving the Bedell brand of acoustic guitars under their Two Old Hippies parent company, which is based in Spirit Lake, Iowa. They’re also introducing a new series, Great Divide Guitars, along with a clothing line, 2OH.

“These new lines of guitars, apparel and accessories are uniquely handcrafted with exceptional quality and [are] focused on helping the independent retailer make a profit,” Bedell said.

NEW BRANDS & VW BUSES

Great Divide guitars are lower-priced and designed for beginning players, while Bedell Guitars are premium, handcrafted models made of solid wood. Lifestyle clothing



Two Old Hippies’
Molly and Tom
Bedell

line 2OH offers shirts, hats and accessories that, as Bedell put it, “go with the Two Old Hippies brand.”

“We will be introducing 20 new models of guitars at The NAMM Show,” Bedell said. “We will have exciting specials, too. It’s going to be an incredible, incredible show.”

The company also plans to unveil the Bedell custom shop

at NAMM. This initiative lets customers of local music retailers design their own guitars. The process is so involved that customers can even choose the exact pieces of wood via pictures on Bedell’s Web site. Bedell then ships the finished product to the local dealer, so it can fulfill the order. “Each guitar is built one by one according to the design of the guitar

enthusiast,” Bedell said.

Also at NAMM, Bedell will be giving away a Volkswagen hippie bus to those who enter the drawing at its booth.

“Our booth at the show will be a display of the ‘Peace, Love and Rock ‘n’ Roll’ lifestyle,” Bedell said. “It will have all of our guitars, a bunch of our 2OH clothing and the hippie bus.” **MI**

SUPPLY 

From left: Loud's Jim Stewart, Jeffrey Cox, Adrian Bell, Rodney Olson, Case Kuehn, John Boudreau and Alex Nelson with the company's roundup of new gear

LOUD TECHNOLOGIES | BY JENNY DOMINE

A LOUD COMEBACK

Loud Technologies was off to a rocky start in 2009. In quick succession, headlines announced the company was selling off its SLM Marketplace, Knilling and Austin brands and delisting from the Nasdaq. This was followed by a disruption of its Mackie and EAW supply chain and bankruptcy rumors.

Now, Loud is making headlines again but for entirely different reasons, as the company kicks off 2010 with a gear-centric, people-focused business plan.

TIMELY CHANGES

While other suppliers were reacting to the economic upheaval last year, Loud was already going through a structural reorganization.

"I'm really proud of what the company accomplished in the past 15 months," said Rodney Olson, Loud CEO.

One year after the gloomy headlines, Loud announces its bold plans for 2010

According to Olson, delisting from the Nasdaq saved Loud \$1 million in annual public company expenses, and after 12 months, 95 percent of the products waiting for restored supplies are back in production.

"Our customers should feel very confident that the new Loud supply chain is stable and has ample capacity to continue growing as the economy comes back to life," Olson said.

FEET ON THE STREET

One expense Loud didn't cut back on was face time with its dealers, distributors and overseas factories.

"We firmly believe that feet on the street are key to supporting the channel and helping our partners find new ways to position and sell our gear in this challenging economy," Olson said.

Loud held a distributor meeting in Ria Bintan, Indonesia, from Oct. 17-19, 2009, that hosted 45 attendees from 26 distribution companies. It held two similar seminars in the past 18 months in Opio, France, and Marrakech, Morocco.

"We will also invest in much stronger in-field training, as well as virtual tools like video and Webinars, to ensure our dealer and distributor network is armed with the information they need to grow their businesses," Olson said.

GAGA FOR GEAR

At The NAMM Show 2010, Loud will unveil the Ampeg Heritage line of heads and cabs, which are designed

and assembled in the United States. Loud will also roll out the lightweight neodymium Pro Neo series cabs with SVT-7PRO and SVT-8PRO heads. Mackie will debut a new line of Mackie HD and Thump powered subwoofers.

To support its new products, Loud is launching a training push for its rep network. Through a mix of social media, online content and promotions, such as Ampeg's 60th anniversary contest, Loud's executives hope to drive end-users into stores. Other promotions will include sponsoring the Lennon Bus, product placement in *Guitar Hero 5* and activities to drive store traffic, such as Loud's online buy-it-now system.

"We've successfully navigated through a complex period for our company and the industry and are once again ready to tackle the fun stuff — growing the business," Olson said. **MI**



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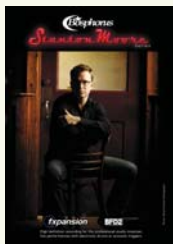
SUPPLY

BRIEFS

TECHNOLOGY

Bosphorus Goes Digital

Bosphorus Cymbals has released the Stanton Moore Signature series in BFD2 format. The entire line of hand-made cymbals is captured in high-definition audio for a fraction of the cost.



"The Stanton Moore series is one of our biggest sellers, and we are very excited to be the first percussion manufacturer to offer its products in a dynamic VST sound library format," said Michael Vosbein, CEO of Bosphorus. bosphoruscymbals.com

LICENSING

FreeHand Adds Carl Fischer

Carl Fischer Music has announced a licensing agreement with FreeHandMusic.com, owner of the online digital sheet music Web site, freehandmusic.com. This agreement is for Carl Fischer's band and orchestra music and will initially include all publications released since 2007. Backlist items will be added later. carlfischer.com

WARRANTY

A-T Extends Warranty

Audio-Technica extended the warranty on its entire line of 40 series microphones. Effective as of Nov. 5, 2009, all 40 series microphones purchased through an authorized U.S. Audio-Technica dealer now come standard with a five-year warranty. Recent purchases going back to Jan. 1, 2009, are also covered retroactively by this extended warranty. audio-technica.com

DISTRIBUTION

Herman to Distribute Sennheiser

Herman Procurement and Logistics recently formed an agreement to distribute Sennheiser's evolution and installed sound series microphones, as well as its full line of conference and RF/infrared assistive-listening systems. Herman plans to stock an array of Sennheiser products in all five of its distribution facilities located in Miami, Atlanta, New Jersey, Dallas and Nevada to provide local availability and better serve Sennheiser customers. sennheiserusa.com



From left: Steinway Piano Gallery's Tim Hoy, Rice Music House's Jyotindra Parekh (J.P.) and Dollarhide's Music Center's Bill Dollarhide



Steinway Piano Gallery's Barbara Wanless and Heid Music's Todd Heid



From left: Sides Music's Alysha Sides Greevy with Southern Nevada Music's Lisa and Denise Wunderlich

STEINWAY | EVENTS

CHICAGO STEINWAY MEETING POINTS TO BOSTON

Roughly 130 Steinway dealers gathered at Chicago's Crowne Plaza Chicago O'Hare hotel on Oct. 21, 2009, for the grand unveiling of the company's new Boston Performance Edition line.

Todd Sanders, Steinway's vice president of sales and marketing, said numerous structural and cosmetic upgrades have been made to the piano series. Among the structural upgrades, the new Performance Edition grands include a maple inner rim for improved tone. The Octagrip Pinblock affords lower tuning torque and smoother pin turn. The pianos also boast a low-tension scale, and the grands feature Mapes bass strings.

Cosmetics have been improved via new hardware. Phillips head screws have been replaced with hex head bolts. Brass-plated hardware has also been replaced with solid polished brass. Plus, the single casters have been replaced with double brass casters.

"The focus on Boston was because we introduced a new and improved series of pianos, which due to their specification enhancement, will perform better and provide greater consumer value in the years to come," said Ron Losby, president of Steinway & Sons, Americas.

Bob Dove, president of Steinway & Sons, Far East, capped the day off with a presentation on the history of Boston Piano. He mentioned that Boston had its first price increase in 1995. "Interestingly, that was the year Boston took off."

And while many attendees bemoaned the soft piano business, Skip Daynes of Daynes Music in Midvale, Utah, discussed how he has boosted piano sales to local schools using QRS Music's PNOscan. The device turns an acoustic piano into a MIDI-equipped teaching tool. Daynes has sold PNOscan with acoustic pianos to multiple school computer labs in Utah. steinway.com



Hartley Peavey outside the restored Temple Theater

PEAVEY | OUTREACH

PEAVEY RESTORES THEATER

Peavey Electronics has restored sound to the historic Hamasa Shrine Temple Theater in CEO Hartley Peavey's hometown of Meridian, Miss.

The 1,550-seat Temple Theater originally opened in 1928 as a movie house but has also served as a staging center for drama productions and live music performances for artists ranging from Willie Nelson to Wilco.

Peavey took on the task of updating the Temple's 1940s-era projection sound system.

"We wanted to preserve the classic moviegoing experience that so many of us remember from our childhood," Peavey said. "Professional audio has come an enormous way since those days. We were able to greatly improve the sound quality, efficiency and performance using Peavey components both designed and made here in Meridian." peavey.com

SUPPLY

GIBSON | LEGAL

Gibson Raided

Officials with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service served a search warrant at Gibson Guitar's Massman Road manufacturing facility on Nov. 17, 2009, according to a story in *Nashville Post*.

The Nashville, Tenn.-based guitar manufacturer is being investigated for violating the Lacey Act by importing an endangered species of rosewood from Madagascar. At press time, no charges had been filed.

A statement released by Gibson said the company was cooperating fully with the investigation.

RAINFOREST ALLIANCE SPEAKS

On Nov. 18, following the raid, *Nashville Business Journal* reported Gibson CEO Henry Juszkiewicz would take a leave of

absence from his role as a board member of the Rainforest Alliance while federal authorities investigated the Gibson plant.

The New York-based Rainforest Alliance also reported it postponed an annual audit of the plant, scheduled for Nov. 23, until December.

"[Juszkiewicz] takes the issue of responsible wood sourcing very seriously," read the statement issued by Gibson.

"I think it shows the reach of the Lacey Act, and nobody is immune from its prohibitions," said James Goldberg, a Washington, D.C.-based counsel for NAMM, in an interview with *The Tennessean*. "Even if you think you know your suppliers, you may [still] have a problem." gibson.com

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SUPPLY 

◀ **BRIEFS**

HONORS

Gibson's Les Paul Tribute

On Nov. 19, 2009, Gibson Guitar held a tribute to the late Les Paul at the Ryman Auditorium, former home to the Grand Ole Opry, in Nashville, Tenn. The event included music, video tributes, testimonials and storytelling. It also marked the first tribute held by the guitar maker in honor of Paul. Many other programs and events will continue to take place in early 2010 to mark anniversary dates significant to his life. gibson.com

DISTRIBUTION

Guitar Hanger Goes to Canada



Guitar accessory manufacturer The Guitar Hanger has confirmed an agreement with D'Addario Canada, which will grant D'Addario exclusive distribution of the product line throughout Canada. The Guitar

Hanger is still actively seeking additional distributors and dealers in the United States. theguitarhanger.com

SHOWS

Fishman Supports Luthier's Showcase

The Woodstock Invitational Luthier's Showcase was held at the Bearsville Theater last Oct. 24-25 in



Woodstock, N.Y. The showcase featured a variety of handmade acoustic instruments. Fishman supplied SA220 Solo Performance Systems for the live performances at the Bearsville Theater and the house P.A. for the luthier's exhibition hall. fishman.com

CHARITY

GITC Teams With Musicians

Jessica Baron, executive director of Guitars In The Classroom (GITC), has created new partnerships with artists to support the organization's efforts to provide musical education for all children. These fund-raising alliances include folk artist George Winston, Pearl Jam's Wishlist Foundation and BonTaj Roulet. They will hold events to strengthen GITC's programs. guitarsintheclassroom.org

APPOINTMENTS

H.L. Hires Gilpin for Shawnee Role

Hal Leonard has named Greg Gilpin director of educational publications for Shawnee Press, the publishing company it acquired in June.

"I'm overjoyed to move forward with Shawnee as it continues to prosper as part of Hal Leonard," Gilpin said. Hal Leonard also announced the appointment of Chris Klinkhardt to the sales department, and Sharon Stosur was named piano publications editor. halleonard.com



Greg Gilpin

Carl Fischer and Theodore Presser have named John Guertin as licensing and copyright manager and Anne Sobel as marketing manager.



>>> Annelie Bum

Eminence Speaker recently tapped Cobi Stein as its marketing director.

Meinl has promoted Annelie Bum to the new eco-manager position.

Mel Bay has appointed René Flores as sales manager for Latin America.

Sennheiser recently added Alexander Schek to its Latin American sales team.

Symetrix has named Eric Dies vice president of manufacturing.

Tunecore has appointed Lise Barbanti as chief marketing officer for tunecore.com.

Universal Audio has appointed David Charles as the director of sales in the Americas.

REMO | EVENTS

BELLI GIVES GUEST SPEECH

The Smithsonian's Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation held its 2009 New Perspectives on Invention and Innovation symposium at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 6 and 7. The event featured a discussion with Remo Belli, founder of Remo. It was hosted by Ken Kimery, executive producer of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. remo.com



Remo Belli

SUPPLY 

MUSIC CHINA | SHOWS

China's Quality Show

Music China attracted 42,499 local and international visitors to the Shanghai New International Expo Centre from Oct. 13-16, 2009.

"The show was a huge success," said Evan Sha, deputy general manager for Messe Frankfurt Shanghai. "However, in line with the current global economy, our visitor numbers were 1.7-percent lower than last year."

More than 1,164 exhibitors had booths at the convention. Three hundred and twelve of those were overseas companies hosted in nine national pavilions from the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Spain, Taiwan and the United Kingdom. Big brand names, such as AXL, Hsinghai, KHS, Pearl River, Roland, Steinway, Warwick and Yamaha, were also represented.

This year, exhibitors reported that

Buyers at Music China show greater interest in quality products

buyers were showing more interest in quality products than at previous shows.

"Buyers are looking for good quality products with a brand name, so the economic recession is not too bad for our company, as we still have a steady sales increase this year," said Lisa Zhu, China's general manager for AXL, distributors for Fender, PRS and ESP electric guitars. "We have a lot of new products, and there is much interest in our limited-edition guitars, seen for the first time in China."

{messefrankfurt.com}



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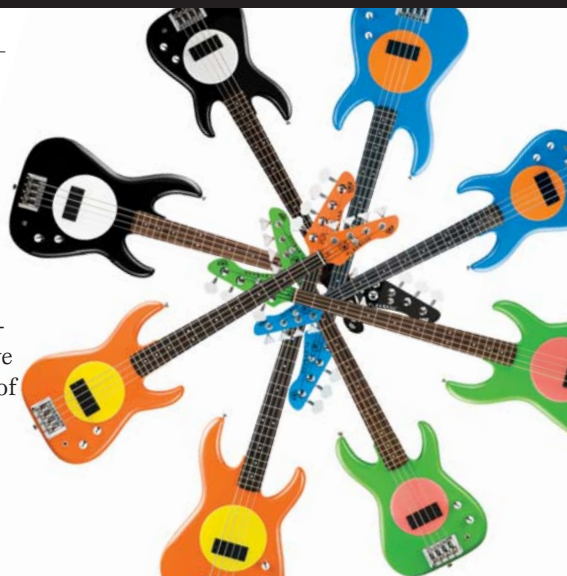
Music Link Gets Flea

The Music Link is now the exclusive U.S. distributor of Fleabass basses.

Flea, the bassist for Red Hot Chili Peppers, has made it his mission to nurture young people's love of music by crafting his own line of basses.

Every Fleabass comes professionally setup and includes an instructional DVD starring Flea.

{fleabass.com; themusiclink.net}



«« TRIBUTE

Terry Bingley

Terry Bingley, a leader in the Canadian music products industry, passed away on Nov. 16, 2009. He was 73 years old. He began his career in music retail before working with Yamaha and, later, serving as the managing director of Kawai. He helped establish Kawai Canada. In 1984, Bingley formed music wholesale company Bingley Distributors.



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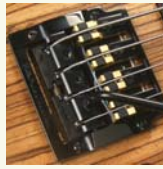
SUPPLY 

BRIEFS

TECHNOLOGY

Brown's MIDI Conversions

Brown's Guitar Factory has merged a Kahler bass tremolo system with acoustic and MIDI saddles. Brown's Guitar Factory will be working with retailers and repair shops to provide the service and installation of the conversion but will let retailers capture the sale of the hardware, which includes bridge and GraphTech Systems.



{brownsguitarfactory.com}

ENVIRONMENT

Drumming Up Green

Los Cabos Drumsticks announced that all of its maple is now rated by the Forest Stewardship Council. "What this means is that the trees were cut in a sustainable manner," said Larry Guay, Los Cabos' president and operations manager.

{loscabosdrumsticks.com}



From left: Yamaha's Rick Young, composer Jarrod Radnich, vocalist Patti Cohenour, arranger Craig Knudsen and Barry Bittman

YAMAHA | WELLNESS

MUSIC HEALS

Barry Bittman, M.D., CEO of the Yamaha Music and Wellness Institute, recently delivered the keynote address at Lincoln Center's Music and the Brain symposium, presented by the Cleveland Clinic Arts and Medicine Institute.

"In ancient times music and medicine were integrally related," Bittman said in his address. "Through this

unique symposium and the collaborative initiatives of the Cleveland Clinic, guest faculty and artists, a resurgence of interest in music as a clinical tool in healthcare is setting the stage for the utilization of integrative expressive strategies that can enable people to maximize quality of life despite extraordinary health challenges."

{yamaha.com}

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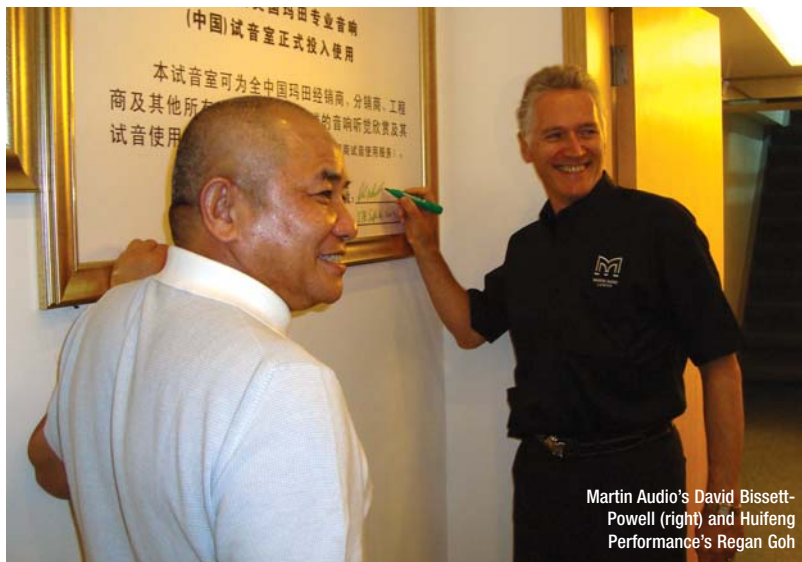
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FUSION 12 ORCHESTRA



Martin Audio's David Bissett-Powell (right) and Huifeng Performance's Regan Goh

MARTIN AUDIO | DESIGN

MARTIN OPENS CHINA SHOWROOM

Martin Audio opened a showroom in Panyu, a suburb of Guangzhou, China, last Oct. 1 — in time for Chinese National Day.

The idea was the brainchild of Regan Goh, who owns sound rental and installation company Huifeng

Performance Equipment.

The new building occupies approximately 10,000 square feet and is set on two floors. Aside from a large demo room and offices, it also includes a dedicated karaoke room. martinaudio.com

SUPPLY

WEBNEWS

promark.com

Pro-Mark has reorganized the products and simplified the navigation on its Web site. Cross-references to other products have also been added. The community area provides a discussion forum for percussion-related subjects. The site also includes a password-protected dealer section that can be accessed via a simple online registration process.



vicfirth.com

Vic Firth has a new area on its Web site, The Exchange, devoted to community interaction. Based on educational content provided by high-profile artists and educators, The Exchange offers a place for constructive dialogue.

"What we have created is a focused discussion area where viewers can contribute to articles written by respected members of the Vic Firth Education Team," said Mark Wessels, Vic Firth's director of Internet activities.

"Unlike a simple one-way presentation of an article, The Exchange allows our viewers to add their experiences or ask questions from the authors — creating a broad perspective on a wide range of topics."

Córdoba

cordobaguitars.com



FUSION 14 JET



FUSION 14 RS



FUSION 14 MAPLE



FUSION 14 ROSE



FUSION 14 OV

PASICstats

- + An estimated 5,300 percussionists attended PASIC 2009.
- + Exhibitor registration dipped to 116 companies, compared to 132 last year.
- + More than 120 events were held on 12 stages compared to 130 events last year.

SHOWS



PASIC 2009 | BY JENNY DOMINE

DEFINE YOUR SOUND

Friday morning at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) in Indianapolis, Zildjian's vice president of marketing Brad Baker thumbed in a Twitter on his phone. His Tweet announced free Zildjian hats were up for grabs at the company's booth.

"It makes it fun and little bit more personal," Baker said of Twitter marketing. This was just one example of how suppliers at

PASIC 2009 exhibitors help drummers find their style

PASIC found innovative ways to listen to and interact with end-users, while providing products and services to help players better define their sound. The show was held from Nov. 11-14 at the Indiana Convention Center.

GETTING FEEDBACK

Many suppliers stressed putting down drumsticks and listening to customers. They used PASIC as a venue to showcase prototypes and soft launches to get feedback from professional artists, educators and students. Both Zildjian and Sabian had displays of potential new sounds that, depending on customer response, could go into full production next year.

Regal Tip expanded its X

series with a black E-Tip design to cater to niche genres in metal music.

"We started getting a lot of

1. Alesis' Autumn Pittman; 2. From left: Alfred's Rich Lackowski, artist Kent Aberle, *Drumhead's* Jonathan Mover, and Alfred's Karissa Read; 3. Evans' Mike Robinson; 4. Zildjian's Craigie Zildjian (left) and Vic Firth; 5. Black Swamp Percussion's Eric Sooy (left) and Jamel Taylor; 6. Ludwig's Jim Catalano; 7. Chops Percussion's Tim Gee (left) and Jeff Huffman; 8. From left: Columbus Percussion's Joel Steward, Derek Graber and Jim Rupp; 9. From left: Dream Cymbals' Brian LaRue, Craig Snowden and Michelle Colton; 10. Mapex's Bob Berheide; 11. From left: Gator's Neal Graham, Bruce Schneider and Ken Fuente

requests for subgenres of metal, like black metal and death metal,” said J. Medynski, director of artist relations for Regal Tip. “We shut up and listened, and [drummers] told us what they wanted. There is a lot of misconception that these guys need to play with big baseball bats, but they are playing so fast, they need a sleek design to hit the speeds they need.”

Remo presented a soft-launch of its Tattoo Skyns drumheads designed by Corey Miller of the TV show “L.A. Ink.” Remo also showed frame drums and tambourines.

“It’s a sneak peek for everyone that comes to the Percussive Arts Society,” said Brian LeVan, Remo’s national sales manager. “It’s a good place for drummers to see where we are going.”

Dynasty, an established name in orchestral and marching percussion, displayed its first venture into drum kits. The company had a prototype set up specifically to get reactions from visitors.

“We’ll sit back with the feedback from people over the next couple of days,” said Rob Ferguson, district manager for Dynasty. “When they tell us what they think, we’ll work on it until we have the kit that we need to make. We won’t release it until it’s ready.”

ACCESSIBLE SELECTION

Suppliers also showcased ways to help both dealers and customers sift through the deep, often daunting selection of products and add-on items with new promotional programs and online resources.

Evans launched Player Profile, a new system of categorizing its tom, bass and snare drumheads, so drummers can easily find the product that

1. Steve West (left) and Mapex’s Joe Vasko; 2. From left: Vater’s Chad Brandolini, Ken Murphy, Alan Vater, Five-Star Drum Shops’ Rob Birenbaum and Vater’s Bill Morgan; 3. From left: Innovative Percussion’s Nebojsa Zivkovic and Erik Johnson with TapSpace’s Jim Casella; 4. Zildjian’s Paul Francis (left) and Bradley Baker; 5. Yamaha’s Chris Dolson (left) and Travis Goodwin; 6. From left: Panadigm Innovation’s Johann Chuckaree, Randall Ali and Keith Maynard; 7. DrumCraft’s Stefan Hess (front) and Winfried Holl; 8. Pearl’s Steve Armstrong; 9. Peterson’s John Norris; 10. Sabian’s Bruce Parry (left) and Robert Mason; 11. Samson’s Bob Flury, James Soviero and Brian Dougherty

offers the right style and sound they want from their kits.

“The profiles speak about the genre, they speak about the product, and they speak about the artists,” said Mike Robinson, senior product manager for Evans. “We are going to have this as a point-of-sale element on our displays in stores.” Evans will also be rolling out packaging that will define each Evans drumhead by the four major profiles: sensitive, versatile, controlled or durable.

Both Hal Leonard and Alfred have each launched new Web sites with improved search capabilities to help dealers and customers better access their catalogs.

“We realize it’s extremely difficult for all of our dealers to carry our complete catalog,” said David Cywinski, Hal Leonard’s key accounts manager. “We are also seeing that [the order referral program] is opening dealers up to new experiences. They didn’t realize people bought some of this stuff before but are now selling it through our shopping cart program.”

Carl Fischer addressed niche skills, such as drumming with brushes, with the new *Brushworks* book and DVD set by Clayton Cameron. It lists for \$35.

“Drummers are psyched to have master drummers and educators coming out with really thought-out, approachable methods,” said Anne



SHOWS



Sobel, marketing manager for Carl Fischer.

Pro-Mark was also promoting a new Web site at PASIC. The site has reorganized the company's product lines and features simplified navigation. It includes a community area for social networking, forum discussions and a password-protected dealer section.

"We've gotten really good response from consumers," said Pat Brown, director of sales and marketing for Pro-Mark. "We're always open and talking to our customers about product ideas. Even today on our Web site, we get questions about people gripping their sticks. So we developed Pro-Grip sticks, gripping tape

and gloves. All of that is a direct result of people asking for it."

TECHNOLOGICAL STANDOUTS

At the Roland booth, students tapped quietly on V-Drums to Roland's HD-1 Tutor software program on large screens for the chance to win the high score and take the software home. Released last year at winter NAMM, Roland's HD-1 Tutor features both notations and drum patterns to accommodate the different ways students learn to play. The MSRP is \$99.

"It's been received very well," said Roland clinician Mike Synder. "It deals with the abstract concept of time, especially for younger players. You

may feel you are playing right with the click and you're not."

Roland also debuted its new TD-20 SX drum set, the latest flagship model electronic kit.

"The goal is not to change the way I play from my acoustic drums to my electronic drums," Synder said. "I want to transfer all that technique to my electronic kit. That's the ultimate goal."

One of the standout innovations at PASIC was Korg's second-generation Wavedrum. Rather than rely on triggered samples, the Wavedrum uses digital signal processing algorithms. "This means how you play and what you play with will translate into the sound that is heard,"

1. Majestic's Peter Vulperhorst (left) and Chris Hanks; 2. From left: Fork's Drum Closet's Jonah Hickson, Dennis Palmer and Gary Forkum; 3. Charles Dumont & Son's Agnes Widmann (left) and Carl Fischer's Anne Sobel; 4. Meinl's Adam Anderson; 5. From left: Pro-Mark's Pat Brown and Don Click with artist Terry Sanders; 6. Hal Leonard's Marilyn Fleenor (left) and David Cywinski; 7. Lone Star Percussion's Jeff and Judy Nelson; 8. Regal Tip's J. Medynski; 9. Korg's Geoff Brown (left) and James Sajeve; 10. Paiste's Tim Shahady; 11. Dynasty's Rob Ferguson (left) and Dave Clark; 12. Tycoon Percussion's John Cathell (left) and George Balmaseda; 13. Roland clinician Mike Snyder

said James Sajeve, Korg's product manager for DJ and computer products. The Wavedrum uses a real drumhead as the playing surface, and it responds naturally to brushes, mallets and hand-drum techniques.

PASIC 2010 will return to Indianapolis from Nov. 10-13. **MI**

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Noon	Making a video in Vegas™ Pro with <i>Rudy Sarzo</i>
1:00	Be a part of the <i>Virtual Rock N Roll Experience!</i>
2:00	Composing with ACID™ Pro with <i>Rudy Sarzo</i>
3:00	Producing in ACID™ Pro with <i>Jason Glead</i>
4:00	Be a part of the <i>Virtual Rock N Roll Experience!</i>
5:00	Sound Forge™ Pro 10 new features

IDEAS

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> **Lessons Learned** Page 48

INDEPENDENT RETAIL | BY TED ESCHLIMAN

I SEE DEAD PEOPLE

Recall the movie *The Sixth Sense* when young Cole confesses, “I see dead people.” These abject folks meander about oblivious to the reality that they’re dead. Are any of your employees this way, productively dead or irrelevant?

Employee termination is never a happy topic, especially this time of year. It’s a new season and, hopefully, a time to redefine your business. We like to focus on our inventory and product mix, but our “people mix” is just as important.

THE DARK SIDE OF VETERAN STAFF

The best competitive edge independent stores maintain over big-box competition is staff. Our best employees not only harbor a passion for our product but are also immersed in the local music community. Willing to settle for modest salaries, they sign on to our industry out of a love of music. Being part of this community gets them out of bed to punch our time clocks and serve our customers. If your operation is successful, it’s most likely because of low turnover and a crew that feels comfortable in your retail culture.



Productive employees can turn into dead weight if they don’t adapt to new trends

Still, there’s a potential dark side. What do you do when long-term veterans have skill sets that are no longer relevant in today’s buying culture? What happens when a worker has been hired to serve a customer profile that’s no longer profitable or has simply vanished?

The sad thing is these can be truly good people, but if they’re

incapable of catering to today’s market, they’re doing your business more harm than good.

When I entered music retail back in 1980, we had an active organ club. These seniors met monthly and communed in our store after hours at a time when half our piano department showroom featured Hammond organs. It has probably been 10 years since an organ graced our floor.

Back in the 1970s and early ’80s, we had a vibrant live music scene in our town and a sales crew tuned to support professional players. The DJ era and a higher legal drinking age put the kibosh on most of this activity. Twenty years later, the scene has all but vanished.

We were also a professional band instrument headquarters for a half century until the advent of specialty warehouses and toll-free phone numbers. The Internet sealed the deal, toppling us from the top of that summit.

Has this been all bad? No. We’ve replaced organs with digital pianos and MIDI-capable keyboards. The live music scene has been replaced with a plethora of personal home recording gear and church

musician hobbyists. The school music rental market remains profitable even though the top-end wind market is almost nonexistent. In other words, markets have not gone away but evolved.

ADAPTABILITY IS A MUST

The pregnant question is: What happens when markets change and employees don’t? If your veterans are buggy whip experts, what happens to them when horses are no longer a fashionable mode of transportation? What happens when the rate of change advances exponentially?

Here’s a hard-core truth: With the virulent speed of change in today’s retail culture, adaptability now trumps longevity and expertise when it comes to staffing.

Making the tough decision to let an untrainable veteran go is one of the most unpleasant duties management faces, but it’s necessary. The only way to avoid employee obsolescence is to hire with this aptitude for adaptability in mind. **MI**

Ted Eschliman is a 30-year veteran of music retail and co-owner of Dietze Music in Southeast Nebraska. Mel Bay published his book, *Getting Into Jazz Mandolin*.

THE CUSTOMER WHISPERER | BY GREG BILLINGS

How We Decide

Recently, I was asked to explain the difference between being a salesperson and being a customer whisperer in one sentence. Of course, a customer whisperer is a salesperson. But there's a difference: A salesperson is interested in persuading clients, whereas a customer whisperer is interested in guiding clients through a decision-making process.

We need to understand how this decision-making process works if we're really going to help our clients. Ever since Plato suggested that the soul is divided into two conflicting spheres, humankind has been intrigued by the dichotomy between reason and emotion. Reason and emotion are precisely the factors that govern our decision making. As salespeople, we assume that if we provide a compelling presentation of facts or, conversely, an evocative demonstration, we can sway people into our way of thinking and be rewarded with a sale. Both of these strategies work occasionally. But to serve clients effectively, we need to shift our focus and consider the experience from their perspective.



Jonah Lehrer's new book, *How We Decide*, helps us help customers

Fortunately, Jonah Lehrer provides insight into this process in his excellent book, *How We Decide*. Those of us in the music business are at least casually aware of the right-brain/left-brain theory about artistic creativity versus logic. Lehrer explores the upper-brain/lower-brain continuum of reason and emotion. The book is chock-full of hard science elegantly simplified and moderated with fascinating real-world examples that can help us

learn to better serve our clients and our employers.

"Emotional," though, is probably not the best word to describe the processes that occur in our lower, more primitive brain. It's more like *gut feel* or *instinct*. On the other hand, analytical precisely describes what goes on behind our foreheads. The cerebral cortex is where we do math and analysis. There are limita-

tions, however, to our capacity to analyze. Few people, other than geniuses, can solve problems with more than six distinct variables. Most people can only handle three.

THE DANGER OF TOO MUCH INFORMATION

The lesson for a customer whisperer is if we present too many facts, our clients' rational thinking starts to shut down. They'll come right out and tell us they are confused as they are leaving our stores without making a

purchase. And it's not their fault. It's ours. We presented too many variables, and we made the decision too hard.

Here's an example of decision making in a common shopping experience. A 14-ounce box of Cheerios costs \$4.29. That's about 31 cents per ounce. The same-size store brand costs \$2.49, or 18 cents per ounce. The name brand is on sale at two for \$6, or 21.3 cents per ounce. (I had to grab a calculator to figure that out.) Fortunately, my grocer has the cost per ounce posted on a little sign, except for the two-for-\$6 offer. Analytically, it's simple math unless you start calculating the marginal cost of the extra box — \$1.71, or 12 cents per ounce.

Few of us would do that much math for a box of cereal. More likely, our back brain would get right to the marginal cost and decide that two boxes for a little more money is a deal, or that oats are oats and there's no reason to waste money. Gut feel then is your back brain doing the math automatically and factoring in the sum of your life experiences, biases and preferences. Gut feel is highly reliable. And once you get past three variables, it's more reliable than your analytical abilities. Unfortunately, too often we don't trust our gut, and neither do our clients.

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IDEAS >>>

the force necessary to achieve the correct speed of the ball, the angle of the arc, how the spin would affect the other two variables, and, if you were playing outside, the wind direction and speed, the game would be over before you even took a shot. A proficient player, who has practiced the shot a thousand times, can step up to the line, bounce the ball once and swish it through the net. It's all lower brain.

A customer has many, many variables to consider when selecting a musical instrument. In addition to barely quantifiable factors, such as the look, feel, sound and touch of the instrument, he might be thinking about what friends or fans will think and where the money will come from. It's more analysis than any customer can do in his head, even if he could quantify the unquantifiable.

THE PROBLEM WITH FACTS

Lehrer shows decisions are really made through the interaction between our analytical and emotional selves — he even has a chapter titled “The Brain Is An Argument.” We are always seeking agreement between the two poles. To make matters more interesting, when shoppers see an item they might consider purchasing, another part of the brain releases dopamine, giving them a feeling of pleasure. This, of course, directly contradicts the idea that customers will come to a decision by carefully considering tangible facts. The amount of dopamine released is in direct proportion to the client's desire for the item. A customer whisperer must closely observe his client's nonverbal response to both his products and his words. (Dopamine

may be flowing.)

Having made a decision, most people stop considering or dismiss contrary evidence and actively seek confirmation. They want to keep the dopamine coming and avoid that unsettling feeling of anxiety. Who wouldn't? It's classic pain avoidance.

Lehrer calls this the Certainty Trap. When our clients start to tune out conflicting data, they are close to making a purchase. This is apparent because they begin to rationalize their decisions. They find little reasons to proceed. They might comment on the frequent flyer miles they'll get if they use a certain credit card or how they can have the product in time for a party or a gig. The emotional brain has just won the argument.

Isn't it ironic? There's nothing less rational than rationalization. Nonetheless, when rationalization starts, a customer whisperer reaches for his pen. It means people are getting ready to buy.

FOCUS ON BENEFITS

Once a customer whisperer understands a little about the neuroscience behind the decision-making process, he needs a strategy to apply this knowledge to help guide his clients.

First, he must accept that he's unlikely to prevail *exclusively* on the basis of facts and figures, no matter how compelling they are. And second, he must understand that his clients are distrustful of blatant emotional appeals, in general, and their own gut feel, in particular.

Unaware of the inner workings of the human brain, classic sales methodology has evolved two standard practices that conform perfectly to what Lehrer has revealed. Presenting

‘Too many times, I have heard a customer ask for confirmation and seen the salesman fail to provide it. Except for bombarding a client with too many facts, it may be our most common error.’

a product feature and quickly connecting it to an important benefit to the client makes the analytical part easy. Clients automatically store a conclusion their subjective brains will later draw upon. If a customer whisperer presents a blue guitar as looking cool, it's just his opinion. But if he presents the blue guitar as bringing out the color of his client's eyes, he's planting an idea that his client may subconsciously draw upon when it's time to make a decision.

ALWAYS GIVE CONFIRMATION

The customer whisperer must also understand the importance of confirmation. If customers ask what you think, they are seeking confirmation. (They are trying to keep the pleasant rush of dopamine flowing.) This is *not* a time to be shy, show off your expertise or express an opinion. It's an opportunity to provide the reassurance your clients are seeking. Every saleswoman at a

department store cosmetic counter understands this, but for some reason, music store clerks often waste the opportunity to confirm and instead brag about their favorite ax or simply demur. If a customer seeks confirmation and you provide it, you are helping make the connection between the rational and emotional brain. You may even provide a little shot of dopamine.

Too many times, I have heard a customer ask for confirmation and seen the salesman fail to provide it. Except for bombarding a client with too many facts, it may be our most common error. Many salespeople are genuinely surprised when prospects ignore their argument and make a purchase elsewhere based on emotion. Well, of course they did! When you blast someone with facts, the upper brain gets overwhelmed and shuts down. And when you deny confirmation, the client has a hormonal crash. It's easy for the next salesperson to get the sale on a rebound.

I can't do complete justice to *How We Decide* in one column, but I highly recommend it to customer whisperers interested in learning more about how their clients experience the process. For those interested only in application, keep your facts few and focused on benefits important to your client. Pay close attention to visceral reactions to products and the things you say. And when asked for your opinion, swallow your pride and don't give it. Clients don't care about your opinion. They are seeking confirmation. Give it to them, and send everyone, including your boss, home happy. **MI**

Greg Billings will discuss the decision-making process at The NAMM Show in Anaheim, Calif. See him at the NAMM Idea Center at 1:30 p.m. on Jan. 16.

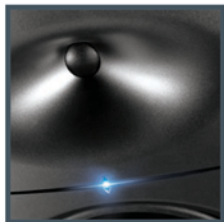
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IDEAS >>>

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Lesson Resolutions

It's the beginning of a new year, which means it's time for self improvement and resolutions. Sticking with a diet or committing to new travel destinations may be tough, but as music retailers, New Year's resolutions are essential for your lessons program. January is a great time to review the good, bad and ugly that went on in your store last year since it's still fresh in your mind. It's also the best time to look ahead. Remember that old adage: Fail to plan, plan to fail.



WHAT WENT RIGHT

Start by making a list of what went right in your music lessons program in 2009. Acknowledge the successes. You're still in business, so you did many things that worked. Take a moment to feel good about your accomplishments. These successes will work for you again in 2010.

Next, pull out a new calendar and pencil in the new year's student showcases, summer programs and other annual events that have worked consistently. Make notes about any tweaks or improvements you made to these events. It's important to bring everyone into the planning process, even your teachers. They often have lots of ideas from working in the trenches.

Also, evaluate the music lesson events and promos that lost steam from 2008 to 2009. Was it the economy? Your implementation? Have trends changed?

List all the ideas you wanted to implement and didn't because of one reason or another. Why didn't they happen? Are they worth trying again this year? If they are, pencil them in to your 2010 plan. If you don't write them down, they won't happen — just like last year.

WHAT WENT WRONG

List problems with your music lessons program in 2009. Did you fix the issue, or is it still looming in the I-hope-it-fixes-itself closet? Don't beat yourself up over everything that went wrong. Instead, develop a plan to correct the issues. Some problems may take longer than others, so be patient. That said, you need an action plan to correct them.

SET ATTAINABLE GOALS

Time to write down your goals for 2010. I love this list. It comes from the optimism, passion and excitement of being in this business. This is the list for ideas on increasing your student enrollment and retention and

improving your sales via music lessons.

Set weekly and monthly goals. You'll make more progress if you take attainable action steps toward each goal. And smaller goals are easier to return to if you fall behind during a busy week at the store.

COMMON GOALS FOR 2010

Here's an example of New Year's resolutions I've made for my own music lessons program. Any business can try them.

1. Use YouTube to promote the lessons program.
2. Increase communication with students via e-mail.
3. Improve outreach in the community to promote music lessons.
4. Revamp piano lessons to better retain teens.
5. Find new, exciting music books for lessons.
6. Recruit new music teachers that fit the store's vibe.
7. Decrease the drop-out rate by 20 percent.
8. Increase new lesson sign-ups by 20 percent.
9. Improve sales staff training on selling lessons to clients.

The time to plan ahead is now. If you wait, it won't happen. Grab your notepad, calendar and pencil. Do it now! **MI**

Pete Gamber will discuss how to improve music lesson programs during The NAMM Show in Anaheim, Calif. See him at the NAMM Idea Center at 4 p.m. on Jan. 15.

Make New Year's resolutions for your lesson program, and stick with them

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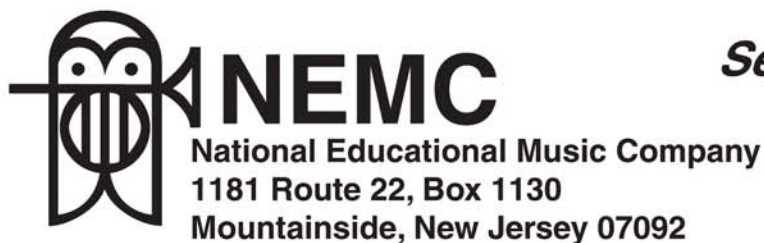
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IDEAS >>>

STREETWISE SELLING | BY KENNY SMITH

Get Found Online

Too many music retailers are out of the loop when it comes to their online futures. I often hear excuses along the lines of “I don’t have the time” or “Someone else handles that for us.” As an owner, you’re skating on thin ice if you’re not deeply involved with your Internet applications and opportunities.

Customers need to be able to find you easily, but getting high rankings on Google and other search engines requires effort. I suggest building your online marketing strategy like a pyramid — the higher you want to go, the wider you need to make your base. Consider these five ways to increase your search engine odds.



WEB SITE OPTIMIZATION

Adding titles, content and blogs containing keywords to your Web site will make it more search engine optimized. You can edit a Web site (i.e. update text, images and video, as well as add blogs) using software from nextedit.com. It’s easy, and it works. (Remember: If you’re using a plug-in store, such as eBay or Amazon.com, it won’t be indexed to your site.)

THE ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Write keyword-enriched articles, and post them on wordpress.com and related sites at least once a week. Share short daily updates on social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. These sites have the potential to

increase your search engine optimization. Employees can be helpful in maintaining your social networking, but managing them for quality content, keyword usage and frequent updating is a must.

MAKE YOURSELF A YOUTUBE STAR

YouTube is considered social media, but it works so well it gets its own category. Andy Fein, owner of Fein Violins in St. Paul,

Minn., read my article “YouTube Sales Training” in the July issue and decided to start his own YouTube campaign. By August, he’d posted three videos. They didn’t generate feedback right away, but Andy didn’t give up. He kept posting videos about his dealership’s products and services. I recently called Andy, and this time, I got a completely different story.

“People who come in are impressed to meet the people who are in the videos, and customers who call love talking with the person from the video,” he said. “Two weeks ago, a lady called right when we opened. During the call,

she asked, ‘Are you the guy that’s in the YouTube video?’ That’s where I found your store.” He added, “This call ended up resulting in a \$10,000 sale, which alone makes it worth the effort I’ve put in.”

LINK UP

Links to your Web site, especially from bigger sites, can boost your Google rankings. Manufacturers sometimes post your link on their sites. Take advantage of this and other free sites that let you post links — digg.com, dailymotion.com and productionhub.com, to name a few. Search coveted keyword phrases, and see what pops up. Studying your competitors can unveil their tactics.

ALWAYS REMEMBER E-MAIL

For Pete’s sake, get e-mail addresses! If employees aren’t getting customers’ addresses, you’re losing sales. Put a “Join our e-mail list” box on your front counter with a pen and blank forms. You’ll be surprised how well this works. Start a monthly e-newsletter, and stick to it. Sending compelling e-blasts rather than plain text is more effective, and Web sites, such as mailchimp.com, offer cool features for creating e-mails your customers will enjoy. **MI**

Kenny Smith will discuss search engine optimization at The NAMM Show in Anaheim, Calif. See him at the NAMM Idea Center at 12:30 p.m. on Jan. 17.

Five easy strategies for making your Web site more search engine friendly

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LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLIOM

Get on the Training Train

In my last column, I discussed the importance of knowing when it's time to terminate underperforming employees. How could I write an article on firing employees before discussing proper training techniques? Indeed, fairness dictates that employees receive the tools needed to do a job well.

However, I submit that training without a bona fide commitment to company excellence is time wasted. How many people have you trained that didn't work out? That's because you were concerned with training them, but they were concerned with collecting a paycheck.



Training without a commitment to excellence is time wasted

So, the first module in your training needs to lay out how serious your company is about excellence. Before the new hire starts snoozing, give specific, anonymous examples of people who've been with your company the longest and those who never made it through the probationary period. Paint a vivid picture of working at your company as a career, not just a stopping point on the road to a record deal.

Be sure your new hire understands that working for your company is a privilege — one that will be withdrawn if he or she doesn't measure up. If you scare the new hire into departing before the end of orientation, you've saved yourself the time and expense of a poor hiring decision.

When it comes to the nuts and bolts of a training program, no two companies operate exactly the same way. Rightfully, every company should have its own distinctive flavor. That said, here are a couple of rules that I believe are universal and often overlooked.

Rule 1: Don't fake it. It astounds me how often I hear retail sales associates give out bogus information. If your employee can't answer a question, he or she must apologize to the

customer, promise to get an accurate answer and do it.

Being forthright will endear the associate to the customer and will save the company's reputation. In training, drive home the point that knowingly lying to a customer is grounds for dismissal.

Rule 2: It's not a history class. Don't get caught up in teaching company history. It's a nice touch and valuable in moderation, but spending too much time on it can be an ego trip and a signal that you're more concerned with your past than your present and future. Get the new hire to the point of feeling pride, and move on.

Rule 3: Maintain balance.

It's important to balance theoretical and practical information in training. Forcing a new hire to read the "Magna Carta" will create a person who studies for the test and forgets everything later. It's the company's responsibility to balance theoretical and legal procedures with hands-on activities, job shadowing and some fun.

Rule 4: Use technology.

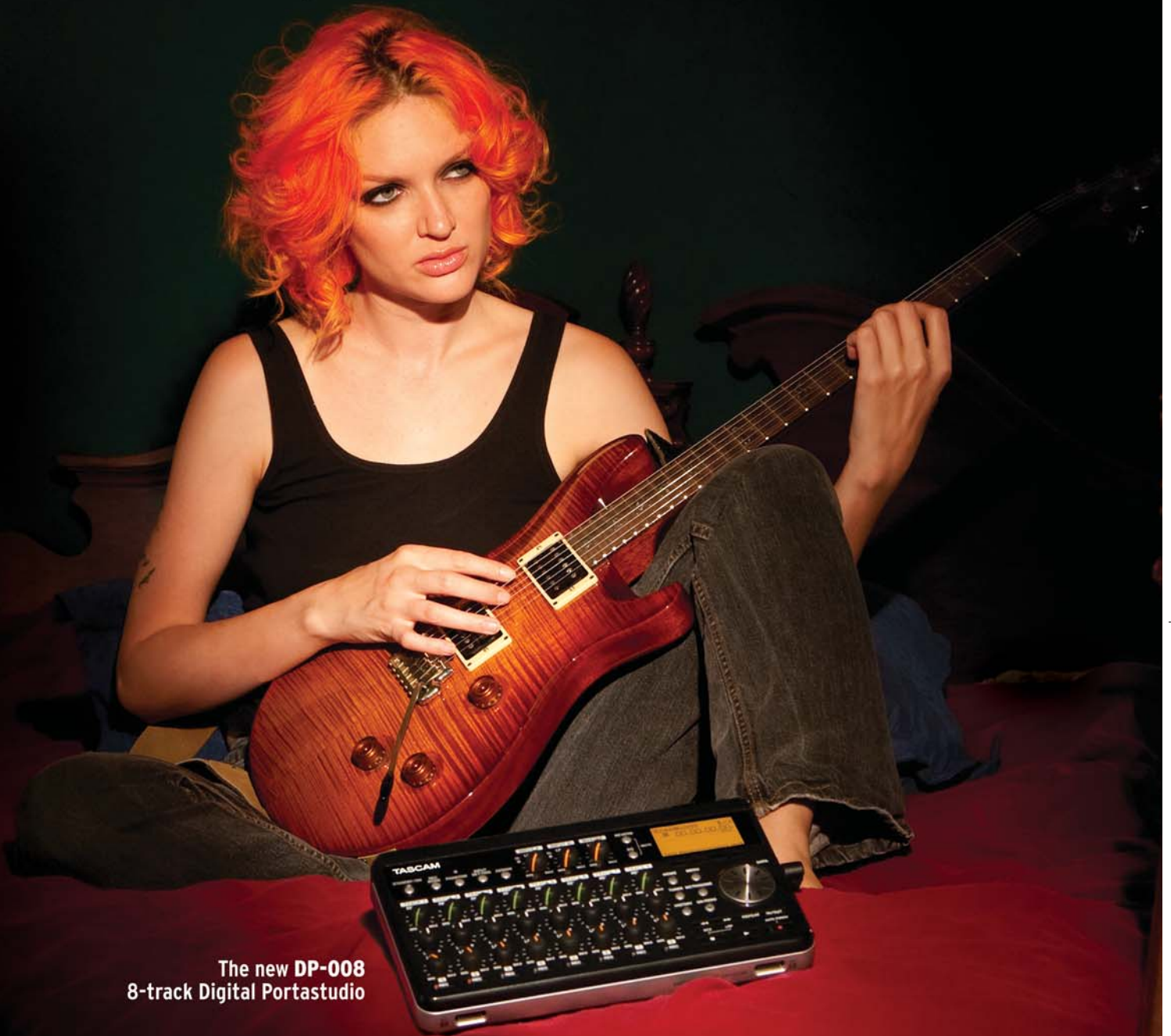
In this age of cheap video cameras, movie editing software and YouTube, it's so easy to put together entertaining training tools. They don't have to be world-class to be effective, and creating one training video will ensure consistent training for future hires.

Rule 5: Training is ongoing. An important factor to remember about training is that it never ends. During my retail career, I required a 15-minute staff meeting before opening *every* day. By the end of each week, the staff was exposed to a healthy dose of announcements, new product introductions, sales training and team building.

And since the meeting started before store hours, my team was in place and ready to go in time for opening. Imagine that! **MI**

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

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BY ZACH PHILLIPS
PHOTOS BY TRAVIS ANDERSON

Schmitt Music,
a 16-store chain
steeped in the
piano market,
survived the
recession to
become a speedier,
nimblener operation

Schmitt Music's flagship location is an elegant full-line mall store in Edina, an upscale Minneapolis suburb. It's a Friday afternoon in late October, and a handful of customers are browsing the combo and band instrument sections. But the piano department is quiet — as in empty. Tom Schmitt, the company's fourth-generation president, scans the showroom, nods and smiles humbly. "Our acoustic piano business has been down."

STIGHTHTER
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Tom Schmitt

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A SILVER LINING FOR THE PIANO INDUSTRY | BY PIANODISC

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+ THE SERVICE-DRIVEN LEADER

Schmitt Music aims to compete with a service-oriented culture, and it starts at the top. Tom Schmitt beams when one of his company's star performers walks in the room. He's an adept listener. He's warm, humble and the first person to admit when an area of his business could use improvement. (He also insists on picking up journalists from the airport personally, even when their flights are running three hours late.) In turn, Schmitt's employees are some of the most sincere, dedicated professionals in music retail. They're the kind of people customers trust with their purchasing dollars, and many employees speak of their tenures at Schmitt Music in terms of double digits.

As NAMM's chairman, Schmitt brings that sense of service to the music products industry. "If we on the NAMM board and executive committee are doing our job well, really listening to our members and trying to be responsive to what they're telling us, then our time and resources will be spent on those things our members tell us are most important to them," he said.

He added that NAMM members have six common requests, which will shape the organization's goals under his chairmanship:

- Produce the industry's premier trade shows.
- Save members millions of dollars through a variety of services.
- Expand the music products market so members have more customers.
- Work with lawmakers to establish a legal and regulatory environment that's friendly to the industry.
- Provide ongoing education and training to help members be more successful.
- Encourage and publicize research that establishes the benefits of making music.

Schmitt acknowledged that the current economic conditions make it a difficult time to be away from his business — the NAMM chairmanship involves regular travel, often abroad. Still, he said the economic woes make NAMM's "work and mission even more important."

"Tom Schmitt is one of the most thoughtful and intelligent guys in the industry today," said Joe Lamond, NAMM's president and CEO. "As a fourth-generation music retailer, there isn't much that he hasn't seen. Tom's wisdom and perspective will help lead NAMM and the industry during these particularly challenging times." — Z.P.

Like the rest of the piano industry, Schmitt Music spent the better part of 2009 trying to get through the economic nosedive. Unlike standalone piano dealers, the company had the benefit of steadier segments — school music, a robust lesson program and combo instruments — to help offset its losses. But Schmitt also had the double-edged sword of 16 locations spread across six states, the overhead costs of employing an A-list executive team and, of course, those lavish retail stores.

"We keep adjusting our business model to weather the storm," Schmitt said of the piano business, a segment that accounts for 50 percent of his company's sales.

And pianos aren't the only area of business being rethought at Schmitt Music these days. Company-wide, it's simultaneously ramping up and retrenching. Pass through its Brooklyn Center, Minn., showroom, and you'll see a new color scheme, recently redesigned departments and a half-dozen new plasma television screens. Talk to its executive staff, though, and you'll hear how the company has been tightening its operations to control expenses.

But all of these changes ultimately serve the same purpose. They aim to turn Schmitt Music — a 113-year-old, mid-sized chain — into a speedier, nimbler operation, a conversion that will prep the company for growth while helping safeguard it against future economic swings.

"We can't grow unless our operations are really tight," said Schmitt, who also took the reins as NAMM's new chairman this past July. "It's much more important than I've ever really fully appreciated."

TIGHTENED OPERATIONS

Next to a print music rack in Schmitt Music's Burnsville, Minn., store, a new display couples a pink Squier guitar, pink Vox practice amp and pink strap to appeal to young female rockers. And as far-fetched as it sounds, there's a direct connection between this smattering of girl-friendly gear and Schmitt's new operational strategy.

Over the last year, the company has been honing its systems to foster speedier communications, smarter purchasing and more laser-focused product mixes. Susan Boche, Schmitt Music's vice president of musical instruments and a former Target executive, likened this transformation to making the company "vertically integrated."

In practice, here's what that amounts to. Employees at each store have been designated product experts. These self-dubbed "band and orchestra geeks" and "guitar gurus," for example, aren't managers. Many aren't even full-time employees. "They're the people who have the passion, the drive, the understanding and, for the most part, also play," Boche said.

They regularly share observations from the sales floor about customer buying patterns and gear trends with Schmitt's corporate product managers. This helps the product managers make better purchasing decisions and experiment with gear and concepts off their radars, such as the girl guitar display. (Pictured on the opposite page.) And product managers will also make suggestions to the store experts about recent bulk gear buys and how many SKUs each store should carry.

"The product manager for band and orchestra, for

{SCHMITTMUSIC}

instance, is on a conference call weekly with her band and orchestra geeks out in the stores,” Boche said. “They talk about what’s happening, what’s new, ‘How come we don’t have neon-colored cases’ and ‘Have you seen this new clarinet that’s out?’ It drives up customer feedback.”

“The [corporate] structure is based on that direct feedback from the ground floor, and it’s constant,” added Joerg Hermsen, Schmitt’s director of marketing and a former Telex executive.

This has resulted in new merchandising directions. Elsewhere at the Burnsville store, pink flute cases have been added to complement the traditional black models. Schmitt’s combo locations were also



recently stocked with basses from up-and-coming supplier Fleabass. Hermsen said he’s confident the basses will turn quickly based on feedback from the in-store guitar gurus. He also noted the speed with which he first learned about Fleabass (Summer NAMM in July) to

when the product actually hit the sales floor (October) — a feat made possible by Schmitt’s vertical integration.

“There’s a good understanding of strategy and what we’re trying to do, so that everybody knows what’s important and what we’re going to concentrate on,” Schmitt said.

TIGHTENED INVENTORY

Still, stocking 16 stores across six states can present a host of inventory-control headaches. (Schmitt Music has 10 locations in Minnesota and one location per state in North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Colorado and Kansas.)

One key solution has been giving stores minimum stock levels for accessories and band

and orchestra instruments. Schmitt’s corporate office forecasts how many SKUs of an item each store typically sells in a given week. Then, the Brooklyn Center warehouse team makes sure the store always has a two-week supply of that SKU. This way, the store won’t run out if it sells more than usual in a particular week. The system also keeps store managers from having to concern themselves with constantly restocking big sellers.

“We don’t need the store managers worrying about that,” Boche said. “The store managers should be listening to their customers and figuring out what those micro-marketing opportunities are.”

The system has only been in place for a few years, and

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The Schmitt Music executive team, from left: Joerg Hermsen, Doug Schmitt, Tom Schmitt, Susan Boche, Wayne Reinhardt and Robert Baker

Schmitt said it's constantly being fine-tuned. That said, the results have been promising so far. He cited the company's last inventory audit as evidence.

"Our auditors checked six or seven stores, and out of all those stores, I think we were only unable to account for 15 or 16 individual SKUs," Schmitt said. "And that included individual sheets of music, individual reeds and individual guitar picks."

TIGHTENED BRANDING

Pianos and band and orchestra instruments may be Schmitt's bread and butter, but lately, the company's adding some sexiness to the mix.

Ask Tom Schmitt where he sees growth potential, and he'll cite the combo market. A

year ago, he brought on Adam Grath, a Guitar Center, Zoom, Midas and Amro Music veteran, as Schmitt Music's combo product manager. "The first step we need to make is to have a subject-matter expert," Schmitt said of Grath.

Elsewhere, the company's investing in image. Stroll through Schmitt Music's Edina store, for instance, and you'll notice some of the finest signage in music retail. (Pictured on page 58.)

On a wall in the music lessons area, each teacher gets his or her own placard with a studio-quality photograph and bio. Tied into that, the company recently launched the Star program. Teachers publicize their favorite instruments with Star recommendations via a sign with the teacher's

To blow out aged piano inventory, Schmitt Music put a low base price on it and split the overage with salespeople 50/50

photo and product review. Teacher-recommended print music gets Star treatment, as well, in the form of bookmarks sticking out with the Star designation. Key instruments also have Star-branded hanging pockets with takeaway check-

lists of accessory suggestions.

All of these displays feature consistent fonts and color schemes (mainly yellow and purple) to maintain branding across Schmitt's 16 stores.

"We are not empowering stores to do whatever they think they should do," Boche said of Schmitt Music's branding strategy. "That dilutes the brand."

TIGHTENED PIANO MARKETING

Obviously, much of the tightening, cost-cutting and rethinking was inspired by the economy's devastation to the piano industry. Like many piano dealers, Schmitt Music also faced the double-whammy of higher interest rates when its lender, GE Finance, changed its policies in early 2009.

Starting in February, Schmitt's keyboard division



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launched a company-wide initiative to blow-out old stock. It put a low base price on aged piano inventory and split the overage with salespeople 50/50.

“Even customers ready to buy big-ticket discretionary pianos want a deal,” said Wayne Reinhardt, vice president of Schmitt Music’s keyboard group, which includes pianos and organs. “So we had a story to tell these customers: ‘Look, our lender has raised our interest rates, and we really need to sell this. We’d rather sell it at a discount than continue to pay the higher interest rates on it.’ And then the salesperson could sell it, even at a discounted price, and make a substantial commission.”

Sales went up, and although margins went down, the initiative gave many employees a more respectable paycheck. And according to Reinhardt, it reduced inventory “dramatically.”

“Actually, when we looked at net margins after commissions on that program, we were making our plan,” Schmitt added.

Every August and September, the company also displays digital pianos at the Minnesota State Fair. In 2009, Schmitt Music negotiated a deal with one of its suppliers on a slew of discontinued digital pianos and offered State Fair prices at all of its piano stores.

“We were able to offer some really good pricing on that, keep our margins up and offer a good deal for our customers,” Reinhardt said. “That really has stimulated our business, as well, on the keyboard side.

“Our digital piano business and our electronic keyboard business is ahead of [2008]. Our Clavinova business is doing really well.”

Schmitt Music’s Lowrey organ classes keep a steady stream of older adults passing through its stores each week. Last year, the company also rolled out play-for-fun piano classes at its keyboard locations using the curriculum created by fellow retailer and educator Debra Perez of Valley Keyboards. Tom Schmitt said the program is still in its infancy but has brought in new traffic. He added that the company has data proving that students in Schmitt Music’s lessons program buy four times as many instruments as non-students.

“The tide has kind of gone out on the acoustic piano business, but we think the tide is going to come back in to some



extent, too,” he said.

Case in point: Schmitt Music’s piano sales were up by double digits this past September and November, as compared to 2008. In fact, the company celebrated a November that compared to its best years sales-wise. Plus, the recent Steinway Selection Event at its Edina, Denver and Kansas City, Kan., stores achieved what Schmitt called “very good” sales that were “not record levels but up significantly from [2008].”

“We’ve had more piano prospects to talk to, more of them are buying higher-end instruments, and we’re hearing normal objections instead of the irrational and fearful objections we heard so often [in 2008],” Schmitt said.

“So we’re feeling a lot better about the piano business at the moment. We’re hoping for much better holiday sales this year than last year.” **MI**



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Jeff Waters
Annihilator
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THE NAMM[®] show¹⁰ music inc.

THE GUIDE

THE NAMM SHOW 2010



THE NAMM SHOW 2010 | BY JENNY DOMINE

HEAT WAVE IN JANUARY

What's going to be hot at The NAMM Show — held Jan. 14–17 in Anaheim, Calif.? The H.O.T. Zone, of course.

The new H.O.T. (Hands-On-Training) Zone has been designed by NAMM to support professionals in the live audio, house of worship, and stage and lighting industries.

Located on the second level of the Anaheim Convention Center, more than 15 industry companies and associations

will offer free training seminars, face-to-face meetings and networking opportunities to help interested dealers get familiar with this high-tech market.

THE NAMM APP

NAMM is also bringing new technology to the show floor. It's working with Core-Apps to offer attendees Follow Me, a new mobile application for smart phones.

The Follow Me app provides an interactive show schedule and floor map with routing to

booths. It also gives users access to downloadable e-brochures from exhibitors. The application can be accessed at namm.org.

“My favorite feature is the schedule linking where individuals and groups that you select can see your schedule and request meetings during the show,” said Joe Lamond, NAMM CEO. “We know that making the most of every moment is important to our members, and this new technology will allow them to do new things that weren't possi-

ble before.”

The Follow Me app also delivers e-coupons and discounts from local restaurants and attractions.

TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS

This year, show attendees will once again have the opportunity to interact with music educators on Jan. 16 and 17. Music Education Days will feature the Best Tools for Schools program, which helps music educators identify innovative music products and materials for teaching music. **MI**



2010 NAMM SHOW EVENTS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14

BREAKFAST SESSION

8 A.M.

Breakfast of Champions

Moderator: Joe Lamond, NAMM president and CEO Hilton Anaheim Hotel, Pacific Ballrooms

Joe Lamond welcomes champions of business for a series of up-close-and-personal discussions with industry leaders. Hear their views on the future of the industry. (Free breakfast served 8–8:30 a.m.)

10:30 A.M.

How Do I Make Time to Market My Business?

Danny Rocks shares the plans and tactics of successful music dealers who are using social networking and Internet marketing to reach more customers.

11 A.M. — SPECIAL DOUBLE SESSION

Five Silver Bullets for Productivity Improvement (Parts 1 and 2)

Brad Huiskens, president of IAS Training, leads participants through a fun, motivational seminar on implementing a productivity improvement program.

**Attendees can join in for one or both parts of this session.*

NOON — SPECIAL DOUBLE SESSION

How to Build and Maintain an Effective E-Mailing List (Part 1)

George Hines shows how to build an effective e-mail list and keep customers clicking through the special offers.

12:30 P.M.

How to Create an Effective E-Newsletter: Before and

After Makeovers (Part 2)

In Part 2, Danny Rocks joins George Hines to demonstrate how to create an effective e-mail marketing campaign by looking at e-newsletter examples submitted by NAMM members.

**Attendees can join in for one or both parts of this session.*

1 P.M.

Creative Ways to Beat the Market

The Percussion Marketing Council and a panel of drum retailers and industry leaders share creative ways to beat the market.

1:30 P.M.

The Magic of Wish Lists: Build Your Business Year-Round

Lane Baldwin of Lane Baldwin Business Solutions explores the opportunities that wish lists pro-

vide retailers and how they keep customers, as well as friends and family, coming back again and again.

2 P.M.

How to Take Advantage of NAMM U Online

Join Danny Rocks, Alan Friedman, Pete Gamber and George Hines as they show you how to improve your sales, financial performance, lesson programs and Web presence from the comfort of your home or office.

2:30 P.M.

Your Business Budget: Plan to Make a Profit!

By creating and diligently using a budget, you can practically assure profitability instead of just hoping for the best. Join music industry consultants Alan Friedman and Daniel Jobe as they demonstrate a simple but effective budgeting tool.

3 P.M.

Managing Your Best Resources: Mining for Great Store Employees

Peter Dods of Easy Music walks you through a simple, effective hiring protocol that will land you the right employees for your store.

3:30 P.M.

If You Rent It ... They Will Come: Short-Term Rentals

Mark Tirabassi, author of *Backline Basics* and owner of Hubbard Music, explains how to start up a short-term rental program and connect with local bands, schools and churches.

4 P.M. — SPECIAL 90-MINUTE SESSION

Create It, Date It and Do It (Part 1)

This three-part series is presented by Donna Hall, president of New York School of Music/Rock Camp USA; drumming educator Dom Famularo; and special guests. Learn how to make your business one of the most exciting places to

be in your community using music lessons, programs and community events that earn great profits and create a buzz.

4:30 P.M.

The Power of Passion (Part 2)

Learn how to capture and share your passion with your students, employees and teachers to create an environment where everyone wants to be.

5 P.M.

The Power and Profit of Teaching — Empowering the Teachers to Teach and Sell (Part 3)

Guest panelists Vic Firth, founder of Vic Firth; Neil Larrivee, director of education at Vic Firth; Rick Drumm, president of D'Addario; Dave Sebree, CEO of the Austin School of Music and Rock Camp; and Pete Gamber, owner of Alta Loma Music, share how they encourage students to have fun, develop their talents and inspire them to remain involved in music for a lifetime.

**Attendees can join in for one, two or all three parts of this session, beginning every 30 minutes.*

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 15
BREAKFAST SESSION**

8 A.M.

The Post-Crisis Consumer

John Gerzema, Young & Rubicam Chief Insights Officer
Hilton Anaheim Hotel, Pacific Ballrooms

Author and consumer insights expert John Gerzema says there's an upside to the recent financial crisis: the opportunity for positive change. Join Gerzema as he explores America's post-crisis behavior shifts, explains the new imperatives for business, identifies four major cultural shifts driving new consumer behavior and shows how businesses are evolving to connect with thoughtful spending. (Free breakfast served 8–8:30 a.m.)

10:30 A.M.

Where the Wild Things (and People) Are: Facebook for Beginners

Scott Robertson, director of marketing and communications for NAMM, encourages everyone to bring their Facebook questions and anecdotes.

11 A.M.

Marketing? Promotion? It's Your Store ... and Your Money

Join Bentley-Hall's Bob Popyk to learn dozens of easy ways to get more customers through your door with low-cost marketing and zero-cost PR.

11:30 A.M.

Five Secrets to Closing a Sale When a Customer Starts to Walk

Don't let "I'll think about it" or "I'll let you know" stifle your sales. Bob Popyk gives ideas you can use to make sure you give every customer your best shot before they leave.

NOON — SPECIAL DOUBLE SESSION

Math for Musicians: How to Read a Financial Statement (Parts 1 and 2)

Join music retailing accountants Alan Friedman and Daniel Jobe to gain the confidence to read a set of financial statements, make sense of them and know exactly what to do next.

**Attendees can join in for one or both parts of this session.*

1 P.M.

Four Keys to Making Money With RMM Piano Classes

Brian Chung, president of the Piano Manufacturers Association International, discusses how recreational music making piano classes can build traffic in your store and add to your bottom line.

1:30 P.M.

Creative Merchandising: Make the Most of What You Have

Jen Tabor leads an idea-packed

session that provides creative ways to give your shop a natural, exciting makeover.

2 P.M.

Igniting the Spark

John Anning and the Alliance of Independent Music Merchants invites artists from around the show floor to discuss the impact early music store experiences had on their careers and what they look for when they visit stores today.

2:30 P.M.

Rock 'n' Roll Retail: How to Turn Your Salespeople Into Retail Rock Stars

Jason VanderPal, general manager of Guitar Center in Hollywood, Calif., shares the top five sales techniques used by his store's highest-producing salespeople. Learn how to avoid the greatest tragedy in sales and why you should throw away your business cards.

3 P.M.

Do It Today, Be Ahead Tomorrow: Taking Advantage of the Current Slowdown to Put Your Best Foot Forward

Billy Cuthrell, owner of Progressive Music Center, discusses being more aggressive with branding via print, social media and Google.

3:30 P.M.

The Wanna Play Experience: The New Opt-In Program

Robin Walenta, president and CEO of West Music; Joel Menchey, owner of Menchey Music Service; and Chris White, president and CEO White House of Music, have helped pilot the new Wanna Play Experience. Listen as they share their success stories. They discuss the marketing tools they used to increase store traffic, strengthen their demographics and encourage community involvement.



The Ableton booth



Pete Gamber presents at the NAMM Idea Center

4 P.M. — SPECIAL 90-MINUTE SESSION

Lesson Strategies for the New Decade (Parts 1, 2 and 3)

Pete Gamber and a panel of music industry leaders offer ideas that you can take home and put into motion. Discover how to find new teachers and make them part of your team. Find out how to recruit new students and retain them. Learn how to promote products and services through your lesson rooms.

**Attendees can join in for one, two or all three parts of this session, beginning every 30 minutes.*

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16

BREAKFAST SESSION

8 A.M.

Strategies for a Changing Retail World

Speaker: George Whalin, Retail Management Consultants
Hilton Anaheim Hotel,
Pacific Ballrooms
Retail expert George Whalin discusses five things retailers should stop doing and five things they should start doing to survive and thrive in today's economic turmoil. (Free breakfast served 8–8:30 a.m.)

10:30 A.M. — SPECIAL

DOUBLE SESSION

Rock Star Retailers — Real Results From Using Social Media (Parts 1 and 2)

Scott Robertson and Jen Lowe highlight 10 music products dealers who are using social media to drive business.

**Attendees can join in for one or both parts of this session.*

11:30 A.M.

Take Control of Your Web Site

Join Jim Hodgson of Hodgson Marketing as he shows how to use blogging and content management software WordPress to add to and edit your Web site, draw quality incoming links, rank higher on Google and get the word out about your business.

NOON — SPECIAL DOUBLE SESSION

How to Design a Year-Round Promotional Calendar (Part 1)

Danny Rocks shares promotional campaign ideas gathered from NAMM dealers around the country. Successful stores never stop promoting — it's a year-round activity.

12:30 P.M.

How to Ensure Successful Promotions (Part 2)

To run a successful promotion, you must have a solid plan and know how to execute it. Danny Rocks; Greg Billings, owner of Steinway Piano Gallery of Naples; and Gayle Beacock, vice president of Beacock Music, share their best practices for staging promotions that bring in the customers and bring home the cash.

**Attendees can join in for one or both parts of this session.*

1 P.M.

Show Me the Money Now! Sure Ways to Get Financing

When it comes down to it, banks have two objectives: to make money by lending you money and to make sure they get paid back. While a healthy financial statement is a good start, you need a whole lot more to obtain the financing you need to run a growing business. Join industry accountants Alan Friedman and Daniel Jobe of Friedman, Kanneberg and Co. to learn how to win over your banker.

1:30 P.M.

Guiding Your Customers Through the Decision-Making Process

Join Greg Billings as he demonstrates the difference between being a salesperson and being a customer whisperer.

2 P.M. — SPECIAL DOUBLE SESSION

Becoming a Retail Superstar: Business-Building Lessons From America's Best Independent Stores

George Whalin of Retail Management Consultants presents strategies, ideas and business-building tools employed by top independent retailers.

3 P.M.

This Is How I Manage My Store

You are invited to learn how veteran retailer Bryan McCann manages his staff, his store operations and his customer relationships to remain profitable. He shares specific situations where he has faced a challenge and turned it into an opportunity.

3:30 P.M.

Music Industry 'Regs and Legs'

Mary Luehrsen, director of public affairs and government relations for NAMM and executive director of the NAMM Foundation, provides current information to ensure that you are informed about regulatory requirements and evolving legislation where your input matters.

4 P.M. — SPECIAL 90-MINUTE SESSION

Seven Ways to Thrive in Any Economy (Parts 1, 2 and 3)

Danny Rocks, Gayle Beacock, Kevin Cranley, George Hines and Robin Walenta explain what they are doing now to improve their business operations. They share the processes that they and other dealers have used to take advantage of a changing economy.

**Attendees can join in for one, two or all three parts of this session, beginning every 30 minutes.*

SUNDAY, JANUARY 17**BREAKFAST SESSION****8 A.M.****Best in Show — This Year's Hottest Products**

Moderator: Frank Alkyer, *Music Inc.* publisher
Hilton Anaheim Hotel, Pacific Ballrooms
Join *Music Inc.* publisher Frank Alkyer and his esteemed panel of retail buyers and gear heads as they scour the show floor and dig into the merchandise to find the best products, ideas and trends from the hidden depths of the convention. (Free breakfast served 8–8:30 a.m.)

10:30 A.M.**Social Media, I Get It ... But Where Do I Start?**

Get real-world tips and strategies from Kurt Witt and his Yamaha team. After several years of social media involvement and activities, they offer practical insight on issues, such as the dreaded question: Where am I going to find the time?

11 A.M.**Getting Twitter: Much More Than Meets the Eye**

Scott Robertson, director of marketing and communications for NAMM, presents a fun, interactive session that will show you how to make the most out of the hottest microblogging site on the Web.

11:30 A.M.**Getting Your Recommended Daily Allowance of Social Media**

Scott Robertson arms retailers with some tips, tricks and takeaways that can be use immediately to drive store traffic and build a store's brand online.

NOON**The Power of YouTube**

Mike Nessen of BoomBoom Percussion teaches you how to make an impact with your worldwide customer base with the help of online video content.

12:30 P.M.**Get Found Online**

Music Inc. columnist Kenny Smith discusses new ways to manage, promote and sell more products using simple but effective online means and proven music industry techniques that will work for you — for free.

1 P.M. — 50-MINUTE SESSION**Industry Panel: Trends in Music Education**

Associate director Sandy Jordan and senior project manager Eric Ebel of NAMM's public affairs and government relations discuss topics ranging from grass-roots advocacy to the role music education and business can play in developing the 21st century workforce.

2 P.M. — 50-MINUTE SESSION**2010 Best Tools for Schools Awards**

Symphony Publishing editors and guests host

the first annual Best Tools for Schools Awards. Come see what students and leaders in music education and business have chosen as the most relevant and innovative products being showcased at NAMM.

3 P.M.**From Legacy to Exhibit: Exploring the Impact of Bob Moog's Work on the Music Industry Past, Present and Future**

This panel discussion explores the impact of Bob Moog's work on the music industry.

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

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AUDIO-TECHNICA

*** BOOTH 6740 ***

A-T will show four new METAlliance-certified 40 series mics — the AT4080 and AT4081 bidirectional active ribbon, AT4050ST stereo condenser and AT4047MP multi-pattern condenser — and MCB4 antenna combiner for M3 wireless in-ear monitor systems.

AUDIO-TECHNICA.COM

AUDIX

*** BOOTH 6976 ***

AUDIXUSA.COM

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B-BAND

*** BOOTH 3385 ***

B-Band — major manufacturer and supplier of B-Band and Ukko brand pickups, contact mics and electronics for acoustic guitar, double bass and drums — will announce its new T-series guitar pre-amps for 2010.

B-BAND.COM

B & C Speakers4786
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Bass Drum O's Hole Reinforcements3564
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Bass Player.....5307

Music Man's Models

Sterling by Music Man will release several new models at The NAMM Show. The new Silo30 is a basswood body electric with a vintage-style, Music Man-designed tremolo bridge; locking tuners; a SSH pickup layout; a pearloid pick-guard; and a gig bag.

Other new models that will be spotlighted include the John Petrucci JP50 in satin black finish, the Ray34 Bass in limited Silverburst finish and the AX40 in new transparent blue finish. MSRP: Silo30, \$499.

{sterlingbysmusicman.com}

Rainbow Rosin

The Super-Sensitive Musical String Co. has introduced Clarity Spectrum, a fun, colorful collection of hypoallergenic rosin. Made from a synthetic hydrocarbon resin compound, Clarity Spectrum substantially improves the performance of rosin, producing better grab and string response. The rosin is available in red, pink, green, blue and purple. MSRP: \$16.22.

{supersensitive.com}

Pickup Line

Schatten Design has launched two new lines of affordable, handmade acoustic pickups. The Performer series and the Player series feature the new Rock-A-Billy pickup for upright bass. These easy-to-install pickups are available in both passive and active formats. They feature fingerboard-mounted thumb-wheel volume controls.

{schattendesign.com}

Ambassador Beat

Ambassador X drumheads are the newest release from Remo. Inspired by the award-

WHAT to SEE

winning Emperor X and Black X drumheads, Ambassador X heads utilize the same film as the industry standard but



are 20-percent thicker for greater attack and volume, as well as increased durability. Heavy hitters Ron Bruner Jr. and Ray Luzier both prefer Ambassadors. The heads are available in 8- through 16-inch sizes. **{remo.com}**

Let it Shine

MBT Lighting will display its newest LED lighting system, LEDGigPack, at The NAMM Show.



The LEDGigPack sets up in minutes with its own carrying case. The slim-designed, 2-inch-thick spots are already mounted and wired to the control T-bar for all power and functions. The cool-running LED spots are red, yellow, blue and green, and they only use 15 watts each. Sixty watts run the entire system. The LEDGigPack also features an auto chase function with a sound-sensitivity knob located on the control T-bar. MSRP: \$599.

{mbtlighting.com}

Get Pro-Active

Pro-Active's turnkey Web site comes preloaded with thousands of products. Vendor drop-shipping is also available. Products are updated daily, and the new Web site includes many sales and marketing tools to help sell more products. New features include a lesson management tool, product comparisons, online payments and a social networking interface.



{pro-activewebsites.com}

WHAT to SEE



Modern Metalheads

Godlyke has released two Nine series models from Maxon: the SM-9 Pro+ Super Metal Distortion and the ST-9 Pro+ Super Tube Overdrive. The SM-9 Pro+ Super Metal Distortion can create a wide variety of high-gain guitar tones from the classic scooped midrange to the low-end needed to reproduce the drop-tuned sounds of modern metal. This unit features gain, level, scoop and edge controls that can be switched between 9- to 18-volt operation via an internal voltage-doubling circuit. The ST-9 Pro+ Super Tube Overdrive is based on Maxon's classic 808 circuit and offers new features, such as separate mid control to vary the level of midrange boost. **{maxonfx.com}**

Jet Setter

Jensen Musical Instrument Speakers has



announced the latest addition to the Jensen Jet series, the 12-inch Falcon. This 50-watt speaker introduces a new style of cone. The Falcon produces a warm, full-bodied tone with lows that are rich and fat and responds to overdrive distortion with a colorful crunch. **{jensentone.com}**

Bass in a Box

Kona Guitar is making learning to play electric bass guitar easier than ever. Kona has teamed up with Wiley Publishing to launch a new addition to its existing For Dummies line of guitar starter packs. The *Electric Bass Guitar Starter Pack For Dummies* includes a full-size Kona electric bass gui-

tar with a classic design and split-style pickups, a 10-watt amplifier, an *Electric Bass Basics For Dummies* book with CD, a guitar bag, a 10-foot guitar cord, digital tuner, guitar strap and picks.

{konaguitars.com}



Drop-in Pre-amp

B-Band's new T-series of guitar pre-amps includes the T65, which is equipped with the XOM two-input circuit for use with B-Band UST and AST pickups, an LCD chromatic tuner, a three-band EQ and XOM mix control. The pre-amp comes in a one-piece, drop-in installation format.

{b-band.com}



Nady's 100

Nady has introduced its UWS-100, a 100-channel select UHF wireless system with 100 user-switchable frequencies per band. The UWS-100 features state-of-the-art PLL UHF performance with 120 dB dynamic range. Other features include: Tone Squelch circuitry for protection from RF interference; Front Panel Touch control for ease of channel selection and ASC operation; and DigiTRU Diversity for maximum range and dropout protection. All transmitter options provide 100 easily selectable channels via ASC IR download for easy synchronization with the receiver.

{nady.com}

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BEAMZ INTERACTIVE

* BOOTH 6110 *

The Beamz is a laser-trigger instrument that enables people to experience making music in an extraordinary way. This product provides dealers new revenue opportunities with consumers and music education in school districts.

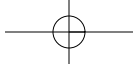
THEBEAMZ.COM

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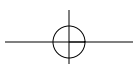


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▶ THE **GUIDE** | **EXLIST** NAMM show

WHAT to SEE

Blackstar Amps Up

The Series One from Blackstar delivers high-gain performance with a level of tonal refinement previously found only in the best boutique and vintage amps.



From the incredible power of the 200W KT88-equipped head to the 45W combo, each Series One design sets new standards for valve tone and flexibility. The built in DPR power reduction system enables reduction to any level down to 10 percent of the rated power with no loss in tone or valve reliability.

{blackstaramps.co.uk}

Play With Light

Visit with Beamz Interactive and experience how great music is made by playing the light. The Beamz is a laser trigger instrument that enables people to experience making music in an extraordinary way.



The Beamz easily connects to a computer USB port. You don't need to read music to play the Beamz. Simply install the software, and you're ready to go.

It includes a digital music system that plays 100-plus instruments that span more than 20 musical genres. The Beamz system also includes 30 original Beamz songs.

{thebeamz.com}

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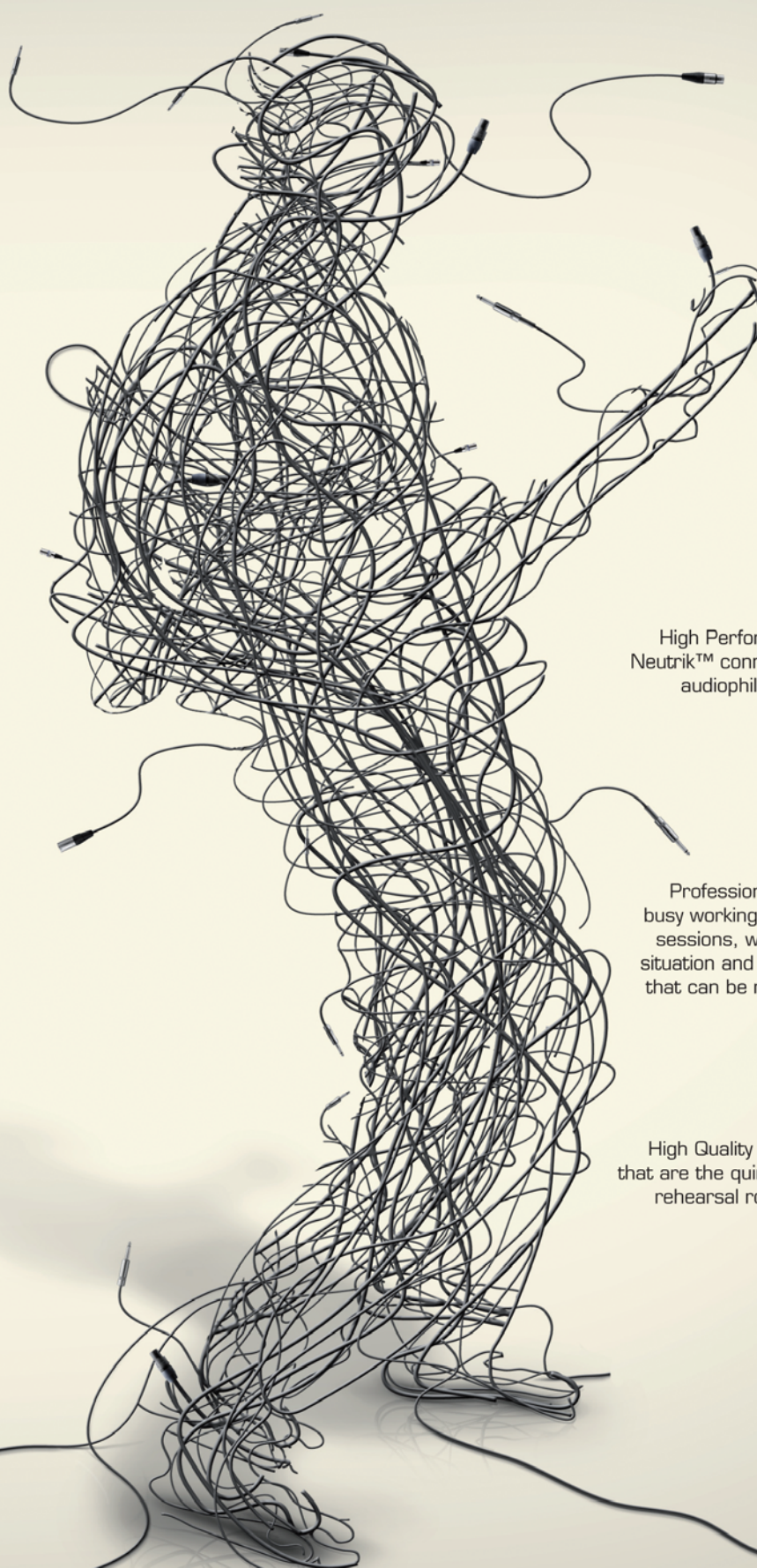
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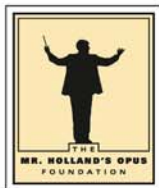
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– *Guitar World Review AX40 Anniversary 2009 Issue*

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Jon Haber of
Alto Music

Photo by Luis Peña

PRO AUDIO'S SERVICE PUSH

Paralleling the downward drift of music sales in recent years, the commercial studio business' decline has been no secret within the industry. That said, the overall computer-recording music market went from less than \$140 million in sales in 1999 to nearly a half-billion dollars in 2008, according to NAMM's statistics. And the largely software-based pro audio sector is now one of the largest revenue generators for several major MI retailers.

Jon Haber, president of Alto Music, a five-store retail chain based in Middletown, N.Y., said pro audio now accounts for the majority of his com-

Pro audio retailers combat greater competition, trend-sensitive product by delving deeper into the consulting business

pany's online sales. In fact, he said pro audio's one of the reasons his company plans a more aggressive online push in 2010.

"We had not done much in the way of online selling before, but based on how well pro audio sales are from the Web site, we're now going after that market," he said.

It's a big market to pursue. Thanks to an explosion in software development, the market for personal music recording has mushroomed. Much of pro audio's most expensive hardware has been converted into software plug-ins that cost as little as \$69. This has tanked the conventional studio business but created an amorphous market landscape with prices ranging from a few dollars for a USB cable to tens of thousands for more sophisticated upper-tier hardware, such as

the SSL AWS 900 and Neve Genesys digital consoles.

That wider array of affordable products has brought more competition to the market. "There are way more stores and people catering to that market now than ever before," Haber said. "The market is huge. Recording is the next logical step for any musician, so any musician becomes a potential pro audio customer, too."

THE NEXT PHASE

And the next step for pro audio-immersed retailers is to go beyond product sales. Some stores, such as Alto Music, have added systems and acoustical design consulting as a service for pro audio cus-

tomers, while others, including Washington Music Center and Guitar Center Pro, have entered the systems integration and installation sector. In some instances, these dealers have subcontracted out construction of personal recording studios.

'Recording is the next logical step for any musician, so any musician becomes a potential pro audio customer, too.'

— Jon Haber, Alto Music

Alan Levin, vice president of Washington Music Center, a Wheaton, Md., MI superstore, said his company has been in pro audio for more than a decade via its subsidiary Washington Professional. For much of that time, it has employed studio and systems designers and also organized contractors to help customers build their studios.

Levin acknowledged the challenges of mixing MI and pro audio retail. "You have to have the knowledge base that can connect a guitar player with recording equipment," Levin said. "You have to be fluent in both domains to be a good salesperson, and not everyone has those abilities."

Then there are the pendulum swings within what can be a very fashion-like business (i.e. analog to digital and back again). "It's like it was years ago, when amplifiers went from tubes to transistors and then back again, and you had to carry both," Levin said.

THE BIG PLAYERS

But as MI retail moves deeper into pro audio territory, some companies have staked out that space exclusively. Dale Professional Audio in New York, a 20-year-old division of Dale Electronics, services only the pro audio sector.

"No one comes in here to buy a guitar," said Joe Prout, a sales representative who has worked at Dale since 1995.

Prout said he views MI retail excursions into pro audio sales skeptically. He

cited Audio Techniques, a pro audio sales venture by Manny's Music in the 1990s before it was absorbed by Sam Ash Music — which itself reintegrated its pro audio sales back into its Manhattan store operations after a stint as Sam Ash Professional.

"There might be companies that claim to be pro audio sales operations, but you

have to do it exclusively to do it well, to service clients like network television and high-end post production or outfit a concert hall," he said. "You just can't do that and sell musical instruments and do both well."

Retailers on the West Coast share a similar view. Jim Pace, president of Audio Intervisual Design (AID), a pro audio-only

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Gary Gand of
Gand Music

“That’s a market where people are shopping price, not service,” he said.

Still, both dedicated pro audio companies and MI retailers with pro audio departments have been developing consulting services to generate sales and build customer loyalty. AID has increased its systems integration and installation practices, as well as added more sophisticated digital data storage systems, such as storage area networks, that it can sell, install, integrate and maintain. Pace said aiming for the top tiers of the industry differentiates his company from MI-based pro audio sales. “They can’t follow us there,” he said.

GC PRO GOES NATIONAL

However, GC Pro, the subsidiary company of mega MI retailer Guitar Center, has ambitions to take pro audio sales and service to a national level. GC Pro now has 33 locations. All are based in cities with GC stores, and most are within a store. Rick Plushner, GC Pro’s director, said he plans to open four more GC Pro locations in 2010, increasing his current staff of 65 people accordingly.

In 2008, GC Pro launched its Affiliates program, which lets systems integrators, acoustical design and construction service companies become part of larger bids by GC Pro for studios, post houses, houses of worship and other projects. Here, GC Pro essentially acts as the general contractor. So far, Plushner said its main client base includes educational institutions and houses of worship, as well as some personal recording studios.

“We have it at the point where a GC Pro customer can write one check for the ground-up construction of a facility, the equipment and its installation and systems integration,” he said.

GC Pro routinely uses its MI store resources in fulfilling project orders, but Plushner said GC’s 214 stores also serve as a training network, with basic Pro Tools classes on up to high-end systems training for GC Pro sales and support employees. This, according to Plushner, rebuts the notion that an MI-based retail company can’t provide high-level technical support.

“It’s a great synergy,” he said. “Any customer can come to any store and get a solution that’s comprehensive at any level.”

Still, Plushner agreed that the line

dealership in West Hollywood, Calif., said he believes the commoditization of music itself has been paralleled by the ubiquity of the digital tools that make it. That, in turn, devalues the knowledge base needed to make long-term strategic purchasing decisions, whether by Hollywood film studios or home studio owners.

“That lack of knowledge focuses buyers on short-term solutions and low prices,” Pace said. “That’s a scenario where the big-box stores will always win.”

Nonetheless, dedicated pro audio companies overlap significantly with MI retail in the personal recording studio arena, and it’s a shared space with an enormous, ever-growing number of products. But Prout said these MI dealers can only provide rudimentary service to pro audio clients.

between pro audio and MI at the retail level is becoming less distinct. “You have hobbyists, then you have everyone else, and they all could be considered professional to some extent,” he said.

Gand Music in Northfield, Ill., began carrying high-end pro audio products, including large-format mixing consoles and multitrack tape recorders, in the mid 1980s. Owner Gary Gand recalled three other Chicago-area music stores — Audio Lines, SG Audio and DJ’s Pro Audio — also spinning off pro audio divisions at the time. “Everyone was under a lot of pressure by the manufacturers to sell pro audio gear,” Gand said.

He resisted spinning off his pro audio operation and kept it integrated with the rest of



Rick Plushner of GC Pro

‘We have it at the point where a GC Pro customer can write one check for the ground-up construction of a facility.’

— Rick Plushner, GC Pro

{PROAUDIORETAIL}

the store. In retrospect, he’s glad he did.

“Every one of those [pro audio] spin-offs is gone now,” he said. “The upper level of the professional business contracted to the point where it couldn’t support that many pro audio dealerships. Music recording’s now done by musicians at home, so it makes sense to keep pro audio in with the musical instruments.”

Pro audio remains a moving target, in terms of being a clearly defined market. Pace keeps a product box on his shelf to remind him of its ephemeral nature: an iMic — a USB microphone adapter.

“It costs \$29, and it said ‘Turn Your Laptop Into a Recording Studio,’ or words to that effect,” he said. “I hope that’s not where it’s all headed.” **MI** — Dan Daley

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AUDIO & RECORDING



1 SHURE PG27USB, PG42USB Shure has rolled out the PG27USB and PG42USB microphones, which connect to any USB computer port with plug-and-play performance. These cardioid condenser microphones feature built-in headphone monitoring with zero latency and monitor mix control, enabling users to hear instantly what they're recording and make adjustments on the go. Both microphones are durable enough for everyday use but designed for advanced recording. MSRP: PG27USB: \$238; PG42USB: \$298. shure.com

2 AUDIO-TECHNICA 40 SERIES Audio-Technica's new 40 series includes the AT4080, AT4081, AT4050ST and AT4047MP. The AT4080 and AT4081 are bidirectional active ribbon mics that utilize a hand-built design with rugged construction. The AT4050ST is a stereo side-address condenser microphone with independent cardioid and figure-of-eight elements. The AT4047MP is a multi-pattern condenser mic that features a vintage sound with low self-noise, wide dynamic range and high SPL capability. audio-technica.com

3 MXL CUBE MXL has introduced the unconventional-looking Cube condenser mic in response to customer requests for a high-quality, reasonably priced mic for recording drums and percussion. Designed with a gold-splattered, six-micron diaphragm, the Cube delivers professional sound, while a high SPL rating delivers on loud drums. The mic is built with durable metal construction and offers big, full-bodied sound. It includes a mic clip, carrying pouch and cleaning cloth. MSRP: \$149.95. mxlmics.com

4 HOSA DA-CAPPO DA15 Hosa's new Da-Cappo DA15 cardioid ear set mic with ear bud monitor incorporates a -51 dB sensitivity rating and a maximum SPL rating of 130 dB. This back-electret condenser microphone provides off-axis rejection by using a front-facing capsule engineered to be positioned at the corner of the performer's mouth. As the microphone's cardioid polar pattern offers maximum rejection at the rear of the capsule, the new DA15 provides superior isolation from surrounding noise. MSRP: \$652 for the kit. hosatech.com



GENELEC | 8260A

Accurate Imaging

Genelec's new 8260A three-way DSP system features advances in the company's proprietary minimum diffraction coaxial mid/high driver technology. The coaxial driver design provides accurate imaging and improved sound quality, both on the acoustical axis and off-axis. The smooth frequency response leads to high clarity and definition.

{genelecusa.com}



BRACE AUDIO | DWG1000-TX

Brace for Impact

Brace Audio is now shipping the DWG1000-TX transmitter for its DWG1000 digital wireless system. Brace Audio technology converts guitar signal into digital audio and transmits it to the receiver using 2.4 GHz frequency hopping spread spectrum transmission on any one of 65,000 channels. During the conversion back to analog, audio hiss, crackle, signal loss and RF interference are eliminated. MSRP: transmitter, \$99.99; system, less than \$150. {braceaudio.com}



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SOUNDCRAFT | NOTEPAD 124 FX

Taking Notes

The new Notepad 124 FX boasts Soundcraft's audio performance with a GB30 mic pre-amp and EQ technology in a compact, solid chassis.

The 124 FX has an integral digital effects processor, which has a feed from every input and more than 100 effects, including a pink noise and test setting. On the

Notepad 124, the FX send is replaced by a standard aux send with a dedicated output.

It provides a recording output of the mix on RCA/phono connectors and a stereo input for CD playback.

{soundcraft.com}



RADIAL | THE WORKHORSE

Radial Revolution

The Workhorse is a lunchbox frame from Radial that incorporates full mixing capabilities to a stereo bus, monitor output and headphones. The new unit features eight slots that are backward-compatible to previous API formats, while adding greater I/O connection.

All eight modules can also be connected via 25-pin D-sub's, which also serve as a separate split out for live recording systems. An expansion bus lets multiple Workhorses combine for larger recording systems. The high-performance mixer can also be used as an eight-channel analog summer box for those who prefer to combine tracks in the analog domain. MSRP: \$1,299.

{radialeng.com}



M-AUDIO | FAST TRACK MKII

Fast Interface

M-Audio has debuted the Fast Track MKII, a two-input, two-output audio interface that's compatible with recording software, including Pro Tools M-Powered 8 and GarageBand. It features 24-bit, 48-kHz sound quality with plug-and-play USB 2.0 compatibility. Fast Track MKII offers studio-standard recording, editing and mixing features with effects, such as reverb and delay. It also has a comprehensive loop library. MSRP: \$149. {m-audio.com}



RUPERT NEVE | PORTICO II

Creativity Capable

The new Portico II from Rupert Neve Designs is a self-powered 2U channel module comprised of a featured mic pre-amplifier, four-band EQ, compressor-limiter, texture control and level metering. It includes a fully tunable de-esser, multiple VCA filtering and detection options, a transient-optimized swept HPF, and parallel compression blending. With its simple yet powerful topologies and extensive feature set, the Portico II channel strip is geared toward providing sonic integrity and creative capabilities.

{rupertneve.com}



FOCUSRITE | SCARLETT

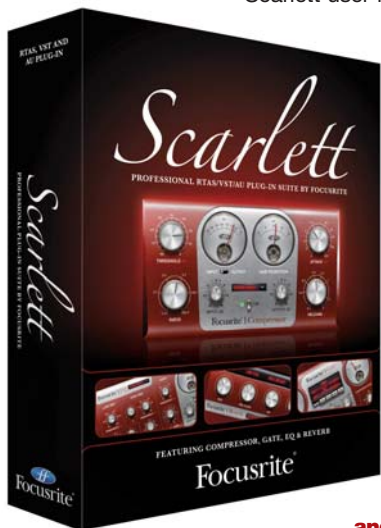
Red-Hot Plug-ins

Focusrite's new Scarlett professional software suite provides a collection of compression, gating, EQ and reverb plug-ins for tracking and mixing. The

Scarlett user interface features a red anodized aluminum look with lifelike VU meters. Each Focusrite plug-in has a host of fast, easy-to-use presets for processing everything from vocals and guitars to synth bass and percussion.

In addition, every plug-in parameter can be finely tuned to achieve the user's desired sound. MSRP: \$99.

{americanmusic
andsound.com}



UNIVERSAL AUDIO | TRIDENT A-RANGE

Mythic Status

Universal Audio has released the Trident A-Range Classic Console EQ powered plug-in for its line of UAD-1 and UAD-2 DSP accelerator cards for Mac and PC.

David Bowie, Lou Reed and Queen all used the original A-Range while recording. The plug-in features four-band active EQ modeled from one of 13 original Trident A-Range desks; unique filter-response curves modeled to exacting detail; an inductor-based EQ design that yields band interaction between bell and shelving filters; and the ability to combine cut filters for unusual filtering responses. Its cosmetics match the original module's eggplant finish. MSRP: \$249. {uaudio.com}



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GEAR >

GUITARS, AMPS & ACCESSORIES



1 MARTIN 000C-MR This new Steve Miller custom artist edition acoustic features a rounded cut-away with an Adirondack spruce top. It has Pacific bigleaf maple back and sides for a clear tone and dynamic range. The instrument's most noticeable feature is its polished lacquer burgundy finish. A Style 45 rosette with a center ring of select abalone pearl is matched by a Style 45 wood mosaic back strip. Also, the ebony belly bridge is fitted with a compensated bone saddle. A chrome strap button completes the guitar's look. martinguitar.com

2 TAYLOR TAYLOR SWIFT MODEL Country-pop superstar Taylor Swift has designed the Taylor Swift Baby Taylor (TSBT). The three-quarter-size dreadnought has a slim 1 11/16-inch neck and a comfortable, compact shape. The TSBT is crafted from sapele laminate back and sides and a solid sitka spruce top. Its custom design features Swift's well-known expression "Love, Love, Love" among vines that encircle the soundhole. The word "Fearless" and her signature are inscribed above the bridge. taylor.com

3 DAISY ROCK BUTTERFLY JUMBO GUITAR The new spalted maple Butterfly Jumbo acoustic-electric guitar comes complete with white binding and a butterfly inlay as the 12th fret marker. The guitar features a mahogany neck and rosewood fingerboard and has 20 medium frets. It's powered by a Fishman Isys system, which boasts volume, contour and phase controls. The Daisy Rock Butterfly Jumbo acoustic-electric guitar is available in bubinga, zebrawood and the spalted maple finish. MSRP: \$589. daisyrock.com

4 DEERING SIERRA INLAYS Deering has introduced a new inlay pattern on its mahogany Sierra banjo and the option for a maple upgrade with no increase in price to customers. The new inlays on the Sierra balance flowing lines and natural elements, such as floral buds, tulips, leaves and fleurs-de-lis, and a custom inlay at the 22nd fret bears the name "Sierra." The inlays are cut from an Italian perloid in a white with black engraving lines. MSRP: \$2,699. deeringbanjos.com



5

5 WARWICK CORVETTE ASH FRETLESS The new Corvette Ash Fretless Special Edition Germany is available as a four- or five-string bass with an ovankol neck and swamp ash body. The instrument features a contrasting white high-polish finish with black hardware. It has a 34-inch scale, tiger stripe ebony fingerboard, Warwick two-piece bridge and white fret lines. Passive MEC pickups and electronics complete the package. warwick.de



6

6 JBOVIER ELECTRIC MANDO CASTER JBovier has debuted the Electric Mando Caster (EMC) mandolin. It features dual JB-53 pickups with a proprietary JBovier rail pickup design that offers more output power. The pickups also provide a wider magnetic field and eliminate problems that pole-piece mandolin pickups can cause. The EMC sports a maple fretboard. MSRP: four-string model, \$849; five-string model, \$949. jbovier.net



7

7 WASHBURN CRACKED MIRROR SERIES Washburn has launched the Cracked Mirror series with the PS1800CMK guitar. The PS1800CMK is one of Paul Stanley's signature models and has a mahogany body with a mahogany set neck, rosewood fretboard and abalone mother-of-pearl split block inlays. It also has a Tune-O-Matic bridge, custom star tailpiece and Grover exclusive tuners. MSRP: \$2,079.90. washburn.com



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GEAR >

GUITARS, AMPS & ACCESSORIES



MARSHALL | MA SERIES

Entry Overdrive

Marshall's new MA series guitar amplifiers offer affordability and quality. Each of the two channels — clean and overdrive — features independent volume control and a three-band EQ. The overdrive channel is equipped with an additional gain knob, a boost switch and crunch balance knob. The rear panel offers Serial FX Loop in and out jacks, as well as both 8-ohm and 16-ohm speaker outputs. The included footswitch also connects via the rear panel.

{marshallamps.com}

AGUILAR | TLC COMPRESS

A Little TLC

Aguilar Amplification has launched the TLC Compressor. It's designed to give musicians the ability to control their dynamics in a flexible, musical way. Aguilar's proprietary Trans Linear Control circuit features a four-knob layout. Using a wide range of attack times and variable threshold and slope levels, musicians will be able to dial in just the right sound. MSRP: \$269.

{aguilaramp.com}



3RD POWER AMPS | HLH100

Triangulated Amplification

3rd Power Amplification Systems has introduced a unique professional guitar amp system. The HLH100 series combines new technologies in both its tube amplifier and triangular 3- by 12-foot speaker cabinet to produce a medium-to-high-gain guitar rig. The HLH100 features hand-wired circuitry from amp to cabinet and is made in the United States. Each HLH 312 cabinet features three Celestion Vintage 30 speakers, wired in parallel for exceptional transient response and dynamic sound. MSRP: amplifier, \$2,999; speaker cabinet, \$1,699.

{3rdpoweramps.com}





SEYMOUR DUNCAN | BLACKOUTS

More Blackouts

Seymour Duncan has released the latest addition to its Blackouts humbucker series, the Blackouts AHB-3 Thomson EMTY. The 9-volt active Blackouts are designed specifically for more aggressive playing styles, especially for players that use extremely low tunings. The EMTY was created to meet the specs of Slipknot's Mick Thomson. He asked for tighter bottom and a more searing top-end cut. seymourduncan.com

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B-BAND | T-SERIES PRE-AMPS

Instant Pre-amp

B-Band has rolled out new T-series guitar pre-amps. The T10 (pictured) is a single-input pre-amp that has two-band EQ in a one-piece drop-in installation form. The T55 is a single-input pre-amp with an LCD chromatic tuner, four-band EQ and notch control. The T65 is equipped with the XOM two-input circuit for use with B-Band UST and AST pickups. It features an LCD chromatic tuner and three-band EQ. b-band.com



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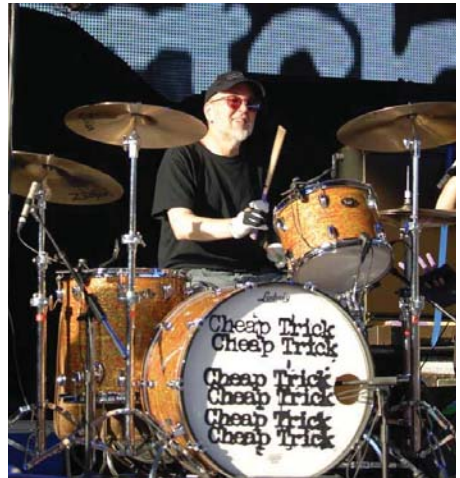
Turning Japanese

Tycoon Percussion has developed a modern interpretation of the Japanese nagado daiko drums. They're used commonly in festivals and shrines and have a deep, reverberant sound.

Each drum is key-tuned and made from aged Siam oak and pretucked calfskin heads. The drums come in 16- and 20-inch sizes. They're available in two finishes: traditional red polish and ancient mahogany. **{tycoonpercussion.com}**



> | Artist Approved



LUDWIG | BUN E. CARLOS SIGNATURE

Ludwig's Trick

Ludwig's Bun E. Carlos Signature is a limited-edition Legacy Classic drum kit. It features a 14- by 24-inch bass drum, 9- by 13-inch rack tom and 16- by 16-inch floor tom. The kit has a Citrus Glass Glitter finish, Bun E.'s personal badge and the Ludwig 100th anniversary badge. MSRP: \$3,800. **{ludwig-drums.com}**



MEINL | CLAMSHELL SHAKERS

Meinl Shakes It

Meinl Percussion now offers Clamshell Spark Shakers. They're held together by a single, solid weld and add chirping and splashing tones to any type of music. The pod-like shape fits easily into a user's hand, and when squeezed, it produces a variable range of pitches. The Clamshell Spark Shakers come in two pitches for a high-low combination. MSRP: \$54 for set. **{meinlpercussion.com}**

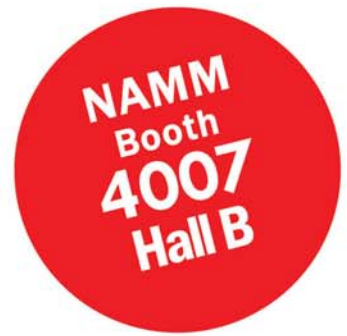




SABIAN | SBR

Affordable Brass

Responding to demand for quality cymbals at all price points, Sabian has introduced the SBr series. The cymbals are designed to offer improved quality for entry-level drummers. These budget-priced models are available in 10-, 13-, 14-, 16-, 18- and 20-inch sizes and in a variety of models. Each features deep, large-peen hammering and pinpoint lathing. All SBr are available in natural finish. sabian.com



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MUSICORP | 2500P, 8500P

True Pedal Pushers

Musicorp's Percussion Plus line now features the 2500P drum pedal and 8500P double bass pedal. Both models have double chain drive systems for fast, smooth response. A side-mounted clamp adjustment makes the pedals easy to attach to or remove from bass drums. MSRP: 2500P, \$99.95; 8500P, \$299.95. musicorp.com



LOS CABOS | PERCUSSION PACK

Packed Up

Los Cabos Drumsticks now offers a student percussion pack. It consists of a pair of tympani mallets, a pair of bell mallets and a pair of concert drumsticks. The 15.75-inch-long tympani mallets have Canadian maple handles and a medium, hard felt beater. The bell mallets feature a 16-inch handle with a 1-inch phenolic ball. The concert series drumsticks are made from Canadian maple and are 16 3/8 inches long. The whole package comes in a black, zippered stick bag with the Los Cabos logo. loscabosdrumsticks.com



GEAR >

BAND & ORCHESTRA



P. MAURIAT | LE BRAVO 200

Bravo!

P. Mauriat's new Le Bravo 200 alto saxophone provides focus and projection from straight tone holes. It has a red brass body, bow and bell. The sax is finished in a high-gloss gold lacquer and also has a hand-engraved nickel silver neck. MSRP: \$2,790.

{pmauriatmusic.com}

CAVANAUGH | REEDS

New Strength

Bari Woodwind Supplies has added two new strengths, medium hard (3.5-4) and medium soft (2.5-3), to its synthetic composite reed line. The reeds play immediately and provide saxophone and clarinet players with consistent response. They don't warp or squeak, regardless of the environment.

Bari reeds are available in soft, medium soft, medium, medium hard and hard. MSRP: original, \$14.18; Star, \$21. {cavanaughcompany.com}



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St. Louis Music is now the exclusive distributor of the Clarinéo in the United States. The Clarinéo bridges the gap between the recorder and woodwind instruments.

Available in several colors, every note on the Clarinéo has its own fingering throughout its three-and-a-half octave range. All Clarinéo fingering is found on the clarinet, and the fingering for the pinky keys is the same as the saxophone. Students can transfer Clarinéo playing skills to an oboe or bassoon, as well. MSRP: \$199. stlouismusic.com



SONARÉ WINDS | 500, 600 SERIES

Step It Up

Sonaré Winds has debuted the 500 and 600 series of intermediate trumpets. The new models feature a Blackburn-designed brass leadpipe and MicroLok adjustable valve guide system. The 600 model (pictured) is silver-plated and comes with gold-plated valve caps and finger buttons. A backpack-style case and 5C mouthpiece are included with each trumpet. MSRP: 500 model, \$899; 600 model, \$999. sonarewinds.com



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GEAR >

PIANOS & KEYBOARDS

M-AUDIO | OXYGEN

Fresh Air

M-Audio has introduced the Oxygen keyboard. It features 49 velocity-sensitive keys, eight MIDI-assignable knobs, nine MIDI-assignable sliders, six dedicated transport controls and a dedicated track of up/down buttons. The DirectLink mode automatically maps these controls to common DAW parameters. Built-in factory presets offer support for popular virtual instruments right out of the box. MSRP: \$189.95. m-audio.com



KORG | MICROSAMPLER

A Little Sample

Korg has released the third model in its microSERIES family, the microSAMPLER compact sampling keyboard. The unit holds MP3 players and comes with a gooseneck microphone, backlit LCD and molded panels. It provides five sampling modes, including traditional one-shot, loop and gate sampling with resampling in every mode. Auto next sampling automatically creates ready-to-use, time-sliced samples during recording. MSRP: \$750. korg.com

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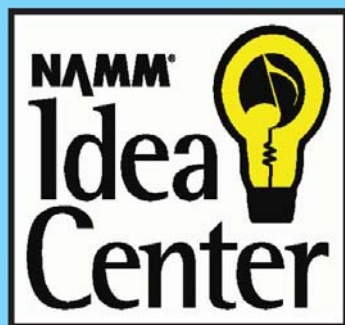
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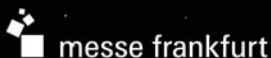
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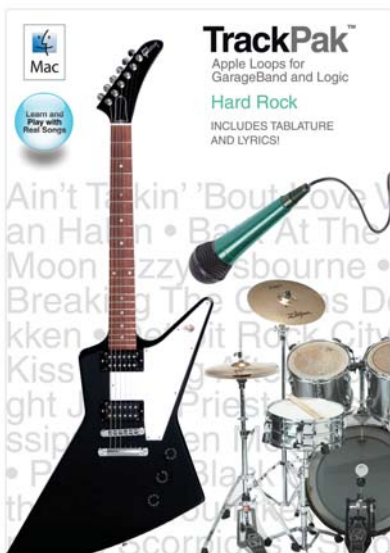
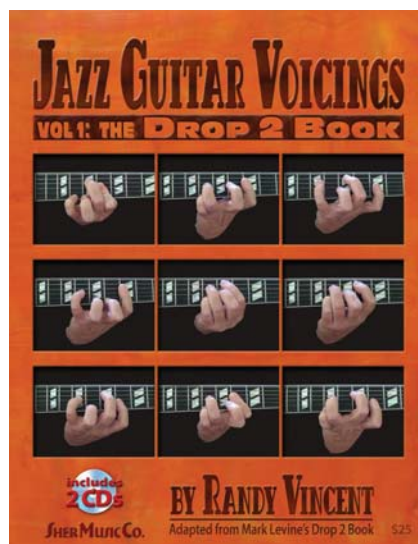
Alfred has released *Value Songbooks: Rock Guitar Hits*. This guitar tab songbook features more than 300 pages of rock hits from modern chart-toppers to classic tunes. *Value Songbooks: Rock Guitar Hits* offers music makers a wide variety of music at a low price.

Containing the straightforward melodies of The Eagles, the riffage of Van Halen, the technical compositions of Led Zeppelin and the party jams of Michael Jackson, *Value Songbooks: Rock Guitar Hits* represents the heart of rock music. MSRP: \$12.95. alfred.com

SHER MUSIC I 'JAZZ GUITAR VOICINGS'

Learn Drop Two

Jazz Guitar Voicings: The Drop 2 Book by veteran jazz guitarist Randy Vincent includes a thorough discussion of basic drop two principles, including passing tones and extension tones, as well as basic chord tones. It features practical, guitar-friendly methods for creating modern sounds by tweaking the basic drop two voicings. The book comes with an organized practice routine, including fingerboard diagrams and standard notations to develop these skills fully with minimal theory. Two CDs of the author demonstrating each exercise are included. MSRP: \$25. shermusic.com



HAL LEONARD I TRACKPAK

Back on Track

Hal Leonard has released the latest titles in its TrackPak line of software and songbook packs designed for use with Apple's GarageBand recording software. The three titles cover acoustic rock, hard rock and 1970s rock.

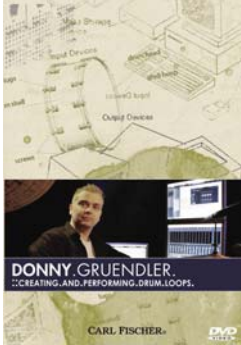
Packaged in easy-to-merchandise boxes, Hal Leonard's TrackPak titles feature software plus a songbook with sheet music notation for reference. Users can pop TrackPaks into their Mac and have 12 hit songs orchestrated out and ready to drop into GarageBand. They can then manipulate the tracks, removing the part for their instruments so they can jam along with the song. MSRP: \$29.99. halleonard.com



CARL FISCHER | DRUM LOOPS DVD

How to Loop

Carl Fischer's *Creating And Performing Drum Loops DVD* features clinician and educator Donny Gruendler. He walks the viewer through the entire process of track programming, equipment wiring and performance to prepare for any commercial gig.

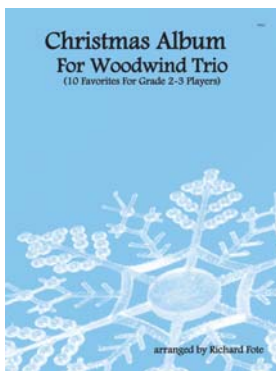


Through step-by-step explanations, including performance lessons, demo software and companion session files, Gruendler presents the viewer with four songs, each featuring a different programming method, equipment setup and performance strategy. MSRP: \$19.95. carlfischer.com

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GEAR

DJ & LIGHTING

NUMARK | NSFXT

Seamless Integration

Numark has launched the NSFXT, an effects controller for use with the company's NS7 software performance controller.

The NS7 and the NSFXT were developed in partnership with software developer Serato. DJs can now use the NSFXT to take advantage of Serato Itch's effects capabilities. The NSFXT delivers seamless integration and hands-on control of a wide range of effects built into Itch.

{numark.com}



MONSTER, BEATS | HEADPHONES

Keepin' Beat

Monster and Beats by Dr. Dre have released Beats Solo. These small, lightweight headphones come with ControlTalk, an on-cable feature that provides full control of the listening experience when using a portable music device. This cable includes an integrated microphone and answer button and lets users access music and answer calls without having to reach into a backpack or pocket. MSRP: \$219.95.

{monstercable.com}



DENON DJ | DN-S3700

True Vinyl Feel

The new DN-S3700 from Denon DJ is a single-deck portable DJ instrument that provides working DJs with enhanced creative flexibility. Its 9-inch spinning platter design offers DJs the best of both digital and analog realms. The unit includes a built-in vinyl record for surface control driven by Denon DJ's high-torque direct drive motor. {denondj.com}



AMERICAN AUDIO | DP2

DJ's Friend

American Audio has rolled out the DP2, a user-friendly, versatile digital media controller. This unit makes the transition between playing CDs and digital files smooth due to features including four sample buttons with adjustable eight- to 30-seconds-per-sample playback and a traditional CD player layout. MSRP: \$499.95. {adjaudio.com}

MBT | LEDMINIFLASH

Mini LED

MBT Lighting's latest LED light is the LEDMiniFlash. This light features 24 bright LEDs (eight red, eight green and eight blue) that chase in a preset series of flash patterns. The LEDMiniFlash includes a rotary knob to control chase speed. This plug-and-play flasher uses 3 watts.

{mbtlighting.com}



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ASK THE RETAILER

>>>

Mike Fazio
Fazio's Frets and Friends
St. Louis

I think [Web site videos] are a great clarification for some products like Rivera amps. A good friend of the business makes professional videos and has his own studio that we use to make our videos.

They are a great initiator of conversation and give us the ability to plug a customer into an amp. When making a video, retailers need to pay attention to the quality of what they are doing. I've seen some [videos] that come off very well that were just done with an inexpensive home [camcorder]. I know when we tried to do that, we couldn't get the audio the way we wanted it to be. We decided to go the professional route. I believe you need the best audio you can possibly get.

>>>

Aaron Miller
ProGuitarShop.com
Tigard, Ore.

Video is what we do. It's put us on the map. We keep it pretty simple and focus on non-biased demonstrations.

We just sort of stumbled into it and started doing it on a hunch. It worked really well. Now, I have created an entire video department with multiple recording rooms and workstations. It's a big endeavor.

I have two full-time employees who just work on videos, and we have about 550 videos right now. It has increased the traffic to our Web site by a hundred times. It is directly tied to sales. The most successful videos we do, we tie in with product releases. We see very good returns on those videos.

In the customer's mind, it puts us in the position of being a resource. They just don't come to our Web site to look at the product and to buy; they come to gather information. This has put our site in the top 50,000 highest-trafficked Web sites in the United States.

We also have a huge YouTube channel. Currently, within the guitar industry, we have the highest-trafficked YouTube channel. Our channel is bigger than Fender's or Gibson's or Guitar World's. Just our YouTube channel receives 45,000 views a day. Our Web site sees about half of that. The investment definitely paid off. I started out selling used guitars out of my garage on eBay. We've come a long way.



>>>

Ray Guntren
Ray's Midbell Music
Sioux City, Iowa

How do you leverage online video content?

Doing a YouTube commercial was an interesting experience. We saw in advance that Rhett and Link [from ilovelocalcommercials.com] create zany commercials, so we were a little nervous about what they would come up with. These two filmmakers work in conjunction with Microbuilt, a risk-management company that we subscribe to. Microbuilt's sponsorship paid for the commercial, so it didn't cost us a dime.

The result was a rap about school bands that was a little tongue-in-cheek and off-the-wall. Overall, the message is positive: Take a stand. Be proud to be in band.

Interestingly enough, this YouTube commercial got picked up by our local

newspaper. They had noticed the YouTube video and wanted to do a story about it. They even came out to take some pictures.

The next day on the front page of the newspaper, in full color, was a picture of my son playing the saxophone with a story about the YouTube commercial. That newspaper has a circulation of more than 40,000. It's hard to put a price on that kind of exposure.

I don't know if it's made a difference at the cash register, but it positions us to be recognized in a positive way. We think the YouTube commercial has merit in that respect.

Otherwise, you're looking at a TV campaign with

a local, limited reach. For tens of thousands of dollars, that just isn't viable.

The unexpected element of YouTube is the negative feedback that gets posted. We can't screen the comments, so having a YouTube video is a little risky because you don't know what the response is going to be.

Overall, we've seen a lot of school band students who are passionate and writing comments like, "Hurray for band." It has almost become a forum where people are making statements about the value of band.

It's a brave new world with this viral marketing. Whether it is really going to turn those page viewers into customers, I think time will tell.



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SKB-PS-55

(2) 1.3 amp 9VAC jacks for powering pedals from Digitech and Line 6, etc; (2) variable DC jacks to allow any voltage from 4-12 volts (simulate an almost dead battery), (4) standard 9 VDC jacks for Boss, Electro-Harmonix, etc, (1) 18 VDC jack for MXR EVH Flinger, etc. (1) 24 VDC jack for boutique and vintage pedals and (2) 9/12 VDC jacks to accommodate additional boutique and vintage pedals. All DC jacks have polarity switches so center negative or center positive is not a problem with the SKB-PS-55 Stagefive Professional Pedalboard. All DC outputs have a current rating of 100mA each.

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Photo illustrates possible set-up configuration - no pedals are included with board.



Joe zooms Chad.



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