

FOR PROGRESSIVE MUSIC RETAILERS

music inc

MAY 2010 | MUSICINCMAG.COM

Peter, Pete and
Alysha Sides of
Robert M. Sides
Family Music
Center

ALL in the FAMILY

PAGE 38 BY GREG AND GRANT BILLINGS

The careful balancing act of
mixing family and business

Gamber on Selling
Lessons in the
YouTube Era

{PAGE 30}

THE SOURCE

The music retailer's
one-stop buyer's
guide, redesigned
and redefined for 2010

- + Seven killer product segments
- + How to score a hot line
- + Print music spotlight
- + New gear releases
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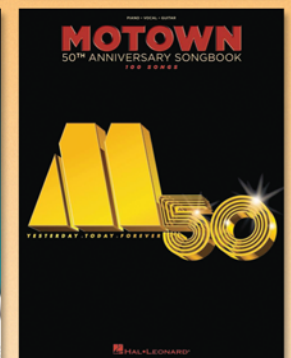
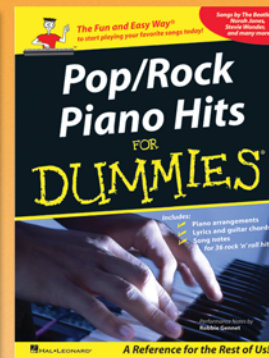
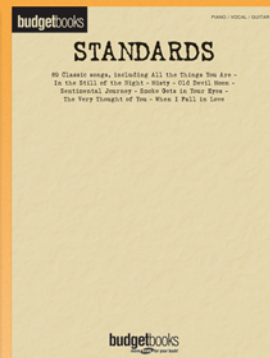
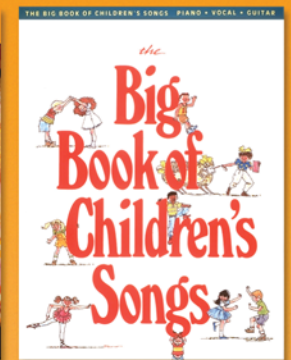
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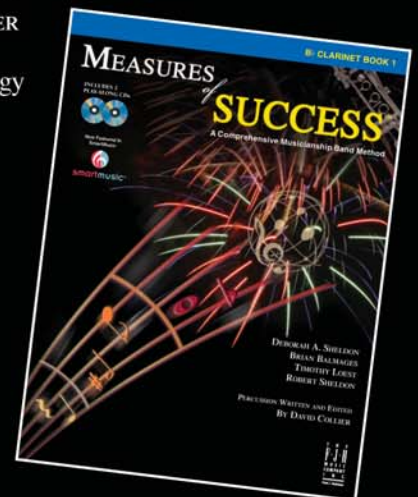
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INSIDE

Alysha, Pete and Peter Sides of Robert M. Sides Family Music Center



Photo by Shane East

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Father-son writing team Greg and Grant Billings investigate how family businesses strike a balance between work and home life, while preparing the next generation for retail's future challenges.

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Redesigned and redefined, *Music Inc.* has transformed this annual resource into the ultimate buyer's guide. With Google a click away, supplier lists are a thing of the past. *The Source* now offers hard-hitting trend reports on seven must-have product categories.



PLUS: Inventive business models among print music dealers and publishers.

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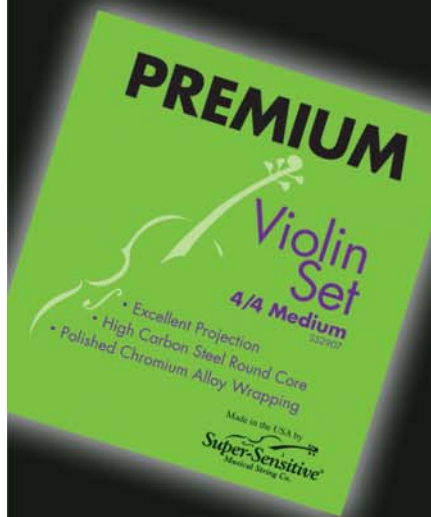


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PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

DON'T DRINK THE TOP-LINE KOOL-AID

Peter Sides, one-third of this month's cover photo, likens a love affair with top-line dollars to drinking poisoned Kool-Aid.

The top line can certainly look sweeter than the humbler bottom line, and it's nicer to throw around with your peers. But join the herds of revenue-worshipping music retailers at your own peril: The first threat to your sales (i.e. a recession) can spell sudden death.

Sides, president of Robert M. Sides Family Music Center in State College, Pa., was one of many retailers at the recent National Association of School Music Dealers (NASMD) convention who saw his top line dip in 2009. While it has continued trending down (roughly 2 percent) in his company's current fiscal year, he has increased the bottom line by a whopping 76 percent. And he couldn't be more pleased.

"It would be nice to show more growth over our 2008 or 2009 numbers, but I'll take profit growth over sales growth any day, especially in these market conditions," Sides said.

I spoke with him and several other NASMD attendees who boosted their bottom lines during the Great Recession of '09 to find out their secrets. Strangely, all of them told me the same thing: Over

the past few years, they'd each undergone a period of painful soul-searching to determine exactly where they were making money, where they were losing money and what they were great at.

Not surprisingly, this meant focusing harder on their B&O instrument rental businesses. Sides said adding online rentals a few years ago boosted his rentals by 5 percent in '09. He also got more aggressive with string rental pricing, growing that pool by roughly 150 instruments — many of which had been sitting on shelves.

Bill Harvey, co-owner of Cincinnati's Buddy Rogers Music, saw his B&O sales drop about 7 percent but gross margins increase 8 percent in the '09 fiscal year. He attributed this to a dip in school bid sales. "And we actually made more money," he said.

Steve Judge, president of Griggs Music in Davenport, Iowa, had one of the best years in his company's history, complete with a generous bottom-line increase. His secret? Mastering Excel.

"You have to take the time with your income statement and really look at how your costs hit the bottom line," he said, admitting that he only learned Excel a few years ago. "You have to think in terms of every activity you do."

Music Inc.'s upcoming June issue will feature full coverage of this year's NASMD convention. Until then, we give you tons of great bottom-line-building ideas within these pages. We've retooled our annual buyer's guide, *The Source*, to help you capitalize on several profitable product categories. Kenny Smith's column, "Selling Old Yeller," is also essential reading for anyone looking to convert stagnant inventory into cash. **MI**



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LETTERS

A Fair Share

I wanted to chime in regarding Alan Friedman's article about paying fair taxes ("Sales Tax Demystified," February 2010).

Unless you are living under a rock, we all know that schools and states are in financial straits. They need revenues to stay afloat. When consumers buy out of state, they are avoiding taxes. And today, with free Internet shipping, musicians will, without a doubt, take every opportunity they can get to avoid paying their share to save a mere 5 or 10 percent.

To address this problem, most countries employ a harmonized VAT (valued added tax) or federal tax to collect dollars, which, in turn, are doled back to the provinces or states as transfer payments. England, France, Germany and Italy all do it. The system is simple, it works and everyone pays their share of taxes.

Here in frosty ol' Canada, the GST (goods and services tax) was implemented several years ago as a means to ensure at least a percentage of federal taxes are collected on each sale or transaction. We fill out a monthly form and send in the balance. It is not complicated at all.

Those who say it is a paper nightmare are full of baloney. They are using what is known as the FUD principle: They spread fear, uncertainty and doubt. This same tactic has been used for years. Fear is a powerful motivator for those who are easily led.

Are taxes good? Are we happy about paying them? No, but when you decide to live in a society, you must put back

'Are taxes good? Are we happy about paying them? No, but when you decide to live in a society, you must put back for the common good.'
— Peter Janis

for the common good. This means building and maintaining roads, schools, music classes, the arts and medicine. All of these are important elements that make a society livable, and all of these need tax dollars to click.

Peter Janis
President
Radial Engineering

Alan's Taxing Issues

The cool thing about writing articles (especially the controversial ones) for *Music Inc.* is you can usually count on the editorial staff to let you write a follow-up letter to the editor when readers are offended by something you wrote, hence this letter regarding my recent article on the topic of sales and use tax ("Sales Tax Demystified," February 2010).

Let me attempt to be clear and rather blunt about why I favor the collection of sales tax on all taxable transactions by all retailers, including online

retailers.

First, let's agree no one likes taxes of any kind, and we all feel our federal, state and local governments are somewhat wasteful with the tax revenues they collect from us. But, wasteful or not, this issue has no merit whatsoever in the argument that online and out-of-state retailers shouldn't have to collect sales tax. Until we elect lawmakers wise enough to either reduce wasteful government spending or modify our tax laws, we're stuck with these tax burdens.

Second, for any tax system to work effectively, its laws should be applied fairly and enforced uniformly to all taxpayers. It is egregiously unfair to brick-and-mortar stores to permit online and out-of-state retailers to take advantage of a tax loophole in the collection of sales tax and then leave it up to the consumer to be honest enough to remit that un-auditable tax. Moreover, it cheats our state and local governments out of billions of rightful revenues they need to keep our communities safe, our schools and libraries vibrant, our roads and waterways clean, and our lives enriched with sports and the arts.

Make no mistake, I'm a big fan of Internet-based retailing, and I certainly do not advocate burdening any retailer with the collection, reporting and remittance of thousands of jurisdictional sales taxes from online sales. That's a burden we must avoid at all costs.

But why should my neighbor be able to avoid paying the same sales tax I pay at my local music store because he bought online from a retailer in another state? That's

unfair to me, the brick-and-mortar retailer fighting to keep my business and the local government counting on that revenue to keep school music programs alive.

What I'm advocating is a change in every state's sales tax law to require retailers to collect sales tax at the point-of-purchase on all taxable sales and then simply remit that tax to their home state only. In all of its simplicity, this change still complies with the Supreme Court's 1992 ruling that a state government can't make companies that have no physical presence in the state collect the state's sales tax. Great, just make all companies with a physical presence in any given state collect that state's sales tax on all taxable transactions, no matter where the product is shipped.

I, frankly, don't understand why it's taking so long for each of our state governments to close this unfair sales tax loophole along with all its compliance complexities. What I do understand is if we don't fix this problem by demanding immediate action from our elected officials, we'd better get used to the idea of our kids learning, playing and mastering musical instruments all by themselves or seeking help from the same keyboard, mouse and screen that sold us their instruments.

Alan Friedman
CPA, Partner
Friedman, Kannenberg and Co.

Inventory Turns

Great article on inventory ("How Much is Too Much?," *Music Inc. Headlines*, February 2010), especially the paragraph:

Maybe the reason inventory

turns are so anemic in our industry isn't that sales are too low. Maybe our stocking levels are just too high.

Stocking levels are ridiculously too high. The fact is we all need to watch our balance sheets more than ever with cash tightening, and we'll probably all be better for it. Although manufacturers may not be happy with fewer orders initially, they will have more financially stable customers.

I would suggest they also make fewer choices (i.e. models) and focus on keeping the fast movers in stock, as well. I often cannot get the models I want because they are popular and out-of-stock — although these days, most items are in-stock.

Len Doyle
Taylor's Music Store & Studios
West Chester, Pa.

Thank You, Gerson

I really appreciate Gerson Rosenbloom's articles and the insight he offers. Thank you for having him as a *Music Inc.* contributor.

Philip Betette
Vice President of Marketing and Sales
Yorkville Sound

Food for Thought

Just wanted to compliment Greg Billings on the fine article "Apples and Ice Cream" (February 2010).

I am in the print industry, so some of Billings' articles do not pertain exactly to our business, but I always read his articles anyway. This one could be food for thought for all segments of the industry. Keep up the good writing.

Don Eubanks
Hutchins & Rea Music
Atlanta

Proud Profile

Thanks very much for the great article on JodyJazz ("Consumer Contact," March/April 2010). We are very happy with it and proud to be in *Music Inc.*

Jody Espina
President
JodyJazz

Making Repair Work

I am swamped with repair work and have a waiting list three to four months out. The last thing I would do is overcharge for unnecessary repairs. If a repair person has to "make work" to "pad their end of the month paycheck," as one response indicated ("Letters," December 2010), then it is time to find a new repair shop.

However, if you went to have air put into your tire and

the mechanic noticed that three lug nuts were missing, would you consider that "making work to pad their check"?

If you save money on repairs and lose students because instruments do not work, does anyone win? I agree there are a few bad apples, but we find that in any vocation. You can make your voice heard by not supporting those few bad apples.

Rodney Berry
Muncy Winds Music
Vilas, N.C.

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RETAIL

BIZARRE GUITAR | BY KATIE KAILUS

BIZARRE MEDIA BLITZ

Among the Budweiser, Doritos and Coca-Cola ads shown during the Feb. 7 Super Bowl came an ad campaign from Miller High Life, “The Little Guys on the Big Day,” featuring four small business owners. One of them was Bob Turner, owner of Phoenix-based guitar shop Bizarre Guitar.

“Last November, I got a call from a girl who said she was from Miller High Life and asked me if I wanted to be in a Super Bowl commercial,” Turner said. “I thought it was a joke. I thought she was trying to steal my identity.”

THE VALUE OF REALNESS

It was no joke. The next day, a video camera arrived at Turner’s store, and he was instructed to create a video highlighting his shop. So, dressed in his typical attire — shorts and a cutoff T-shirt — Turner filmed his store from the inside out.

“I told them, ‘I don’t have carpeting or track lighting, but I have 1,500 of the best guitars on the planet,’” he said. “They told me they liked it because it looked like I didn’t care. I didn’t dress up or read off a script. What you see is what you get, and I wasn’t going to change



For Bizarre Guitar, a Super Bowl ad has meant 10 times the usual attention

for anyone.”

It turned out Turner’s realness helped him land the commercial spot. According to *The Arizona Republic*, Miller High Life found out about Bizarre Guitar online, and it grabbed the marketing team’s interest.

“He came across as a guy who started his own business and worked his way up,” Joe Abegg, national brand man-

ager for Miller High Life, told the newspaper. “It was all about his non-pretentious, no-BS attitude, and that fits our brand values.”

According to Turner, he was one of 10,000 small businesses considered. “We didn’t enter a contest or anything like that,” he said of his store and the other featured businesses. “We all thought it was fake. We all thought the same thing. None of us ever found out how we got picked. It was like shooting an arrow into the earth, and it hit me.”

TEN TIMES THE TRAFFIC & CALLS

That magical arrow paid off. The day after the Super Bowl commercial aired, his store was flooded with calls from customers, the media and

fellow shop owners.

“Normally, when I get in, we will have one message that will be like a hang-up or something,” Turner said. “We came in the next day [after the Super Bowl] to 28 messages.”

Even Bizarre Guitar’s Web site shut down due to an overflow of traffic. And the week after the commercial, the store garnered 10 times the traffic and phone calls as usual, according to Turner.

“It sure has increased my business,” Turner said. “I have seen an increase in sales. It hasn’t been through the roof, but it’s been an increase. A bad economy is a bad economy. Whether people want to spend money or not, if you don’t have it, you are going to buy your kids food first. You’re not going to buy a Les Paul or a Strat. But we have had 10 times the notoriety from across the country.

“It’s amazing how the media can affect someone and their business. Yesterday, I went to the grocery store, and it took me three hours to buy milk.”

Turner said he hopes his newfound celebrity will continue to benefit Bizarre Guitar.

“I hope some money comes back [to the economy] before this runs out.” **MI**

CLOSING

Chuck's Demolished

After 40 years in business, Chuck Day Music Center in Niles, Mich., was demolished on March 2. The building was torn down to make room for a parking lot across from the Lakeland Community Hospital. Former owner Chuck Day died in January 2009 at the age of 89. He had operated the store with his wife, Louise, since 1970.

VENUES

Movin' In

Charles Magby Fine Violins of Guilford, Conn., has signed a seven-year lease with the board of education to occupy a 2,778-square-foot retail space at the Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School in New Haven, Conn. Opened in 1976, Charles Magby Fine Violins sells high-end instruments but also rents and sells student instruments for beginning players.

AWARDS

Key Notables



Korg USA recently named the winners of its 2009 Key Note Awards, an annual recognition of retailers that have excelled in multiple

categories and demonstrated a commitment to Korg brands. Among the many winners, Best New Dealer went to Recording Services and Supply in Salina, Kan., while Overall Growth went to Kraft Music in Franklin, Wis.

"Korg USA is proud to honor those members of the dealer network [who] have exemplified excellence this past year, as well as shown exceptional loyalty to Korg USA's brands and products," said Doug Nestler, Korg USA director of sales.

DESIGN & DISPLAY

Schuster's Makeover

Schuster's Music recently got a new paint job and two new lesson studios as part of a store renovation. The dealership now has five lesson studios.

Formerly Foxtone Music in Hudson, Wis., the company was purchased by Andrew Schuster last fall. Piano lessons have been added to its lesson program, which already includes guitar, bass and drums. Schuster worked at Foxtone Music previously as a bass teacher.



Cory Lake of American Guitar & Band

OUTREACH | BY JENNY DOMINE, WITH REPORTING BY ZACH PHILLIPS

DEALERS AID HAITI RELIEF

Since the Jan. 12 earthquake devastated Haiti, music retailers have lent their support to disaster victims.

Patricia Horowitz, the wife of Barry Horowitz, senior vice president at Sam Ash Music, made a personal connection with a family in Jacmel, Haiti. The village had been cut off from the main source of aid coming into Haiti capital Port-au-Prince.

"I connected with a member of the family that lives in the U.S., and after some e-mails back and forth, I got a list of the supplies they desperately needed," Horowitz said.

She rallied friends and relatives to make donations. Then, she enlisted the help of Sam Ash's Eric Spitzer and former Guitar Center CEO Larry Thomas, both partners in a helicopter company, to arrange transport of approximately 500 pounds of food to Jacmel.

"I contacted a pilot out of Florida, and he happened to already be in Haiti volunteering," Spitzer said. "It turns out he was only 80 miles from the village, so we sent him the money for the air time."

ALL-AMERICAN RESPONSE

Stephanie and Cory Lake, owners of American Guitar & Band in Maple Grove, Minn., held a fundraiser on Feb. 27 and 28 to ben-

efit the American Red Cross International Response Fund. The shop's staff restrung and appraised guitars in exchange for a minimum \$10 donation to the Red Cross. Fender and D'Addario provided strings for the event. According to Stephanie, American Guitar & Band raised more than \$1,500 in restringing alone, enough to feed 300 people.

"We had four to five staff members working nonstop both days with participants [ranging] from age 5 to 85 and guitars from 1952 to the present day, valued from \$200 to \$15,000," she said. "Most importantly, it was an incredibly fun and inspiring weekend. One woman had not restrung her guitar since the late 1960s, and she decided to take it up again and signed up for guitar lessons at our shop."

PEPPER PROMOTES UNITY

Print music retail chain J.W. Pepper of Paoli, Pa., has also pitched in by donating all of the proceeds from sheet music sales of the song "We Are The World" to the Red Cross. The donation includes sales from both traditional print and downloadable versions of the song. According to a company representative, Pepper will continue with the program for at least a year.

MCFADYEN MUSIC | OPENING

MCFADYEN RETURNS

In March, McFadyen Music reopened its doors at a new location in Hope Mills, N.C. McFadyen Music's original store was purchased in 2000 by now-defunct chain Brook Mays Music.

Brook Mays went bankrupt and liquidated all of its stores in 2006.

New McFadyen Music owners Joe Chambers and Al Woodruff also own The Musicenter in Greenville, N.C., and have attained the rights to the name McFadyen Music. They worked for McFadyen prior to its 2006 closure.

The store's grand opening

The new McFadyen Music Hope Mills, N.C., location



will include giveaways, drawings and a display of rare instruments, including signa-

ture guitars.

"The company will be a smaller, tighter-knit com-

pany," Woodruff said. "At this point, this being our second location, there is more attention to very competitive pricing, great product selection and our customer service."

McFadyen Music will be a full-line dealership and sell Fender, Ibanez, Yamaha, Tama and JBL brands. The store will also feature a repair shop, music lessons and church sound system installation services.

While Woodruff would not say to what capacity, he indicated that the McFadyen family will play a role in the new store.

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St. Louis MUSIC St. Louis Music is a division of U.S. Band & Orchestra Supplies, Inc.

EVENT

Funk Clinics

Gretsch Drums partnered with funk stylist Stanton Moore (pictured) and presented a clinic tour at select Gretsch dealers across the country in March. The clinics focused on Moore's new multimedia project, *Groove Alchemy*. They also included a Q&A session between Stanton and Gretsch Product Manager John Palmer, as well as a Gretsch snare drum giveaway.



PROMOTION

Record With Slash

Guitar Center has announced "Guitar Center Presents Your Next Record With Slash," a contest for unsigned bands. It gives them a chance to record a three-song EP with producer Mike Clink and write, record and perform with famed guitarist Slash. Winners will also receive: a management development deal with The Collective, a worldwide music distribution through Tunecore, a \$10,000 GC shopping spree, new gear and endorsement deals from Ernie Ball Music Man, an opening slot on Slash's Monster Energy Bash, and a feature in *Guitar World* magazine. Unsigned bands can enter at yournextrecord.com through April 30. GC has already received 8,000 submissions.

EDUCATION

Music Tech 101

Sweetwater Sound of Fort Wayne, Ind., has teamed up with Indiana University-Purdue University Fort



Wayne (IPFW) to establish a music technology degree. Students enrolled in the Music Technology Program will receive a Bachelor of Science

in Music with a specialty in music technology. The program will be available in the fall.

"Our partnership with Sweetwater will allow us to build a program of prominence in the region and nationally," said Charles O'Connor, dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts. "Support from Sweetwater will allow IPFW to stay up to date with the latest music technology available."

QUINLAN & FABISH | LEGAL

Q&F Employees Found Slain

Quinlan & Fabish employees Carolyn and John Tarwacki were murdered in their Niles, Mich., home on Feb. 5. Both worked at Quinlan & Fabish's Stevensville, Mich., location.



Carolyn and John Tarwacki

At press time, investigators had not released how the couple died or identified a prime suspect. According to a statement from the Michigan State Police in Niles, the victims "died of violent means involving weapons by a single assailant." Carolyn served as Quinlan & Fabish's regional representative in southwest Michigan.

"It's sad and tragic," said George

Quinlan, president of Burr Ridge, Ill.-based Quinlan & Fabish. "John was new to our company but had already made a positive impact. Carolyn was more than a road rep to her customers. She was everyone's sister, aunt or best friend. No challenge was too much for her as she greeted each day with a smile and a burst of 'let's get it done' energy."

Contributions to a scholarship fund for Carolyn can go to Southwestern Michigan College Foundation, c/o McKnight-Tarwacki Scholarship. Checks should be made payable to SMC Foundation.



Schmitt Music's new saxophone pro shop

SCHMITT MUSIC | NICHES

Schmitt Opens Sax Shop

Schmitt Music celebrated the opening of its saxophone pro shop in mid-March with a week of contests, educational events and live music.

The roughly 600-square-foot shop, located inside the company's Brooklyn Center, Minn., facility, includes a range of professional sax models and accessories. A Bose stereo system has been installed, so customers can demo instruments to backing tracks. The shop also features what Joerg Hermsen, Schmitt's director of marketing, called a "jazz club-inspired" theme.

During the week it opened, reps from Buffet Crampon, Conn-Selmer, Yamaha and Jupiter

came out to host giveaways. Buffet Crampon clinician Al Maniscalco also hosted a master class on March 14.

"There's a good saxophone market in our area, and there's nothing else like this to serve those customers," said Tom Schmitt, president of Schmitt Music. "Sax players would have to travel a long way to be able to try out this many different high-end saxophones all in one place. We're hoping that putting all these great horns together with knowledgeable, friendly people; a tremendous repair shop; and a comfortable atmosphere will appeal to customers and be a new line of business for our company."



A Carver Elementary School student bows a violin donated by Music & Arts

MUSIC & ARTS | OUTREACH

M&A Debuts Soundscapes

Music & Arts recently launched its Soundscapes program with the donation of 100 stringed instruments to Carver Elementary School in Newport News, Va.

Co-founded by Newport News resident Anne Henry and musician and educator Rey Ramirez, Soundscapes is designed to teach children music and life skills. Participants meet for two hours three

days each week. Soundscapes is based off similar programs created by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and Venezuela's El Sistema youth orchestra training program.

Representatives of Music & Arts, a Frederick, Md.-based school music retail chain, hand-delivered violins and cellos to 65 first-grade students in the Soundscapes program at Carver as part of its holiday celebration.

»»» RETAIL

MARGARET LEVIN | TRIBUTE

REMEMBERING MARGARET LEVIN

Even though Chuck Levin's Washington Music Center bore her husband's name, Margaret Levin, who passed away March 2 at 81, was always the first person to greet customers at the door.

Acting as co-owner with her husband, Levin ran the cash register at the Wheaton, Md.-based full-line dealership, which they founded in 1958. The business started as an adjunct to a pawnshop operated by the Levin family. In 1968, the couple moved the store to Wheaton, where it grew to occupy an entire city block.

Levin also directed the Charles and Margaret Levin Family Foundation, a charitable organization.

A statement from the company's Web site read, "For all of us who are employees at WMC, Mrs. Levin has been a second mother to all of us, helping us through all of the challenges we each have faced throughout life."

Chuck Levin died in 2002. Survivors include three children, Alan, Robert and Abbe Levin; a sister, Natalie Stewart; and two grandchildren.



Margaret and Chuck Levin

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Note from Scott

National Wanna Play Music Week Kicks off May 3–7

NAMM believes that playing music is good for people of all ages and talent levels. This is the driving principle behind our *Wanna Play?* national public awareness campaign, and it's allowed us to share our industry's pro-music message with millions of people for the past four years through television, radio, print and Web media coverage. **In 2009 alone, this effort generated \$39 million in promotional ad value.** As part of this campaign, we've declared the first week in May to be NAMM's National Wanna Play Music Week.

Our 2010 weeklong celebration takes place May 3–7. The activities during NAMM's 4th annual Wanna Play Music Week are designed to put the national, regional and local media spotlight on the proven benefits of playing music in order to give people new reasons to start or re-start this life-changing activity.

The most recent Gallup Poll conducted by NAMM indicates that more than 85 percent of people who don't currently play a musical instrument WISH they did. During National Wanna Play Music Week, our industry has the ability to grant some of these wishes! At wannaplaymusic.com, aspiring musicians can find news, information and resources, such as local music teachers and even the location of their closest NAMM Member music store, all in one place.

As May draws closer, we've reached out to all of our partners and music-making friends to help engage the media, spread the message about the proven benefits of making music and maximize the exposure to all who, well, wanna play. Look for music-related stories on the national news, during late-night TV, at your child's school, on Facebook and Twitter, and even on a street corner in a neighborhood near you. NAMM and our partners will be out in force promoting the idea of music making as one of the most talked-about messages all week. And we'll end the week with a day of appreciation for local music stores and all they do to inspire people to play music. We hope you'll join us in creating more music makers during NAMM's National Wanna Play Music Week!

Scott Robertson

NAMM DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

NAMM's Wanna Play Music Week Agenda

MUSIC MONDAY, MAY 3

NAMM will join the Coalition of Music Education in Canada in its sixth annual Music Monday event to demonstrate the importance of music education programs throughout North America and celebrate the many proven benefits of playing music.

TUESDAY, MAY 4

To celebrate the spontaneity of music making and the fact that anyone can do it, NAMM will organize a series of surprise events across the country to be shared on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and other social media networks, creating a viral buzz for music making.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5

The NAMM Foundation will announce its "Best Communities for Music Education," honoring schools and communities that work hard to make music a part of a complete education for every child.

THURSDAY, MAY 6

You'd be surprised by how many celebrities (including actors, authors, sports stars and politicians) also play music just for fun. NAMM will feature many of these "unexpected celebrity musicians" in creative ways on this day.

FRIDAY, MAY 7

As official Music Store Appreciation Day, we're honoring the hub of all things musical—the local community music store—and encouraging non-musicians to pay these stores a visit to get started playing.

Visit namm.org for "5 Simple Ways to Get Involved in NAMM's National Wanna Play Music Week."



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

Lieutenant Dan Rocks!

"I got my first guitar when I was in fourth grade, and I was in bands all the way up into my early 20s. I was torn between music and acting, but then the acting took over.

"I didn't play for many, many years. Then, about 12 years ago, I picked up the bass again and ended up founding a band with a buddy of mine called Gary Sinise and the Lt. Dan Band.

"Music is something that's been a part of my life for many years, and getting back to it and just playing for fun has been a real kick."

Gary Sinise

Actor, *CSI New York*

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Hand built in North America for the player that refuses to compromise, the Traynor YGM-3 vintage re-issue recaptures the exacting tone, warmth, feel and responsiveness of one of the great vintage tube guitar amplifiers of all time.

Built using truly hand-wired point-to-point circuitry throughout, the Traynor YGM-3 uses high grade braided wire for all connections – no printed circuit boards or surface mount components here. High quality electronic components, a superior Jensen P12Q Alnico speaker, true amplitude bias tremolo, and premium hand selected & tested tubes are all key to capturing the purest tone, vintage warmth and unrivaled charm of the early '70s original.



- Point-To-Point Hand-Wired Circuitry • Connections Made Using High Grade Braided Wire
- Canadian Made Hammond Paper Bobbin Power & Output Transformers (Built To The Specifications of the Original components)
- Jensen P12Q Alnico Magnet Speaker • Illinois Metalized Polypropylene Capacitors
- Switchcraft Jacks & JJ Supply Caps • Hand Selected Electro Harmonix 12AX7 Preamp Tubes
- JJ EL84 Output Tubes • Vintage Amplitude Bias Tremolo Circuit • Accutronics™ Long Spring Reverb Tank
- Custom Vintage Grill Cloth (Sourced from the Original Supplier) • Solid Plywood Cabinet & Steel Box Chassis
- Hand Made in Canada

VISIT WWW.TRAYNORAMPS.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE YGM-3 OR ANY TRAYNOR PRODUCT.
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- > **Yamaha, Jupiter**
Cut prices for school bids
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SUPPLY

WIRELESS MICROPHONES | BY JENNY DOMINE

FCC SETS TRANSITION DATE

Remember last June, when the black and white snow disappeared from TV screens for good? Because of that digital transition, another type of transition directly impacting the music industry is taking place this spring.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has named June 12 as the end date for operation of all 700 MHz band wireless microphones.

According to the FCC, this type of microphone had been operating in between old TV broadcast channels. Now that TVs have gone digital, the 700 MHz band will be used for public safety and commercial wireless consumer services.

The FCC made its first announcement of the bandwidth changes and new white space licensing in 2008. The FCC banned the sale, manufacture and import of 700 MHz band microphones in the United States on Jan. 15.

"Having an official end date has made getting people motivated easier," said Jackie Green, vice president of R&D, engineering for Audio-Technica.

"It's very difficult to operate when you don't know when and what's going to happen."

WHO WILL BE AFFECTED

While most rental houses and touring sound companies made the equipment change early, other large wireless venues have held out for an official deadline.

"It really affects the people using wireless mics who have an installed base of gear that is working perfectly well and not in particular need of replacement," said Chris Lyons, manager of technical and educational communications for Shure. "There are lots of churches, schools and theaters that have a rack full of two, four or 12 systems. Maybe they bought them five years ago, and they thought they were good for another 10 years. Now, they have to replace all this."

The FCC's staff has been aware that wireless microphone use extends beyond the broadcasters and production companies included in current licensing rules. The commission issued a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in January to ask for input regarding whether its current wireless microphone licensing rules should include more organizations and facilities that use these devices.

The commission had extended its deadline for pub-

June 12 will signal the end of 700 MHz band use

lic comments relating to these proposed changes from Feb. 22 to March 1.

Shure reported the FCC received more than 300 letters from houses of worship, theaters, education institutions, musicians, producers, sound engineers, AV rental and production companies, hotels, and convention centers during the comment period.

"Wireless microphone users are sending a strong and clear message that they and their audiences expect and deserve interference-free audio," said Sandy LaMantia, president and CEO of Shure. "Wireless microphones are an essential feature of professional sound production in many contexts where audio quality is a priority."

SPREADING THE WORD

The biggest challenge for microphone companies has been getting the word out to consumers that this change is happening soon.

"If you remember the DTV transition, TV stations were running public service announcements about it for months," Lyons said. "We don't have that available to us. We are trying to get the word out through dealers. It's taking a lot more time to finally reach people."

Retailers are required by the FCC to notify their customers of the ban on 700 MHz microphones.

"[Retailers] have to tell people what the rules are, but they also have to put something conspicuously in writing at the point of sale of a wireless microphone," Green said.

Now that a date has been finalized for the wireless transition, all major microphone manufacturers have extended or relaunched rebate initiatives to encourage people to turn in their old wireless gear. Most of these programs will continue until the end of June.

"I think there are more people now that have gotten off the fence because there is a formal date, and they know it's a done deal," Lyons said.

The FCC Web site has a list of markets where people must stop using 700 MHz band wireless microphones immediately or on a specific date before June 12. **MI**

VENUES

SSL's New Office

Solid State Logic recently opened a new West Coast office location at 3700 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 720 in Los Angeles. The building offers expanded demo facilities to further showcase the company's C series digital consoles and full line of analog products, including the Duality SE, AWS 900+ SE, Matrix and new X-Patch.

"This is an exciting opportunity for SSL to expand its West Coast office," said Piers Plaskitt, CEO of SSL. "The new location offers the ability to provide a more comfortable environment to demonstrate our products." solidstatelogic.com

ARTIST APPROVED

U-Bass on Tour

Bassist Bakithi Kumalo will be taking his Kala U-Bass on tour with Paul Simon this spring. Simon will be joined by Art Garfunkel in a concert

at the New Orleans Jazz Festival in April with additional dates to be announced. kalaukulele.com

EVENT

500 Wedding DJs

Five hundred DJs were on hand when fellow DJs Jimmie Hontz Jr. and Rachel Welch tied the knot at the American DJ Customer Appreciation Party during the annual Mobile Beat trade show in Las Vegas on Feb. 10.



"We appreciate our customers — they're like family to us," said Scott Davies, general manager of American DJ. "We're very happy to show our appreciation for Jimmie and Rachel by hosting their wedding."

americandj.com

PROMOTION

GAMA 2010 Rates

The Guitar and Accessories Marketing Association (GAMA) board has voted to extend its new member introductory dues program. Eighteen companies took advantage of the initiative in 2009.

New members joining in 2010 will pay \$250 or \$500, depending on their size, for their first-year membership. discoverguitar.com

KHS | PRICING

BAND BIDS

From March 1 through Sept. 30, Jupiter will offer lower prices on all its marching brass, baritones, euphoniums, tubas and sousaphones. The pricing for Majestic's full line of timpani has also been reduced.

The program is designed to give dealers an opportunity to win more school bids.

"We are all in this together," said Richard Breske, vice president of marketing at KHS America. "We looked at what we could do for educators, and at the same time, we have to make

sure dealers are profitable."

The new pricing can be used on all school bids, including bid substitutions with no additional paperwork or verification than normal school bids.

KHS RELOCATES HQ

On Feb. 22, KHS America also announced plans to move its corporate headquarters from Austin, Texas, to a new 100,000-square-foot building in Mount Juliet, Tenn. The facility is scheduled to be completed early this summer. jupitermusic.com

B&S | DISTRIBUTION

B&S DIRECT TO DEALERS

The Geretsried, Germany-based brass and wind manufacturer B&S has changed its distribution setup in Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

Starting in March, the company stopped distributing its B&S, Hans Hoyer, J. Scherzer and Melton/Meinl Weston brands through a third-party wholesaler and began distributing directly to retail stores.

B&S Chairman Gerhard Meinl will return in a management capacity to lead the company.

b-and-s.com



Gerhard Meinl (left) and Jakob von Wolff

YAMAHA | EDUCATION

Yamaha Lowers Prices

Yamaha Corp. of America is now offering lower price points for its YEP-201, YEP-321 and YEP-321S euphoniums and YBB-105WC 3/4-size top-action three-valve lacquer tuba.

"This is one small way we can help educators without sacrificing their budget," said Roger Eaton, director of marketing for Yamaha's band and orchestral division.

HAL LEONARD PARTNERSHIP

Hal Leonard has also expanded its partnership with Yamaha to distribute band and orchestra accessories. Yamaha's maintenance kits; mouthpieces and caps; cleaners, cloths and oils; percussion practice pads; and Silent Brass systems can now be ordered from Hal Leonard. yamaha.com



WEBNEWS

promark.com

**PRO-MARK
BUILDS
COMMUNITY**

On March 17, Pro-Mark launched the community section of its redesigned Web site. The community section is open to consumers and dealers.

After registering, dealers may set up their own community pages, which can be linked back to the dealer's own Web site.

The community is a place where retailers can announce special offers, clinics or other events. Registration is free.

hosatech.com

Hosa Technology's Web site has been renovated to represent the various Hosa-distributed brands, including Da-Cappo Micro Microphones, CAIG Laboratories, Neutrik and Zaolla Silverline, under a single banner. In partnership with Shopatron, Hosa can now offer fulfillment services at the location nearest the customer. The dealer locator has a drop-down menu to help customers find a reseller.



FENDER | FINANCE

Fender Finances Gear

GE Money and Fender Musical Instruments Corp. (FMIC) recently made a multiyear agreement to provide consumer financing. The GE Money Music credit card, managed by GE Money's sales finance unit, provides consumers with a flexible way to

finance Fender instruments.

As part of the program agreement, Fender dealers will use GE Money's Business Center, a Web-based finance management portal, which gives retailers an easy, secure way to manage their credit programs. **{fender.com}**

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AURA | SIXTEEN
Programmable Aura Imaging Pedal

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Restore a studio-miked sound to your acoustic instrument. Now includes the Aura Image Gallery software featuring over 800 Images available for download.

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Aura Image Gallery III now available for Mac® and Windows®

MUSICORP | OUTREACH

**MUSICORP'S
GUITAR GIFT**

Musicorp donated several guitars to the new music education guitar program at Ashley River Creative Arts Elementary (ARCAE) in West Ashley, S.C., on Jan. 28.

ARCAE's philosophy is that children learn best when taught through the arts.

"We always strive to support music education and are happy to donate guitars to children eager to learn how to play," said Dan Roberts, Musicorp's vice president of sales. **{musicorp.com}**



ARCAE's Daun Stuart

AGREEMENT

Daisy Up North

In March, Daisy Rock Guitars named MusicOneSelect as the exclusive Daisy Rock distributor in Canada. Daisy Rock will also be featured at MIAC 2010 in Toronto at MusicOneSelect's booth.

{daisyrock.com}

DISTRIBUTION

Farley's New Hanger

Farley's Musical Essentials will now distribute Woodies Hanger. This product lets



musicians hang instruments on the wall at any angle or on the ceiling. The hanger supports the guitar by the strap buttons and has a quick-release top bracket, so players can access their guitars to perform. It then clips back easily for display.

{farleysessentials.com}

E.K. BLESSING | EXPANSION

E.K. Blessing Adds Jobs

E. K. Blessing recently made plans to expand its manufacturing facility in Elkhart, Ind. The initiative will create up to 22 new jobs by 2012.

The brass instrument maker, which was acquired by Verne Q. Powell Flutes in October 2009, will invest more than \$2.6 million to relocate its brass instrument production from Germany and Taiwan to Indiana. As part of the expansion, E.K. Blessing

Brass instrument maker invests \$2.6 million for U.S. relocation

will move to a larger facility, which previously housed an RV manufacturer, in May. {blessingbrass.com}

MASON & HAMLIN | MANUFACTURING

GRANDS GET NEW ACTION

Mason & Hamlin has announced it will make Wessell, Nickel & Gross (WNG) composite actions standard on all of its grand pianos.

"Based on extensive testing and extremely positive feedback from technicians, who have found the WNG composite action superior to

wood, and pianists, who have raved about the level of responsiveness it affords them, we are taking the next logical step of using WNG actions exclusively in all our new grand pianos," said Tom Lagomarsino, Mason & Hamlin's executive vice president. {pianodisc.com}

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APPOINTMENTS

Roland's Exec Changes

Roland has made a series of changes to its executive management in the United States, effective April 1.



Dennis Houlihan

Dennis Houlihan will assume the responsibilities of chairman of Roland U.S.



Chris Bristol

Chris Bristol has been named the new president and CEO of Roland U.S. He will also be a member of the board of directors for Roland U.S.

Paul Youngblood will serve as vice president of Boss and guitar products for Roland U.S. and will act as director of Boss Japan.

Brian Alli has been promoted to vice president of sales for Roland U.S. rolandus.com

Altus Flutes has named Liz Pritchett sales manager.

Benedetto Guitars' Lane Zastrow will head sales in the Mid-Atlantic states, Canada and Europe.



>>> Lane Zastrow

Rock Clouser has been named national sales and marketing manager for **Conn-Selmer's** stringed instrument division.

D'Addario has promoted Brian Johnson to systems information specialist for all of its brands.

Eastwood Guitars has named Lou Vito as its new artist relations consultant.

Fishman has appointed Corey Congilio as its marketing and artist relations specialist.



>>> Andrew Strayer

KHS America has appointed Andrew Strayer as vice president of sales.

L-Acoustics has tapped Scott Sugden to head its U.S. touring support. The company has also added two new staff members, David Yates

and Germain Simon, to its technical support team.

Musicorp's new regional sales management team will include Mike Summers, Dave Findley, Rick Murray, Tim Weaver and Dan Murdy.

The National Association for Music Education has elected Nancy Ditmer national president-elect for the 2010-2012 term.

RS Berkeley has named Pat Emmett district manager for Arizona, California and

Nevada.

Solid State Logic has promoted George Horton to vice president, Western region and Latin America.

Studer Professional

Audio has appointed Tibor Tamas as the sales engineer for Germany, Austria, Greece and Eastern European countries.



>>> Tibor Tamas

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Your customers are all different, but they all want the same thing - a sound and feel that works for them. Vandoren makes the widest variety of clarinet mouthpieces of any manufacturer, with only one goal - to help your customers sound and play their best.

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VENUES

Chauvet in the U.K.

Chauvet has opened a full-service office in the United Kingdom with its own dedicated inventory, technicians and sales team. All products are specifically designed for 240-volt power and are fitted with U.K. mains plugs. Staffers include Michael Brooksbank (pictured) as sales manager and Darren Jackson as southern U.K. territory business manager.



{chauvetlighting.com}

DISTRIBUTION

Eastwood Signs iMusic

Eastwood Guitars will now be distributed by iMusic Network in Germany and Austria. This agreement will make the Eastwood and Airline brands available through select dealers in Europe. {eastwoodguitars.com}



Warwick production

WARWICK | DELIVERY

WARWICK DELIVERY WAIT

Warwick recently announced that delivery times for its basses and Framus guitars will be extended from three to six months to six to nine months. A statement from the company said the delivery changes will “enable us to better serve you while still delivering the same high standard of craftsmanship and engineering that you’ve grown accustomed to in all Warwick

Warwick reports a longer wait time for guitars, basses

and Framus products. Thank you, in advance, for your patience and cooperation.” {warwick.de}

NEW FROM JODYJAZZ
DV CHI Tenor



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The DV Chicago Tenor is the culmination of Jody Espina's quest to make the perfect saxophone mouthpiece.

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 **TRIBUTE**

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

 **Paul Specht**

Hoshino USA Director of Communications Paul Specht passed away on Feb. 10 while in the hospital for treatment of leukemia. Specht had been in remission and was actively working from his home when his cancer returned. He was 58.



“We’ve all been banking on the idea that Paul was going to lick this thing,” said Bill Reim, president of Hoshino USA. “So, we’ve kept his desk open, pretty much as he left it, in preparation for his return. It’s hard for us to believe he’s never coming back.”

Reim remembered Specht for his strong principles, as well as being friendly, funny and intelligent. “Paul was a good friend and someone I knew I could always bounce professional issues off and come away with a sound perspective,” he said.

Specht is survived by his son, Stephan.

 **Charlie Wicks**

Charlie Wicks, founder and CEO of Pro Co Sound, passed away on March 11 from complications related to cancer. He was 65.

Wicks formed Pro Co in the early 1970s to manufacture P.A. speakers and shifted to manufacturing cables and interconnect products in 1974. He successfully led the company for four decades.

 **Michael Murphy**

Michael Murphy, a Musicorp sales representative, died on Feb. 11 after a 15-month battle with cancer. He was 30.

Murphy was a drummer for the City of Washington Bagpipe Band and a drumming instructor for the MacMillan-Birtles Bagpipe Band.



“Mike worked hard every day to take care of his customers,” said Dave Jones, Musicorp sales manager.

THE MUSIC GROUP | PERSONNEL

The Music Group CEO Steps Down

Michael Deeb, the CEO and director of The Music Group, stepped down from his leadership roles on Feb. 12. Uli Behringer and Arie van den Broek will lead The Music Group on an interim basis.

“Changes are always challenging

but also present great opportunities,” Behringer said.

“We have just celebrated our 20th anniversary, and as we enter our third decade, we are once again reinventing our company.”

{music-group.net}



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IDEAS

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INDEPENDENT RETAIL | BY TED ESCHLIMAN

THE GLASS IS HALF-FULL

On Jan. 27, Steve Jobs introduced Apple's latest technological leap: the iPad. An Apple version of the Amazon Kindle, Sony Reader and Barnes & Noble nook, it had been anticipated for several months — a PC tablet bejeweled with many of the iPhone and iPod Touch features and popular Mac-like user interface. Industry pundits expected a price tag upwards of \$1,000. After Jobs and his support staff presented their descriptions of the new and reworked Apple features, fans were pleased to discover the basic model would cost \$499.

I was at the Wi-Fi-equipped YMCA the next morning when it dawned on me how much I was already using some of the iPad's features. On my Touch, I was surfing Facebook, catching up on e-mail and listening to some tunes in advance of the night's rehearsal, all while pumping away on an elliptical trainer. I was already contemplating the larger 9.7-inch display in an e-reader purchase. With the ability to read sheet music and do many of these Apple applications, I quickly resolved an iPad would be in my



'An elitist attitude could be the death of the music store model.'

future. Jobs promised the new technology would revolutionize the way we do many of these activities, and I, for one, agree.

My enthusiasm was soon challenged by many of the techno-elite Internet bloggers bagging on features that were left off: a multitasking USB port and a camera. They also bemoaned the high app prices. I couldn't grasp the negativity.

The miracle machine was to be released in 60 days, and all I could think was I needed to get my hands on one. All the critics could do was whine.

There's a human response here we need to be aware of in our own product appeal. It's easy to dwell on what something won't do, rather than try to appreciate what it will do. I think the iPad is going to offer some incredible benefits in portable word processing, e-reading, art and presentation software (dig the new iWork Keynote), let alone mobile video and music. The price is reasonable and within my budget. This is an answer to every traveler's prayers.

CUT THE I-BASHING ATTITUDE

In our stores, we sell things with many features that please and benefit, but often we dwell more on what they don't do than what they can do. Take the entry-level guitar, for example. We criticize the \$79 guitar because it will fret out and buzz up the neck, but the overwhelming majority of beginners aren't interested in anything above the fifth fret. We fear a case isn't flight-ready, but few of our customers check

their instruments at the airport. We pan the unnatural feel of a cheap digital keyboard, but most beginning pianists are more likely to play an electric piano in a rock band than a grand piano in a concert hall.

It's not wrong to have high expectations of our products, to think long-term about the customer's future needs, but what about "the now"? Does an i-bashing attitude prevent our customers from getting started in the wonderful, life-long activity of music because we've prejudged their standards to be too low?

Far be it from me to endorse "junk" or pawn-renegade instruments, but there comes a time when we have to recognize the economic reality of "good enough to get by." An elitist attitude could be the death of the music store model because our customers will find this product on the Internet with or without our help. We need to start thinking about what these things *will* do, rather than obsessing about what they won't. **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 LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Competing With YouTube

Not long ago, one of my younger employees was doing a great job promoting our music lesson program to a mother and her student-to-be when the potential student said, “Mom, I don’t need lessons. I can learn from YouTube.”

It was a stump-the-staff moment. My staffer started to sputter, and it got worse. He started talking about his favorite YouTube videos.

When presented with an alternative music lesson option, my employee wasn’t prepared to give the “why us” pitch. That was a serious problem.

SO, WHY SHOULD I TAKE LESSONS AT YOUR STORE?

This isn’t just about YouTube. It’s about the Craigslist teachers, the local parks and recreation department lessons, and the dude at church.

How does your staff handle customers who say they can get lessons elsewhere? Can your employees answer this basic customer question: Why should I take lessons at your store? If not, they need training.

Let’s start with some tips on what *not* to say.

- Don’t mention the year the business opened.
- Don’t say that all of your teachers have degrees.
- Don’t brag about the teacher who was in a non-famous, Jurassic-era rock band.
- Don’t say bad things about the competition.

Some of this might seem obvious, but it still goes on in many shops.

BE STUDENT-CENTRIC

In the egocentric world of iTunes, MySpace, iPhones and Twitter, retailers must cater to the student’s needs, not their own agenda. Talk about what’s in it for the student.

Ask the parent and student if they’re familiar with your music lesson program. I’d also ask what school the student attends because you might have other students from that school in your program. You might hear, “Nancy takes lessons here? I didn’t know that.” It creates an instant connection.

Mention the great events and performances you host for students. Explain how a teacher can help fix beginner mistakes while keeping the learning process fun. Not everyone is going to sign up for music lessons on the spot, but this dialogue can lead to future sign-ups.

YOUTUBE VS. YOU

These talking points are great, but you still need to know what distinguishes your lessons from the other resources out there.

Ask yourself: What’s the competition’s major flaw, and how do I compensate for that flaw?

With the YouTube example, if the student is holding the instrument incorrectly, no one is there to say, “Hang on a second. We need to fix the way you’re doing that.”

Online instruction can be over the student’s head, too. A beginner can quickly become confused and develop bad habits — or quit entirely. YouTube also can’t hook a student up with other musicians for performance events.

The YouTube teacher can’t analyze a student’s specific needs. For example, we have a student with Asperger syndrome, and for that student, lessons are about learning to interact with his teacher and playing with other musicians in a safe environment. Can YouTube do that?

Come up with a list of these benefits with your staff, and use this list in your marketing information. When new staffers come on-board, add this to their training. **MI**

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



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STREETWISE SELLING | BY KENNY SMITH

Selling Old Yeller

When I was a kid, my dad took an old Wurlitzer organ in trade and refinished it pale yellow, hoping someone would fall in love with it. The organ ended up sitting around for so long that one salesman dubbed it “Old Yeller” — a clever take on the term “dogs,” or products no one likes.

Even if you don’t have anything as hideous as a pale yellow organ on the floor, you likely have older products that are tying up valuable resources and space. Reducing prices isn’t the magic solution for selling them. It helps, but

Old Yeller got as low as \$150 and still had no prospective buyers. Ultimately, it takes a conscious selling effort and ongoing plan of action to deplete aging inventory.

1. Identify products you should have already sold.

Your employees are a good resource, and their opinions won’t show up on an inventory spreadsheet. Visually inspect the store to find out why certain products haven’t been selling. You might be surprised by what you find.

2. Sort products out.

Sacred cows are expensive heirlooms we hate to part with but make the store look pricey. Check online for their going rates, and turn them into cash.

Portraits are products that have morphed into furniture. If products stay in the same place too long, they go unnoticed by salespeople and never get shown. Move these pieces to a prominent spot. Make them sparkle, add signage and focus on selling them until they’re history.

Headed-for-the-chopping-block products are slated to be discontinued and can be a disaster once their replacements arrive. Have reps keep you up to date. Know what’s coming before your customers do.

Nonsellers include multiple items that aren’t turning well. Giant stacks can scare off buyers. Decreasing displays to two or three boxes and one

demo unit can create more urgency to buy. Keep the stack small.

And, of course, there’s *broken gear*. Determine whether it’s treasure or trash, and act accordingly. Something as simple as a missing AC adapter can stop a sale dead in its tracks. Get these items retail-ready before offering them.

3. Sell the salesperson.

Our industry is full of biased salespeople who believe customers should buy what they would buy for themselves. Stress communicating product knowledge, as opposed to opinions. A heart-to-heart discussion with your salespeople can influence them to demo what you need to sell.

4. Host a thank-you sale.

If you have a lot of items you’re willing to sell at low prices, you have a perfect opportunity to get your old customers back in the store. You probably won’t make huge profits during the event, but customers feel like they won — and your residuals can be huge.

5. Fight the funk.

There’s a misconception that customers will be unhappy if we don’t sell them the latest, greatest item. Nothing could be further from the truth. Don’t feel uncomfortable if other salespeople roll their eyes at you for trying to sell something unpopular. Some of my happiest customers have bought products outside the typical groove.

6. Offer incentives.

Customers like little bonus gifts, and salespeople are motivated when they can earn a little extra. Even expensive, aging products have profit potential to factor in a small bonus.

7. Get online.

The Internet’s an excellent place to find buyers for items you can’t sell in-store. There are plenty of free options that will bring in hot leads.

In the end, Old Yeller got promoted to center stage, my dad put up a \$50 bonus, the salesman changed his negative attitude and, within a week, Old Yeller sold to a happy buyer for \$495. **MI**

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



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LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

Your Friend, Social Media

Given the option, most people would choose to do business with friends. When you're about to make a major purchase, wouldn't you prefer having the guidance of someone with whom you have a trusting, personal relationship? In my previous life as a retail store owner, I always taught my sales staff to focus on turning customers into friends. It makes the sales process much easier.

Understanding that business relationships work better when people are personal contacts, I noticed an interesting phenomenon at January's NAMM convention. As I walked the show, I seemed to have a lot more friends. The advent of social media — such sites as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn — has enabled people I've known for many years to feel, as do I, that our business relationships have grown more personal. Through social media, people I might not have been in contact with have stayed in touch on a regular basis. In other words, social media lets people form deeper, more consistent relationships that transcend their purely business nature.

THE SHRINKING OF THE INDUSTRY

Those of us using social media immediately understand its impact as a new communications tool. It's as if Facebook has taken an already small industry and cranked up the intimacy level several notches. When I posted this observation, that the whole industry felt more like family, I received an

overwhelming response from my online network. It literally took moments for a flurry of acknowledgments to fill my in-box.

The benefit here is the ability to stay connected to your network. No longer are these industry folks just acquaintances. They're friends. And when you have a friend in the business, it's a whole lot easier to get things done. For me, it has yielded a

number of consulting assignments. I've been able to help people reconnect, and I've made introductions that have yielded great results.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN RETAIL

Having seen the effectiveness of social networking, I regret having not used it more effectively in my retail career. All retail associates should establish their own individual social media accounts, and they should collect e-mail addresses from every client. (They should be doing that for the

company mailing list, anyway.) Retail associates should attempt to become friends with each of those contacts by inviting them into their social networks. Then, they can tell contacts to count on them as their personal source for advice, help and support.

Key to this tactic is avoiding any attempts at blatant advertising or commercialism. The goal is to become an available resource and so familiar with customers that they consider you their friend — that they choose to come to you as their trusted source. Don't miss the chance to befriend the bands and/or companies associated with these people.

Another powerful use of social media is to set up a presence for your company. Key to this is having someone handle these duties. This person needs to create an online personality for your company. Once again, he or she can't be out there as a huckster but should become a valuable resource and a trusted advisor. Most of all, remember that social media is a two-way communication. Allow feedback, both positive and negative, and use it to improve what you do.

I'll see you next month, or you can Tweet me, Link me in or friend me on Facebook. **MI**

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



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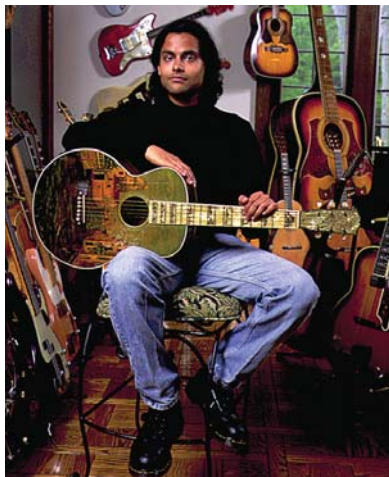
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THE CUSTOMER CONNECTION | BY RAVI

Choose Your Customers

For more than a decade, I've been giving a seminar at universities and music business conferences called "Maintaining Artistic Integrity While Running Your Career as a Business." One of my messages to up-and-coming artists is, "Don't learn to write for the market. Learn to market what you write." Essentially, I'm advising to not give consumers what they want but instead attract those who want what you offer. Even better, make consumers want what you have.



TARGETING THE 20 PERCENT

This isn't often-preached business advice. We're more familiar with, "The customer is always right." Well, I believe in the 80/20 rule: 80 percent of business comes from 20 percent of customers, and vice versa. As such, I also believe that 80 percent of customers are wrong, at least as it pertains to your business. Why would I want to work so hard trying to win their business, which only amounts to 20 percent of my revenue?

The point is that you have to know who you're relying on. Ultimately, if you subject your core 20 percent to marketing efforts and inventory targeted at the peripheral 80 percent, you'll lose that loyal base due to non-aligned interests. Trade brick-and-mortar for a Web-only business if you want to serve the masses. Otherwise, by the time you dole out your best deal to that 80 percent, the effort and cost of closing that sale is often hardly worth the margin.

Focus on your top 20 percent in the community — the ones who buy from you because of you. They want to do business with you and enjoy your environment. It's easier to purchase musical merchandise online than in a store, and product info combined with customer reviews is enough to seal most deals in one's pajamas. Add a

return policy that permits trying out gear delivered to the comfort of home, and it's pretty hard to beat. Moreover, you don't want to be primarily a showroom for the majority who Googles the cheapest price and "clicks to buy."

BRAND STRATEGY

Your store is the place where your 20 percent makes its big purchases and everyone else can pick up accessories in a pinch. Forget trying to figure out what the finicky public wants. Instead, develop your customer

base around your personal preferences and other complementing products — the stuff you really know and love. Your stock must be an extension of yourself. Inventory may be imposed on you by certain manufacturers, but remember: You exist first to serve your 20 percent, not the manufacturers. Maybe you can push the "other stuff" to your own "click to buy" 80 percent.

You cannot just carry brands — your store has to be a brand itself. Today's consumers are inundated by "friends" they've never met and mass marketing from companies all over the world. No brand is more powerful than a genuine personality with which one can interact.

Another message I tell artists is, "Only the best succeed, so be the best you." Bitter musicians falling back on owning music stores are not going to win customers. If that sounds like you, pick up your ax, get out and play. Become one of your 20 percent. You'll attract a loyal core clientele, not only because the people you jam with will probably want to buy from you but because the empathy you share with musicians of all levels will seduce one out of every five. **MI**

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

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ALL IN THE FAMILY

How today's family
music stores
work together
to bridge the
generation
gap

BY GREG &
GRANT BILLINGS
PHOTO BY SHANE EAST





Writing this story had all the makings of a bad reality TV show. Take seemingly happy, successful families and interview the parents and children separately. On our father-and-son writing team, the dad, Greg, envisioned a modern version of “All In The Family,” complete with the overbearing patriarch and disillusioned 20-somethings who never could see eye-to-eye. The son, Grant, imagined something along the lines of “Family Ties,” with parents struggling to teach their modern, BlackBerry-toting children the importance of balancing friendship, culture, love and work. But what we found looked more like “The Waltons” than “Family Feud.”

From left:
Alysha, Pete
and Peter
Sides of Robert
M. Sides
Family Music
Center



Photo by Stella Alesi

What's happening in today's family-owned and -operated music stores? Is wisdom being handed down from one generation to the next, or has nepotism run amok? How excited is the next generation about the business? And just how well is everyone getting along?

Most of the dads we interviewed inherited the business from their dads and were somewhere along a path to succession by their kids. The parents were generally concerned about their legacies, nostalgic for the good-old days and genuinely excited about working with their children.

"Once kids grow up and go off on their own, I think you do anything you can to spend time with them," said Jim

Foster of Foster Family Music in Davenport, Iowa. "We get to work with our kids every day. That's pretty cool."

On the flip side, the kids recognized the significance of their family legacies but were focused on the future. And they genuinely liked working with their parents.

"He's one of the best businessmen I've ever seen," said Christi Foster, Jim's daughter, who describes her role at the company simply as "to keep the family business going."

THE WONDER YEARS

When they talked about their early experiences, the generations often echoed each other. They all started working in their fathers' stores

'I think a lot of our most productive business conversations take place over dinner.'
— Clint Strait

at a very young age. They cleaned, polished and did piece work. As teenagers, they made a lot of deliveries. Ron Carlson of Carlson's Piano World in Minneapolis and Carlson Music Center in Alexandria, Minn., said he remembers making a delivery with his dad

in their Econoline truck, which had the motor between the driver and passenger seats.

"He was sitting on the engine cover teaching me to drive a three-speed with a clutch when a highway patrolman saw us and gave dad a ticket for letting me drive without a license," Carlson said. "As silly as it sounds, I have great memories of going on deliveries with him."

Todd Heid, now president of Heid Music in Appleton, Wis., started in the mailroom but got put on the road early. "When I had my [drivers] license for maybe a month, Dad put me in a Suburban and had me go all the way up [to Michigan's Upper Peninsula] to deliver and pick up the summer repairs. I couldn't see out the rearview mirror. If I had hit the brakes, I would have been decapitated by a bassoon."

We didn't find anyone who had ever been paid to be the boss' kid. Each of our subjects could easily find work elsewhere, and most had. The younger generation often explored careers outside the music business before joining their families in a capacity beyond polishing horns, building benches or taking out the trash — although they had all done those jobs. They mentioned their work experience helping them better appreciate working with their families and bringing a higher level of professionalism to the relationships.

In Boston, M. Steinert & Sons' Brendan Murphy, the fourth generation, sold educational tours after college. "You get over your fear of rejection," he said of the job. "That certainly helped me."

Clint Strait, the third generation at Strait Music of Austin, Texas, had a similar experience working in outside sales for

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DHL. College internships made Peter Sides, the third generation at Robert M. Sides Family Music Center in Williamsport, Pa., aware of “the shortcoming of the layers of management” in large corporations.

Ron Carlson, whose father, Sid, founded Carlson Music Center, said he wanted to seek his future elsewhere after growing up in a small town and in a family business. “After I graduated from high school, I didn’t really want anything to do with the music business, and the last thing I wanted to do was go into business with my dad,” he said.

But after graduating from college, selling suits at Montgomery Ward, driving an ambulance in Topeka and living in Florida, Carlson returned to Minnesota having learned skills that would pay off when he joined Carlson Music at the age of 28. Like so many of us, he was on straight commission, and his training consisted of observing others and figuring things out on his own.

Outside experience isn’t the only path to success, though. Paul Heid only left Appleton long enough to get a degree in finance at Marquette University. “I don’t think it is chiseled in granite anywhere,” he said of kids needing outside experience.

Todd Heid agreed. “At one time or another, I worked with every employee on the floor. They saw that I was never afraid to get dirty. That was a pretty good way to work up through the company.”

ONE DAY AT A TIME

The process of merging the next generation with current employees reflects the company’s culture. As an apprentice, Paul Murphy reported to the shop foreman. “The guys in the shop viewed



Ron Carlson of Carlson’s Piano World and Carlson Music Center

me with some suspicion,” he said. “They were old timers and probably thought I was a spy. But all of these people were very helpful.”

The experience was different for his son, Brendan. “I work with a salesperson who was here when I was born,” Brendan said. “I think we have a more informal relationship because she’s known me all my life.”

“I don’t think it was as apparent then as it is in hindsight, but the other employees did treat me differently,” Paul Heid said. “And I was working as hard as or harder than anyone. But, it was my name on the front door.”

Todd Heid said he noticed early on that the other employ-

ees would “throw ideas” at him, but he downplayed his family connection with peers and customers. “My name tag just said ‘Todd.’”

When Robert Strait joined the business, he said “a few employees felt a little awkward dealing with the boss’ kid at first, but everyone adapted and it’s worked out quite nicely.”

“Did we have a sort of silver spoon?” said Dennis Saphir, sixth-generation piano technician and owner of Kurt Saphir Pianos in Wilmette, Ill. “I would say ‘yes.’”

Many dads have found it best to have their kids report to someone else, at least for their first assignments. “When Todd

came into the business, my oldest daughter, Kim, came to me and said, ‘Dad, Todd’s going to work for me,’” Paul Heid said. “I never thought about it at the time, but I guess it’s the same thing my dad did when I started. He had me report to his partner, Buck Jensen.”

The approach to training can change from one generation to the next. Today, most dads take a more analytical approach with their successors. “My early tuning experience was on the worst pianos available,” Saphir said. “I asked my dad, ‘Why am I doing this?’ He said, ‘If you can tune these, you can tune anything.’ I recognize now that he knew exactly what he was talking about.”

Still, he was frustrated. “I began to wonder if there was an easier way to make a living.” But there was another side to the relationship that became apparent only in retrospect. “As a rookie out in the field, when I would run into a problem, I had the luxury of calling and saying, ‘Dad, I don’t know how to do this,’ and he would be there in record time, and I knew he was always there for me to count on. He could have sent one of the other technicians, but he never would.”

Saphir changed his approach with his own son. “I’m not going to make it as difficult for Dan as it was for me. I exposed him to better instruments right from the start.”

Ultimately, each generation has to find its way. Pete Sides’ son, Peter, spent several years on the front line before deciding his real love was back office duties. His sister, Alysha, handled marketing before deciding her real love was selling.

“I think it had something to do with selling a big piano, maybe a Steinway, and seeing a [big] commission check,”

Peter said. "We've come to realize that my sister and I are a pretty good team."

Jim Foster has been on both sides of this family business dilemma. "When my partner brought his son into the business, I trained him, and it changed the way I looked at things because I had expected to buy the rest of the company," he said.

While Jim went on to build his own successful business, the one he left behind languished for years before finally closing.

FAMILY TIES

Communication between the generations is critical but can be a delicate balancing act. "When I brought my kids in, I wish I had been more hands-off in the beginning," Pete Sides said. "The thing that I did the best was to pull out and let them make their own decisions. You have to make a conscious effort to listen in a way you might not for other people."

Ron and Sid Carlson had to work a little harder for harmony. "Dad and I had completely opposite beliefs," Ron said. "So, we sometimes clashed. I always thought if I could make the customer happy, I would be happy, and I wasn't concerned about what it took. We used to fight like crazy because I kept lowering prices to sell more units."

When it comes to balancing business and family, there's no consensus on whether shop talk away from the shop is taboo. The Murphy family avoids piano talk at family gatherings, but Clint Strait said, "I think a lot of our most productive business conversations take place over dinner." When asked how he balances business and family, Bob Zenoni at Uncle Bob's Music in Milwaukee said he and his brothers, Dennis and Michael, play cards to break away.

"I'm not sure there is a line, and if there is, I'm not sure how or where to draw it," Paul Heid said. "You have to bear in mind that there are a whole bunch of people involved. It isn't just you and your son or daughter. All of the extended family is affected — your wife, in-laws, other siblings, and even nieces and nephews who maybe should have been involved in the business."

Robert Strait has three brothers and sisters, but his father's CPA advised, "You have to have someone in control of the business.


Otherwise, you can't get anything done."


What causes dads to want to bring their kids into the business, and more importantly, what causes the kids to join? Both realize spending their formative years in a music store gives the family a comparative advantage over competitors because the kids develop strong business instincts that can only be learned over time.

"Paul took [my grandfather's business] philosophy and expanded it at all levels," Todd Heid said of his father. "He took the family business and grew [it]."

For many parents, handing over the reins is akin to trusting someone with their baby. Who better to trust than your own child, who reflects your own values, dedication and work ethic? Saphir said he


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{FAMILYBUSINESS}

knew his father was serious about turning the business over to him when he “made me an offer I couldn’t refuse.” And Jim Foster said, “Christi has passion for our company and continuing to support music education and our community. She isn’t doing this because it is a way to make an easy buck.”

Some successful families, such as the Zenonis, have decided to not bring their kids into the business. “I just don’t see a future like the one my brothers and I had 40 years ago,” Zenoni said. “I see my friends struggling, frustrated and going out of business.”

But carrying on a legacy can still be the driving force. “After he completed his undergraduate work, my son decided that it was necessary to keep the tradition and become the seventh generation,” Saphir said with a hint of pride. “He said, ‘Teach me what you know, train me, and I’m here for good.’”

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Brendan Murphy said he’s very proud his family is celebrating its 150th year in business. “It’s great to show customers a picture on the wall that was taken in 1901 and say, ‘That’s my grandfather.’”

“My grandfather didn’t live to know me, but my dad made a comment about how nice it would have been for him to see me and now my son in the business,” Saphir said. “You can tell that my dad is really proud.”

“I feel great about bringing my kids into the business,” Paul Heid said. “What’s greater for a dad than to have his kids and grandkids not only in the same town but to work in the business their grandfather started? Plus, they’re talented people, and I love them. We lost my dad 90 days ago, and if he ever took pride in the fact that we were in the third generation, it didn’t come through to me, but I think he was. And I’ve learned to make sure I tell my kids how lucky I feel to have them working with me.”

It’s obvious this generation faces challenges its parents could have never imagined. “In today’s economy, being in business isn’t exactly a walk in the park,” Carlson said. “There is no guarantee customers are going to continue to come in, and I’m reluctant to put my kids in a situation where they have all that pressure. But on the other hand, maybe they can take the business and build on what I’ve done the same way I expanded what my dad started.”

It’s also harder than ever for businesses to find good employees and for

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employees to find good businesses. Seeing children succeed, both inside and outside the music store, gives parents insight into their children's merit. Having watched their parents be the boss offers kids a perspective that any potential employee would love to have before accepting a job. Nearly every kid we interviewed took great pride in their parents and their company's long-term employees.

Equitable partnerships between fathers and their kids require mutual respect, clear lines of authority and open communication. "Christi's the boss," Jim Foster said. "The reason I'm still here is because she wants me here. If I got hit by a truck on my way home tonight, I think Christi would do OK."

Ron Carlson said his son Matt "plays a big role in a lot of the things we do at the store."

Of his father, Paul Murphy said, "He was a lot more than a father. He was a partner, and he was a friend." Murphy was also enthusiastic when talking about his son "He is a much more effective salesman than I was."

Zenoni summed up his family's key to longevity in business: "We three brothers get along really good, and my dad was one in a million."

These family businesses are much more significant than any Hollywood stereotype or politician's cliché. These are hard-working, sincere, happy people for whom the distinctions between job, family and community have become hopelessly blurred. They aren't counting

'You have to make a conscious effort to listen [to family] in a way you might not for other people.'
— Pete Sides

their work hours, their savings or their number of days until retirement. They don't have a job — they have a life. A life's tapestry woven of relationships with their parents, siblings, children, customers, vendors

and communities.

When asked if he ever had second thoughts about coming into the family business, Paul Murphy wryly said, "All the time!" Paul Heid was more reflective. "When you're in your 50s, at the peak of your game, you play mind games like, 'What else could I have done?' But I've never had a regret."

While the rewards of being the parent or kid in a successful family business include financial security and being part of a legacy, it's the intangibles that appear most valued. Brendan Murphy captured the sentiments of all the families interviewed when he spoke of the rewards. "I get to hang out with my uncle and my dad a lot, which is kind of cool. It's a good thing." **MI**

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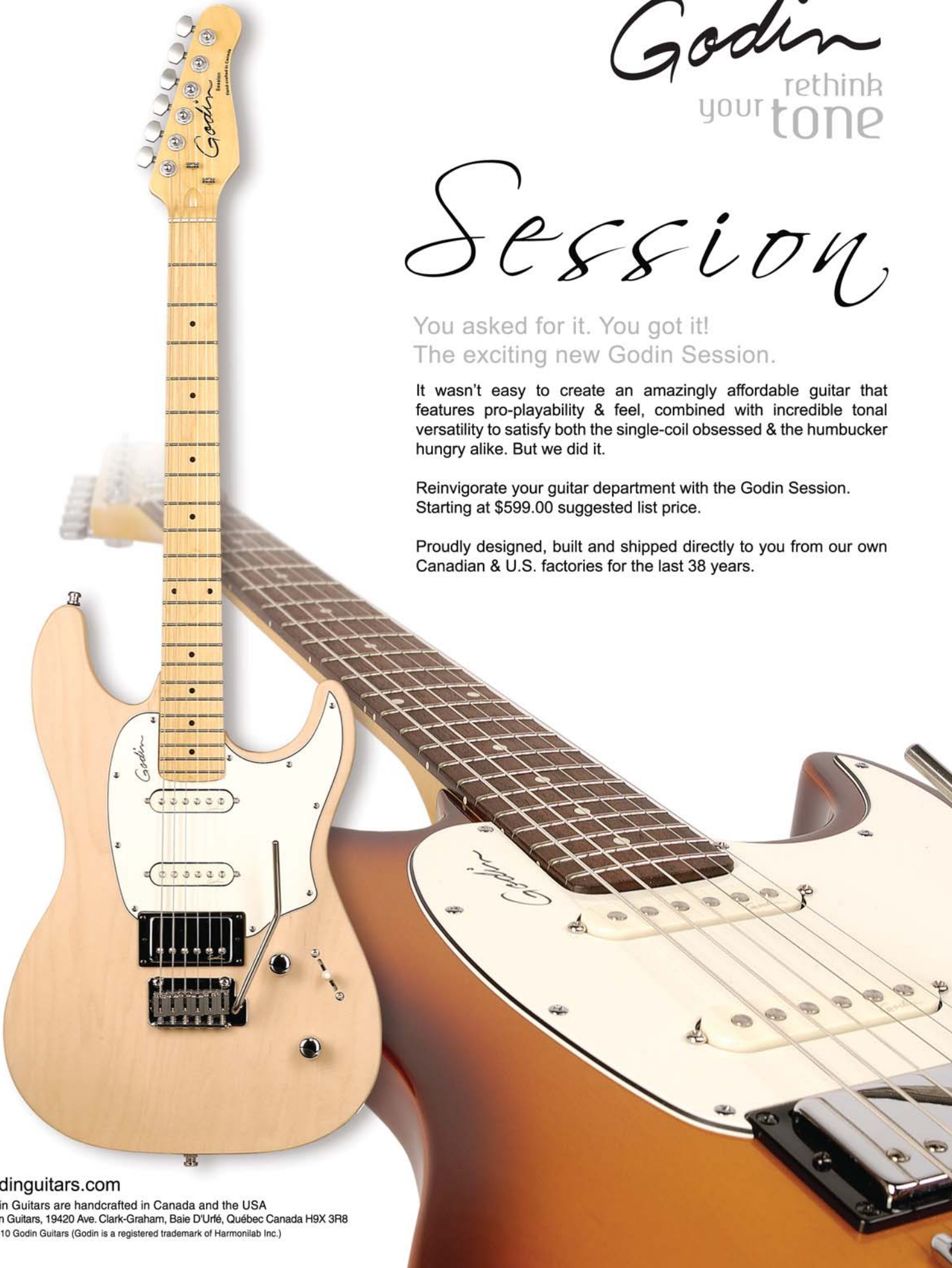
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78 | HOW I SCORED THAT LINE

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Jim Harms

Photo by Lars Swanson

QUICK MOVERS

During the 2009 holidays, Strait Music sold eight times as many beginner acoustic guitar packs as it did electric packs.

“We’ve got a 20- by 40-foot neon marquee out front,” said Casey Maroney, sales manager of the Austin, Texas-based full-line dealership. “All we need to do is put, ‘Guitars starting at \$99,’ and that’s it.” Maroney added that he often bumped customers up to \$200–\$300 models, mainly the Yamaha FS720S and APX500.

On paper, entry-level acoustics sound like a dream

Nearly everyone’s a customer for entry-level acoustic guitars

category: a necessary first purchase for every fledgling player, regardless of age or demographic, with the potential to drive generous store traffic — and give dealers that fourth-quarter bump. As Mike Mulqueen, sales and product

manager for guitar distributor Major Music Supply, pointed out, it’s also a category that tends to perform well in a down economy. But the low ticket price and mass distribution can be a turn-off.

“I have a lot of friendly competitors who say they don’t want to sell \$200 guitars,” said Jim Harms, owner of My Music Store in Minneapolis. “Believe it or not, they send those people to me.”

John Giovannoni, co-owner of The Music Room in Palatine, Ill., said he more than makes up for the low price with rapid inventory turns.

“A Fender CD-60 has a \$199 street price, and that’s with a hardshell case,” he said. “Cost is \$102.60, so it’s a 48-percent margin. We can’t even keep them in stock. We turn them within 30 days, our entire batch of them.”

THE UPSSELL

Giovannoni credited his success with entry-level acoustics to his relatively deep stock and keeping all guitars on the wall — even the least expensive — set up and gig-ready.

That said, The Music Room doesn’t dabble in the \$99 range. Strait Music’s Maroney said he



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prefers using instruments at this price as a talking point to upsell customers. During the holidays, Strait displayed a dozen acoustic packs in the \$99 range in the middle of the show floor.

“People come in and ask, ‘What’s the cheapest guitar?’” Maroney explained. “I say, ‘Here it is — 100 bucks.’ Then, I take them over where I’ve got the nicer ones displayed. The cases are open. [Customers] look and start asking questions. It all goes from there.”

“A lot of retailers put this stuff out there as loss leaders,” said Steve Patrino, president of The Music Link, which distributes such entry-level acoustics as the Johnson JG-615 and Recording King RD-06. “They pull customers in and sell them up.”

But Patrino stressed that even the Johnson JG-615, which has a roughly \$99 street price, is “packed full of value.”

“A \$99 guitar now versus a \$99 guitar three years ago is a different animal — at least ours are,” he said.

MUSIC LESSON MAINSTAY

Harms, who has roughly 1560 students pass through his store each week, said lower-end acoustics are a necessary piece of his education-focused business model.

“If you can start a young player on a quality instrument and get him involved in those lesson programs, potentially, you’ve got a customer you can groom for life.”

He keeps an unplayable \$50 acoustic guitar in the back room to caution parents wanting to start their kids on a dirt-cheap model. “I say, ‘If I can’t play it, how’s a 10-year-old going to play it?’”

“Take the time to educate them and say, ‘You know, if you

spend \$179, you’ve got a viable instrument.” He reassures parents by letting them return the guitar for 60 percent of its resale value if their kid quits.

ALTERNATIVE MARKETS

School guitar programs have created a relatively new, burgeoning market for beginner acoustics. Cris Behrens, store manager of Utah school music retail giant Summerhays Music Center, said rent-to-own acoustics at the \$299 price point have been in demand with students in junior high and high school guitar programs. He estimated that 80 percent of his company’s acoustic sales are in this range.

“The \$299 price range with a hardshell case in a rent-to-own program is a big hit with combating the lesser-quality guitars that can be bought at non-music-retailer-type stores,” Behrens said. “Parents are more willing to take a chance by paying a small monthly rent with a four-month minimum on a higher-quality acoustic than outright buying a lesser-quality acoustic that the student may or may not stick with. The rental return rate on an acoustic guitar is far less than that of any B&O rental that we do.”

Chris Griffiths, vice president of American Music and Sound, which distributes the Jay Turser brand, has also noticed several Jay Turser dealers finding opportunity in school guitar programs. “A great-sounding and easy-to-play instrument is critical at this juncture, as it will influence the time and commitment the purchaser invests in mastering the instrument.”

When asked who he sees as the customer for these guitars, Griffiths added, “Honestly? All of them.” **MI** — Zach Phillips

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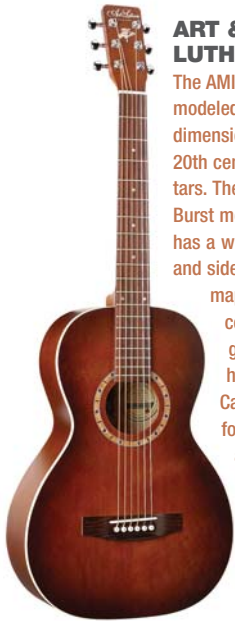
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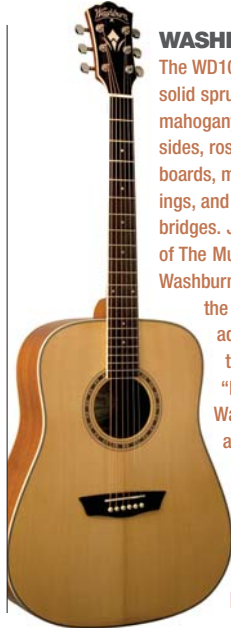
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WASHBURN
The WD10S line offers up solid spruce tops, mahogany backs and sides, rosewood fretboards, multi-ply bindings, and rosewood bridges. John Giovannoni of The Music Room, a Washburn dealer, offered the following advice for selling these guitars: "Display a Washburn WD10S as if it were gold-plated and came with a masseuse." MAP: \$119. washburn.com



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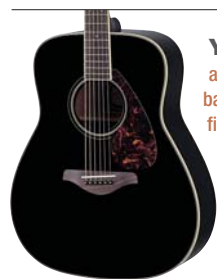
JAY TURSER The JJ-49 includes an adjustable truss rod, die-cast machine heads and gloss finish. More recently, the company launched the JJ-49 PAK, which bundles the instrument with a gig bag, strap, Profile PT-2600 tuner and Rock House Method tutorial DVD. MAP: JJ-49, \$64.99; JJ-49 PAK, roughly \$110. [\[jaytursers.com\]](http://jaytursers.com)

JOHNSON The 615 Player series dreadnought features a solid spruce top, bound rosewood fretboard and die-cast tuners. It's available in gloss black or as a dreadnought cutaway with a pickup. MAP: \$119.99; dreadnought cutaway, \$149.99. [\[themusiclink.net\]](http://themusiclink.net)



JB PLAYER The JPBGAC dreadnought has a spruce top, mahogany back and sides, die-cast machine heads, and natural gloss finish. As a bonus, it comes with a wooden case featuring a black Tolex-type exterior and plush lining interior. MSRP: \$235. [\[musiccorp.com\]](http://musiccorp.com)

CRAFTER The Silver series HD24 models are packed with features for the first-time player, including dreadnought bodies, 25.5-inch scales, spruce tops, and mahogany backs and sides. The guitars also have rosewood fingerboards and bridges. Street price: \$279. [\[crafterusa.com\]](http://crafterusa.com)



YAMAHA The FG720S boasts a solid sitka spruce top, Nato back and sides, and rosewood fingerboard. Its finish options include natural, black, brown sunburst, Dusk Sun Red and Ocean Blue Burst. Street price: less than \$300. [\[yamaha.com/guitars\]](http://yamaha.com/guitars)

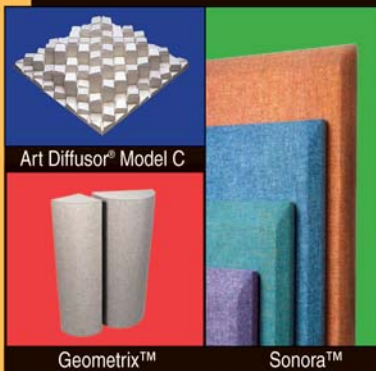
GREG BENNETT Dubbed "the loudest guitar you've ever heard at this price point," the GD100S dreadnought features Thunderflex bracing, a solid sitka spruce top, Nato mahogany back and sides, multi-ply binding, and a padded gig bag. MAP: \$189. [\[gregbennettguitars.com\]](http://gregbennettguitars.com)



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Mike Ross



THE REVOLUTION WILL BE RECORDED

It's a product that every customer who walks through a retailer's doors wants to buy. It's as low-budget as under \$100 and as upscale as over a grand.

"It may be the most sought-after and useful Christmas gift for anyone involved in audio — ever," said Mike Ross, marketing director for Sweetwater Sound in Fort Wayne, Ind. And you'd be hard-pressed to argue with him.

If you're not selling them yet, welcome to the world of hand-held digital field recorders. There are nearly a dozen companies currently making them, and for retailers who sell everything from band instruments to pro audio gear, the segment is a winner. "It's been a growth category for us

Why hand-held digital field recorders will change music retail

since they first started coming out," Ross said.

NO CABLES, NO HASSLES

What makes hand-held recorders a hot category?

"While their uses cross many different consumer spectrums, I think musicians are taking advantage of the technology that allows them to be closer to their music more than ever before," said Amy Leslie, audio product manager

for Olympus.

"We are part of the point-and-shoot generation," said Jerry Kovarsky, director of brand management for Korg USA. "People are using their Flip cams to take HD videos and post them to YouTube — no cables, no hassles. With audio, the feeling is the same."

"Field gathering of media is at an all-time high right now with more and more people video blogging, podcasting and creating other Web-based content," said Jake Carter, product specialist with HHB. "Experienced media producers know the limitations of the internal audio options of video recorders, and podcasters often need to be 'untethered' for interviews. Hand-held recorders are the easiest of the

go-to options for getting these field samples in the can."

QUALITY EXPLOSION

While such manufacturers as Olympus, Tascam, Sony, Yamaha and Roland have been making portable recording devices for decades, this hand-held category exploded when technology combined digital recording, a good condenser mic and a device that delivered high-quality sound.

"It's [for] everyone from concertgoers wanting to capture live performances to musicians wanting to review their performances to sound designers wanting to create original sounds rather than buy from libraries to people making their own home movies with iMovie and exploring the use of ADR

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PORTASTUDIO 30th ANNIVERSARY
30th
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[Advanced Digital Recording],” said Kurt Heiden, marketing manager for Alesis.

“[They’re for] anyone who needs high-fidelity audio recording on the go,” said Vince LaDuca, product manager for Edirol by Roland. “Hand-held recorders are ideal for musicians who want to record their musical inspiration instantly, but there are a myriad of other uses for podcasters, journalists, lecturers, business professionals, doctors, even scientists.”

“We are finding that the market continues to expand,” said Mark Wilder, marketing director for Samson Technologies, distributor of Zoom products. “Musicians and songwriters are the largest part of the market, but we also sell the recorders to journalists, bloggers, podcasters, sound designers, filmmakers and educators. Retailers with a lesson program should be selling a recorder to every single student.”

SEEING INTO THE FUTURE

As a result of this appeal, manufacturers are looking to sell hand-helds through the broadest retail base possible.

“All Yamaha dealers should be carrying these products,” said Athan Billias, marketing director for Yamaha Corp. of America. “In fact, we have been working hard to expand distribution of the Pocketraks outside of just MI combo dealers to both our B&O dealers and piano dealers.

“Music & Arts and Paige’s Music are examples of B&O-focused dealers who have been successful with Pocketraks. Sweetwater, Washington Music and Romeo Music are examples of education-oriented dealers who have been very successful. We are working with Hal Leonard on bundles with Finale, as these products work well together.”

And the future for the product won’t just be heard — it will be seen. Zoom and Alesis have both launched hand-helds with video capabilities, and Sweetwater’s Ross sees video becoming standard. He said the first generations of hand-held recorders offered “a Swiss Army knife” of options. But he believes the market will open up for even simpler recorders created for specific purposes, too.

No matter which way the products head, he and others believe this will continue to be a booming category for retailers. **MI**

— Frank Alkyer

THE PLAYERS

+ HAND-HELD RECORDERS



HHB The Flashmic is geared to the broadcast market. Street price: \$1,099 with a Sennheiser omnidirectional or cardioid mic capsule; \$1,499 with a line input jack. hhb.co.uk



YAMAHA Yamaha has two versions of the Pocketrak: the W24 (pictured) and the C24. MAP: W24, \$299.99; C24, \$199.99. yamaha.com



OLYMPUS Olympus offers the LS-10, LS-11 (pictured) and the WS-500. MAP: LS-10, \$299; LS-11, \$399; and the WS-500 retails for \$99. olympus-america.com



SONY The audio giant delivers the PCM-D1, PCM-D50 and PCM-M10 (pictured). MAP: PCM-D1, \$1,849; PCM-D50, \$499; PCM-M10, \$299. sony.com



EDIROL Edirol by Roland has the R-09HR and the new R-05 (pictured). MSRP: R-09HR, \$450; MAP: R-05, \$249. edirol.com



MARANTZ Marantz has the PMD620 (pictured), PMD660 and PMD661. Street price: PMD620, less than \$350; PMD660, less than \$500; PMD661, less than \$600. d-mpro.com



KORG The new Sound On Sound (SOS) Recorder features unlimited tracks and overdubbing. MAP: \$299. korg.com



SAMSON Zoom has three entries: the H2, H4n and Q3 (pictured). Street price: H2, roughly \$149; MAP: H4n, \$299; Q3, \$249. samson-tech.com



ALESIS Alesis has the ProTrack, PalmTrack and VideoTrack (pictured). MAP: \$199, \$149 and \$199, respectively. alesis.com



TASCAM Tascam delivers the DR-07, DR-2d (pictured) and DR-08. Street price: DR-07, less than \$150; DR-2d, less than \$300; DR-08, less than \$200. tascam.com

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“One of the most useful products I’ve seen in a really long time!” says customer Alan Bibey.

FLORIDA—ToneRite Inc. has released the third generation of the world’s premier automatic play-in device for guitar. One of the secrets of great, vintage instruments is the more they are played, the better they sound. The ToneRite® accelerates the opening-up process of acoustic instruments by using a set of sub-sonic frequencies to simulate the same physics as long-term playing. Simply attach the ToneRite® whenever you are not playing and expect to hear moderate to dramatic increases in resonance, balance and dynamic range after only a single week’s worth of use. The ToneRite® is available for guitar, mandolin, ukulele, violin, viola, cello and double bass. Already, customers are raving about it. Eric Schoenberg



of Schoenberg Guitars says, **“The ToneRite® has made a dramatic difference in the tone of new instruments and has helped to ‘wake up’ vintage instruments that haven’t been played in years.”** Alan Bibey, member of Grass-towne and two-time SPBGMA Mandolin Player of the Year had similar compliments: **“The ToneRite® supercharged my instruments to their max in volume and tone! One of the most useful new products I’ve seen in a really long time!”** Grammy Award winner John Sherba of the Kronos Quartet said, **“The more I used the ToneRite® the better my instruments got, not just a little bit, but creates a definite, noticeable, positive audible difference.”** The third generation ToneRite® is now available for resale to select stores.

Achieve vintage tone for your stringed instrument now, only at www.tonerite.com or call toll-free at 1-(866)-688-3772.



Brad Boynton

EVERYBODY'S INSTRUMENT

Brad Boynton, owner of Rhythm Traders in Portland, Ore., carries all things drums, but not all his customers are drummers.

"They are also toddlers, teachers, theater groups and studio musicians," Boynton said. "Actually, we sell a lot of small percussion to singers and sound engineers because drummers don't always show up to the gig prepared."

Hand-held percussion has been a bread-and-butter item for most music retailers, but as big-ticket sales decline, dealers are seeing customers make more impulsive grabs for shakers, clackers, blocks and bells.

Shakers, bells and noisemakers go from novelties to staples

"Everyone is a potential customer because of the many different price points, as well as the relative ease of playing most items, which is a great combination for consumers in any economy," said Tom Becker, general manager of Steve Weiss Music in Willow Grove, Pa.

GROWTH FACTORS

The growth of the hand percussion market has not been lost on suppliers. Meinl, Remo, Pearl and Vic Firth have all steadily expanded their offerings in this category, while Toca and LP have added creative hybrid percussion tools, such as the Toca Jingle Shake and LP Percusso.

"Our entire shaker category is going great guns," said Jim Rockwell, director of marketing for Latin Percussion.

The price range on these small goods is as diverse as the category. Stag egg shakers cost as little as \$4.99, while the Toca Freestyle Fifth Anniversary djembe is \$399.

"The fact is drummers are still going to spend money on their instruments, but it's just less right now than at other times," said Ben Bruno, assistant combo and percussion marketing manager at Pearl. "Drummers are always looking for ways to add new sounds to their arsenal."

The diversity of products and strong margins make this segment appealing to retailers. According to Boynton, one way to profit is to use hand percussion to complement rather than compete with other dealers. This prevents a race-to-the-bottom effect.

"In fact, it will be difficult for customers to comparison

shop since no one competitor would be deep in all percussion categories,” Boynton said.

SELF-PROMOTERS

Percussion retailers and suppliers unanimously agree on one tried-and-true way to sell this category: Get hands-on.

“Put up a rig with a percussion table full of hand-held instruments,” Rockwell said. “If it is available to demo out in the open, there is a greater chance to make a sale.”

“Tell your staff to pick two or three crazy percussion instruments, so even when a customer says, ‘No thanks, just looking,’ your staff can counter with, ‘Have you seen one of these?’” Boynton said.

Many dealerships, such as Marshall Music in Lansing, Mich., have started hosting regular drum circles as a way to bring non-musicians into the store.

“We’ve added a monthly drum circle at our Lansing location that’s turned into

something very popular,” said Joe Cardenas, vice president of combo products at Marshall Music. “We provide the drums to those who don’t have them, and that has translated into a few sales.”

“People of all ages are getting involved in drum circles as a fun pastime,” said Wes Faulconer, owner of Explorers Percussion in Kansas City, Mo. Faulconer also suggested tapping into drum healing programs and finding local music therapy markets.

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

The sheer number of SKUs in this segment — from congas to bongos to exotic effects, such as the donkey jaw — can easily lead to inventory overload. But most drum retailers agree that having variety is the key to success.

“I would suggest going wide in this category,” said Frank Eck, manager of drums and percussion for West L.A.

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- Screw top shaker cylinder allows you to adjust the amount of fill

THE PLAYERS

+ HAND-HELD PERCUSSION



LP The Multi Gajate Bracket secures three percussion items that can smoothly alternate at any time.

The drummer rotates the top assembly to choose from block, bell or tambourine. It will not budge under repeated blows, and its low profile enables it to slip into tight spaces.

MSRP: \$150.

{lpmusic.com}



PEARL The New Yorker cowbells are designed to create the signature salsa sound with the volume and durability to handle any musical situation. The Marc Quinones Timbal bell is an ideal salsa campana bell. With its one-piece steel construction, it's engineered to cut through the largest latin ensembles. MSRP: \$67.

{pearldrums.com}



REMO Developed for education and recreation markets, Remo Global Frame Drums include Irish bodhráns, pandeiros, tar frame drums, a riq, a tamburic and a Persian daf drum.

MSRP: \$89-\$259. {remo.com}



MEINL Offering stylish appeal, the String Designer series cajons feature fluid graphics that defy the typical boxy-crate look. The cajons have an adjustable sizzle effect with integrated string mute system.

MSRP: \$279. {meinlpercussion.com}



TOCA This 12-inch tambourine frame is made of exotic acacia wood. The tambourine is lightweight and has an ergonomic handle for extra comfort. MSRP: \$49.

{tocapercussion.com}



TYCOON The Martin Verdonk Signature series includes the Easy-Shake and Swing-Shake shakers and the studio-style Las Vegas tambourines.

MSRP: \$9-\$67. {tycoonpercussion.com}



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tocapercussion.com



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Remo Kanjira played by Pete Lockett, award winning percussionist.

Music in Los Angeles. "Choice seems to be something that most customers are seeking."

"By carrying smaller quantities of more models, rather than the usual rule of stocking more quantities of only a few models, dealers are able to display a larger selection that might normally be found only online," said Juan Berrios, Meinl's vice president of sales.

However, Gary Waddell, owner of Waddell Drums in Wexford, Pa., suggested newcomers ease into this category.

"In this market, I'd start off with a few things," Waddell said. "Djembes are our best-sellers. We also set out egg shakers on our counter, and little kids pick 'em up."

According to Faulconer, the children's percussion segment is a strong starter niche.

"Bongos and congas have kind of slowed down, but percussion specifically geared for kids, such as Meinl's Nino line and LP's RhythMix, is still growing," he said. "A lot of people don't specialize in kids percussion."

Retailers can also niche their selection by carrying a house brand or one-of-a-kind imports. Boynton carries house-brand tambourines, bells and ganzas that have up to four times the profit margin as name-brand items.

Becker noted Steve Weiss Music's exotic selection is a big hit with customers when a composer's score calls for unconventional sounds.

"We offer many of our own brand instruments that cannot be purchased anywhere else," Becker said. MI — Jenny Domine

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BECAUSE SOUND MATTERS

PROFITS & PROTECTION

Eastman's Saul Friedgood with the ETR420 student trumpet



If ever there was a time to invest in an alternative band and orchestra line, it was yesterday.

The laundry list of challenges for school music dealers keeps multiplying — budget cuts, economic setbacks, extra-cautious consumers, and that's just for starters. A lesser-known line can offer controlled distribution, attractive pricing and, as Separk Music's Drew Parker put it, profit margins that "often shock" his colleagues.

"The perceived value of many of these instrument lines parallels the major brands, but my cost is much lower than one would expect," said Parker, president of the Winston-Salem, N.C., school music dealership.

And according to Scott Summerhays, president of Summerhays Music Center in Murray, Utah, customers are also less brand conscious than one would expect, especially when it comes to entry-level B&O instruments.

"Based on our recommendations, key influencers of music students are typically very willing to try new or established products and give us feedback," Summerhays said. "In this regard, the key factor is quality and not necessarily the brand name."

"Our overhead costs are much less, and we are able to price our instruments where everyone in the channel is making a good profit margin, while still being significantly

Alternative B&O brands can be a godsend in a down economy

priced under many brand names," said Don Rhodes, president of E.M. Winston, which supplies a range of B&O instruments and accessories.

He added that most alternative brands don't have large required buy-ins, making them even more attractive to retailers trying to prune their inventory. "Order what works for you and your business, and it most often ends up growing to

levels that neither of us could have predicted," Rhodes said.

THE QUALITY PITCH

As Parker pointed out, the trick with alternative lines is selling everyone on quality. Separk Music has an aggressive play-testing program. Its in-house teachers demo and compare instruments constantly, "not just to select the model to promote but also to monitor the quality coming from the factory," according to Parker. He joked that suppliers view his store as their QC department.

"Every flute in my store, student to pro, gets played many times: during initial receipt and entry to our system, before they are rented to a new student, during weekly maintenance, and most recently during our monthly maintenance program in our warehouse."

Parker then sells customers with what he called a "try it and you tell us what you think" strategy. He related how one high school director in the market for three euphoniums was leaning toward a major brand. Parker left the director with an Eastman model for a week.

"[He] was sold not only on the quality of the product but also by the fact that he could get a fourth instrument within the budget he had," Parker said. "I also made a very healthy margin on the transaction."

"If we are auditioning a new line, we are very honest with the teachers upfront, showing them the advantages and disadvantages and reassuring them that if problems arise we will take care of them," said George Quinlan, president of Burr Ridge, Ill.-based school music dealer Quinlan & Fabish.

THE DIFFERENTIATION FACTOR

And, of course, there's no replacement for an educated retail sales staff. Tevis Laukat, president of woodwind and brass-wind instrument maker Cannonball, acknowledged that more innovative products often take extra effort to introduce, but the benefits of doing so can be great.

Cannonball's Stone series saxophone models each come with two necks, giving students the option of two different sounds on the same instrument. Laukat said his company is currently designing a display for the extra neck to give salespeople "a benefit to talk about" so they can "introduce Cannonball in a different way than the competition."

"Another example would be talking about full ribbed construction on our student saxophones, which normally only comes on professional saxophones."

THE VALUE OF TERRITORIES

In the cutthroat school bid market, alternative B&O instruments also give independent retailers a chance to grab the sale and make a respectable margin. Saul Friedgood, executive vice president of Eastman, said his company offers exclusive territories to help curb bottom-of-the-barrel bids.

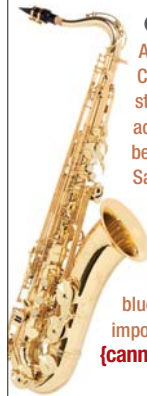
"In many cases, we only have one dealer in each territory," said Friedgood, whose company supplies B&O and a variety of stringed instruments. "So when a dealer does the legwork to get in on a school bid, they will get the reward of being able to win that bid and do it at a decent margin that works for everyone."

Quinlan cautioned fellow retailers to pick their supply partners carefully, though, citing protected territories as a key consideration.

"Each year, almost half of all rental instruments are returned, and the reward of a higher margin only happens when and if the instrument is sold," he said. "Often, that takes several years. We work with our suppliers closely to make sure they realize we make a long-term investment of time and money to build acceptance [of lesser-known brands] for both of us. We try to be selective, choosing suppliers that understand our position and are willing to grow with us and protect us during the process of building brand acceptance." **MI** — Zach Phillips

THE PLAYERS

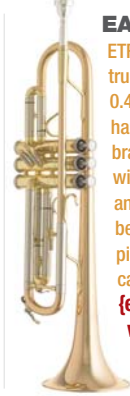
+ ALTERNATIVE B&O



CANNONBALL

All saxophones in Cannonball's Alcazar student line are acoustically finished before leaving the Salt Lake City factory.

Each model features a hard rubber classical-style mouthpiece, blue steel springs and imported Italian pads. **{cannonballmusic.com}**



EASTMAN

The ETR420G B-flat trumpet features a 0.46-inch bore, hand-spun gold brass bell with a wire reinforcement and torch-annealed bell tail. A mouthpiece and plastic case are included.

{eastmanwinds.com}

E.K. BLESSING

The upgraded BTR-1266 and BTR-1277 trumpets feature the new M Bell (medium) shape, a 4 7/8-inch model previously reserved for more expensive instruments. MAP: \$630 each.

{ekblessing.com}



E.M. WINSTON The FL200S student C flute lists for less than \$300 and delivers the goods. It features a silver-plated head, body and foot, along with a French-style case with a leather cover. Bonus: It comes with a five-year warranty. MSRP: \$299. **{emwinston.com}**



SAGA MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

The Cremona SV-130 violin outfit has select, solid ebony for its fingerboard and trimmings. The select solid spruce top and solid maple back are hard-carved and graduated.

{sagamusical.com}

W. NIRSCHL

The H100 student trombone has a 0.5-inch slide bore and 8-inch bell. It also features lacquer or bright silver plate and chrome-plated nickel silver inner slide tubes. The H100 comes with a 12C mouthpiece. MSRP: \$899.

{wnirschl.com}



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Photo by Ryan Fitzsimmons

Tim Mann

MORE UKULELE

Don't look now, but the little ukulele could be the mightiest trend in stringed instruments today.

Billionaire investor Warren Buffett is a fan. He takes his passion to schools, teaching children the basics of playing the ukulele. Jake Shimabukuro, known as the Jimi Hendrix of the uke, played an amazing version of "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" on YouTube. More than 4.8 million people have viewed it, to date. And Collings Guitars recently reported that Pete Townshend, the legendary songwriter and guitarist for The Who, just

The uke is now hip, and smart retailers are tapping in

ordered up two of its high-end ukuleles.

The uke is popping up all over the media landscape — from television's "American Idol" to National Public Radio. And all of this has musicians — from beginners to pros — taking a new look at the instrument. The trend also gives retailers a new growth segment for ukes priced from less than

\$50 to more than \$5,000.

"When you've got people saying again and again how much George Harrison was into the ukulele, it really made me take a second look," said Tim Mann, a Boston-area musician and the resident uke expert at The Music Emporium, a boutique stringed-instrument retailer in Lexington, Mass. "At the same time, I saw Paul McCartney in concert, and he was playing it on a rendition of one of George's songs. And I got a Tom Petty record, and there was a ukulele song on that. So, I began to realize that really serious musicians are playing ukulele not just for fun

but because it's viewed as a bona fide instrument."

Mike Upton, president of Kala Ukulele, said the market has been hot for more than three years now, "but it has been a real underground-type movement that has now bubbled up to the surface, and people are realizing what a cool little instrument it is."

But others in the market have been feeling the uke-omania for much longer.

"Ukuleles have been around now for 120 years, since they were first brought from Portugal in about 1890," said John Kitakis, founder of Ko'olau Guitar & Ukulele, the



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THE SOURCE

TREND SEGMENTS UKULELES

THE PLAYERS

+ UKULELES

There are countless suppliers of ukuleles. Here's an abbreviated listing from the very inexpensive to the top-of-the-line makers. For more, check out tikiking.com. The site has a database of more than 500 makers.



SAGA It offers Mahalo and Hamano ukuleles. Mahalo includes a Deluxe Soprano Pineapple outfit and a Flying V-style (pictured). MSRP: \$29.95-\$104.95. {sagamusic.com}



MARTIN The guitar maker has been crafting ukes since 1916, from the classic S-0 to the Standard 3, 3K and 5K. MSRP: \$399-\$5,199. {mguitar.com}



BIG ISLAND It has three lines of Honu ukes: the Deluxe XXX, the Rope and the Traditional. MSRP: \$349.99-\$1,149.99. {bigislandukulele.com}



KALA It provides more than a dozen ukuleles from novelty models to Koa lines. MSRP: \$39.95-\$500-plus. {kalaukulele.com}



FENDER The industry giant manufactures three tenor-style models: the Hau'oli, Nohea and Pa'ina (pictured). MSRP: \$199.99-\$399.99. {fender.com}

MAJOR MUSIC SUPPLY The company offers Makai ukes in three series: Mahogany, Solid Top and Koa. MSRP: \$59.99-\$639.99. {majormusic.com}



IBANEZ With six unique designs, Ibanez's offerings include the UEW20SG (pictured) and the Iceman-styled UIC10BK. MSRP: \$114.27-\$214.27. {ibanez.com}



LANAKAI It makes several lines of ukuleles: Custom, Designer, Flame Maple, Curly Koa, O and LU. The company also offers the budget line, Kohala by Lanikai. Street price: \$34-\$399. {lanikaiukes.com}



COLLINGS The high-end Austin, Texas-based guitar maker also crafts 10 ukulele models. Street price: \$1,800 to more than \$3,500. {collingsguitars.com}

THE MUSIC LINK The distributor provides Koloa Ukuleles, which include both Pro models and entry-level PlayerPacks. Street price: \$39.99-\$169.99. {themusiclink.net}



OHANA UKULELES It has a wide range of ukuleles from sopranos to baritones, along with unique models. MSRP: \$69-\$859. {ohanamusic.com}

KO'OLAU UKULELE Made in Hawaii, Ko'olau offers Standard and Custom series ukes that list as high as \$8,200. It also offers affordable, quality ukes starting at \$369. {koolauukulele.com}



makers of Ko'olau and Pono ukuleles. "Popularity was up and down, but the past 10 years has been on the rise. And today, they are popular in almost every country, in all styles of music, including jazz, country, rock, reggae, blues, classical and, of course, Hawaiian. They are small and easy to tote around. And they create a feeling of happiness — even when playing the blues."

DEEP DEMOGRAPHICS

So who makes up the market for ukuleles? "Originally, we thought it was mostly teenagers and college students, but the deeper we look into the market, we see that the demographics are very versatile," said Irene

Shvartsman, acoustic product line manager for Ibanez, a newer entrant into the ukulele market. "For example, you have church groups and retirement communities also showing interest in the ukulele."

"The crazy thing with the uke is that all ages and demographics are playing it," Upton said. "There are uke clubs and groups forming organically all over the country, as well as internationally, and they want to learn and grow together as a group."

"I find that lately a lot of non-musicians are picking it up and having success with it. Also, a lot of guitar players are finding ukulele is easy to add to their stringed-instrument arsenal."

THE RECESSION-ERA INSTRUMENT

To tap into this market, retailers need to do three things, according to Louis Wu of Ohana Ukuleles. "First, give the instrument a better presence at your store," Wu said. "Second, work with your local communities and schools to support the learning and playing of the instrument. Third, be prepared to stock a good range of the instruments and related accessories, so it becomes a one-stop shop for your customers."

Wu also suggested starting a ukulele class at your store, hosting a uke club, taking out booth space at local uke festivals and having clearly defined sections carved out in your store for ukuleles and accessories.

Jim Bryant, marketing man-

ager for Fender acoustics, agreed. "Some [retailers] test the waters carrying a few different models at different price points, and after having success, they add more ukes at different price points for the beginner to the pro," he said. "Also, there are many stores that specialize and sell only ukuleles that offer a wide variety of manufacturer instruments and a range of price points."

In short, stores that have the most success selling ukuleles are the ones that take the instrument most seriously, according to Kitakis.

"They have designated areas in the store for ukuleles," he said. "There are a variety of sizes, brands and qualities. There may be the



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cheap uke, but they also carry high-quality instruments, often running up to several thousands of dollars. Just as they know that someone could at any time walk in the door and buy a guitar worth over \$2,000, so too with ukuleles.”

“Retailers who are not seriously looking at the uke market are losing some big dollars,” said Jorma Winkler, president of Big Island Ukulele. “The uke market has been a growth industry, year on year, for the last five years, including these last two recession years. I’ve heard some uke makers had their best months in the last two years. I am also seeing my orders rise and new dealers coming on-board.”

Just having product and knowledge helps open the door

to the market, according to Winkler. “Many customers looking for ukuleles want to buy at a brick-and-mortar store, but too often, there is none in the area, so they are forced to buy through the Net, often grudgingly and very often from one of my dealers in Hawaii.”

SELF-SELLERS

Winkler and others agreed that ukuleles are great complementary products for stores selling guitars. That’s where employees, such as The Music Emporium’s Mann, come in. He plays the ukulele regularly in the Boston area. He also teaches and posts videos on YouTube.

“It really helps in selling the product to have a lot of knowledge,” Mann said. “One of the

‘You just show [customers] a couple of ukes, and they’re intrigued. It’s almost like the ukes are doing it by themselves.’

— Tim Mann

things that we pride ourselves on at The Music Emporium is that, in general, with all of our products, we know how the instruments are made. We know the difference between

instruments at different price points. We can account for the price tag on every instrument in the store.”

“Specifically, people come in and they’ve seen me on YouTube or they’ve seen me playing, and it helps them say in their minds, ‘This guy must know what he’s talking about because he’s practicing what he’s preaching.’”

Even so, Mann likes to let the ukulele do the sales pitch. “To some extent, they do sell themselves,” he said. “You just show them a couple of ukes, and they’re intrigued. It’s almost like the ukes are doing it by themselves. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard the phrase, ‘I’ve always wanted to get into the ukulele.’” **MI**

— Frank Alkyer

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Tom Grace

GRAND TECH CONVERSION

When visiting Daynes Music's Web site, the first thing a viewer sees is a MacBook Pro sitting atop a Henry Z. Steinway Limited Edition grand piano. It's an image that exemplifies the growing trend of marrying digital media with acoustic pianos.

CUSTOMER RELEVANCE

Daynes Music in Salt Lake City has attracted attention from suppliers and fellow retailers for its goal of putting five acoustic PNOscan pianos in every Utah school. QRS Music's PNOscan uses optical sensors and a USB connection to give acoustic pianos a com-

Acoustic piano retailers seal the deal by adding on player pianos

puter link up.

Currently, owner Skip Daynes is working on a \$1.1 million federal grant to develop UPlay Piano software, which works with PNOscan, which tracks students' piano lessons, progress and accuracy.

Daynes and most other piano dealers agree this technology gives them an extra

boost to help seal a deal.

But each piano dealer must consider the type of customers they cater to when deciding what player piano systems to carry.

"Do your research," said Tom Austin, president of Sherman Clay in San Francisco. "If the size of the library, the ease of installation and the quietness of the mechanical actions make a difference to you, then you should be looking into which system is superior."

"People who are on the fence often decide to go forward with the purchase because of the player add-on," said Tom Grace, Jordan Kitt's senior vice president in Washington, D.C. "The Sync-A-Vision system is a great

attention grabber and fantastic for remote events, malls and home shows."

According to Tom Lagomarsino, executive vice president of PianoDisc, 27 percent of piano buyers surveyed claimed they would not have bought a grand piano had it not been for the player system, and approximately 35 percent of new grand pianos sold in the United States are equipped with player systems.

THE DIGITAL PITCH

Acoustic pianos have seen large sales declines with the advent of digital keyboards, but player piano systems can give piano dealers a competitive technological edge.

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(available soon)



- **iQ Blu-ray Package**
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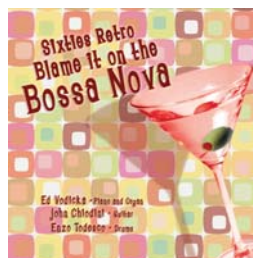
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PIANODISC IQ

PianoDisc's IQ packages bundle media delivery devices, hardware and software that let a dealer customize IQ to suit his or her customers. DVD players, Oppo Blu-ray players, netbooks and iPods are just some of IQ's performance partners.

{pianodisc.com}



YAMAHA DISKLAVER E3

This piano includes standard, CD sync and video sync recording; more than 450 built-in songs; and Internet connectivity. It also supports DisklavierRadio and DisklavierMusicStore.

{yamaha.com}

"You can say, 'We have the greatest digital there is, and you get a free acoustic piano along with it,'" Austin said.

With such products as PianoDisc's Sync-A-Vision and PNOscan, dealers can also leverage software and CD sales.

"One of the cool softwares that's out there is PianoWizard," said Sam Bennett, general manager of PianoWorks in Duluth, Ga. "We were already selling PianoWizard separately. It was an easy match up. It can be an upgrade, a tie-in or a throw-in depending on how you want to market it."

Wyman Piano President Tim Laskey said dealers who demo player piano technology and pitch its educational benefits can also increase sales.

"WebOnlyPianos has an educational program [Piano Discoveries] that plays through the piano," Laskey said. "You put the CD into the piano player unit, and it gives accompaniment to the curriculum of the piano course."

COST & UPGRADES

One of the challenges of this product category is keeping up with the ever-changing technology. Suppliers have found ways to ensure their products stay relevant

and foster customer-dealer relationships.

"An add-on sale is the beginning of a wonderful relationship between the dealer and the customer," Lagomarsino said. PianoDisc has created the Legacy Music Exchange program, which lets PianoDisc customers swap their older PianoDisc CD music library for the same music in any new format that a new system requires.

Yamaha has also announced a soon-to-be-released Disklavier DKC-850 control unit that will add the new Disklavier E3 series to older models.

"It offers tremendous ROI, as there's only a minimal additional investment," said Jim Levesque, Disklavier marketing manager at Yamaha. "Owners can outfit older-model Disklaviers with enhanced features, like Disklavier Radio, as well as video sync and CD sync capabilities."

"As computers change, it doesn't make any difference to PNOscan," Daynes said. "[The piano] has a USB port. As long as things plug in with USB, it will accept new information." He also includes the feature in all new Steinway purchases.

"It doesn't matter if [customers] want the feature or not," Daynes said. "Their grandchildren will want it." **MI**

— Jenny Domine

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DIGITAL GETS REAL

At The NAMM Show 2010, digital drums represented a product segment on the cutting edge of innovation.

The Yamaha DTX900 and DTX950, Korg Wavedrum, and Pearl e-Pro Live swept the “Best In Show” awards, featuring new technologies that improved the look and response of traditional black pads. Authentic drum sound reproduction and feel have also won over more dealers in recent years. Jim Rupp, owner of Columbus Pro Percussion in Columbus, Ohio, and a “Best In Show” panelist,

called Yamaha’s latest introductions “a game changer.”

“I thought that the pads on that Yamaha set felt amazing,” Rupp said. “I had a hard time getting up from playing them.”

THE QUIET CUSTOMER

A key selling point for digital kits is the silent practice feature.

Fred Markle, owner of Markle Music in Linton, Ind., has seen many apartment-dwelling musicians take an interest in this type of kit.

“I have drummers who might get up at 2 a.m. and want to play away,” he said.

Digital drums offer new innovations to players

“Digital drums have saved many a peaceful home.”

Jason Robinett, drums and percussion manager for Gadsden Music in Gadsden, Ala., said this product category appeals to a wide range of drummers.

“Our customers are primarily churches, students and pro drummers,” he said. “Pro drummers buy digital for live performances, rehearsal and recording.”

invest in an electronic drum kit,” said Bob Terry, Yamaha’s marketing manager for DTX electronic drums. “There are benefits and features that you wouldn’t normally get on an acoustic drum kit.”

At the retail level, strong sell-through can be achieved by dedicating a special place to digital drums.

“Set up your kits like a drummer would play them,” said Tim Root, product manager for Roland drums and percussion. “Make displays accessible and comfortable, and make sure each kit has not only headphones but a great-sounding playback system.”

THE PLAYERS

+ DIGITAL DRUMS



ALESIS Based on Alesis’ DM-10 sound module (pictured), the DM-10 Pro Kit features the company’s RealHead drum pads, Surge cymbals made of real cymbal alloy and ErgoRack mounting system. It also includes tom mounts that enable freely adjustable mounting. MSRP: \$1,799. alesis.com

KORG The Wavedrum from Korg is an electronic drum pad with a real drumhead and textured-rim playing surfaces, which provide articulate responses. This drum comes with acoustic percussion sounds, synth voices and effects. MSRP: \$850. korg.com



PINTECH The Pintech E-Gig is an entry-level kit that has many of the same features as higher-end kits, including Pintech’s EZ Module. The eight single-zone inputs, 389 voices, 50 preset songs with four user songs and full MIDI capability make it an ideal starter module. MAP: \$1,125. edrums.com

ROLAND The Octapad SPD-30 is a multi-percussion pad that uses Roland’s V-Drum trigger technology and has a real-time phrase loop function. It features 30 types of multi-effects and USB connectivity. MSRP: \$799. rolandus.com



YAMAHA The DTX950K is a six-piece electronic drum system that features DTX-Pad drum pads with a textured cellular silicone head. This series includes four toms, three cymbals, a snare, a hi-hat and a kick. It offers matte chrome finished hoops and an on-board sampler with dedicated effects. yamaha.com

MORE BANG FOR THE BUCK

Yamaha, Pintech, Roland and Alesis have all been at the forefront of electronic drum technology. Each company has offerings with their own unique features, such as Alesis’ Surge cymbals made of real cymbal alloy or Roland’s TD-4SX V-Drum with patented multi-layer mesh heads. Price ranges vary to meet customers’ diverse needs.

Pintech offers an entry-level kit for students with 389 voices and 50 preset songs, plus MIDI.

“Digital drums allow for much greater versatility than a standard acoustic drum kit,” said Lorrie Landry, Pintech’s manager of sales and service.

On the high-end, the Yamaha DTX drums deliver precise tracking, a solid Hexrack and an on-board sampler.

“You can get considerable bang for your buck when you

HYBRID FUTURE?

Pearl, a dedicated acoustic drum kit manufacturer, has also dipped into the digital trend with its e-Pro live. This kit is a digital-acoustic hybrid, which could represent the next generation of the category, blending an acoustic feel and aesthetic with digital options.

And last December, Korg released the Wavedrum, an electronic hybrid-type drum pad that responds to hands, sticks and brushes.

“The product plays and reacts as the user expects it to,” said Korg Wavedrum Product Manager James Sajeve. “That lends to its ability to be used by a wide range of musicians.”

“As with any segment of the market, advances in technology allow musicians to perform more flexibly and with more versatility.”

“Technology helps to increase the capabilities in the same footprint or even a smaller one.” **MI**

— Katie Kailus

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HOW I SCORED THAT LINE

Jim Harms, owner of My Music Store in Minneapolis, held the No. 1 Parker Guitars dealer title for two consecutive years. It was hard won. In fact, when he first went after the line, he was turned down.

"I had to battle a little bit for it," he said. "They said, 'We're not looking for any dealers right now.'"

But Harms got a lucky break when a rep called on him as a vintage buyer.

"He was surprised when I knew more about the Parker guitars than he did," he said.

Harms explained how he was able to establish a house account with Parker when the rep moved on to a different career.

"I called the gal who was taking my orders and said, 'I don't have a rep. Why don't we set it up so that you get the commission?' So every time somebody couldn't pay for [a guitar], every time there was a blemish, guess who got the phone call? I was her bread-and-butter account."

Harms used every opportunity to help Parker move guitars, even taking on unwanted back stock as used models.

"They kept feeding me product," he said. "In the first seven months that I had [Parker], we sold 48 guitars at \$2,000 and up." This opened the door to other lucrative lines, such as Paul Reed Smith Guitars.

Like Harms, Rick Mock, owner of Melodee Music in Leesburg, Va., has grown to be a top-level dealer for many major brands, and today, he said he can score any line he wants.

That was not the case when Melodee Music opened in 1971. It was a small business in the same region as Chuck Levin's Washington Music Center.

"That was always the line: 'Chuck Levin's has it,'" Mock said. But he made his case by mentioning he was in another state, and the line had little or no representation in the area.

Mock's big break came in 1972 when he scored Gibson Guitar. Even though he stopped carrying the brand five years ago, it was an important line that helped him build his business. "Sometimes, a company would take a chance on us, and most of them are glad they did," he said.

GO TO A SHOW

Dealers in pursuit of their dream products often have to find creative ways to stand out to suppliers.

Music Matters co-owner Aaron Soriero took the success of his first rock camp and added it to his arsenal of reasons why suppliers needed to pay attention to his Atlanta-based retail chain.

"At Summer NAMM, I went around to the booths with copies of newspaper articles and pictures from the camp," Soriero said. "Some of the companies that were unwilling to

Retailers share their hard-won battles, rule-bending strategies and lucky breaks

open me as a dealer were willing to sponsor the camp by sending some of their products to use for free or at cost."

These sponsorships gave Soriero the foot in the door he needed to snag valuable lines.

"I feel that a lot of work can get done at The NAMM Show that might be harder to achieve over the phone," he said. "Sometimes, if you call the main number and ask to become a dealer, the person answering the phone may look at a map and determine that you are too close to another dealer.

"At NAMM, you have the opportunity to further tell your story and sell yourself."

Soriero also said NAMM gives dealers an opportunity to meet with people higher up in a company. Talking with a head of marketing or even a CEO can give dealers a chance to share what they can offer a manufacturer.

Once you have that CEO's ear, Soriero advised keeping the lines of communication open.

"If they sent you some gear to use for an event or program you were having, be sure to

follow up to say 'thank you' and send some pictures or video of their gear in action."

Mark MacLeod and Alice Alviani, co-owners of Family Piano in Waukegan, Ill., scored their high-end Sauter piano line with an elevator conversation at the 2007 Piano Technicians Guild Convention in Kansas City, Kan. The retailers were quickly introduced to Sauter President Ulrich Sauter at the convention and found themselves being wined and dined by the piano maker.

"We are now at the brink of selling our first 9-foot Sauter concert grand to the University of Wisconsin-Parkside," MacLeod said. Family Piano is also adding an additional 3,000-square-foot space to its store and bringing in new products, such as Crafter guitars. It's another brand they found through convention interaction — this time at The NAMM Show 2010.

"When we asked, people said, 'Go see Crafter,'" MacLeod said. "It happened four or five times.

"For all the people who don't go to The NAMM Show, I have no sympathy for their businesses. So many opportunities come to you because you're there. If you're not there, you miss out."

Soriero also noted that people tend to move around within the close-knit music product industry. A strong relationship with a person at one company often leads to more opportuni-

ties as that contact goes to work for other suppliers.

BE A CHEERLEADER

Supersonic Music in Topeka, Kan., is one of two retailers in the state that carries Mesa Boogie amps, and General Manager R.J. Soldani is a huge fan of the line, which he scored this year.

“It was an exciting thing for us,” Soldani said. “We’ve sold two amps, and they haven’t even shown up yet.”

Soldani approached Mesa Boogie’s regional sales rep and presented a model mix of products he thought would be successful in the area. It didn’t hurt that Soldani is a guitar player and uses the product himself.

“Mesa is very picky about its dealers,” he said. “They have arguably the most reputable name out there. We try to be as proactive as possible when selling new lines.”

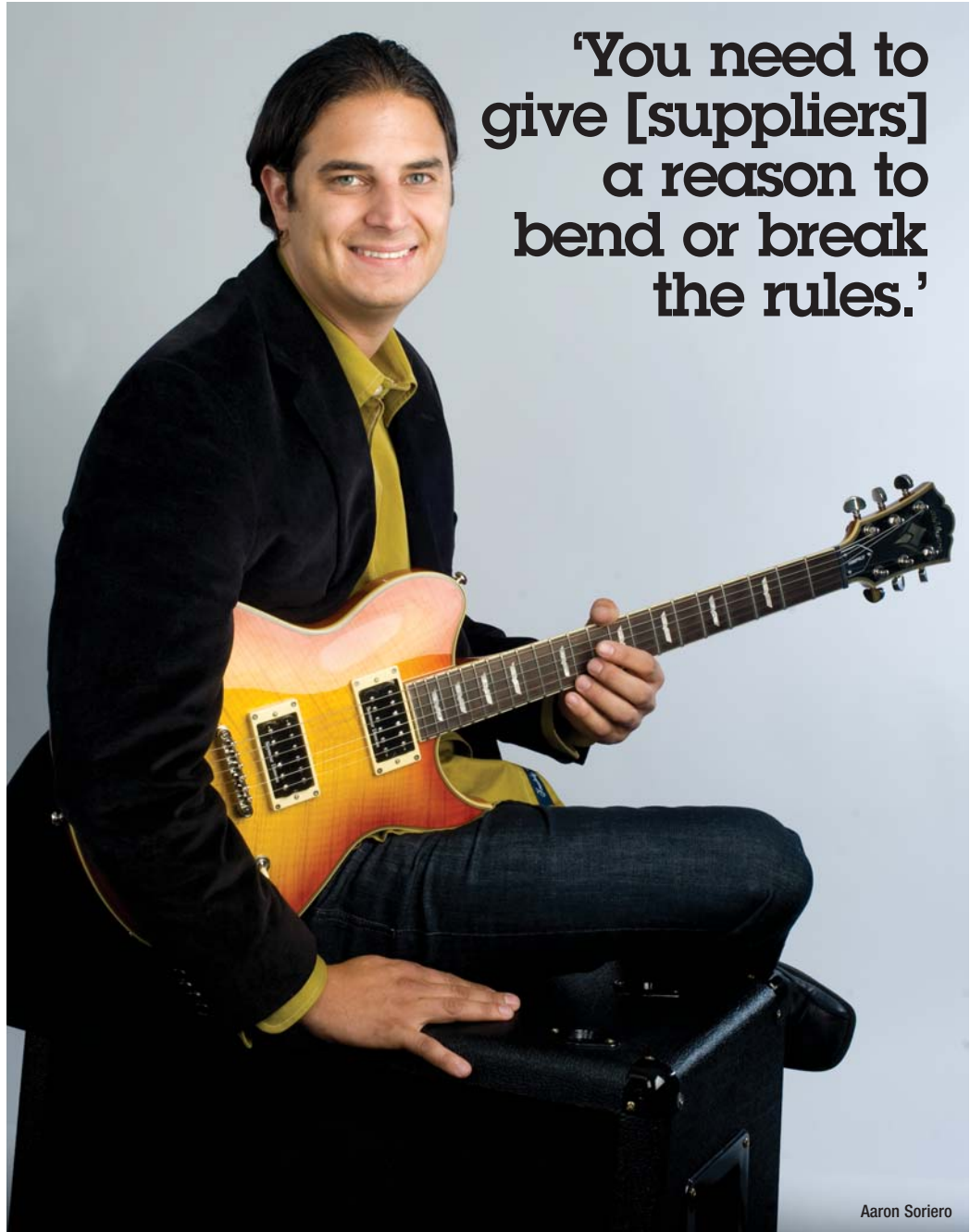
Bobby Boyles of Oklahoma Vintage Guitars in El Reno, Okla., uses his YouTube guitar reviews to champion his lines. But when he first started, he encountered resistance.

“When we got started [online] 10 years ago, we wanted to start advertising on the Internet, and all the lines were scared to death,” Boyles said. “It was really hard to get lines if you were doing online advertising of any kind.”

It took Boyles several years to get major lines because some manufacturers were uncertain about his online promotions.

“I just kept saying to them, ‘This is the largest advertising medium the planet has ever known, and you’re keeping your name off of that,’” Boyles said.

These days, companies line up to get one of Boyles’



Aaron Soriero

‘You need to give [suppliers] a reason to bend or break the rules.’

YouTube reviews.

“We’ve become a reference point for buyers all over the world,” he said. “We find that manufacturers sell a lot of a particular SKU if I have it advertised like that. [Suppliers] come to me now and say, ‘Hey, we want you to do our products.’”

Boyles still has some hurdles to overcome, such as convincing suppliers to let retailers advertise on eBay and

other third-party sites, but he said he’s pleased to see how well his suppliers have adapted.

“We had Taylor Guitars for six years and didn’t do a lot with them because we couldn’t even state online that we were a Taylor dealer,” Boyles said. “They’ve come around and want us to do all of it. Taylor is a very progressive company, and they are becoming one of our biggest lines because they

saw what we were capable of.”

For many retailers, scoring a new line comes down to having the audacity to keep saying “yes” when everyone else says “no.”

“If a company has some rules determining who they open and who they don’t, then you need to give them a reason to bend or break those rules,” Soriero said. **MI** — Jenny Domine, with reporting by Zach Phillips

PRINT MODEL REDUX

Get print. That was Myrna Sislen's message to 700 music retailers at this year's NAMM breakfast session "Best In Show."

"There is not a music store of any kind that would not benefit financially to have some kind of print," said Sislen, owner of Middle C Music in Washington, D.C.

Print music sales continue to be a margin-friendly add-on for instrument retailers, but many niche sheet music dealerships are struggling because of greater online competition.

That's why Dave's Music Den owner Beth Ellingwood-Wind forged a partnership between her print music shop and Meridian Music, a piano dealership in Carmel, Ind. She rents space inside Meridian Music and runs the department as a separate operation.

"[The Meridian staff] felt that they needed to continue with print music in their store, but they didn't want to deal with it themselves," Ellingwood-Wind said.

That 2007 partnership paved the way for Dave's Music Den to open a second location in 2009 within Fort Wayne, Ind., retail giant Sweetwater.

SAVING SHEET MUSIC

Print dealers turning into vendors for larger music stores is not a new concept, but more recently, it has become a popular alternative for print retailers looking to grow.

In October 2008, professional pianist Richard Dowling purchased Wadler-Kaplan in Houston from Pender's Music



James Li (left) and Richard Dowling; inset: inside Dowling Music's Houston location

Two print music dealers explain why becoming vendors was the best choice

two weeks before its closing date. He and his partner, James Li, rechristened the store Dowling Music and moved it to a new, more prominent location in Houston.

Now, Dowling Music has also adopted the print vendor model, signing an agreement in March to open a second location within Steinway Hall in New York.

"I am hoping to make

Dowling Music more of a national store, rather than just a regional store," said Richard Dowling, owner of Dowling Music.

MAKING IT WORK

This partnership between instrument retailer and print vendor can provide big rewards for both parties but not without a certain amount of risk.

Accent Music had a similar vendor partnership with Brook Mays but lost everything when the full-line dealer filed for bankruptcy in 2006.

"When a company declares bankruptcy, nothing under its roof can be removed, whether it's their property or not," said Richard Rejino, former Accent Print Music vice president and current store manager for Pender's Music's Dallas location.

Rejino recommended that dealers considering this type of partnership have carefully drawn up contracts, a store manager who's willing to support a print department and a Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) agreement.

According to Daniel Jobe, accountant and music retail consultant for Friedman, Kannenberg and Co., current legislation lets banks seize everything from a bankrupt company.

"Once everything is liquidated, the UCC codes provide an order to who gets the money, but even then vendors can still lose out," Jobe said.

FINDING THE WIN-WIN-WIN

For Dave's Music Den, the vendor business model has been carefully tested at Meridian Music and proven viable at Sweetwater.

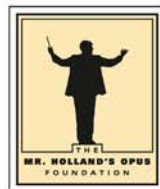
Dear

M.H.O.F, Thank you, not only for donating our instruments to us, but also for giving children like me the opportunity to learn music and develop a talent that we will keep our whole life. You give us something that will define us, make ourselves special, without you I would probably never ^{have} learned to play guitar. So
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Sincerely yours Joseph Posey



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(Like, for instance, the above letter.)

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“I think the biggest benefit is we tapped into their customers,” Ellingwood-Wind said. “[Sweetwater traffic] is amazing because it is like a tourist destination.”

Dowling, a Steinway artist himself, saw the benefit of paying a flat rental rate to give his business access to Steinway Hall’s resources, prestige and prime loca-

tion around the block from Carnegie Hall.

“We don’t have to build bathrooms, we don’t have to build teaching studios, and Steinway Hall already has recital rooms,” he said. “We know exactly how much music we have, so we’re going to duplicate just the store.”

For both Dowling and Ellingwood-

From left: Dave’s Music Den’s Joan Fisher, Beth Ellingwood-Wind and Theresa Haner



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Middle: Dave’s Music Den’s print display; bottom: the gift department at Meridian Music

Wind, the presence of a physical print store in a community is an essential service that won’t go out of style.

“I had a gentleman come in at Christmas, and he was in desperate need of a violin Christmas book for his daughter,” Ellingwood-Wind said. “He admitted he had ordered it online. The book arrived but without the violin part. He had tried to communicate with [the online service], and three weeks later, he still didn’t have a solution. He called us, and we had two copies.

“He said, ‘You are going to save my life.’ He came in, bought it and his child was happy. I think that makes a big difference.” **MI**

— Jenny Domine

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PRIMA MUSIC | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

MOM-AND-POP ONLINE

Prima Music operates on razor-thin margins. Its latest sale featured 40- to 50-percent off Schirmer Performance Editions. Educators who spend more than \$1,200 with the Atlanta-based online print music retailer get a 25-percent discount on purchases for life. In no uncertain terms, Bobby Mitchell, company CEO, sees sheet music as a commodity business.

But Prima Music's ascent from startup to multimillion-dollar operation over the past eight years comes in a big way from its old-school, mom-and-pop customer service. "As the owner of the company, I can pretty much spot any customer's name who comes through here," Mitchell said.

Orders get sent out with stickers and handwritten thank-you notes. Employees are encouraged to chat up telephone customers to build a rapport and learn about their needs. Mitchell even claims to know the names and composers of all 35,000 titles in his company's warehouse.

"I tell staff, 'This is not a call center,'" Mitchell said. "'You're not on the clock.'"

PIANO NICHE

Mitchell, an ex-Internet industry executive, founded Prima Music with his wife, Susan, a piano teacher, after she couldn't find a local print music retailer. The company began, and remains, niched in the piano education market. It operates out of a 5,000-square-foot distribution center and currently employs 12 people. "We try to keep the



Prima Music's low-margin, high-service Internet retail model

staff and the footprint lean," Mitchell said.

Balancing personal customer transactions with self-serve e-commerce sales helps reduce labor and costs. "It's not like brick-and-mortar, where we have to give personal, face-to-face attention to everyone who walks in the door," Mitchell said. "So that gives us some advantage because our customer service is focused on the needy, if you will — the people who call up needing advice."

He added that, despite its low gross margins, the company has been profitable for several years by turning large product quantities. "We were FJH's second-largest Internet retailer in the country last year. I just heard from Alfred that

we finished 2009 as the No. 4 online company in sales."

DISCOUNT PROMOTIONS

Aggressive online marketing helps Prima Music generate that volume. According to Mitchell, the company has more than 70,000 people on its newsletter list. Its e-blast on March 15 included the Schirmer offer and 25-percent off Willis Music's A Dozen A Day series, along with a link to a recital recommendations page and featured new titles.

"People get the e-mail, and over the next two to four days, there's a gigantic influx of orders," Mitchell said. "We probably do 10 times an average day's business on the two or three days following any e-mail we send out."

The company's membership program, which was designed to entice discount-sensitive private piano teachers, also generates sales by rewarding return customers. It has four tiers, ranging from 10-percent off for customers who spend \$300 to 25-percent

off for customers who spend \$1,200. And it lasts for life.

Mitchell said the company receives additional referral business from private piano teachers who double as church organists or school teachers. These customers often bring their larger accounts to Prima.

PROFITABLE PARTNERING

Over the past two years, the company has grown by dabbling in non-piano segments, particularly choral and pop music. Mitchell credited Alfred's Shopping Cart Handoff Program and Hal Leonard's Order Referral Program as key to that expansion, calling the initiatives "almost like a gift from heaven." As a bonus, integrating the publishers' full catalogs into Prima's Web site has boosted the company's search engine rankings. "Because of those [programs], those segments of our business are growing really fast," he said.

Prima Music's hefty e-mail list has also made it an attractive publisher partner. The company currently offers two free copies of a new FJH Music method on its Web site. FJH fulfills the orders and includes a Prima Music insert that directs customers back to the dealership if they need to purchase additional copies.

"I'm trying to move my publishers from being suppliers to being strategic partners," Mitchell said. "This year, I've really seen the tide turn on that. It could be driven by the fact that we've gotten bigger, and we're buying more from them. But we're also full of ideas, and the traditional model is out the door." **MI**

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THE FJH MUSIC CO. | BY KATIE KAILUS

FJH BRANCHES OUT

The FJH Music Co. has been a long-standing giant in piano pedagogy. But over the past several years, the Fort Lauderdale, Fla.-based print music publisher has branched out to make a name for itself in the band and orchestra method market, launching *New Directions For Strings* and, more recently, *Measures Of Success*.

“When we put our writers on the new band method, *Measures Of Success*, we noticed that band directors wanted something different,” said Kevin Hackinson, FJH vice president. “They wanted a new, fresh, quality method out there. We felt the timing was right for a method that was innovative and that would include a different look, a fresh sound, exciting music and play-along tracks that motivate and inspire students and young musicians.”

MORE THAN JUST PIANO

FJH was founded by print music industry veteran Frank Hackinson and his wife, Gail — Kevin’s father and mother. Their other children, Kyle and Kerry, are also involved in the business. The company publishes titles in multiple categories, including piano, guitar and instrumental.

Measures Of Success, A Comprehensive Musicianship Method For Band features full-page assessments and critical listening, playing by ear, theory and terminology, composing and arranging, and performance exercises and activities. The series addresses all of The National Association for Music



Kevin Hackinson

The renowned piano method publisher makes a name in B&O

Education’s standards, and each book comes with an accompaniment CD, which features live backing tracks recorded by The Washington Winds, The Studio A Jazz Band Rhythm Section and Horns, and The Washington Pops. Classical and world music representing more than 20 composers and 17 countries, along with art and world history, are also featured. The method was written by Deborah Sheldon, Robert Sheldon, Brian Balmages and Timothy Loest, with per-

cussion by David Collier.

In 2007, the company released *New Directions For Strings*, A Comprehensive String Method. “It’s the first method written by a team of pedagogues, experts representing each of the four stringed instruments whose combined expertise represents over 100 years of teaching experience,” Hackinson said.

He added that “in addition to the approach and pedagogy, great methods should have great music. That is key.” *New Directions For Strings*, for example, features a variety of concert pieces by composers Soon Hee Newbold and Elliot Del Borgo.

METHOD OF THE FUTURE

In pianos, FJH recently released Helen Marlais’ *Succeeding At The Piano*, A Method For

Everyone, which combines music by top pedagogical composers with classics.

“We feel that this new piano method is *the* innovative piano method of the future and presents a pedagogically sound approach to teaching the piano,” Hackinson said. “We’re just releasing it now. We published over 200 supplemental publications by Dr. Helen Marlais while we were developing and writing the method. Now, she has name recognition and significant dealer and teacher support. The initial reaction to this method has been phenomenal.”

Last year, FJH sold *Piano Adventures* and the other publications written by Nancy and Randall Faber to a corporation they controlled. The Faber catalog is now distributed by Hal Leonard.

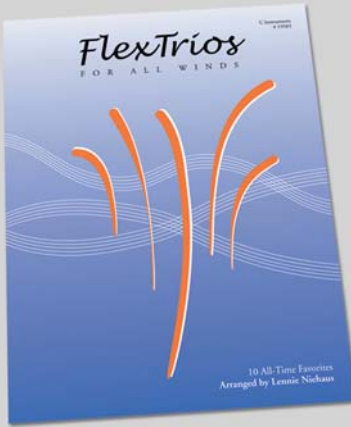
DEALER SUPPORT

Hackinson said FJH’s piano, guitar and instrumental titles have become especially popular among the company’s dealer network.

Many print retailers give these publications an extra push through piano workshops and string and band reading sessions.

“FJH writers and authors will present about 40–50 workshops and clinics this year sponsored by music dealers,” Hackinson said. “We partner with the dealer to make this possible. It’s a very effective way to promote new products, and it’s a great way for dealers to be involved, co-promote and co-sponsor these workshops.” **MI**

PRINT MUSIC SPOT LIGHT



FlexTrios For All Winds

To answer the call for chamber music with flexible instrumentation, veteran writer Lennie Niehaus has designed this new series that features 10 grade 2-3 selections that can be played by virtually any combination of three like-or-mixed wind instruments using the appropriate key-compatible book (C Treble Instruments, Bb Instruments, Eb Instruments, F Instruments, Bass Clef Instruments).



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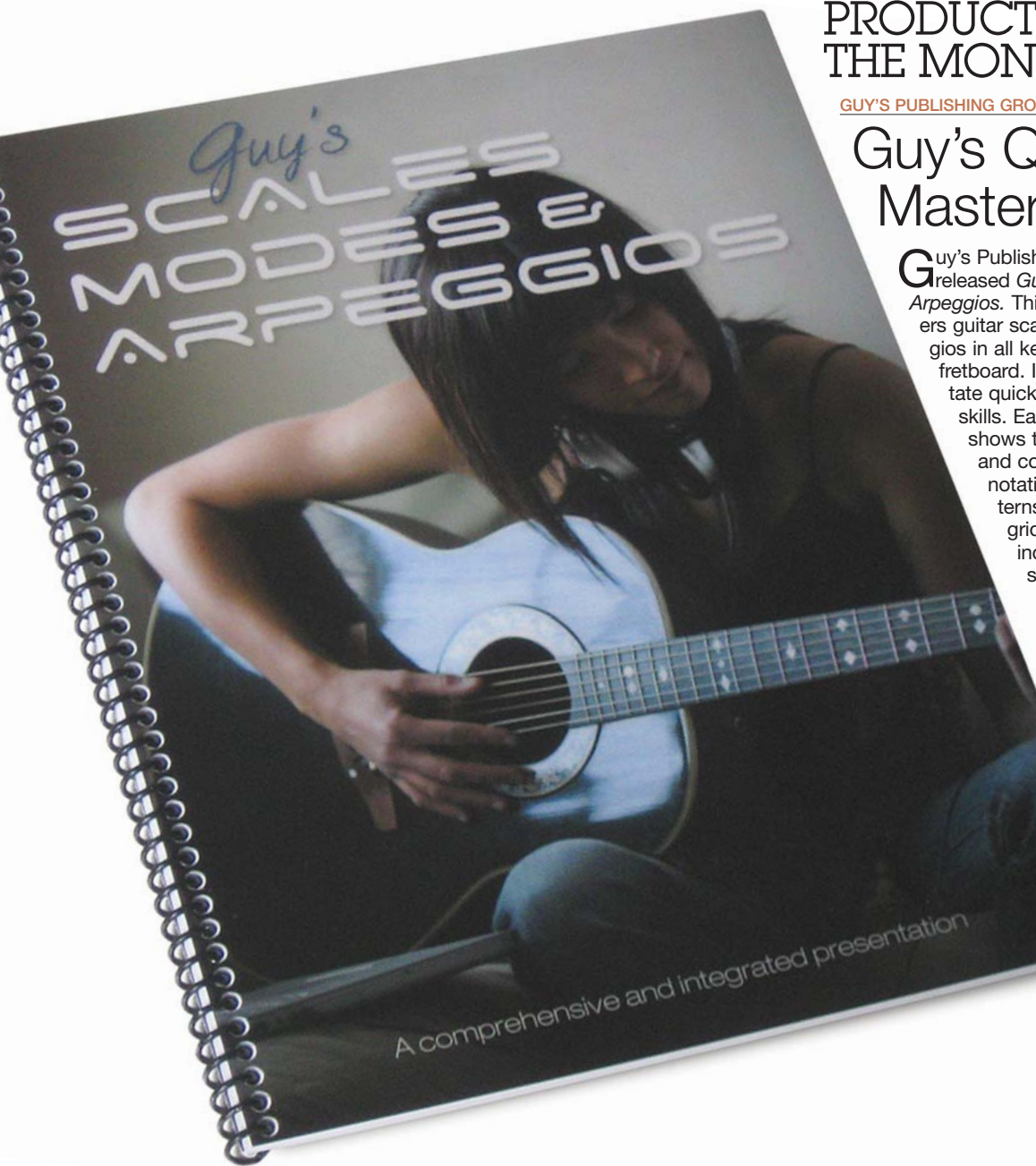
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GEAR



PRODUCT OF THE MONTH >

GUY'S PUBLISHING GROUP | GUITAR FINGERING

Guy's Quick Mastery

Guy's Publishing Group has released *Guy's Scales, Modes & Arpeggios*. This reference book covers guitar scales, modes and arpeggios in all keys and regions of the fretboard. It's designed to facilitate quick mastery of guitar skills. Each two-page spread shows the fingering patterns and corresponding standard notation. The fingering patterns are presented in a grid format. The appendix includes a comprehensive set of triad studies. MSRP: \$14.95.

{guysgrids.com}

> Inside GEAR

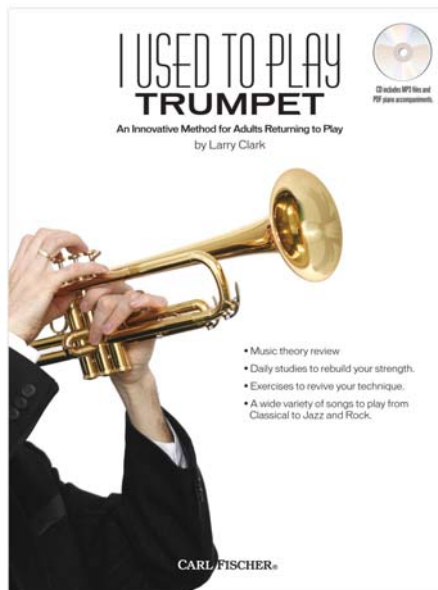
- > **Print, Multimedia & Gifts**
Hal Leonard rides 'Avatar' Oscar buzz
PAGE 90
- > **Guitars, Amps & Accessories**
Tech 21 unleashes deadly dynamics
PAGE 92
- > **Audio, Recording & Lighting**
American DJ gets the Jellyfish glow
PAGE 94
- > **Drums & Percussion**
Dixon powers up Plasma finish
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- > **Band & Orchestra**
Barcus-Berry spices up Cajun fiddle
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CARL FISCHER | I USED TO PLAY SERIES

Play It Again

Carl Fischer now offers the new I Used To Play series for flute, trumpet and violin. The line is designed to jump-start former adult players and get them comfortable with their instruments again.

Each book contains a variety of songs and styles, including pop, jazz and classics. The enclosed CD contains audio MP3 files of each song, plus versions of accompaniments without the melody to make playing along easier. The CD also comes with printable PDF files of the piano parts, which can be played by a pianist friend to provide more performance opportunities. carlfischer.com



ALFRED | TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

Get Techie

In keeping with trends in digital media education, Alfred's *Mr. Zig's Literacy, Music And Technology Connection* is a new book that takes classes through the process of creating, composing, recording and producing an original song. The book-and-CD set includes 18 step-by-step lesson plans, worksheets and song examples.

alfred.com

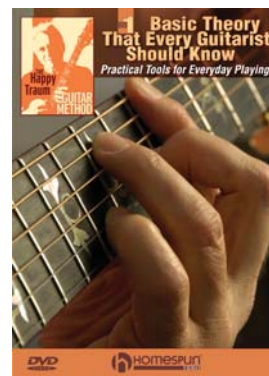


HOMESPUN | GUITAR THEORY

Happy Theory

Homespun's new *Basic Theory That Every Guitarist Should Know: Practical Tools For Everyday Playing* can benefit beginners or experts who lack a basic understanding of the theory behind their music. Guitar teacher Happy Traum maps out the fingerboard, so guitar players can quickly find notes in any key and start turning them into simple melodies.

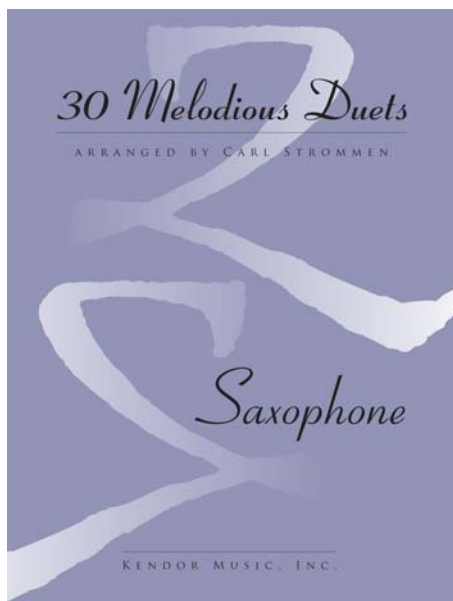
homespun.com



KENDOR MUSIC | '30 MELODIOUS DUETS'

Melodious Page Turner

Kendor's new duet project by Carl Strommen, *30 Melodious Duets*, is intended for second- and third-grade level players. The music in this collection eliminates awkward page turns within a piece for students. The layout has been designed so each selection appears on a single page or two facing pages. The list of composers includes Bach, Haydn, Clarke, Mozart, Hook, Corelli and Beethoven, to name a few. MSRP: \$12.95. kendormusic.com



HAL LEONARD | 'AVATAR'

Golden Buzz

Hal Leonard has released the piano solo soundtrack to Oscar-winning film *Avatar*. The matching folio features eight piano solo arrangements by composer James Horner. Songs include "The Bioluminescence Of The Night," "The Destruction Of Hometree" and "Quaritch," plus a piano/vocal/guitar arrangement of the song "I See You," sung by singer-songwriter Leona Lewis. This songbook also comes with an eight-page spread of full-color art from the film. MSRP: \$14.99. halleonard.com





1



2



3



4



The Gift Shop

Practical, wearable or just plain fun, these gifts will help generate impulse buys when kept close to the register.

1 ACCOUTREMENTS.COM MOZART ACTION FIGURE

Novelty wholesaler accoutrements.com has brought its silly style to the world of classical music with new action figures of famous composers, such as Mozart, Bach and Beethoven. Each figurine stands 5 3/8 inches tall and is made of hard vinyl with moveable arms and legs. Each classic composer also comes with a 1 1/2-inch plastic piano bench. Accoutrements.com also offers a downloadable PDF of a fold-up paper piano that can be printed and assembled.

{accoutrements.com}

2 HARRIS MUSICAL PRODUCTS INNERSOUL

Each guitar pick pendant in Harris Musical Products' new Innersoul collection is made of 2-mm surgical stainless steel and features stylish engraved designs. There are more than 40 models available. Each individually blister-packed pendant comes with a 24-inch stainless steel ball chain and a plastic playing guitar pick. The guitar-shaped P.O.P. countertop display is free with a qualifying order of at least 40 necklaces. MSRP: \$14.99 per necklace.

{picksbythepound.com}

3 AIM GIFTS HAND

SANITIZER Aim Gifts now offers a P.O.P. display for its Musician's Hand Sanitizer. This unique sanitizer spray is ideal for traveling musicians in crowded airports, music students from kindergarten to college, and non-musicians looking to prevent illness and the spread of H1N1. The hand sanitizer container is thin and light. It has a carabiner clip built into the cap, which makes it travel friendly and an easy impulse buy. The display holds 24 multi-colored cap designs.

{aimgifts.com}

4 MIGHTY BRIGHT LED

ORCHESTRA LIGHT Mighty Bright's orchestra light is an LED clip-on for performing musicians. Using solid-state lighting technology, the orchestra light provides coverage for up to four pages of sheet music. It's equipped with nine LED lights and an easy access power switch with two brightness levels. The light's flexible gooseneck arm can be positioned in many directions and the padded clip base easily attaches to music or piano stands. MSRP: \$69.99.

{mightybright.com}

TECH 21 | RED RIPPER

Deadly Control

The new Red Ripper all-analog bass effect from Tech 21 responds to the dynamics of an individual's touch. Play harder for more fuzz and higher harmonics, or ease up for less fuzz and enhanced lower harmonics. Other features include active three-band EQ and level and drive controls. There's also a low-pass filter switch to compensate for full-range bass systems equipped with tweeters. MSRP: \$225. tech21nyc.com



MODTONE | STUTTERKILL

Panic Button

The new StutterKill from Modtone is a dual-purpose pedal for all types of players. The pedal acts as a kill switch, which is ideal when changing guitars. The second button acts as a momentary kill switch that lets the player do an on/off toggle switch effect with the foot. It's like a personal musical panic button. MSRP: \$99.95. modtone-effects.com



> | AddOns

1 PLANET WAVES TRUE STROBE

PEDAL TUNER The new Planet Waves True-Strobe pedal tuner features a heavy-duty, die-cast design and convenient pedal housing. The readout has a large, back-lit LCD display. It's equipped with the Buzz Feiten Tuning System Offsets and employs six detuning modes for players using drop-tunings. MSRP: \$149.99. planetwaves.com



2 LEVY'S LEATHERS VAMPIRE,

WEREWOLF STRAPS In the spirit of pop culture's recent fascination with monster movies, such as "Twilight" and "The Wolfman," Levy's Leathers is now offering vampire and werewolf designs. These original, gothic-style designs are printed on cotton guitar straps. Pictured is model MSSC8V. levysleathers.com



3 I-TAB PORTABLE GUITAR TAB

PLAYER The new i-tab sits at the end of a guitar and scrolls chords and lyrics at the player's tempo of choice. The i-tab lets users download backing tracks and video lessons from a library of legal tabs, tracks and lessons on i-tab.com. The i-tab includes 4 GB of memory and 30 free song tabs. i-tab.com





EASTWOOD | FOLKSTAR RESONATOR

Red Resonation

The new Airline Folkstar Resonator from Eastwood Guitars is based on the early 1960s model. This chambered mahogany 24 3/4-inch scale guitar has a biscuit resonator cone with a piezo bridge pickup and a New York mini-humbucker neck pickup, which are both controlled by a blend potentiometer for unlimited sounds.

{eastwoodguitars.com}



BUDDA AMPLIFICATION | MN-100

Leather Luxury

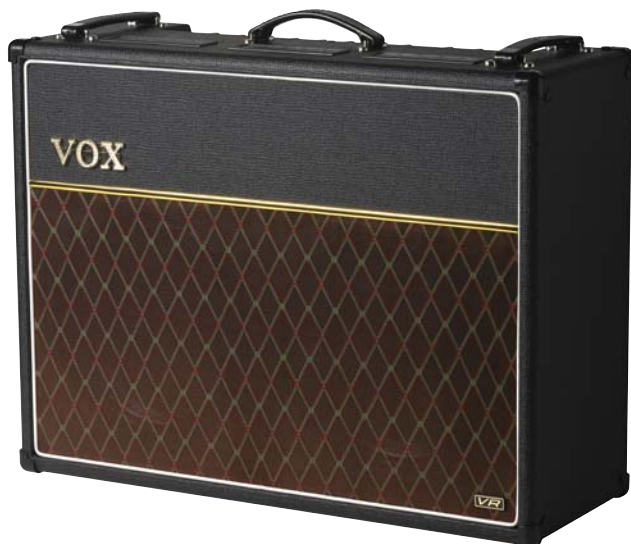
Budda Amplification's new Budda MN-100 features a custom Italian leather exterior by footwear designer Mark Nason. The Budda MN-100 is a high-gain amplifier, which features three independent channels, a 100-watt power section driven by four 6L6GC tubes and a pre-amp with seven two-stage 12AX7 tubes. MSRP: \$3,499.99. {budda.com}

VOX | VR SERIES

Amped Reactor

Vox has released the AC30VR and AC15VR VR series combo amplifiers. The line features Vox's Valve Reactor technology. The AC30VR (pictured) has an overdrive channel, which features its own treble and bass controls and adds a middle control. MSRP: AC30VR, \$800; AC15VR, \$500.

{voxamps.com}



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AMERICAN DJ | THE JELLYFISH

One Fish, Two Fish



American DJ has released the Jellyfish, an LED-powered effect light. It uses 84 high-powered LEDs through a clear outer shell, which changes color itself. The Jellyfish features 21 red, 21 green, 21 blue and 21 white 5-mm LEDs. It also offers a color strobe effect, 116-degree beam angle and built-in programs. The Jellyfish weighs 5 pounds and boasts a 100,000-hour LED life. MSRP: \$179.95. americandj.com

JBL | PRX500

Low-Priced Powerhouses

JBL is now offering all seven of its PRX500 series portable P.A. loud-speaker models at lower prices.

The PRX500 series includes JBL differential drive transducers and state-of-the-art Crown class D amplifiers, delivering high power and performance.

Lightweight, compact and multichannel, the Crown amplifiers include DSP for EQ, crossover, system control and protection. jblpro.com



SHURE | PSM 900

Thoroughly Analyzed

Shure's new PSM 900 wireless personal monitor system delivers a rugged, all-metal, wireless bodypack receiver and a half-rack single wireless transmitter. The PSM 900 will be available with Shure's newly introduced SE425 sound isolating earphones. Utilizing Scan and Sync technology, audio engineers can easily analyze the RF environment for interference and identify available compatible frequencies within seconds. The dedicated RF mute feature gives users the ability to set up audio and RF parameters without transmitting. MSRP: \$1,800 with SE425 earphones included. shure.com

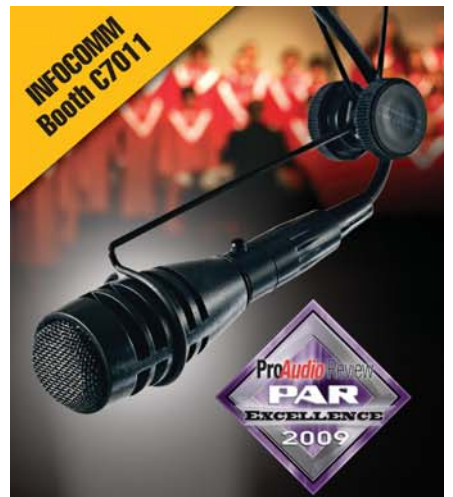




MXL I USB-77

Vintage USB

MXL Microphones' new USB-77 is designed for recording directly to a desktop or laptop with programs, such as Cubase, Logic, GarageBand, Skype and Reaper. The USB-77 is a cardioid condenser studio mic with a 1940s-era ribbon look. It includes a 1/8-inch stereo headphone with a high-quality amplifier, so users can monitor their recordings without latency issues. **{marshall electronics.net}**



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AKG | C 414 XLS, XL II

Upfront Sound

The new AKG C 414 XLS and the C 414 XL II (pictured) offer nine pickup patterns. Both mics have three switchable bass cut filters and three preattenuation levels that enable lead vocals and solo instruments to be placed in dense mixes. The C 414 XLS combines reference-quality technology and state-of-the-art components. The upfront sound is ideal for distant miking applications, such as drum ambience miking. **{akg.com}**

NADY | W-1KU

Dropouts Eliminated

Nady Systems' new W-1KU is a 1,000-channel select UHF system with 1,000 user-switchable frequencies per band. Its true-diversity circuitry with two complete front ends offers maximum range and eliminates most dropouts. **{nady.com}**



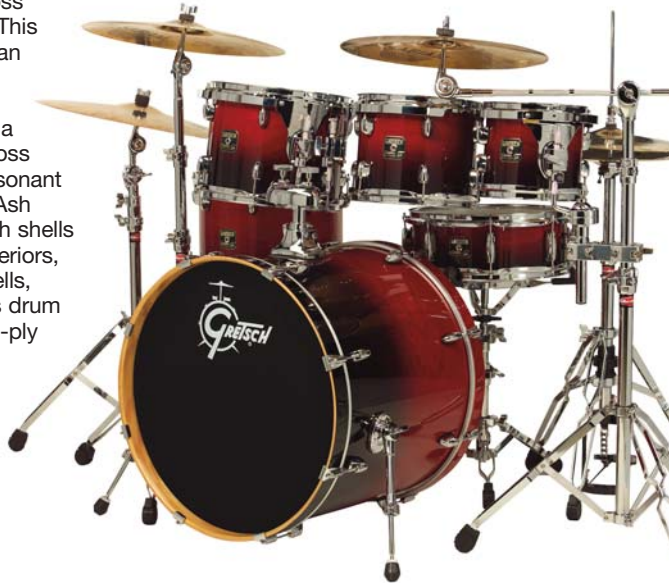
GRETSCH | BLACK CHERRY FADE

Tart Cherry

Gretsch has expanded its Catalina Ash line with a new black cherry fade gloss lacquer finish. This finish features an ebony stain on the batter side and fades into a deep cherry gloss stain on the resonant side. Catalina Ash drums have ash shells with natural interiors, six-ply tom shells, seven-ply bass drum shells and nine-ply snare drum shells with 45-degree bearing edges.

MSRP: \$1,045.

{gretschdrums.com}



DIXON | NEW FINISHES

Plasma Demon

Dixon is now offering its Demon kits in a red and black plasma finish. The seven-ply birch and mahogany shells deliver brightness and attack while warm, low tones spread through the mahogany. The plasma lacquer finish gives each drum an exclusive look. MSRP: \$1,439.

{dixondrums.net}

SOULTONE CYMBALS | OLD SCHOOL EDITION

Old-School Feel

Soultone Cymbals has added to its Vintage series line with the Old School edition cymbals. These cymbals are based off classic models from the 1950s and '60s. They offer a rich, dark signature sound and feature an EarthStroke natural finish with deeper lathing. This technique provides an open tone for any style of music.

The cymbals feature a dry tonal balance and natural feel.

They are available in crash/ride and hi-hat models. {soultonecymbals.com}





BRADY DRUMS | ANNIVERSARY SNARE

Brady's B-day

In celebration of its 30th anniversary, Brady Drums has released an anniversary snare. It's hand-crafted in Brady's block-shell-style construction from Australian myrtle. The drums are 14 by 6.5 inches and feature a custom mother-of-pearl Brady badge. Only 30 of these models will be available worldwide, and each shell is autographed inside by founder Chris Brady. bradydrums.com.au

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VIC FIRTH



Cindy Blackman

VIC FIRTH | CINDY BLACKMAN SIGNATURE

Blackman's Beater

Vic Firth has launched the Cindy Blackman signature stick. It's designed with a 5A hickory shaft, enlarged neck and full taper. The rounded arrow-shaped tip creates a full, clear sound on the cymbals. Blackman is best known for performing with Lenny Kravitz. MSRP: \$16. vicfirth.com

Billy Ward
 BILLY WARD

pro-mark 526
 THE BULB
 MILLENNIUM II

PRO-MARK | BILLY WARD AUTOGRAPH SERIES

Ward Signs Pro-Mark

The Billy Ward TX526W is the latest model in the Pro-Mark Autograph series. The TX526W is constructed of American hickory with a modified barrel-shaped wood tip. Its shape is similar to a 5A and has a large bulb in the fulcrum area. MSRP: \$15.25.

promark.com

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BAND & ORCHESTRA

EASTMAN STRINGS | GUISEPPI GALIANO LINE

Superb Tonewoods

Eastman Strings has launched the Guiseppi Galiano line of handcrafted orchestral strings. Each instrument is outfitted with a case and bow. The line is handcrafted with tonewoods, fittings and accessories. Offered to a select number of Eastman Strings dealers, the instruments include four levels designed to meet a variety of budgets. Eastman Strings is also offering a promotional package to help dealers grow their step-up string business.

{eastmanmusiccompany.com}



BARCUS-BERRY | VIBRATO-AE VIOLIN

Ragin' Electric Cajun

The Vibrato-AE in new Red Berry Burst finish from Barcus-Berry is constructed of Carpathian maple and spruce. It includes ebony fittings, Super Sensitive Red Label strings, four Wittner tuners and a hand-rubbed lacquer finish. The outfit is completed with a color-matching Glasser bow, full-cake dark rosin and color-coordinated soft-shaped case. Barcus-Berry has also announced that Cajun fiddler Doug Kershaw is the latest endorser of the Vibrato-AE violin in Red Berry Burst. {musicorp.com}



DENIS WICK | TENOR HORN MOUTHPIECES

Silver & Gold

Denis Wick has introduced four new tenor horn mouthpiece models to provide players with more choices. They include the 1, 1A, 2A and 4, and they're available in silver- and gold-plated versions. The mouthpieces can fill in the gaps between the older, established models, making it easier for players to find the mouthpiece that's ideal for them. {deniswick.com}





LÉGÈRE REEDS | SIGNATURE SERIES

Freedom Performs

Legère Reeds' new Signature series tenor sax reeds follow on the heels of the company's recently introduced Signature series clarinet reeds. Legère Reeds are available for almost all saxophones. They feature enhanced tone and range with the advantages of a synthetic reed.

Legère offers two cuts for alto sax and three cuts for tenor sax. The original cuts are designed for a darker sound and typically used for a classical setup. The studio cut reeds are free-blowing, bright and flexible. legere.com

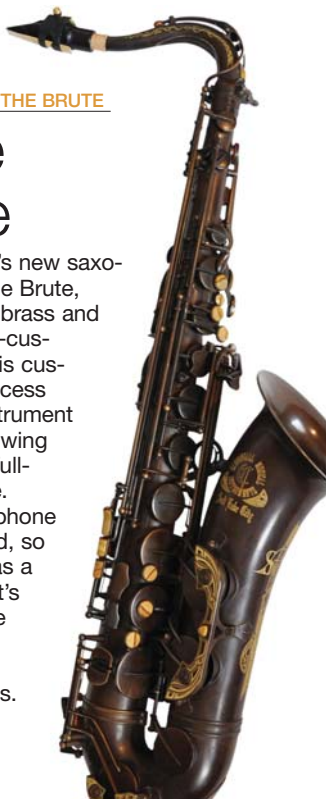
CANNONBALL | THE BRUTE

Brute Force

Cannonball's new saxophone, The Brute, features aged brass and acoustic hand-customization. This customization process creates an instrument with a free-blowing feel and rich, full-character tone.

Each saxophone is hand-treated, so every Brute has a unique color. It's available in the Big Bell Stone series and Vintage models.

cannonballmusic.com



YAMAHA | YSL-872

Playing With Flexibility

Yamaha has released the YSL-872 alto trombone in E-flat with trill rotor. It features a lightweight nickel-silver slide, which provides a smooth slide motion. The half and whole step trill rotor slide option offers greater flexibility. yamaha.com

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GALILEO | VP-111 VIRTUAL PIANO

Natural for Students

Galileo Music has added the VP-111 virtual piano to its digital piano collection. It features iMotion piano technology, which reproduces sympathetic resonance and damper dynamics in real time. This process makes the performance more natural and offers a greater range of tone and dynamics. The virtual piano technology also analyzes the room and changes the quality of the sound — creating bigger or smaller pianos — according to the user's environment.



The optional vocal guide offers a speaking interface to explain settings and features. All functions are presented in a minimalist control panel designed for students.

galileomusic.com



ROLAND | RP-201

Elegant Entry

Roland has introduced the RP-201 digital piano. Ideal for beginning piano students, this unit features an 88-key stereo multisampled sound engine, 128-note polyphony and built-in stereo speaker system that delivers full sound with adjustable volume control. The RP-201 is available in a satin black or rosewood finish. It provides a smooth-sliding keyboard cover, three integrated pedals and headphone jack for silent practice. The piano also offers low power consumption without sacrificing the output level.

rolandus.com

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KORG | SP-170

Line Addition

Korg has added the SP-170 to its SP line of digital pianos. The SP-170 includes eight additional sounds: two electric pianos, harpsichord, clav, vibraphone, pipe organ, electric organ and strings. It also features selectable reverb and chorus effects, an 88-note piano-style keyboard, three touch curves, and natural weighted hammer action, which reproduces the touch and graduated weight of acoustic piano keys. The SP-170 includes a built-in sound system with a pair of full-range oval speakers housed in the internal bass-reflex cabinet.

korg.com

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John Grabowski
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Jim Uding
Drum
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I've learned how to judge what sells and how quickly it turns as a result of replacing what is sold on a weekly basis. The best advice I can give is don't buy as if you're shopping for yourself.

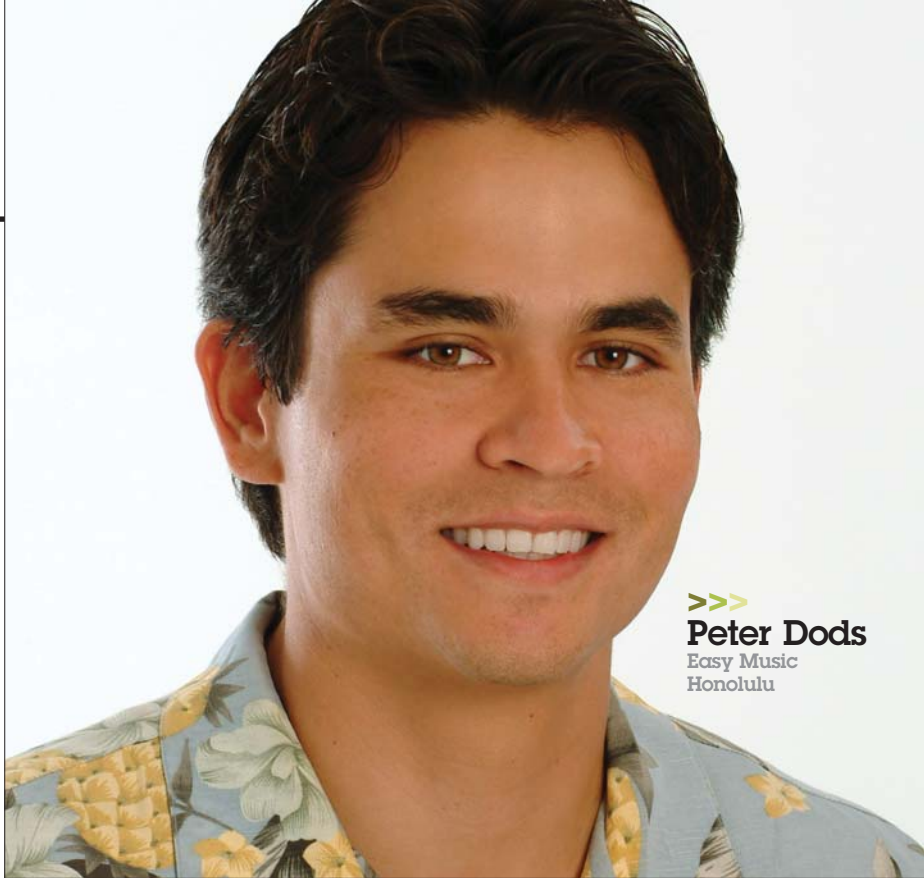
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Bob Johnstonbaugh
Johnstonbaugh Music Center
Gibsonia, Pa.

I was a learn-on-the-job-type of person. I have attended various NAMM seminars throughout the years that have provided lessons on buying from an accounting standpoint. I have gathered some of that information along the way.

In a nutshell, my buying philosophy has just been assimilated experience over the years. I live by the old slogan: Buy as low and sell as high as possible.

In today's economy, there is so much downward price pressure from imports, big-boxes and mail-order companies. Independent retailers have to carve out their own way. In our case, we've added digital keyboards. In that sense, we've expanded our offering. That's one approach to today's economy.



>>>

Peter Dods
Easy Music
Honolulu

What's your strategy for effective **inventory purchasing?**

I've learned to analyze the historical turns on every single SKU that I've ordered. I've learned to calculate the GMROI (gross margin return on investment) on lines. I question my AIMM colleagues every chance I get as to what has worked for them. I check out MI SalesTrak religiously.

Because we are on an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, I probably stock deeper and have to plan further ahead than most people. Missing a sale on basic accessories is terrible. I tend to go very deep on accessories to make sure I can ship them via a

freight forwarder and keep my prices down and margins up.

I also ask: How consistently does this vendor have the stock I need? If the answer is not often, then I need to stock it deeper. Chances are that it won't be available the next time I order it.

If the vendor is consistently short and you can't seem to get enough of it, try to find a competing product that can substitute it. We've had tremendous success with Yamaha acoustics.

I always consider space when ordering. As much as I love accessories, I know that we can't carry

every brand of capo out there or every brand of mic cable. I like to hone in on a few lines and go deep with them. Spreading yourself too thin among too many competing lines will raise your cost of freight, as well.

I continually ask my sales guys a lot of detailed questions. What do you need? What are we consistently running out of? Would our resources be better spent [elsewhere]?

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MICROPHONES

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