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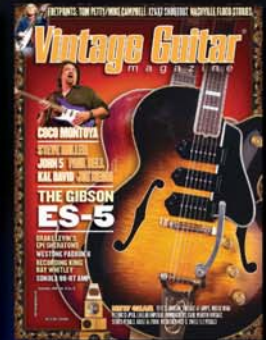
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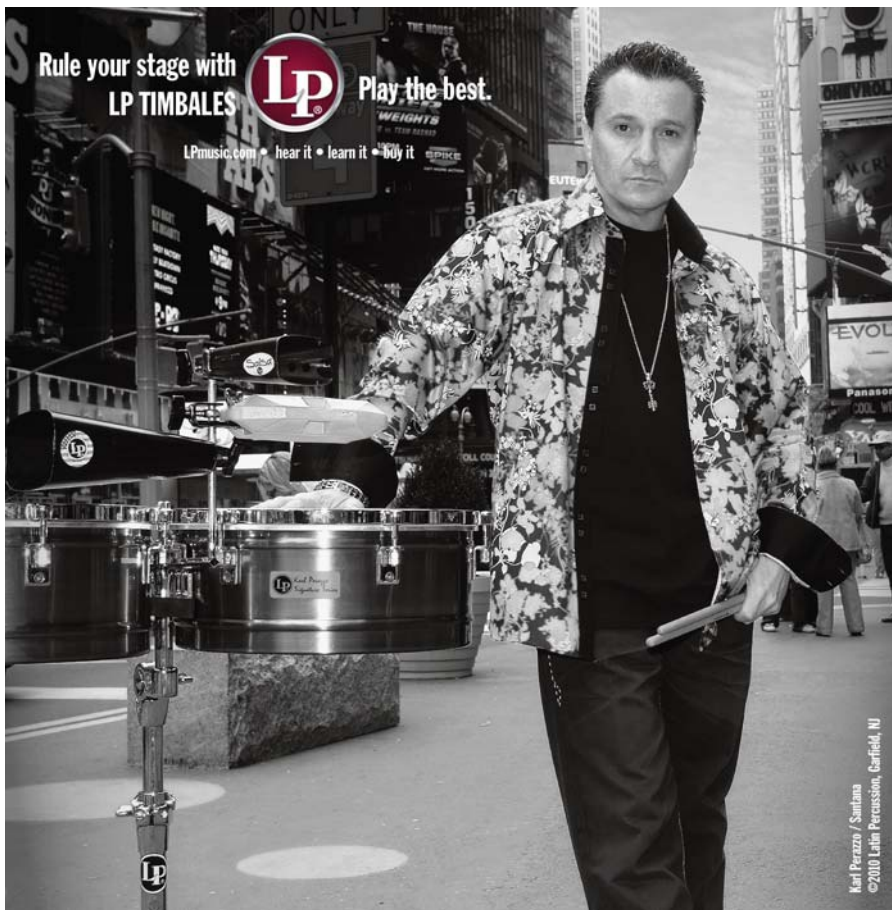
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Cover photo by Stan Barouh

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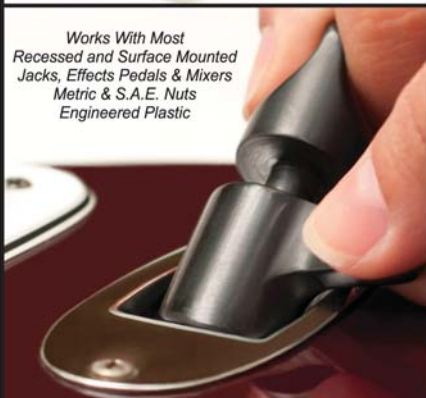
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# PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

## KICK-STARTING CHANGE IN RETAIL

**S**ay this for the recession: It's forced everyone to make changes they were putting off. And in music retailing, that's meant a two-year surge of great better-business ideas — low-cost promotions, clever expense cuts, new niches to conquer. Many of these ideas have changed companies for the better. Unfortunately, not all ideas have worked — even good ones. Why? I believe a big reason is that change only happens when retail leaders get their staff to buy into it.



Industry veteran Danny Rocks will address this issue during "Lessons Learned: How Doing Business Now Has Changed for the Better," a panel discussion he's moderating at The NAMM Show in January. In a recent conversation, Rocks explained that getting employees on-board with new ideas requires not only articulating the goal but also explaining why it should matter to staff. As he put it, "The *what* and the *why* must be paired."

"You've got to make the *why* personal — how the change will affect the employees, how it will affect your business," he said. "Then, they will be more willing to accept the *what* that you're trying to change."

George Hines, owner of Berwyn, Pa.-based George's Music and a panelist in Rocks' session, has used the downturn to create targeted e-mail campaigns, improve his company's communications via social media and focus on new income streams. To make this happen, he has hosted "themed" manager meetings that look at ways to create measurable results.

"The manager meetings allow us to get the leadership united around a change we are trying to implement, the themes help give clarity to the message, the initiatives push the company to adapt to the sales environment, and the measurement keeps us focusing on results," Hines said.

His people have good reason to care: George's Music offers an employee stock ownership plan. As Hines said, this gives staff "skin in the game."

Mark Goff, president of Paige's Music in Indianapolis and another panelist, has used the downturn to focus harder on his core customers — "going deeper with fewer," as he put it. He motivates his staff by showing them Paige's Music's financial results. "This 360-degree accountability helps us focus our efforts on the right things," Goff said.

You'll find more proven retail ideas in *The Best of 2010*, our year-end awards section, starting on page 33. One featured retailer, Kraft Music of Franklin, Wis., holds biweekly "efficiency meetings," where department heads kick around ways to improve business with CEO Jamie Medina. A few months back, these meetings resulted in a much-needed rerouting of Kraft Music's automated phone system.

"In the end, the consumer is much better served, and we're having an easier time doing it," said Ben Kraft, company owner and chairman.

It proves that sometimes the *why* can be as simple as just letting employees know their ideas are heard. **MI**



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# LETTERS

## Hornsmasher a Smash

Thanks for the great piece, “Viral Video Smash,” on my shop, Pedersen’s Band & Orchestra, in the October 2010 issue. Overnight, my YouTube readings showed a spike of 30 additional views for each of my videos. My combined upload total of all my videos is now around 18,000 views.

I have my first reservation at an educator conference, the California Band Directors Association’s convention, this coming February. I’m working on my first 10- by 10-foot booth with one large flat-screen to display my videos and two computer workstations where people can test drive the Web site. This is a whole new world for me. Thanks again for the exposure and the opportunity to be a part of the *Music Inc.* community.

**John Pedersen**  
Pedersen’s Band & Orchestra  
Burbank, Calif.

## The Phone 4-1-1

Great article on using the Gphone (Kenny Smith, “How to Use the Phone,” October 2010). It reminds me of the great sales meetings Smith conducted at Johnny Guitar in Hollywood, Calif. I can hear him now: “The purpose of the telephone is to get the guy into your store.” I am enjoying his sales training again. These are the real master keys to selling, and it is great to see him sharing them with the industry.

**Vic Lillo**  
Lillo’s Music  
Edmonton, Alberta

## Handbook-Worthy Column

Kenny Smith’s October 2010 article, “How to Use the Phone,” was a great read. My



staff felt good about the things they were already doing. But it was great to point out some of the things that only a handful of them or none of them are doing, like telling the caller to ask for them or repeating the caller’s name and writing it down.

Forgive my plagiarism, but we updated our operation manual with his article under “phone etiquette.”

**Peter Dods**  
Easy Music Center  
Honolulu

## Bruhn’s Legacy

Karl Bruhn has passed on, leaving a legacy that will not be easily equaled. The results of Karl’s efforts will be a part of our music products industry forever.

It was my good fortune that I began a close working friend-

ship with Karl just at the time that he was leaving his position at NAMM. Fortunately for all of us, he never retired.

Karl’s concepts were interesting to see develop and a pleasure to implement. He had the logic and wisdom to envision things that had not been done before. He cared a great deal for our industry and its people.

We will miss him, and for those of you who did not have an opportunity to know him, you will unknowingly miss him the most.

**Remo Belli**  
Founder and CEO  
Remo Inc.

## Industry Pioneer

I wanted to comment on my experience working with the late Karl Bruhn.

In the early 1990s, in an attempt to bring the NAMM board of directors up to the current thinking of high-tech music retailers, I was recruited. During one long, heated meeting, Karl reported the findings of a group of scientists that had done research [on the effects of music and the brain].

As reported in Wikipedia, Rauscher, Shaw and Ky investigated the effect of listening to music by Mozart on spatial reasoning.

We discussed funding further research with NAMM funds, and I asked Karl, “Are you telling me that these guys think that listening to music makes kids smarter?” He said, “Basically, and playing it may be even better.” I said, “This is big. Can you imagine what would happen if this became common knowledge among the moms of the world?” He just looked at me and smiled with that Cheshire Cat grin of his.

Three years later, *Newsweek* magazine’s Feb. 19, 1996, cover story reported that “making music makes you smarter” was more than a slogan.

So that was Karl conspiring with me to do something they couldn’t even fathom the long-term effects of. One small step for NAMM, one giant leap for music. If it wasn’t for Karl, this never would have happened.

**Gary Gand**  
Gand Music & Sound  
Northfield, Ill.

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### NEW PERFORMANCE VIDEOS

Andrew Markworth explains the concepts behind his new Corpsmaster Signature Keyboard Mallets and you can watch the 2010 Crown front ensemble demonstrate these mallets at: [www.vicfirth.com/products/corpsmaster\\_markworth.php](http://www.vicfirth.com/products/corpsmaster_markworth.php). The new Markworth Signature Series features 6 models—3 for marimba and 3 for vibraphone.

We've got tons of new artist interviews flowing in and out of the editing room. Swing on by [vicfirth.com](http://vicfirth.com) right now to check out Chris Fryar of the Zac Brown Band (Grammy® winner for Best New Artist) and Trey Gray of Brooks and Dunn. Keep your eyes peeled for several more fresh interviews that are currently in the works, including new VF artists Ben Sesar/Brad Paisley and Chad Szelgia/Breaking Benjamin!

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Reports sales increase for 2010  
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**PAGE 19**



# RETAIL

SCHOOL MUSIC | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

## NO DOOMSDAY FOR SCHOOL RENTALS

ooming budget cuts for the 2010-'11 academic year caused many industry insiders to predict a doom-and-gloom school music rental season. Yet most U.S. retailers recently polled by *Music Inc.* presented a much sunnier picture. In fact, the majority reported an increase in rentals or flat business compared to last year.

In mid-October, Ron Beaudoin, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Frederick, Md.-based school music retail chain Music & Arts Center, said his company's rental season was turning out to be better than expected.

Bob Morrison, co-founder of arts education research firm Quadrant Arts Education Research, reported that most dealers achieved 10-percent boosts, on average, in rentals this year. According to Morrison, Texas retailers fared especially well due to a new law that requires middle school students to take at least one fine arts class before they graduate. "This has led to an explosion of growth and has



Nick Rail

led to a shortage of instruments," he said.

"Everyone I've spoken with is either even or up," added Peter Sides, president of Robert M. Sides Family Music Center in State College, Pa.

### ONLINE RENTAL BOOST

Sides' rental season doesn't end until Nov. 30, but in mid-October, he said his dealership's rentals were 5-per-

cent above last year. He added that his company's online rentals have nearly doubled compared to 2009, and 8 percent of all its rentals are now conducted online.

Sides mentioned that most school music programs in Pennsylvania have fared well. Further south, in Hanover, Joel Menchey, president of Menchey Music Service, said, "It definitely feels better than

last year," of his company's rental season.

In neighboring West Virginia, Evan Jones of Clarksburg-based Bandland reported a 15-percent boost in student band instrument rentals. He credited this partly to forging new relationships with a couple of school districts.

Separate Music of Winston-Salem, N.C., boosted its rentals to established, returning

schools by 11 percent in September, according to Drew Parker, company co-owner. But he mentioned that over-the-counter walk-in renters were down enough that “it’s pretty much a wash.”

“What that says to me is that the strong programs with good directors are solid, the weaker ones are not, and we are getting more of the business,” Parker said.

Separk Music’s reps are currently adding three more counties to their travel schedules, which Parker projected “should add another 400–500 rentals in 2011, which would be nice growth.”

#### ALTERNATIVE BUSINESS

Out West, Beacock Music of Vancouver, Wash., achieved an 8.36-percent boost in its rental business, according to Gayle Beacock, company vice president.

And Scott Summerhays, president and CEO of Summerhays Music in Murray, Utah, called his dealership’s season “solid — not record-breaking but very good.”

Beacock Music purchased roughly 300 new instruments for its rental inventory in anticipation of fellow dealers stocking less because of the recession. Additionally, Gayle’s brother, Russ Beacock, also a vice president at the company, bought several less-popular instruments, including bass clarinets, bari saxophones, cellos and basses.

“So, we were the only store to have these,” Gayle said. “Being proactive rather than ‘waiting to see’ helped us.”

She added that her total September business was up by nearly 18 percent.

Mitchel Banks of Don Banks Music in Tampa, Fla., reported a slightly better rental



## Peter Sides reported that 8 percent of his company’s rentals come from the Web

season than last year. He said he gained additional sales from several schools that launched guitar programs.

Tracy Leenman of Musical Innovations in Greenville, S.C., tripled last year’s rentals by mid-October, although this was only her second year in business. She credited her success, in part, to offering low monthly payments and letting 100 percent of stringed instrument lease credit go toward full-size instruments. She also offered a rental program for parents who wouldn’t normally qualify for rentals due to credit problems.

#### MIXED MIDWEST

Dealers in large markets tended to have more outside forces working against them. Mark Goff, president of Paige’s Music in Indianapolis, reported an unspecified dip in his dealership’s rentals.

“We had several large schools in the area push the recruiting class back a year, which cost us several hundred rentals, so we will definitely be down this year,” he said. “However, we were up in the remaining schools, so our overall decrease won’t be as bad as it could have been. A classic bad-news-good-news scenario.”

Senseny Music of Wichita, Kan., had a roughly 8-percent drop in its rentals, which President Lori Supinie attributed to a combination of economic and competitive factors.

“Our local economy, heavily tied to the aircraft biz, is still pretty cautious at best,” she said. “We found parents much more willing to search for a

used closet horn this year.”

Mozingo Music of St. Louis had what owner Jeff Mozingo called a “great” rental season, although he said step-up sales “were down considerably.”

#### COST-CUTTING

Elsewhere in the Midwest, Donovan Bankhead, vice president of Springfield Music in Springfield, Mo., reported a 7-percent increase in his company’s rentals. His dealership achieved this bump despite its road rep team getting cut in half.

“[We] eliminated the very small accounts that really didn’t have any potential — either in the growth of the program or with the director,” Bankhead said. “This allowed us to reduce a road position, saving over \$50K per year.”

Nick Rail Music is headquartered in California, one of the states hardest hit by school budget cuts. Still, as of mid-October, the Santa Barbara-based retailer achieved an 11-percent rental increase compared to last year across its seven locations. As with many dealers surveyed, owner Nick Rail attributed the boost to “improved preparation and promotions and good, old-fashioned hard work.”

“Like so many others, we’ve done our best to lower overhead costs, and we’re not done yet. Lease reduction negotiations have had a positive result.”

“School budget cuts have certainly been a challenge,” Summerhays said. “However, there are some very committed directors in our area who continue to develop excellent programs despite the financial obstacles. I believe our school reps and our band staff in general have been working very hard with these strong educators, and the efforts have paid dividends.” **MI**

LEGAL

**Biasco Fiasco Ends**

The case against the Piano Experts came to an end in October with company owners Paul and Peter Biasco owing restitution and fines totaling nearly \$200,000. In February 2008, the Piano Experts closed its doors, leaving expectant piano owners without instruments after they'd already paid. An investigation by Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office and a lawsuit found approximately 174 piano orders totaling more than \$975,000 were outstanding.



OUTREACH

**A Decade of Giving**

Michael Davis (pictured), owner of Ye Olde Music in Hanahan, S.C., recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of his Music For All Children program. Through the initiative, Davis collects used instruments from the community and refurbishes them for underprivileged children. Roughly 100 instruments have been given away since the program's inception.

"We are very proud of the special efforts that Michael Davis is making in reaching out to the community and helping children that might not otherwise have the opportunity to learn and play a musical instrument," said Dan Roberts, vice president of Musiccorp, one of Ye Olde Music's suppliers.

PROMOTION

**Make a Wish**

Music123.com celebrated the launch of its newly redesigned, interactive Web site in October with the Win Your Wishlist contest. It gave one customer the chance to win free musical equipment and accessories worth more than \$4,000 by registering on the site or updating an existing wish list.



The Milwaukee Bucks Wild! Drumline kicks off DrummerFest 2010 at Cascio Interstate Music

CASCIO INTERSTATE MUSIC | EVENT

**A Decade of Drumming**

On Oct. 23, New Berlin, Wis., retailer Cascio Interstate Music brought world-class talent to its store with DrummerFest 2010. Mapex, Sabian, Yamaha, Ludwig and Zildjian co-sponsored the event, which marked DrummerFest's 10th anniversary.

The day kicked off with the Milwaukee Bucks Wild! Drumline marching from the store's entrance to its SoundStage, where the group conducted a marching presentation. The drumline was sponsored by Cascio.

Educator and consultant Dom Famularo then hosted a clinic featuring his mix of humor, motivation and inspiration. He was followed by

Marvin McQuitty, who demonstrated his funk-groove style, and Bun E. Carlos, drummer for Cheap Trick. Carlos' clinic served as a history lesson in famous rock drumbeats. He played examples that ranged from grooves in Chubby Checker songs to British Invasion beats. Terry Bozzio capped the clinics with a presentation that left audience members in what Cascio representatives described as a "state of awe."

The day ended with the 20-minute All-Star Jam, featuring all the clinicians. They traded chops and grooves, changed dynamics, and ended with a rhythmic barrage.

GUITAR CENTER PROFESSIONAL | SALES

**GC PRO POSTS SALES INCREASE**

Guitar Center Professional, GC's outside sales division for pro users, recently announced that its sales increased this year, despite the recession.

GC Pro's sales teams grew in key markets with new locations, including Orlando, Fla.; Charlotte, N.C.; Oklahoma City; Bakersfield, Calif.; Los Angeles; Cherry Hill, N.J.; Raleigh, N.C.; and Seattle. The division now has nearly 70 employees. Recently, GC Pro appointed industry veteran Brad Lyons as an account manager. Based in the

Atlanta location, he has more than 20 years of experience and most recently served as a senior sales engineer at Sweetwater.

GC Pro has also expanded its services to a wider range of markets, including recording, post production, live sound and house of worship. Plus, the division has enhanced its educational alliances and has nearly 30 schools as customers.

"The GC Pro model is proven and tested, and it's working very, very well," said Rick Plushner, director of GC Pro.



CASSELL'S MUSIC | SECURITY

# THE MI RETAILER'S BEST FRIEND

Three dogs recently helped capture a burglary suspect at Cassell's Music in San Fernando, Calif.

On Oct. 21, the store manager, Chris Grocott, who lives next door to the dealership, heard the building's alarm go off at roughly 4 a.m. He took his three dogs to investigate and said he found the plate glass front door broken and a man walking by with two guitars and a pocketful of cash. When Grocott yelled for the man to stop, the man put the instruments in the bed of a truck and ran away.

Grocott said he returned to the store to find another man dressed as a skeleton and dragging a sleeping bag holding

seven guitars. After the dogs cornered him, the man struck one of the dogs, a pit bull named Duchess, in the head with bolt cutters. According to Grocott, Duchess "immediately reacted as a pit bull would and brought the suspect down." Grocott then sat on the man to detain him with the help of a neighbor until the police arrived moments later. At press time, police were still looking for the first suspect.

Cassell's Music owner Ed Intagliata said that all Grocott asked for in return were extra-large dog bones for his pets.

"That's a very rare employee who takes ownership and pride in his job and doesn't expect to be compensated above and beyond," Intagliata said.



Cassell's Music's Chris Grocott with one of his crime fighters

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

AUSTIN WINS  
BEST SHOW  
BEST IN SHOW



### Baltimore's Best

Forty-five years ago, Bill's Music began as an 8- by 8-foot teaching studio. Nowadays, the Catonsville, Md., dealership stands as one of the largest Baltimore-area music retailers, with a full line of new and used instruments and a music lessons program with more than 430 students. Three employees — Jim Mays, Lou Campagnoli and Ron Cook — have also been with the company for 40-plus years.

To commemorate these milestones, Bill's Music recently threw an anniversary celebration. It featured live music from local bands, Tama Fastest Feet and *Guitar Hero* contests, two Gibson exhibits, free giveaways and guitar lessons, product clinics with factory reps, concessions, and slashed prices on gear. The Baltimore County Council even came out to present owner Bill Higgins with a proclamation that declared it "Bill's Music House Day" in Baltimore. According to company representatives, hundreds of people attended the event, including drummers Dennis Chambers and Larry Bright.

"Forty-five years is a big deal," said Tracey Kern, Higgins' daughter, who spearheaded the celebration. "We wanted to do something to thank all of our customers who have stuck by us through the age of chain stores and Internet shopping. Because of them, my family and the whole Bill's crew have been able to do something we love, working in the music business every day."

### Sixteen Candles

Bookmark Music of Pacific Grove, Calif., turned 16 this year, celebrating with an in-store party on Oct. 2. It featured the talents of employee Pamela Scholz (pictured with her daughter),



who played the harp all afternoon. The print music dealership is owned and operated by Marcia Stearns.

"Our gratitude goes to Hal Leonard Corp., Carl Fischer Music and Alfred Music Publishing for their assistance," Stearns said.



Gist Piano Center student Jordan Burns (middle)

#### GIST PIANO CENTER | EDUCATION

## Gist Preps Future Piano Stars

Gist Piano Center of Louisville, Ky., was recently chosen as one of six U.S. companies to participate in the National Roland Piano Festival.

Four of Gist's teachers worked with students to develop a song for the competition. They practiced for two months on Roland's RM-700 digital piano. Judging from a wide range of criteria, Roland staff then selected three of the students — Jordan Burns, Polly Cochran and Annalara Fischer — to represent Louisville in the National

Roland Piano Festival, held in Los Angeles on Nov. 13. Roland flew these students and their parents to Los Angeles to compete with others from across the United States.

"Honestly, this opportunity has been one of the highlights of my career," said piano teacher Angela Hartman after two of her students were chosen as finalists. "My kids practiced really hard for this festival, but they were having so much fun they didn't mind all that hard work."

#### PROGRESSIVE MUSIC CENTER | OUTREACH

## PROGRESSIVE GEAR DONATION

Progressive Music Center of Raleigh, N.C., and Remo joined forces in early October to donate instruments to Duke Children's Hospital & Health Center in Durham. The donations will be used by the music therapist in the child care units.

Billy Cuthrell, president of Progressive Music Center, said Remo donated five assorted shakers, a set of agogo bells, two tambourines and two Tubanitos. His dealership gave a Tubano, a set kids congas and a set of bongos. The donations were made through Progressive's charity arm, Instrument Aid, which was launched in 2006 to get instruments to schools devastated by Hurricane Katrina. The charity collects new and used



From left: Progressive Music Center's Billy Cuthrell with Duke Children's Hospital's Michelle Ashford and Tray Batson

instruments and donates them to programs across the United States.

"It's my hope that these instruments will brighten the day for the children receiving treatment at Duke thanks to Remo and others that help make this a reality by donating these instruments," Cuthrell said.

SWEETWATER, AUDIOLINES | LEGAL

# SWEETWATER WINS TRADEMARK SUIT

Sweetwater of Fort Wayne, Ind., recently won a trademark infringement lawsuit against Audiolines, a part of Chicago-based J2 Electronics Group.

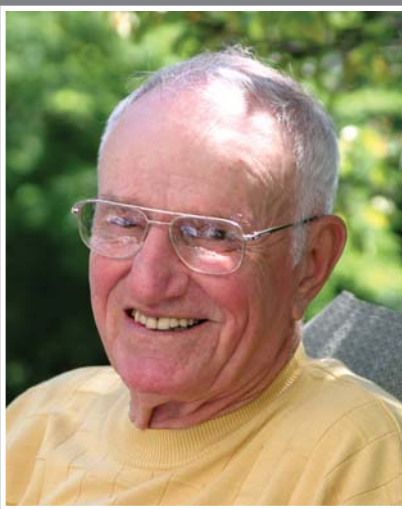
In the lawsuit, which was filed in mid-July in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, Sweetwater alleged that Audiolines illegally copied

online content, including product information and specs on Sweetwater's Web site, and posted it on the Audiolines site. Sweetwater sought \$75,000 in damages, and the court ordered

Audiolines to pay for the trademark infringement. The court also permanently enjoined Audiolines from using the trademark "Sweetwater" on its Web site.

## ««« TRIBUTE

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



### ⊕ Edward Cranley

Music retail and publishing pioneer Edward Cranley died on Oct. 19. He was 87.

Cranley served as Willis Music's president emeritus and chairman of the board for 59 years. The Florence, Ky.-based full-line dealership is now run by his son Kevin.

During Edward's NAMM Oral History interview in 2005, he spoke passionately about the growth of Willis Music's print music publishing business, which included a long partnership with Edna Mae Burnam, who penned several successful method books.

"He lived a long, happy life, and I had many great years with him," Kevin said. "He will always be with me."

Edward is survived by his wife of 60 years, Jane O'Toole Cranley; his son; his daughters, Kathleen Rudnick, Nancy Cranley and Terry Flottman; a brother, William Cranley; a sister, Mae Buckley; 14 grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

**Kyser + Klassics**

# K-Lever

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

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# SUPPLY

KHS AMERICA | BY FRANK ALKYER

## KHS OPENS NASHVILLE HQ

In an effort to consolidate its brands into one location, KHS America has opened a new headquarters and warehouse in the Greater Nashville, Tenn., area.

The 100,000-square-foot facility, opened during October in the Nashville suburb of Mt. Juliet, will serve as the home of all KHS America brands — from Jupiter woodwinds and brass to Mapex drums and Majestic percussion to Altus flutes to Walden guitars

Tabor Stamper, president of KHS America, said bringing the brands together in one facility will mean better customer service, marketing and distribution. Before the move, Mapex was based in Nashville, while KHS's other brands were based in Austin, Texas.

"We have 52 employees in this facility," Stamper said. "Twenty-two of them moved from Austin. Another 20 or so are brand-new employees. The remaining eight or 10 were here at the Mapex facility. So, we have a lot of new folks with us in this building. They've all come together, and we didn't miss one day of being open. The phone lines were never down. We shut them down at 5 p.m. in Austin on a Thursday, and they were up and running here the next morning. We



KHS's Karl Leong (left) and Tabor Stamper (center) are congratulated by Mt. Juliet Vice Mayor Will Sellers after the ribbon-cutting ceremony

only missed one day of shipping. So the team really made it happen. I'm especially proud of the Texans, those lifelong Texans, who were willing to move with the company."

### CUSTOM HEADQUARTERS

The new facility provides 85,000 square feet of warehouse space and 15,000 square feet of office space with room to grow. The custom-designed building will house all corporate functions, warehousing and shipping facilities, as well as provide climate-controlled space for new instrument testing and quality assurance. The building also features a recital hall that will be available to Nashville's music and music education communities.

"Certainly, our team is pleased to be in our new build-

ing, but I must say that our location in Nashville is equally important, maybe more so," Stamper said. "First of all, Nashville is centrally located. It allows us to reach many more of our dealers much faster and much more efficiently. Its live music activity works really well with our Mapex drum sets. If you stroll down Broadway and walk into any of the clubs, you'll see a Mapex drum set in that club.

"Most of all, we hope this new facility demonstrates our commitment to the United States market — for music education and the music industry, in general."

### COMMUNITY SPIRIT

To demonstrate that commitment, the grand opening featured an array of speakers

from the local and national music community, including Mary Luehrsen from NAMM; Michael Blakeslee from Music Educators National Conference; Carole Grooms, regional director of the American School Band Directors Association; Dr. Thomas Verrier from the College Band Directors National Association; Grayson Zeagler from the National Association of School Music Dealers; and keynote speaker Mitchell Korn from the Nashville Symphony.

Karl Leong, president and CEO of KHS Musical Instruments Co., the Taiwan-based parent company of KHS, said the company's dedicated to promoting music education and making instruments for everyone, from students to educators to professionals. He noted that KHS is celebrating its 80th anniversary this year. Leong also mentioned that the initials KHS represent Kong Hseu Sheh in Chinese, which means "contribute to schools and society."

In line with that thinking, KHS America donated 24 instruments valued at \$23,500 to the Nashville Symphony. The instruments will be used for the symphony's Instrument Petting Zoo for children. They replace instruments lost in the recent floods that devastated middle Tennessee. **MI**



## Note from Skip

### Bringing Your Staff to the NAMM Show Makes Sense!

I attended my first NAMM Show in 1972 and haven't missed one since. To this day, I still leave the show confident that my time spent was rewarded by opportunity I would have missed if I weren't there. There's no more efficient or effective way to keep my staff—and my stores—on top of the latest innovative products than to see and hear about them from the manufacturers themselves. Now more than ever, customers expect us to have all the answers to their new product questions as soon as they're released.

There's nothing more motivating than sending my sales staff to the shows. After all, the industry is so much bigger and more exciting than what they can experience within the four walls of Skip's Music. The NAMM Show offers retailers a unique opportunity to help develop the quality staff that consumers seek out when making buying decisions. Nothing can generate more long-term ROI than the investment you make today in the development of your sales staff for tomorrow.

Before the show, my sales staff pre-plans their schedules to the minute. Afterward, we have a contest that awards the staff member who returns with best new product or marketing idea that can potentially result in the most new business. In just two days and one night, they cover all the products and catch several NAMM U sessions—a small price to pay for freshly motivated, reignited and productive employees.

I remember sending a young employee to his first show one year; it made a profound impact on both his life and mine. He saw how exciting the industry really was—a different side than he had known as a player. He took more notes and brought back more new ideas than even I had hoped for. That employee returned with determination and a renewed commitment to make the music products industry his chosen career path. That employee was Joe Lamond.

I hear that retailers are fearful of bringing the staff to the show because they're afraid of exposing them to other job opportunities. I understand their concern. But then I think, what if you don't educate, develop, excite and engage your staff in making this their chosen career? The last thing that you want is an unmotivated, dispassionate sales team.

For nearly a decade, I enjoyed Joe's presence and impact on Skip's Music. I still benefit, along with the rest of the music products industry, from his commitment that came from attending that first NAMM Show. Bringing him along was an investment that certainly paid off, and I believe it will do the same for your employees.

*Skip Maggiora*  
Skip Maggiora • Skip's Music

### A Sneak Peek at Sessions Set for the 2011 NAMM Show

These Idea Center sessions will offer tips to energize your staff—and your store!

#### Get Connected—Online Business Strategies

*Presented by Mike Nessen,*

*Rinforza Social Media Marketing*

In this series of sessions, you'll learn how to be found in the crowded electronic marketplace, reach out and identify your customer base online, and apply strategies to appeal to the new generation of online consumers.

#### Adding Up: 5 Ways to Increase Every Sale

*Presented by Bob Popyk, Founder of*

*Bentley-Hall, Inc., and Columnist for*

*Music Trades Magazine*

Simple ways to maximize each customer and substantially increase the dollar amount of each individual sale.

#### No More Slow Days!

**(How To Get A Crowd in Your Store Every Day)**

*Presented by Bob Popyk, Founder of*

*Bentley-Hall, Inc., and Columnist for*

*Music Trades Magazine*

Here's how to keep your store traffic constant and the cash register ringing every day—without draining your checkbook.

#### The Key To Buying Music Product Inventory

*Presented by Alan Friedman, CPA, Friedman,*

*Kannenberg & Company, P.C.*

In this updated session, you will learn how to buy the right music products, quantity and mix at the right cost and payment terms. Learn the secret to making smart inventory buys.

### The Value of Being There...

“The sessions at the Idea Center are phenomenal. The guys are bringing to the table ideas that maybe you have thought about before, but they help you bring it to fruition and give you the tools to do that with.”

Micky Hardy • Springfield Music

NAME NAMM News November 2010

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



# TAKE IT TO 11

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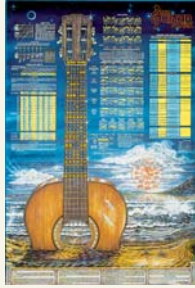
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ANNIVERSARY

**Guitar Poster Celebrates 30**

The iconic Guitar Poster, which features guitar chords and scales, is celebrating its 30 anniversary. The poster made its debut at NAMM in 1981.



More than 2 million guitarists have used the poster since its publication. [castaliapub.com](http://castaliapub.com)

PROMOTION

**Free for All**

Until Dec. 31, users who download the Planet Waves Guitar Tools iPhone app will get a free set of D'Addario guitar strings.

Players can purchase the Planet Waves Guitar Tools app at the Apple iTunes App Store and forward the iTunes confirmation e-mail to [freestringspromotion@planetwaves.com](mailto:freestringspromotion@planetwaves.com) to receive their free strings.

Participants have their choice between the EXP110, EXL110, EXP16 or EJ16 for their strings. [planetwaves.com](http://planetwaves.com)

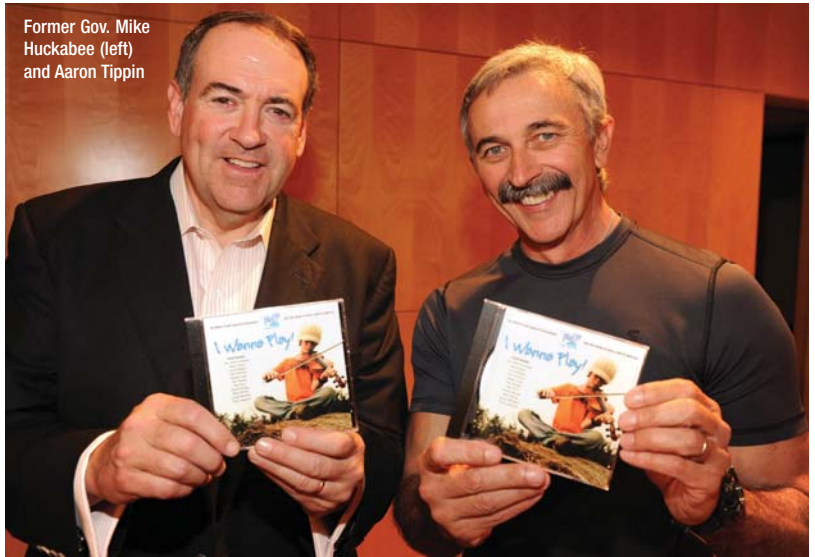


GEAR

**Audio-Technica Rebate**

Audio-Technica is offering wireless rebates on its professional wireless gear, including the 4000 series, 3000 series and 2000 series wireless systems, from Oct. 1 through Dec. 31. All customers who purchase these products from an authorized U.S. dealer during the rebate period will be eligible for either a \$40 rebate on the 4000 series, a \$30 rebate on the 3000 series or a \$20 rebate on the 2000 series. Rebate details can be found on Audio-Technica's Web site.

[audio-technica.com](http://audio-technica.com)



Former Gov. Mike Huckabee (left) and Aaron Tippin

NAMM | EDUCATION

**NAMM RELEASES 'I WANNA PLAY'**

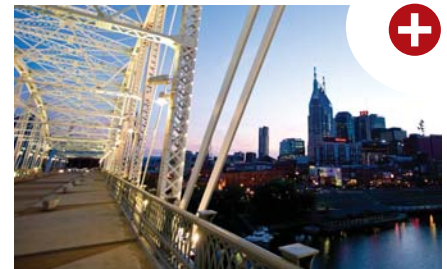
Mike Huckabee, the former Arkansas governor and a part-time bass player, recently launched a new benefit album in conjunction with NAMM, *I Wanna Play!: An Album To Put Musical Instruments Into The Hands Of Every Child In America*. Platinum recording artist and songwriter Aaron Tippin and producer James Stroud also worked on the project.

The album features songs by Tippin, George Jones, Lorrie Morgan and Tracy Lawrence, among others.

"Aaron Tippin's cornerstone song 'I Wanna Play' will hopefully become a tune that is not only heard by millions but helps place instruments in the hands of children," Huckabee said. "Music changed my life when I got my first guitar at age 11, and it's been changing my life ever since. I still play and have more fun doing it now than ever before."

Studies have shown making music positively affects a child's cognitive skills.

In other NAMM news, on Oct. 14, the Wanna Play Fund donated \$10,000 to W.O. Smith Music School. The school provides quality music instruction to children from low-income families. Students from the school also sang on the album's title track, "I Wanna Play." [namm.org](http://namm.org)



NAMM | SHOWS

**Summer Dates, New Format Confirmed**

NAMM has announced the dates for Summer NAMM 2011. The show will run from July 21-23 in Nashville, Tenn. New features to the show include the Top 100 dealer awards, which will honor the best ideas and the leading dealers, as well as a Saturday public day, where the show floor will be open to the public. Summer NAMM will be held in Nashville during July through 2013.



UNIVERSAL PERCUSSION | AGREEMENT

# Universally Premier

Universal Percussion has announced an exclusive distribution agreement with Premier drums.

The U.K.-based drum company has found popularity in Europe, Asia and other markets around the globe. The distribution deal with Universal Percussion aims to increase the brand's visibility in the United States.

"Premier makes great drums, and we'll be supporting them with Universal's equally great sales and service," said Universal President Tom Shelley. "That means maintaining a solid inventory of drum kits, add-on drums and spare parts.

**Universal forms distribution agreement with Premier to boost its visibility in the United States**

At Universal, we work hard to earn and maintain the confidence of our retail customers with all of our product lines. And that's how we'll be handling Premier Drums."

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

HAL LEONARD | DISTRIBUTION

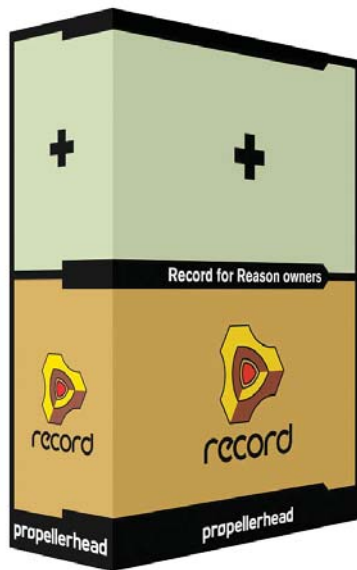
# HAL'S NEW DEALS

Hal Leonard is now distributing Propellerhead Software products to the MI trade in the United States, beginning Nov. 1.

Since 2005, Line 6 has served as the exclusive U.S. wholesale distributor for Propellerhead Software, a privately owned company based in Stockholm. Propellerhead Software creates music software products, including Reason, ReCycle and Record. Record lets users build song parts like patterns and string them together for quick arranging.

"Teaming with Hal Leonard is a natural fit for us since they will help us tap new markets to better reach street-level musicians," said Greg Batusic, vice president of sales for Americas for Line 6. "Players stopping by their local music store for sticks or strings may be apt to dabble in recording if our products are available where they shop."

Additionally, Hal Leonard has reached a deal with Nashville, Tenn.-based Legacy Learning Systems to distribute the company's Learn & Master courses exclusively. The worldwide deal went into effect Nov. 1, making guitar, blues guitar, guitar setup and maintenance, piano, and drum titles available through Hal Leonard. {[halleonard.com](http://halleonard.com)}



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CONTEST

Cover Band

Several companies, including Sabian, Ovation, Gretsch Drums, Fender, Casio, Musician's Friend, *Modern Drummer* magazine and *Guitar Player* magazine, among others, have joined forces to sponsor Coverband 2011, an online talent contest, providing musicians the opportunity to perform at The NAMM Show 2011 in Anaheim, Calif.

Individuals can compete for seven performance spots, including drummer, bass player, vocalist, percussionist, two guitar players and keyboardist. Musicians can upload a performance video of their best licks, riffs and hits, and the top five finalists in each instrument category will be judged by a celebrity panel.

Winners will receive a free trip to The NAMM Show, gear from the sponsoring brands and the opportunity to perform before a live audience at the show. [kmcmusic.com](http://kmcmusic.com)



Children's Miracle Network's Linda Gatti and Jason Aldean

CHARITY

Sierra Helps Children

Sierra Guitars has donated a guitar to The Children's Miracle Network for the 2011 Kicks Cares for Kids Radiothon and Celebrity Auction in Odessa, Texas.

The donated Sierra Tahoe Jumbo acoustic-electric guitar was signed by country singer and guitarist Jason Aldean.

Children's Miracle Network is a non-profit organization that raises funds for children's hospitals, and the donations it receives fund medical care, research and education that save the lives of children each year. [sierraguitars.net](http://sierraguitars.net)

DISTRIBUTION

French Connection

JZ Microphones, a Latvia-based microphone manufacturer, has appointed Floating Point Audio to manage its distribution in France.

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

APPOINTMENTS

Fender's New Additions

Fender has appointed industry veteran Eric Spitzer as vice president of the Fender accessory division. Spitzer will oversee the development of all Fender-branded accessory products.

Fender also named 30-year industry veteran Jay Wanamaker to the newly created position of senior vice president of percussion. Plus, Hamid "Gadget" Hopkins has been named chairman of the board for the Fender Music Foundation.



Jay Wanamaker

Graham Takes the Helm at Loud

Mark Graham was recently named the CEO of Loud Technologies. The former president of Crown International has spent more than 20 years in the music industry. Graham succeeds Rodney Olson, who, during his two years as CEO, steered Loud through supply chain disruptions and the worldwide economic downturn.

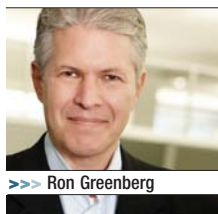
"As both a former competitor and audio industry veteran, I've closely followed Loud's moves over the years and have great admiration for the company's brands and their lauded market positions," Graham said. "I look forward to joining the Loud management team and working with them to build on the solid momentum they have begun."



Mark Graham



>>> Tim Lautzenheiser



>>> Ron Greenberg

Tim Lautzenheiser has been named vice president of education for **Conn-Selmer**. Lautzenheiser has served as the company's executive director of education since 1996.

Ron Greenberg will now lead all of **Avid's** global

marketing efforts across the company's hardware, software and services offerings.

**C.F. Martin** recently appointed Nathan Eckhart as its new CFO. John

Messer, the company's former vice president of finance and administration, retired in September.

Brian Pickowitz has been promoted to market manager for tour sound at **Crown Audio**.

Joachim Flor has joined **SPL** as the international sales manager.

**Harman Professional** recently tapped Graham Hammell as director of its core research and development team, the System Development and Integration Group.

**Genelec**, the U.S. distributor of Genelec Active Monitoring Systems, has chosen John Conard as national sales manager for its professional products.

Eric Boyer and Thomas Mitchell have been named to the **Blue Microphones** sales team.

**Mixware** has appointed Jon Cormican as director of sales.

FENDER | OUTREACH

# FENDER'S FUNDRAISER FRENZY

Steve Miller Band performed to a sold-out audience at the Fender Center on Sept. 17. The event raised more than \$500,000 for Campaign 800, benefiting the Kids Rock Free music education program. During the show, Miller performed "Jungle Love" with several Kids Rock Free students.

In other news, Fender announced a pledge drive campaign benefitting the Fender Music Foundation and supporting music education programs throughout the United States.

The campaign, which is targeted at U.S. Fender dealers, kicked off Nov. 1 and goes through Dec. 31. During this period, Fender will match dealer donations, dollar for dollar, up to \$50,000, with the ultimate goal of raising \$100,000 for the Fender Music Foundation, its non-profit organization.

"This pledge drive is one more way we can partner with our dealer network to continue to foster the gift of music for generations to come," said Larry Thomas, Fender CEO. [fender.com](http://fender.com)

Steve Miller Band performs at the Fender Center



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TECHNOLOGY

ONE GROOVY APP

SuperMegaUltraGroovy has released *Capo* for the iPhone and iPod touch. *Capo* lets musicians choose music from their iTunes libraries and learn how to play it by ear. "In addition to guitarists, customers also include players of less portable instruments, like drums or pianos," said Chris Liscio, company founder. [\[supermegaultragroovy.com\]](http://supermegaultragroovy.com)

PAISTE | DISTRIBUTION

PAISTE, YAMAHA END DISTRIBUTION AGREEMENT

Paiste America and Yamaha have announced that their five-year distribution relationship for Paiste products will conclude at the end of the year. Paiste America will move to serve its major U.S. retailers directly, starting Jan. 1, 2011. Both companies cited major changes to the market structures in the United

States as reasons for ending the distribution agreement.

"We have had an excellent relationship with the Yamaha Corp. of America and appreciate their efforts supporting the distribution of our instruments in the past five years," said Erik Paiste, president of Paiste-America. [\[paiste.com\]](http://paiste.com)

BUFFET CRAMPON | CORPORATE

Buffet Crampon's Changes

Buffet Crampon USA has announced changes to the current roles and titles of its executive management team.

Bruce Silva will continue in his current role with a title change to senior vice president of North America. He will oversee the overall operation of Buffet Crampon

USA and its national accounts.

François Kloc has been named the North American vice president of marketing and artist relations and will continue to hold the title and responsibilities associated with his current role as double reed product manager.

[\[buffetcrampon.fr\]](http://buffetcrampon.fr)

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Now the world's #1 selling stick is available in pink.

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Gibson's Henry Juskiewicz christens the new Firebird X guitar



GIBSON | EVENT

## Gibson's Firebird a Smash

Gibson Guitar Chairman and CEO Henry Juskiewicz introduced the new Firebird X at a press conference on Oct. 28 at the Hard Rock Time Square in New York. During the press conference, Juskiewicz talked about the technology that led to the unveiling of the Firebird X.

To usher in a new era of guitar technology, he smashed a guitar to

pieces in front of the crowd. Frank Johns, the Firebird X luthier, also took to the stage to demonstrate the guitar.

Gibson's Firebird X brings new creative options to musicians. It includes a richer, simpler user interface. Fundamental musical effects are available with minimum motion and disruption from playing. [gibson.com](http://gibson.com)

SUPPLY 



STEINWAY | GEAR

## Lennon Piano Reimagined

Steinway paid tribute to John Lennon's 70th birthday with the introduction of its Imagine Series Limited Edition piano on Sept. 1. The product launch coincided with the 2010 Steinway & Sons Dealer Meeting, held at the Crowne Plaza Chicago O'Hare in Rosemont, Ill.

The instrument is modeled after the white Steinway grand that Lennon presented to his wife, Yoko Ono, on her birthday in 1971. The bass side of the inner rim features a portion of the lyrics from the song "Imagine." The cast-iron plate inside the piano has the song's opening bars. The Imagine series is available in Model M, O, A, B and D grand piano sizes. [steinway.com](http://steinway.com)

## NEW PRODUCTS FROM VIC

### LIVE WIRES

New retractable wire brushes feature a small round bead on the tip of each wire for a sharp snap on cymbals and drums.




### STICK CADDY

Easy access to your sticks when you need them. Clamps to any stand or hardware.



**VIC FIRTH**  
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A photograph of a person lying on a bed covered with white sheets. An acoustic guitar is positioned on the left side of the bed, leaning against the person's legs. The background is a window with sheer white curtains, allowing soft, natural light to fill the room. The overall mood is peaceful and intimate.

Flips are for kids.

**Q3HD**

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**ZOOM**

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# THE BEST OF 2010



**M**usic Inc.'s 2010 awards issue honors 10 retailers and 10 suppliers that spent the year improving their businesses — and reaping the rewards, in the form of increased profits and customer loyalty. We've also highlighted the 20 home run products of 2010. But this isn't just any awards issue. Inside, you'll find tried-and-true strategies for running a better company. Learn from these winners, and look to their stories as a year-round idea well.

## **+ THE RETAIL EXCELLENCE AWARDS**

- + Washington Music Center
- + Wasson Music
- + Mozingo Music
- + Bentley's Drum Shop
- + Brook Mays Music
- + Sweetwater
- + Sam Ash Music
- + Rick's Music World
- + Kraft Music
- + Buckdancer's Choice Music

## **+ THE SUPPLIER EXCELLENCE AWARDS**

- + Hanser Music Group
- + Taylor Guitars
- + Roland
- + Hoshino
- + D'Addario
- + Harris-Teller
- + Yamaha
- + KMC Music
- + Steinway
- + Fender

## **+ THE YEAR'S BEST PRODUCTS**

- + Kickport, Taylor Guitars, Reverend, Kala, Lanakai, Zoom, Cannonball, Ibanez, Evans, Samick, Yamaha, Breedlove, IK Multimedia, Snark, Avanti, Fender, Curt Mangan, Peavey, Bach and DBZ Guitars

Photo by Simon Brubaker

# BESTSALESPLAN

The British may have coined the phrase “Keep Calm and Carry On,” but the World War II-era slogan could be Washington Music Center’s recession motto.

Now celebrating its 50th year in business, the Bethesda, Md., full-line dealership has managed the economic turmoil by emphasizing old-fashioned retail sales and service over gimmicks and trends. Vice President Alan Levin acknowledged that there have been some quiet nights in his store, but Washington Music Center hasn’t laid off staff or cut any major costs.

Levin shared the following advice for maintaining business and morale:

**1. Keep the store exciting and fresh, so the doom-and-gloom mentality doesn’t sink in.**

“After this many years, we’ve seen things come and we’ve seen things go,” Levin said. “Some of our business has shifted to different items, but we still have a lot of foot traffic. When someone is in the store, they need to be waited on. They need to feel like there’s some excitement going on. It’s a vibe you need.”

**2. Keep staff busy.**

Washington Music Center’s employees create and rearrange displays, handle paperwork and manage inventory to see what needs to be ordered, blown out and updated.

“We’ve never let people go just because business was quiet,” Levin said. “You won’t be able to hire good people if you’re known for doing that. If anything, I’m still looking for good people. If there’s a good person out there who can bring something to the table,

**‘If anything, I’m still looking for good people. If there’s a good person out there who can bring something to the table, we hire him.’  
— Alan Levin**

we hire him.

“When things are quiet, my guys know this is how they’re making their living. The fact that they want to make these sales — that’s what they’re here for.”

**3. Stay laser-focused on the customers’ needs, and always make sure they get the right products.**

“We try to find the customer what they want, not just let them leave with something they’re going to bring back five times trying to find the right one,” Levin said. “We’d like them to stay [longer], so we can match them with the right item.”

**4. Take a recession-conscious approach to sales by emphasizing quality and the amount customers will save over time by purchasing the right — as opposed to the cheapest — product.**

“There’s nothing set in stone when you’re selling, but my employees will talk to cus-

tomers and give them the options,” Levin said. “They will explain to them that if they spend a little more, they may easily get more years out of their purchases. For example, ‘Do you want to spend \$500 now and have a ride for about eight years, or do you want to spend \$300 now and then spend \$600 or \$700 in another three years from now?’ Most people opt to spend the \$500 now when they realize how to look at it.”

Levin’s approach is grounded in the idea that he’d rather someone have the pleasure of playing a quality, long-lasting instrument than make two or three low-end to midrange purchases and throw in the towel because the sound or feel wasn’t right. After all, an unhappy customer is less likely to come back to the store.

**5. Manage inventory effectively by taking advantage of opportunities and not overreacting.**

“We’re always very careful on our purchases,” Levin said. “Have we tried to thin our inventory a little bit? Yes. Some of the manufacturers were offering recession-busters, and we were still buying. If there was a deal out there, we tried to take advantage of it. We also tried to clear out older inventory.

“Maybe we’re a bunch of dinosaurs, but we think it begins with that face to face interaction. If someone comes in, we can react faster to them than a large, multi-layered management company can. We don’t have to vote. If there’s a question about making a deal or not making a deal, they get an answer right away.” **MI**

— By Sara Farr





Robert (left)  
and Alan Levin

# BEST RECOVERY

On Sept. 26, 2008, a car plowed through Wasson Music. In the matter of an instant, the Dayton, Ohio-based print and lessons operation was crumbling, with the front wall and window taken out completely.

“It was bad,” said Carol Wasson, the store owner and a piano and violin teacher. “The car hit the building between the window and the door. That caused the wall to begin to separate from the roof.”

Wasson Music underwent \$50,000 worth of reconstruction and repairs over nine months. While her store was being built back up, Wasson watched her sales decline.

“It was destructive all the way around,” Wasson said. “Everyone thought we were closed for business, even though we were open during the entire reconstruction period. I would sit and watch them pull into the parking lot and then turn around and go over to the music store across the street.”

On top of the decrease in customer traffic, excessive dust caused many students in the company’s lesson program to go elsewhere. Also, Wasson said her insurance company would not refund revenue lost during the reconstruction.

“During that time, I watched my sales go to almost nothing,” she said. “I knew the only way I was going to survive was if I reinvented myself. I knew I had to do something.”

## ARTISTIC INSPIRATION

Wasson decided to incorporate an art gallery into her showroom. She was no



Carol Wasson

stranger to the idea — she once had a children’s art gallery within her lesson studio.

“I started contacting artists I knew,” Wasson said. “And we came up with the Synthesia Gallery, which is now a part of our business.”

The gallery is spread throughout the store, but most of the artwork hangs in the recital hall, which seats 75 and boasts two Steinway grands. The hallway in the 12-room lessons area also features artwork.

“It is a multisensory, multi-educational experience,” Wasson said. “The philosophy is that people are experiencing

art with music because music is going on in our building all the time.”

Bringing art and music together has presented opportunities to boost store traffic. For instance, Wasson periodically holds art receptions.

“That has caused a real interest in the community because we are an entirely different kind of music store now,” she said. “Parents are bringing new students in here all the time because they want their child in this sort of multi-educational atmosphere.”

Artists enjoy bringing work into Wasson Music because it’s

received by a large audience. In return, Wasson gets increased traffic flow throughout the store and has even piqued some new interest in music.

“A lot of times the artists will bring in their students, and their students will then [take lessons] with us,” she said. “We both work together.”

Wasson added that she believes art and music go hand in hand. “They are intertwined in the creative soul,” she said. “I feel we should be stimulating the creative processes of everyone who walks into our store.” **MI**

— By Katie Kailus

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Jeff Mozingo

Photo by Scott Rovak

# BEST MARKETER

These days, Jeff Mozingo can't flash his credit card in St. Louis without waiters and gas station clerks asking, "Are you related to the folks at Mozingo Music?"

"And invariably, it's because of something we did this last year in marketing," said the owner of the St. Louis-based full-line retailer.

In fact, becoming a household name in the Gateway City was Mozingo Music's goal for 2010. It sounds ambitious for a two-store music dealership, but the company hit the bull's-eye, largely by harnessing the combined promotional power of live music and sports.

"If we can get more people to enjoy sports and music together, then it really makes a difference," Mozingo said. "It's working for us."

## THE BUSCH STADIUM HOME RUN

This past summer, the company found a captive audience in Cardinals fans. At several home games, Mozingo Music's Web site flashed across Busch Stadium's screen. Elsewhere, the retailer set up three pop-up tents in high-visibility spots within the venue. At a few games, Jeff Mozingo even got face time with the crowd.

These priceless plugs were payment for co-sponsoring Battle at Busch with radio station 105.7 The Point. Mozingo provided a high-end P.A. system, backline gear and judges for the summer-long battle of the bands, held at Busch Stadium during a half-dozen Cardinals games.

"This is what's so cool about it: The only thing it cost

## Mozingo Music finds fame in St. Louis by harnessing the promotional power of live music, sports

me was what it cost to support and sponsor the battle of the bands," Mozingo said.

Still, it was a sizeable upfront investment, as he had to purchase a high-end P.A. system to loan out. But that investment will soon pay for itself.

"I've rented the sound system three times since I picked it up from Busch Stadium," Mozingo said. "So, I continue to make money with it."

He bookended Battle at Busch by advertising mozingomusic.com on a center field equipment shed at River City Rascals games. It cost \$3,000 for the season, and that price included a Mozingo Music night.

"The advertising we've done this year has literally made our name a household name," Mozingo said. "People are like, 'I hear your name on The Point all the time. I saw your thing down at the Rascals stadium. That's really cool.'"

## DOMINATING POINTFEST

Thirty-thousand concertgoers also saw Mozingo Music's name. In another partnership with The Point, the retailer served as a mainstage sponsor for Pointfest, the radio

station's annual daylong concert event — held twice this summer at Verizon Wireless Amphitheater.

Mozingo gave away four guitars from the stage to radio contest winners. His employees also manned two booths, where they handed out Mozingo Music bracelets. The effort yielded 5,000 new names for the company's mailing list and cost \$2,000, plus staff time.

Mozingo added that getting people to work the event was a no-brainer. "My employees who work six days a week are excited to be there because they want to hear the bands," Mozingo said. "They want to be part of the excitement."

He has since seen Mozingo Music bracelets crop up at St. Louis-area schools, where he has been hosting drum and percussion clinics (putting the Busch Stadium sound system to further use). He said industry suppliers have pitched in to all of these promotions.

"People rag on the manufacturers at times for not supporting music stores," he said. "I saw just the opposite this last year. These guys have supported me the best that they've ever supported me. Whatever capacity they can, they make it happen. But you've got to ask."

## IN-STORE PROMOTIONS

The promotional blitz couldn't be better-timed. Mozingo singled out more aggressive Internet competitors as his biggest recession-era challenge. (The company doesn't offer e-commerce on its Web site but plans to start doing so next year.) Luckily, 2010's tireless marketing has fattened up Mozingo Music's prospect list.

And in 2011, it plans to put that list to good use.

The company's getting a head start this holiday season. Mozingo said he plans to send out an e-blast to thank everyone for stopping by the Pointfest booths. The mailing will include enticements to get them in the store.

"We'll have a hook that says, 'If you bring this coupon in, you'll get a free set of strings. Why not use that free set of strings as a gift and then add a guitar strap?'" Mozingo explained.

Other ongoing promotions aim to keep people coming through the doors. The daily Scratch It promotion at mozingomusic.com lets visitors sign up to win gear — adding more names to the company's mailing list.

"[Manufacturers] will donate a guitar or a drum set or some cymbals or a keyboard toward the Scratch It campaign," Mozingo said. "But you have to come into the store to get your prize, obviously. And when [winners] come in to get their prizes, we try to bring them in and make them lifelong customers."

And some of Mozingo's most effective marketing goes on within its own four walls. Each week, 1,200–1,500 students pass through its two locations for music lessons. Students automatically get 100 points a month for Mozingo Music's Loyalty Program, and they can use the points for additional savings.

"We sell more to our lesson students than we do anyone else," Mozingo said. "They're coming in. They're using loyalty cards. Lessons are huge." **MI**

— By Zach Phillips



Bill Xavier

## BESTREP FORCE

If retailers had their way, all manufacturer reps would be clones of those at Hanser Music Group.

"Our [Hanser] rep knows how to dance a fine line between being a full-service rep and becoming someone who pesters you for orders," said one dealer. "[He] always brings new items that he knows will fit our product mix and filters out those items and brands that would be a waste of both of our time to push. Exceptional service, great follow-through and a pleasure to do business with. I wish all of my suppliers and reps were like Hanser's."

Bill Xavier, vice president of Hanser Music Group, said his company's reps aren't "really salespeople."

"They are professional consultants and partners to our dealers. Our reps consult with dealers, and once their needs are identified, HMG provides the financing tools, freight programs and margin opportunities to assist the reps and our dealers to sell through the gear in a profitable manner."

He added that to nurture a culture of excellence, everyone on the team needs to believe they have an important role to play.

"We are a relatively small company, but that allows everyone to feel like a part of growing something great," Xavier said.

"Everyone on the team is a musician, and many have been with our company for more than 10 years. We work as a team to resolve issues quickly. That makes everyone feel empowered and positive about our future." **MI**

— By Jeff Cagle



## miBESTPRODUCT

**KICKPORT** The coolest thing about the KickPort? It works. Easily installed in a bass drum, the unit produces a deeper, fatter and more focused sound. And drum retailers love the KickPort because it sells. "It's a great add-on [for] any drummer, it really works and sells for under \$40," said one dealer. **{kickport.com}**

## BESTEXPANSION

Dana Bentley, owner of Bentley's Drum Shop in Fresno, Calif., didn't think twice about the economic situation when he moved his store this past September.

"If you look historically, some of the smartest moves in business were done at some of the most volatile times," he said.

Bentley had been adding off-site warehousing here and there since his shop opened in 1992. After 18 years in the same spot, he decided to move to a new location where he could house everything under one roof.

Only a mile and a half away, the new Bentley's Drum Shop is 11,000 square feet and features five lesson rooms, a 6,700-square-foot showroom and expanded warehouse space with a loading dock.

"This was really the best time for us to move," Bentley said. "We had been looking at this facility for a year and a half, and it became available."

The September move also gave Bentley ample time to let his customers know of his new digs before the holiday season.

"We had a good two months for our customers to get used to our new location — and for those who aren't on our mailing list, who might only visit us once a year, to find us before the holidays," Bentley said.

The grand-opening celebration was spread



Dana Bentley

out over a month to give everyone fair warning. It featured an Evans tuning clinic, a Daniel Glass master class, a Ludwig day and in-store meet-and-greets with John Tempesta and Terry Bozzio.

"Spreading out the celebration gave everyone a chance to come and check it out," Bentley said.

The new drum shop boasts several additions, such as a snare drum display that holds 100 models — including two large snares hanging from the ceiling. The percussion area now covers two entire walls, giving customers even more space to shop. Canned lighting has also replaced harsh fluorescents. As Bentley said, "Everything flows quite nicely." **MI**

— By Katie Kailus



# the **BEST** and the **BRIGHTEST**



Thirty-five years after defining the tuner category, Korg offers a level of excellence and value that no other brand can match. Take the Pitchblack. Visible in sunlight, low light, or no light, Pitchblack's bold, bright display offers four meter modes to suit any style. At home in nearly any pedalboard, Pitchblack can even power your other pedals. Best of all, our True Bypass circuitry means Pitchblack will never color your sound.

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# BEST PRODUCTS

The sluggish economy has caused many suppliers to scale back production, get creative with inventory and, in some cases, reduce staff. Not so for Taylor Guitars, according to Brian Swerdfeger, the company's vice president of sales and marketing.

"Our production of 500 through 900 series, Koa series and build-to-order guitars is at an all-time high," he said. "We hired more than 85 new employees this year, and we're on our ninth production increase. Together with our retail partners, we are making

a difference in the economy."

Dealers singled out Taylor's product quality, profitability and retail support programs as reasons why the guitar maker stood out in 2010.

"While many manufacturers seem to be chasing the low-end, finding the cheapest possible materials and labor, Taylor recognizes that there are musicians and dealers who just aren't interested," said one dealer. "Taylor guitars are selling extremely well — seemingly insulated from current economic conditions — and the margins are good enough to affect the bottom line. And



Taylor Road Show attendees try out guitars at the Taylor "Petting Zoo"

they don't have just three SKUs that sell. Every model I stock sells, so when business is good, I feel safe to experi-

ment with new SKUs."

Taylor also backed up its product with high-visibility, product-turning promotions. The Road Show, in particular, received retailer praise. According to Swerdfeger, through the middle of November, Taylor put on 200 Road Shows in the United States alone. Each event averaged 85 people, and dealers reported selling an average of five to eight guitars per night.

"In addition, customers return to the stores for weeks following, and sales are energized for months," Swerdfeger said. "In this Internet age where everything is available online, the one thing you can't get online is real community, hands-on interaction with a brand and products you love and stories from the people in the factory. That's what we bring to every event. It's fun, it's informative, it's interactive and different every time. Our dealers and players are worth it."

Taylor's passion for product innovation, dealer support and the Road Show add up to a winning combination. As one dealer put it, "They don't check the rearview mirror very much." **MI**

— By Jeff Cagle



## mi BEST PRODUCT

**TAYLOR GS MINI** With the GS Mini, Taylor delivered an ultra-portable guitar with the volume and tone of a much larger model. It's a scaled-down version of the company's Grand Symphony body shape and features a solid Sitka top, back and sides of sapele laminate, an ebony fretboard and bridge, and a tortoise shell pickguard. While lots of retailers loved the instrument — one dealer called it "a small guitar that actually sounds good" — they enjoyed selling it even more. A retailer said it was "the only product that I saw come out this year that pre-sold in big numbers." It lists for \$678. **{taylor guitars.com}**

# BEST COMEBACK

Don't tell Bill Everitt there are no second acts in American lives.

The president of Dallas-based Brook Mays Music has crept back into the music industry after his dealership's high-profile bankruptcy four years ago. That collapse put some suppliers on the hook — a handful to the tune of millions of dollars. And still, many couldn't be happier that Brook Mays has returned.

"Brook Mays has gone back to its roots of what made the company strong by servicing the band director and their school needs," said one supplier. "They do an outstanding job of servicing their customers. I give them my vote as best chain because of the remarkable comeback this company has accomplished."

## NEW FOCUS

Critics of the former Brook Mays Music claimed it had grown too fast and lost control of its systems and overall focus. That said, Everitt's determined to not repeat past mistakes. The new iteration of the company, for starters, is strictly a school music business, as opposed to a full-line operation. It has six locations — three in Houston and three in the Dallas/Fort Worth area — along with 62 employees. Everitt said an average staff member has 25 years of experience.

"Growth is important for any business, but growth built on solid market share gains is the best way to ensure strong working relationships with customers

and suppliers," he said. "I have organized my business model differently.

"With a renewed focus on the school music segment, we are able to concentrate our efforts and invest our assets to a higher and better purpose."

## REBUILDING BROOK MAYS

Getting back in the game hasn't been without its roadblocks. Four months after the bankruptcy, Everitt said he started negotiating with liquidators to buy the company trade names and trademarks. Since then, he has been battling what he called "misinformation" about the new Brook Mays.

"When we started in November 2006, we did not have the manpower or ed rep coverage to tell our side of the story," Everitt said. "As we continue to add staffing, I am confident that we can become a larger player in the market areas that we serve. In some cases, we have been welcomed with open arms, and in some cases, we know it will take time."

Plus, there was that little issue of lines. Everitt acknowledged that some vendors still don't trust his new venture. He credited those that do as being a critical resource for re-entering the business.

"I am grateful for the respect of many suppliers that were willing to provide access to their products on a direct basis," he said, adding that "the bottom line is that we have every product type



Bill Everitt

that we need to be successful.

"In addition to the normal startup issues, we also had to deal with a lot of negative issues hanging over from the bankruptcy. It has taken time, but I am glad to say that the past is now the past."

These days, Brook Mays is a profitable family business, according to Everitt. And it's growing. His son, Ray, has become more involved in building the company's financing,

distribution, e-commerce and marketing infrastructure. Everitt's daughter, Gracie, continues to serve as Brook Mays' corporate attorney.

"I am also blessed with so many friends and associates in the business," he said. "Over the past four years, we have built a unique infrastructure, and I believe we are well-positioned for solid growth for many years to come." **MI**

— By Zach Phillips



## mi BEST PRODUCT

### REVEREND SENSEI HB-FM

The Sensei HB-FM offers classic flametop tone in a thinner, lighter and, not least of all, less-pricey guitar. Plus, it boasts smooth, focused midrange and clear treble. Bonus: Dealers also enjoy working with the guitar maker. As one retailer commented, "They make us feel we have part ownership with them."

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

# BEST WEBSITE

Sweetwater's Web site, [sweetwater.com](http://sweetwater.com), deserves props for ambition alone.

Guitars are shot from multiple angles in the company's in-house photo studio. Buying guides teach everything from choosing the right mic to hanging acoustic foam to assembling a Pro Tools rig. Anticipated new products often boast high-quality demo videos, put together by Sweetwater staff and manufacturer reps. Plus, the site caters to pros and newbies alike, depending on how deep you click into it.

But [sweetwater.com](http://sweetwater.com) is also good for business. According to Chuck Surack, president and founder of the Fort Wayne, Ind., retailer, one-third of the company's sales now come directly from the site. And that doesn't account for existing customers who turn to [sweetwater.com](http://sweetwater.com) as a resource.

"While I don't have figures on what other sales might come indirectly from the site, we know that a great many of our regular customers, who place their orders with our sales engineers, use the Web site, as well as our *ProGear Directory*, as a resource," he said.

## SWEETWATER EXCLUSIVES

Regular upkeep requires eight full-time employees, but [sweetwater.com](http://sweetwater.com) is a collaborative effort. Surack mentioned that as many as 20 additional staff, plus a slew of supplier reps, contribute content.

"Our Web site allows us to extend [our] expertise to the Web in a variety of ways," he said. "Buyers guides, reviews and videos are a big part of



that. We also have a huge knowledge base, with tens of thousands of articles about every aspect of the music making and recording process."

Take the page for Mesa Boogie's Transatlantic TA-15 guitar amp head. Not only is the copy fresh — less a PR piece, more an exclusive gear review — but Sweetwater Editorial Director Mitch Gallagher offers an in-depth video demo of the amp head, as well. (He has a weekly series on the site called "Sweetwater Minute.")

The Royer R-121's page features a video by John Jennings, Royer's vice president of sales and marketing. He discusses the ribbon mic's standout properties, along with applications where ribbon mics produce more natural audio. This way, amateur recordists learn not only about a new product but

also a new product category.

"We shoot product demo videos with [reps] as often as we can and post them as soon as possible, especially with new product announcements," Surack said. "We see video as an important part of our marketing strategy going forward."

He likened Sweetwater's social media presence on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and MySpace to having four different television channels for educational content and commercials. He said daily posts on Facebook and Twitter generate a "high number" of click-throughs to [sweetwater.com](http://sweetwater.com).

## EDUCATION PUSH

Surack singled out the site's Guitar Gallery and Cable Finder as especially unique features. The Guitar Gallery lets users search for guitars by brand or price — or both at

once. Each ax features meticulous, exclusive photography. Even a \$450 Fender Jaguar boasts nine different pics, including shots of the pickups and front and back of the headstock.

The Cable Finder has a fast three-step process for helping users choose the ideal cord. With each step, little pop-ups offer details, such as the difference between TRS and TS cables. And the final screen lets users search by length, brand, price and popularity.

"Our commitment is to provide helpful content to educate, to facilitate product research and technical service, and to take the Sweetwater difference online so that our customers can benefit from Sweetwater's huge investment in training and education," Surack said. **MI**

— By Zach Phillips

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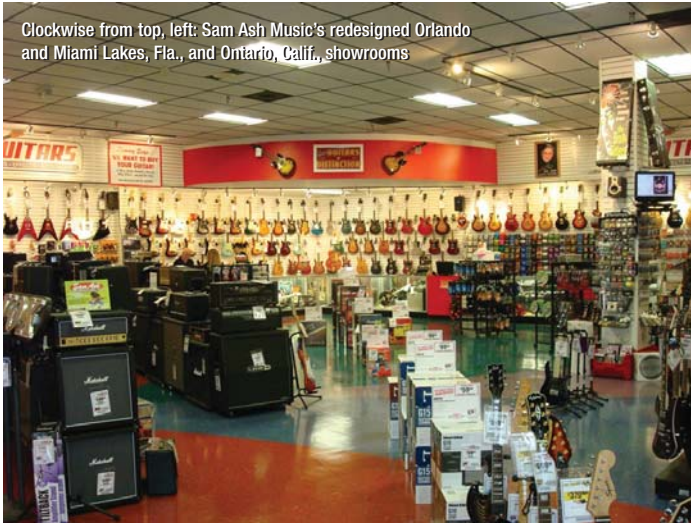
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Clockwise from top, left: Sam Ash Music's redesigned Orlando and Miami Lakes, Fla., and Ontario, Calif., showrooms



# BEST RECESSION SPENDING

Customers who walk into any given Sam Ash Music store can usually bet their favorite sales associates will be there.

Maintaining staff longevity, in fact, is key to creating a mom-and-pop feel at the music retail chain, according to Sammy Ash, company COO — who noted that the average Sam Ash store is 21,000 square feet.

To combat high turnover common to retail, he added that his company strives to pay a competitive wage and fosters an environment of respect and communication. Every employee, for instance, has access to any Sam Ash executive's office and cell phone numbers and e-mail address.

"My wife isn't always thrilled that I get so many calls, but she understands, as she used to work here, too," Ash said. "When the customer hears that an associate is on the phone with Sammy Ash, it is another reminder that we are a family business — not a conglomerate."

He noted that customer complaints are always handled directly by a member of the

## Sam Ash Music remodels, refocuses amid the economic downturn

Ash family. "No one has to go up the chain of command to get justice," he said.

### DOWNTURN OPPORTUNITIES

This mindset also helps Sam Ash Music react quickly to change and take advantage of opportunities.

Though many retail companies have struggled during the economic downturn, Sam Ash has expanded its accessories business, remodeled its stores and focused on offering the widest range of guitars in the \$1,000-and-under category. People are holding on to what they already have, Ash said, so instead of buying a new saxophone, a customer might instead be looking at a new mouthpiece or a new set of pickups for a guitar.

The retailer now provides instrument repair in all of its



stores and is expanding its music lessons business — two areas that have traditionally been the domain of indie retailers. Thirteen Sam Ash stores currently offer lessons; Ash predicted that number will be up to 25 by next year.

"When I am in any of our stores, we hear, 'Do you give lessons?' and the answer was 'no,'" he said. "So the customer takes their purchase from us, and we send them away — to a music school or smaller competitor. Why do that when we know most of the teachers in any given area anyway?"

The economy has also offered Sam Ash Music the

opportunity to redesign its stores and create lesson rooms where there were none before.

"Contractors are dying for business, so we are getting almost a 30-percent reduction on a job I priced just two years ago," Ash said. "As a consumer, I do not like to shop at shabby, outdated stores."

"We know that business is going to come back, so [now] is not the time to tear apart a store. We always invest in our stores, and while we are not opening any [new locations] right now, we are using those funds to make things better for our current stores." MI

— By Sara Farr

**mi**BESTPRODUCT

**ZOOM H1 HANDY RECORDER**

Described as a “quantum leap in price and performance” by one dealer, this tiny handheld recorder turned many a head when launched at Summer NAMM in June. It offers 24-bit, 96-kHz audio at a \$99 price point. The USB 2.0 interface also allows for

the transfer of recorded files to a PC or Mac for storage, editing and/or playback.

{samson  
tech.com}



**mi**BESTPRODUCT

**KALA U-BASS & LANAKAI LKP-C KOA CONCERT UKE PACK**

2010 turned out to be a banner year for the uke, with everyone from combo retailers to band dealers stocking up on the island instruments.

And Kala's U-Bass and Lanakai's uke pack were standouts.

The U-Bass, a short-scale bass on a baritone uke body, is tuned like a standard bass (EADG). Delivering booming sound in a pint-size instrument, it has an MSRP of \$599 and, according to several dealers, impressive margins.

Lanakai found a best-seller in its LKP-C Koa Concert Uke pack. The uke boasts a figured koa top, back and sides; rosewood fingerboard and bridge; and gold-plated die-cast tuners. Its custom nut is slightly wider than most ukes. The pack also features a fully chromatic tuner and gig bag.

{hohnerusa.com;  
kalaukulele.com}



**BEST INNOVATOR**

One music retailer described Roland's product output as an incredible stream of high-tech, well-built gear.

This year alone yielded such marquee products as the SuperNATURAL digital piano line, but Brian Alli, Roland's vice president of sales, said some of the biggest R&D strides came from the company's battery technologies.

“The new R-05 handheld recorder has 15 hours of recording time on a pair of AA batteries,” he said. “As a result, we've been able to release a whole line of battery-powered products from keyboards to drums to recorders to amplifiers and guitar products. To date, we have 27 Roland and 62 Boss products that are all battery-powered, allowing our customers to have the freedom to play anywhere they want.”

The emphasis on product development hasn't caused service to suffer, though. “It's easy for a manufacturer to run from service in this economic climate,” one dealer said. “I have not noticed a change in [Roland's] commitment to excellence.”

In fact, Roland expanded its service programs this year with the introduction of Roland University, which held two sessions in 2010 with more to come after the new year.

“Our dealer training is something we're extremely proud of,” Alli said. “We have a full-time field training staff that was able to reach 100 dealers in the last three months alone. We are committed to the long-term education and relationships with our dealers in any way we can — online, in the store and in the field.” **MI**

— By Jeff Cagle



Brian Alli

**mi**BESTPRODUCT

**CANNONBALL SCEPTYR**

**SERIES** Cannonball Sceptyr

Semi-Pro saxophones are award-winning instruments that afford dealers generous

margins, by virtue of

Cannonball's no-Internet-advertising policy. They

come in three different finish options — rich

gold lacquer body and keys,

black nickel-plated body with rich gold lacquer keys, and black

nickel-plated body with silver-plated keys. The saxes also come

standard with blue abalone finger buttons. {cannonballmusic.com}



# BEST INDIE SUPPORTER

In no uncertain terms, independent music retailers see Hoshino as a key partner.

One retailer commented that the Ibanez and Tama supplier views independent retailers as an ally, not an annoyance. The dealer added, "Hoshino produces timely, high-quality products and backs them up with top-notch service."



Bill Reim

Bill Reim, company president, noted that the MI industry exists in a specific, specialized world, making independent key brokers for his company's products.

"More so than most industries, we need people selling our products who understand both the technical aspects and the human element if we want to keep this industry vibrant," he said. "The brightest and most successful independent dealers fill this need, and without them, this would be a very flat and dull world."

Dealers also praised Hoshino's deals to help ease recessionary pains, specifically its better terms, discounts and lesser-quantity buys.

"We've been designing sales incentives that, we hope, are seen as true incentives but remain open to different dealers' needs, as no single solution will solve everyone's problems," Reim said. "We do whatever we can, whenever we can — especially for someone who's been a loyal and supportive customer. Thankfully, we have many of those." **MI**

— By Jeff Cagle



## mi BEST PRODUCT

### IBANEZ TSA15H TUBE AMP

Ibanez took the effects pedal out of overdriven tube amp tone and put it into, well, a tube amp. This 15-watt head boasts a built-in Tube Screamer circuit for warm, punchy overdrive. "It's got sound with a price that is better than anything else out there," a retailer said. "They got it right this time." **{ibanez.com}**



Rick (left) and Robin Santos

# BEST VIBE

When Rick Santos opened his combo dealership, Rick's Music World in Raynham, Mass., he wanted it to be more than just a music shop. So, he added a café.

The local hot spot, which features a performance area and roughly 100 seats, gives starving artists and local musicians a venue to mingle, rehearse and try out new songs before a captive audience.

"We felt that the store and performance stage should all be under one roof," Santos said. "We really promote music making and the art of music making. The café portion of it allows [customers] to have snacks, drinks and pastries and get that coffeehouse feel, which is really nice. People just love the vibe."

Weekly open mic nights promote Rick's Music World as a community arts hub. "People come from all over, which is amazing, and then you have your regular customers who come over every week," Santos said.

The café stage also doubles as a recital space for the 500 students in Rick's lesson program. And according to Santos, all the excitement has rubbed off on his employees.

"My staff has been with me so long that they have seen the changes in the industry and seen what we are trying to do," Santos said. "They have become so excited since they can see the direction that we are headed. That adds to the feel of everything."

It also keeps music lessons front of mind among staff when they're selling to new customers. "They have become very good at talking to people who are buying beginner instruments and letting them know about our lesson program and our open mic nights," Santos said. "We make sure that our employees fit right into our environment." **MI**

**Adding a café and stage motivates staff to sell music lessons**

— By Katie Kailus





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{BESTOF2010}



## miBESTPRODUCT

### EVANS DRUMHEADS

The drumhead maker received special kudos for the quality and consistency of its product. "I think Evans has really nailed the market, in terms of offering almost every gauge and thickness and type of coated head available to the drummer," said one drum dealer. The company's Hybrid drum set snare batter head (pictured) blends two high-tensile fibers to give drummers enhanced attack, projection and snare sound with a softer feel.

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

## miBESTPRODUCT

**SAMICK JTR GUITARS** "New, different, innovative, well-built with plenty of profit margin and intelligent distribution," said one guitar retailer of the JTR line — and Samick's business model. A collaboration between Samick and luthier J.T. Riboloff, these guitars and basses feature contoured fastened neck joint systems, a range of hardwoods and custom-wound pickups for a vintage feel with modern sound. {[samickguitar.com](http://samickguitar.com)}



# BEST PROFIT PARTNER

David Via



"Measure your profits" stood out as D'Addario's message to retailers in 2010. According to David Via, the company's vice president of sales, D'Addario encouraged its dealers to take a hard look at what made the most money in their stores. And that included reconsidering their accessory strategy.

"Accessories give consumers the ability to spend money and feel like they are not putting their heads in the sand from an economic point of view," Via said. "It's not as large of a purchase as an instrument, in terms of what they have to take out of their pockets, but it gives them the gratification of spending a little bit of money on something that they really love, which is making music."

Based on responses from voters in this year's Supplier Excellence Awards, dealers took the message to heart.

"[D'Addario offers] great products that sell — profitably — every day, superior service, impeccable shipping accuracy and some of the nicest people in the industry who support small dealers, live music and education constantly," said one retailer. "They're an iconic supplier that defines what we should all aspire to."

"We're obviously going to be more successful in this industry if dealers are financially stable," Via said. "We want the dealer to rely on us to provide the flow of product that's going to maximize their cash flow and maximize profitability to provide financial stability in this slow recovery and help them feel more comfortable with their business and its security today and in going forward." **MI**

— By Jeff Cagle



Jon Harris

## BEST RECEPTION PLAN

While other companies combat the recession by cutting staff and inventory, Harris-Teller has fought the downturn by doing the opposite. The Chicago-based distributor has maintained its employees and kept inventory levels even higher than in the past, according to Jon Harris, company president.

“We’ve made a point to make sure that when dealers call in they’re not getting voice mail and are still speaking to the same people they always have — whether it’s for an order or simply for information,” Harris said.

But manning the phones is only half of the equation. “[Harris-Teller] gets our products to us faster than any other supplier,” said one dealer. “There are no problems with back orders, and the items we order are the ones we get.”

Harris said the company strives to turn orders quickly, often moving them out the same day. And that’s possible because he has kept his core group of employees intact.

“We really want to be the same company we always have been,” Harris said. “People are so unsure about so many other things that are going on. We don’t want to be one more thing for them to be unsure about.” **MI** — By Jeff Cagle

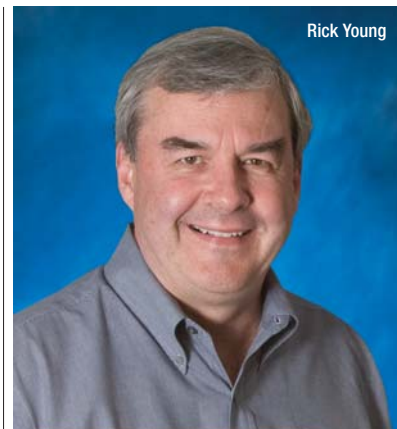
# BEST DEALER SERVICE

The tough economic climate has forced Yamaha to enact expense controls and adapt to what Rick Young, senior vice president, called “the new reality in retail.” Still, Yamaha execs wanted to make sure the effects wouldn’t trickle down to customers.

“We stated in meetings that we had to do everything possible to not have an effect on our customers, keeping the controls inside with very little effect outside,” Young said. “We have always tried hard to be very customer-oriented and want to do anything possible to assist our retailers in their efforts. Hopefully, we were successful and customers did not feel any change in service levels.”

If there was any change, it was lost on dealers, judging from this year’s Supplier Excellence Award voters.

“Others try hard but none come close to Yamaha in product excellence, dealer and end consumer support, both in product and service,” said one dealer. Another added that Yamaha’s sales managers are careful to make sure products arrive on time.



Rick Young

Young said that customer service is an all-day, everyday state of mind at Yamaha, and no detail is too small to overlook.

“For example, many people these days say ‘no problem’ when someone thanks them,” he explained. “We advise our associates never to use that reply, but rather, ‘It is my pleasure,’ or something to that effect. It may seem like a small point, but the small details are many times what customers remember as a differentiator.” **MI** — By Jeff Cagle

## miBESTPRODUCT


### YAMAHA CVP509 CLAVINOVA

**SERIES** One Yamaha retailer called the Clavinova line “a solid performer and one of the few high-dollar products that a dealer can make a good margin on.” It’s high praise, considering the tough state of the piano market. Among this year’s top sellers, the CVP509 series features Yamaha Pure CF sampling technology and Super Articulation 2 Voices for increased realism. **{yamaha.com}**



{BESTOF2010}

# BEST NICHE



**K**raft Music turns its inventory 11–14 times a year. It only carries deep stock of a few select brands. As one supplier pointed out, the Franklin, Wis., e-commerce retailer “doesn’t try to be everything for everyone” and “has done an incredible job of creating a market for itself.”

“They specialize in a small group of products and excel at what they do,” the supplier said.

That specialty has won Kraft Music the adoration of customers and vendors. It also generated enough growth for the company to justify its move from a 4,000-square-foot building to one more than four times that size in 2007.

“We recognize that being everything to everyone is nearly impossible,” said Ben Kraft, owner and chairman of the combo business, which employs 15 full-time employees.

“Because of that, we won’t be able to serve everyone, but we’re able to go deep with the product that we do make an effort to

Ben Kraft

sell, and that enables us to control inventory, take advantage of manufacturer specials across the board and stay current with customer promotions.”

#### RETAIL BY NUMBERS

That's not to say Kraft Music hasn't faced its share of recession-era challenges. More than 90 percent of its business comes from e-commerce and mail-order, making rising freight costs especially tough on margins. Still, the company absorbs those costs — and at a time when Kraft said he sees fewer active consumers. Keeping a close eye on the numbers has been critical to staying above water.

“It's a tough environment, and therefore, we spend a lot more time evaluating all lines on an income statement to be sure that we are maximizing every dollar,” Kraft said. “That has been something that I have been doing since day one. That helped us grow in the past and has kept us above water in these times.”

Kraft added that, if necessary, his team will “run reports each day and order [inventory] each day” to keep product turns up and stock levels down.

“The only exception is when we think manufacturer availability on a certain SKU is going to be tight, and then we might stretch a bit so that we can secure inventory and, in turn, be able to have product for our customers.”

#### EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

Going out of its way for customers, in fact, is serious business for the company. Kraft mentioned that he finds exceeding consumer expectations to be relatively easy “when we simply do what we say we will do.” That consists of same-day shipping, e-mailing tracking

info and after-sale follow-up.

“It's not rocket science, but I can't believe how many times customers will tell us that they placed an order at so-and-so music, and they never heard anything until they called the store directly to find out why their item hadn't shipped,” Kraft said. “Customers are generally expecting to be disappointed, and [our] entire staff works very hard to give them a pleasant experience.”

A more recent online promotion served to enhance that experience. Kraft's marketing team added an Expedited Processing feature to the company Web site.

“It's valid mainly in high-volume times, like the holidays, but it allows customers to pay a nominal fee to have their order placed on top of the pile so that it goes out first and before other orders,” Kraft said. “It's a benefit to our customers, and we hustle to earn the added charge.”

#### THE EMPLOYEE THINK TANK

But Kraft stressed that it's ultimately his people who create customer loyalty. The company recently celebrated two five-year anniversaries and will have two 10-year anniversaries next year. Employees are encouraged to share their ideas, and Kraft even hosts biweekly “efficiency meetings” to make this happen.

“There is always a better way to do something, and we debate and discuss every process often,” Kraft said.

“People are everything, and we've bucked the trend over the past few years by increasing employee benefits rather than stripping them. I want to encourage the Kraft Music family to grow this business.” **MI**

— By Zach Phillips,  
photo by Simon Brubaker

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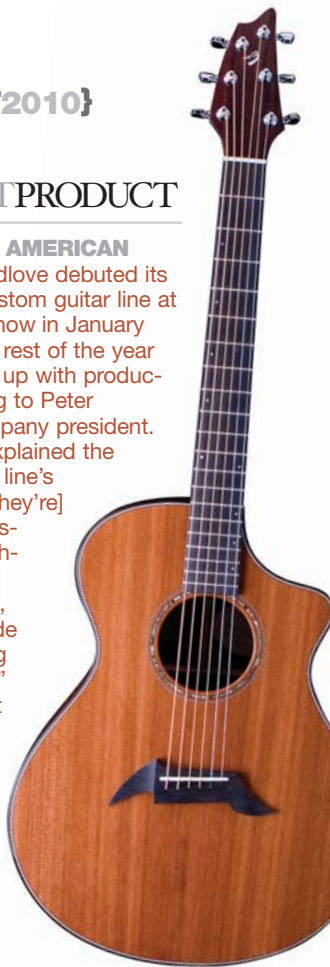
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## {BESTOF2010}

### miBESTPRODUCT

**BREEDLOVE AMERICAN SERIES** Breedlove debuted its U.S.-made custom guitar line at The NAMM Show in January and spent the rest of the year trying to keep up with production, according to Peter Newport, company president. One retailer explained the reason for the line's popularity: "[They're] completely customizable, high-quality, all-solid-wood, American-made guitars starting under \$1,000." He added that they're "the best deal" in his stores. **{breedlove.com}**



## BESTMARKETINGPARTNER

Steinway retailers couldn't say enough good things about the company's latest product innovations, especially the Boston Performance Edition line. But the piano maker received special kudos for its promotional partnerships.

Todd Sanders, Steinway's vice president of sales and marketing, said the company has ramped up its use of technology to benefit Steinway dealers. He cited leads generated on [steinway.com](http://steinway.com) and then passed on to dealers as one example.

"Every inquiry we receive is a very valuable lead and likely someone that is interested in buying a piano," he said. "We spend a lot of time, effort and money to drive traf-

fic to our Web site and capture qualified leads, and we pass these on to our dealers for free."

Sanders added that Steinway has also stepped up its marketing support to dealers. The company regularly offers turnkey promotions, professional product videos shot in high definition and updated point-of-purchase sales aids.

"We have invested in these things because we understand that our success depends on successful dealers," he said. "We know that when we select the most qualified dealer in an area to be our exclusive representative and provide them with the right tools to be successful, they will be." **MI**

— By Jeff Cagle

## BEST24/7 SUPPORT

KMC Music makes it easier for dealers to do business. Nominating retailers praised the supplier's online ordering, easy payment terms and excellent customer service.

Paul Damiano, KMC's senior vice president of sales and marketing, cited KMConline as an example of that service. KMConline gives dealers a single site to place orders, check real-time stock availability and manage back orders — 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

"We are providing dealers electronic versions of our catalogs for direct downloading to their computers," he said. "We have implemented complete electronic data interchange (EDI) with any of our customers that support EDI partners. We have streamlined our operations such that orders received by 4 p.m. ship the same day 98 percent of the time and within 24 hours 100 percent of the time."

Judging from retailers' praise, KMC's online ordering hasn't translated into a drop-off in service. "[Our reps] are awesome about going the extra mile in getting you what you need," one dealer said. "I always get a follow-up call when I submit a purchase order and never have to worry that things are lost in the shuffle." **MI**

— By Jeff Cagle

### miBESTPRODUCT

**IK MULTIMEDIA AMPLITUBE iRIG** This tiny iPhone guitar interface made big waves at Summer NAMM in June. As "Best in Show" panelist George Hines of George's

Music pointed out, "It's a low-cost accessory that makes playing music more enjoyable, and it's versatile." For \$39.99, users get the iRig, plus a free iPhone version of AmpliTube — putting an entire guitar or bass rig at their fingertips.

**{amplitube.com/irig}**



## miBESTPRODUCT

### SNARK GUITAR & BASS TUNER

One retailer commented that this \$29 clip-on tuner “reinvented a wheel that we didn’t even know we needed.” It rotates 360 degrees for enhanced visibility and features a color display that’s just plain cool-looking.

“Great price, and [it] works the best of the attachable tuners that we have seen,” added another dealer. [snarktuners.com](http://snarktuners.com)



## miBESTPRODUCT

### AVANTI FLUTES

“A dynamic new instrument for the future” was how one school music retailer described Avanti flutes. He and other dealers agreed that these instruments offer tremendous bang-for-the-buck value and compete with much more expensive models. Avanti flutes feature ideal sound and feel via the Avanti-Brannen headjoint, which is handcut and matched to the body to give the flute a range of tone colors and dynamics. “Every instrument we have presented to a player has surprised them,” the dealer added.

Another said, “We sell a ton of them to middle and high schoolers but also to saxophone players who double.”

[avantiflutes.net](http://avantiflutes.net)



# BESTWEBTOOL

The folks at Fender know dealers are busy, the marketplace is competitive and consumers are more informed than ever. So last year, the company launched FMIC Direct, a Web-based portal that lets retailers see Fender product availability in real time, 24 hours a day.

“It also gives our dealers total turnkey marketing solutions by providing a wealth of collateral, like Fender advertisements, brochures, videos, images and logos, helping them promote our products and fulfill their customers’ needs,” said Richard McDonald, the company’s senior vice president of marketing. “By keeping the Fender Web site layout and imagery clean and consistent and making product specs and pricing information easily accessible, dealers

are able to get the information they need fast and focus on what they do best — serve their customers.”

And despite Fender’s growth, McDonald stressed that the company’s core philosophy is the same as the day it was founded in a shed in the late 1940s.

“Our level of service hasn’t changed,” he said. “We still operate with the dealer and consumer top of mind and do whatever we can to make and keep our dealers successful — one relationship at a time. We do this the same way we always have, by spending time with them face to face, listening to their wants and needs, and addressing them as quickly as possible in ways that ultimately help them be successful.” **MI**

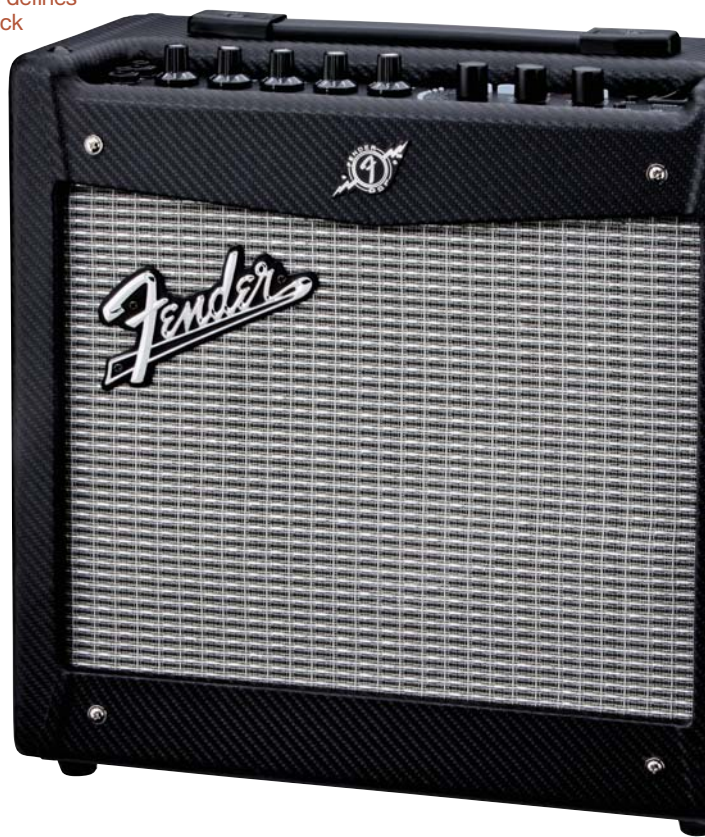
— By Jeff Cagle

## miBESTPRODUCT

### FENDER MUSTANG AMPS

The Mustang series defines the bang-for-the-buck guitar amp.

Featuring a low price point (MSRP: Mustang I, \$149.99; Mustang II, \$269.99), they come equipped with USB connectivity and Fender FUSE software. They contain 24 presets using eight accurate amp tones, ranging from vintage Fender sparkle to modern metal distortion. A nominating retailer said the Mustang I has the most power, as well as the best features and warranty, of any \$99 amp. [fender.com](http://fender.com)



## {BESTOF2010}



### miBESTPRODUCT

**CURT MANGAN STRINGS** Why are music retailers crazy for a boutique string company? Simple. Curt Mangan delivers product that sells often — and at the right price point. The company’s factory play-tests every batch of strings produced to ensure ideal tone and feel. Plus, it offers roughly 400 different single strings and packages nearly 200 different sets for guitar, bass, mandolin and banjo, among other instruments. [curtmangan.com](http://curtmangan.com)

### miBESTPRODUCT

**PEAVEY VYPYR AMPS** “You don’t have to demo them for more than 2 minutes, and people say, ‘I’ll take it,’” a dealer said of Vypyr amps. Another commented that the amps afford new players all the benefits of bigger, less-affordable models. The Vypyr 100 (pictured) features 24 amp channel models, 11 editable pre-amp stomp box effects and 11 editable post-amp rack effects with dual parameter control. It also acts as its own computer audio interface. [peavey.com](http://peavey.com)



### miBESTPRODUCT

**BACH TR300H2 TRUMPET** This student model offers everything new players need: a 0.459-inch medium-large bore, red brass lead-pipe, stainless-steel pistons for quiet action and greater resistance to dents. The TR300H2 is available in lacquer and silver-plate finishes. As one retailer commented, “[The] price is less than previous models, so it is more affordable for parents of beginning students. Sound is great. Feel resistance of air flow is great. What more can you ask for?” [bachbrass.com](http://bachbrass.com)

## BESTCLIENTCONNECTION

For 34 years, Buckdancer’s Choice Music has been treating customers like family.

“We have a great word-of-mouth business,” said Tim Emery, who co-owns the Portland, Maine, shop with Phineas Martin. “There’s a lot of customer loyalty.”

That loyalty has helped Buckdancer’s hold its own against such formidable local competitors as Guitar Center and Daddy’s Junky Music. And Emery said he sees being small as a strength. “We can make decisions on the fly. We don’t have to go through any larger departments.”

Unlike many chains, Buckdancer’s also has low turnover, adding to its family vibe. “It’s really hard for a customer to feel at home with someone

they don’t know,” Emery said. “We have guys who have been here for years and years. We have very little employee turnover. It’s more like family than anything else. I think it’s just picking good staff from the get-go.”

But picking good people isn’t as simple as hiring a skilled sales pro. To keep a family vibe, Emery stressed the importance of finding employees who get along with existing staff.

“We can teach them how to treat customers,” he said. “That can be imprinted in them. But getting along with other employees is important.”

It’s a two-way street that starts at the top with Emery and Martin.

“Treating your staff right helps treat your customers right,” Emery said. **MI**

— By Katie Kailus



### miBESTPRODUCT

**DBZ IMPERIAL** One dealer compared a \$799 DBZ Imperial to a \$4,000 Gibson Les Paul Custom. He’s not alone. At this year’s Summer NAMM conference, DBZ took top honors at the “Best in Show” session. Panelist Brian Reardon of Monster Music commented, “The Imperial, which aesthetically appeals to a weekend warrior 50-something demographic, is like nothing you have ever seen before and, with its wafer-thin body, begs the question why no one had thought of it before.” [dbzguitars.com](http://dbzguitars.com)





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# GEAR



## PRODUCT OF THE MONTH >

FENDER | BLACKTOP

### Blackout

Fender's new Blacktop guitar series expands the sonic horizons of the Stratocaster, Telecaster, Jazzmaster and Jaguar models by powering them with high-gain humbucking pickups. These guitars deliver a thick, heavy sound with a wide array of deep, rich and aggressive tones to match the intensity of any playing style. MSRP: \$699.99. [fender.com](http://fender.com)

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TC ELECTRONIC | BASS AMP 2.0

## Razor-Sharp

The BH500 is the newest addition to TC Electronics' Bass Amp 2.0 line. The BH500 features razor-sharp tone-shaping tools, such as TubeTone, SpectraComp and bass-tuned tone controls. The three memories let users change their tone at any given time, while the integrated tuner allows for silent tuning on the fly. The Tolex-covered BC cabs come in three models. MSRP: \$699. [tcelectronics.com](http://tcelectronics.com)

FRETTED AMERICANA | EVIL ROBOT

## Dark Sounds

Fretted Americana has released the Evil Robot guitar amplifier. It's a class A, 18-watt 1 x 12 combo guitar amplifier constructed of Baltic birch. The cabinet has a semi-open back and houses a 16-gauge steel chassis and one 12-inch handmade speaker. MSRP: \$1,595. [frettedamericana.com](http://frettedamericana.com)



GUARDIAN | CG-090-POP

## Bag in the Box

Guardian's new CG-090-POP gig bag package features 20 of the company's 12-mm gig bags in a box that functions as an easy-to-use POP dispenser. The CG-090 bags have 12 mm of high-density padding and are covered with proprietary DuraGuard nylon weave. Each bag is lined with a no-scratch interior to protect the instrument's finish. [guardiancases.com](http://guardiancases.com)



LINE 6 | POD HD AMPS

## Sweet 16

Line 6 has debuted a new line of POD HD multi-effect pedals, featuring 16 new HD amp models. The POD HD500 features a collection of digital and analog ins and outs, a 48-second looper, and more than 100 M-class effects. The POD HD300 and HD400 (pictured) have full sets of ins and outs, as well as 24-second loopers. MSRP: POD HD300, \$459.99; POD HD400, \$559.99; POD HD500, \$699.99. [line6.com](http://line6.com)

ROTSOUND | SUPER BRONZE

## Super Strings

Rotosound's new Super Bronze strings feature the company's "contact core" design, which creates longer sustain, brighter sound and increased volume. They are used by such artists as Fun Lovin' Criminals and Bob Geldof. [rotsound.com](http://rotsound.com)



LEVY'S LEATHERS | LYRICS STRAPS

## Don't Forget the Lyrics



Levy's Leathers has launched lyrics guitar straps. They feature 2-inch polyester webbing and are sublimation-printed with popular song lyrics. Each strap includes a lyric excerpt on the front and full song lyrics on the back. The straps are available in 13 designs. [levysleathers.com](http://levysleathers.com)

LUCIDA | BAJO QUINTO

## Mariachi Magic

Lucida offers three new Bajo Quinto models that deliver historic mariachi sound without muddiness from the low E-string. The Bajo Quintos are available as an acoustic model, acoustic-electric model and a thin-body electric. MAP: Bajo Quintos with four-band EQ pickups, \$299.99; Bajo Quinto, \$247.49. [lucidaguitars.com](http://lucidaguitars.com)



RECORDING KING | RK-R35

## Strumming on the Ol' Banjo

Recording King's new RK-R35 Madison banjo is built around a three-ply steam-bent maple rim. It features a maple neck with an adjustable two-way truss rod and a comfortable rosewood fretboard. The banjo boasts a maple resonator with a hand-rubbed brown matte finish. MAP: \$674.99. [recordingking.com](http://recordingking.com)



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TASCAM | TC-1S

Powered by the Sun

The recently released TC-1S is Tascam's first solar-powered instrument tuner. It charges its battery from a bank of solar cells on the front panel, while a USB input is available for quick charging when in the dark. The recorder is wrapped in a shock-proof silicon cover and available in six colors with a strap and clip that keep it charging all day long.

{tascam.com}



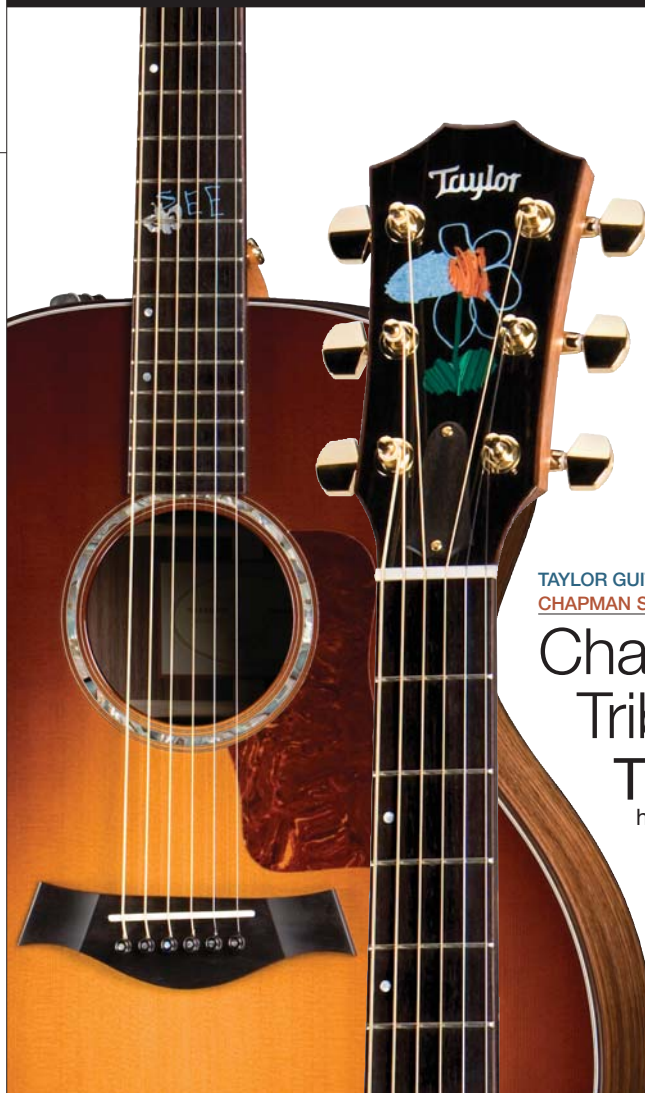
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TAYLOR GUITARS | STEVEN CURTIS  
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Chapman's  
Tribute

Taylor's new Steven Curtis Chapman Signature series honors the musician's late daughter by incorporating design touches recreated from one of her last crayon drawings. The peghead features a six-petal flower, and the fretboard includes the word "see" at the 12th fret. MSRP: \$3,998.

{taylorguitars.com}

HOTTIE | 327 CARVE TOP

# Little Hottie

Hottie has launched a new carve-top version of its Hottie 327 electric guitar. The instrument has a one-piece Honduran mahogany body and a deep-dish carved Eastern hard rock maple top. MSRP: \$2,499. [hottieguitars.com](http://hottieguitars.com)



CORDOBA | TUNER

# Noise Control

Cordoba's new digital tuner is designed to work under the noisiest circumstances and can detect pitch through its extra-large vibration-sensitive clip. The clip accommodates all guitars and features three tuner settings and pitch detection via the vibration-sensitive clip. MSRP: \$29. [cordobaguitars.com](http://cordobaguitars.com)



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BLUE MICROPHONES | SPARK

## Making Sparks

**B**lue Microphones' Spark is a new cardioid, solid-state condenser microphone with fully discrete components and a focus control offering two sonic signatures. The Spark is able to capture a wide range of recording situations and comes with a custom shock mount and pop filter in a professional wooden case. MSRP: \$199. [bluemic.com](http://bluemic.com)



UNIVERSAL AUDIO | UAD-2 QUAD OMNI V.5.7

## Power Package

**U**niversal Audio has released the new UAD-2 QUAD Omni v.5.7 DSP Accelerator Package. It's Universal Audio's most powerful and flexible processing hardware, complete with the company's plug-in bundle for professional power users. The pack gives producers and engineers 50 award-winning UAD Powered Plug-Ins for Mac or PC. [universalaudio.com](http://universalaudio.com)

V-MODA | VIBRATO IN-EAR HEADPHONES

## Vibrant Vibratos

**V**-Moda's new Vibrato noise-isolating in-ear headphones are crafted from zinc alloy and feature a Kevlar fabric cable with a three-button remote and microphone. The headphones have a geometric design and solid, durable feel. Constructed with an 8-mm dynamic HD neodymium driver, the Vibrato delivers vibrant bass, midrange and highs. MSRP: \$129.99. [v-moda.com](http://v-moda.com)







KACES | MICROPHONE BAG

## Mic Messenger

Six microphones fit safely into Kaces' new slim messenger-style microphone bag. Heavy foam surrounds each mic, and the entire outfit is covered with padded 600D polyester and includes a padded panel zip over the top. A second cover flap folds over the entire face of the bag and is secured with two latching straps. MSRP: \$39.95. [kaces.com](http://kaces.com)



GATOR | G-MIX-B-2123

## Mixer Mobility

Gator has launched G-MIX-B-2123, a soft mixer bag that holds today's popular models, including the Yamaha N12. Cases are made of a rugged nylon exterior and feature 5-mm spongy foam padding, a protective tricot-lined interior, webbed carry handles, a removable shoulder strap and a large exterior pocket. [gatorcases.com](http://gatorcases.com)

ZOOM | Q3HD

## Handheld High-Def

Zoom's new Q3HD is a handheld camcorder that records audio and video in HD. The Q3HD combines Zoom's audio technology with 1080p HD video. The unit uses the same microphone capsules as Zoom's H4n recorder, configured in a wide 120-degree X/Y pattern. Setting audio levels is easy using the on-board level meters and mic gain switch with auto gain control. [zoom.co.jp](http://zoom.co.jp)



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ULTRASONIC | EDITION 10

### Perfect 10

Ultrasonics has released its first open-back special-edition headphones, the Edition 10. They feature Zebrano wood ear cup inlays, Ethiopian sheepskin leather ear cup pads, titanium-plated drivers and Kevlar-coated cables. The Edition 10's drivers have been tuned for open-back headphones. MSRP: \$2,749. [ultrasonics.com](http://ultrasonics.com)



WAVES | TONY MASERATI

### Signature Sound

Waves Audio has enhanced its Tony Maserati Artist Signature Collection with a new plug-in, features and presets. These features — which were developed by Waves and Maserati, a Grammy award-winning producer — include the Maserati GRP Group Processor, a new insert/send mode and dozens of presets. The GRP Group Processor was designed for group tracks. [waves.com](http://waves.com)

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JZ MICROPHONES | JZ|PF

## Pop Blocker

JZ Microphones has launched the JZ|PF pop filter. It has a unique shape that's designed to reduce plosive sounds coming at the microphone capsule without altering the sound source's harmonic content. The extended length of the gooseneck makes for easy setup. [jzmic.com](http://jzmic.com)



ZAOLLA SILVERLINE | CABLES

## Silver Lining

Zaolla Silverline has introduced a microphone cable that combines the company's unique silver-core conductors with Neutrik XX-14 series XLR connectors. The result is a cable that combines sonic transparency with durability, ideal for professional studio musicians, home recordists and live performers. The new cable is designed around two solid-silver center conductors. Cables are available in 3-, 5-, 10-, 15-, 20-, 30- and 50-foot lengths. MSRP: \$79-\$716. [zaollasilverline.com](http://zaollasilverline.com)

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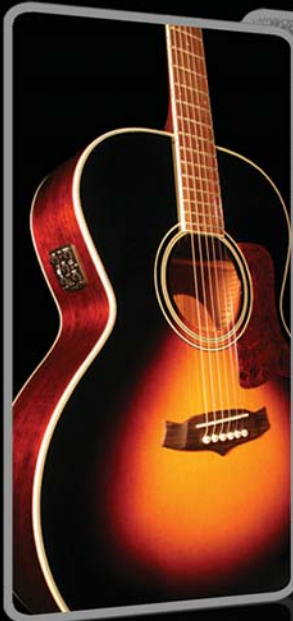
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SABIAN | B8

### Cheers to 20

Sabian has released a new version of the B8 Pro cymbal to mark its 20th anniversary. It's richer-sounding and opens up when hit hard, but now it also "gives up the goods" when played lightly. The cymbal features a brilliant finish and a two-year warranty. [sabian.com](http://sabian.com)



TRX | ICON SERIES

### Iconic Rides

Handcrafted in Turkey, TRX's new Icon cymbal series features traditional lathing with a highly polished finish. The cymbals are available in a wide selection of sizes and styles, including big sizes and heavier weights. The Icon crash cymbals come in thin, medium and heavy models, giving drummers an extended range of crash and crash-ride options. [trxcymbals.com](http://trxcymbals.com)



KORG | WAVEDRUM BLACK

### Black Waves

Korg's Wavedrum is now available in a limited-edition black color with a solid black metallic rim and an exclusive black suede Remo drumhead. The Wavedrum is a percussion synthesizer that can be used as a stand-alone instrument or part of a percussion rig. [korg.com](http://korg.com)



MAPEX | HORIZON HXB

## On the Horizon

The new Horizon HXB series drums from Mapex feature genuine basswood shells for rich tone and attack. Mounted toms are equipped with Mapex's isolated tom mounting system, which lets the shell resonate freely. The drums feature black hardware and are available in black or burgundy high-gloss wrapped finishes. MSRP: starts at \$697.

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



ZILDJIAN | GEN16

## Vaulting Ahead

Zildjian's Gen16 has announced its new Digital Vault series. The Digital Vault offers high-resolution acoustic samples of the company's master reference cymbals, along with limited-edition cymbals never available to the public. Each cymbal was hand-selected by Zildjian's master cymbal tester from the cymbal vault at the company's Norwell, Mass., workshop and recorded by percussion sampling guru John Emrich.

Powering the Gen16 Digital Vaults is a custom version of FXpansion's BFD Eco. {[gen-16.com](http://gen-16.com)}



CYMBAG | CYMBAL PROTECTORS

## Cymbal Sleeves

Cymbag's new cymbal protector sleeves keep cymbals clean and shiny by protecting them from fingerprints and dirt during setup, pack up, storage and travel. Made from an advanced microfiber material that's snug, secure and super-soft yet rugged and durable, Cymbags slip on and off any cymbal while it's still on the stand and into any hard or soft case. Cymbal protectors are available in sizes from 6–26 inches. {[cymbag.com](http://cymbag.com)}

GATOR | ATA TSA CASE

## Foam-itable Case

Gator's latest ATA TSA keyboard cases are designed with a foam-wedge blocking system for compatibility. Made of a heavy-duty polyethylene plastic, the cases sport a sleek, black uninterrupted aluminum valance; heavy-duty rubber-gripped handles; recessed in-line wheels; and a thick foam-lined interior. [gatorcases.com](http://gatorcases.com)



AVID | M-AUDIO OXYGEN 88

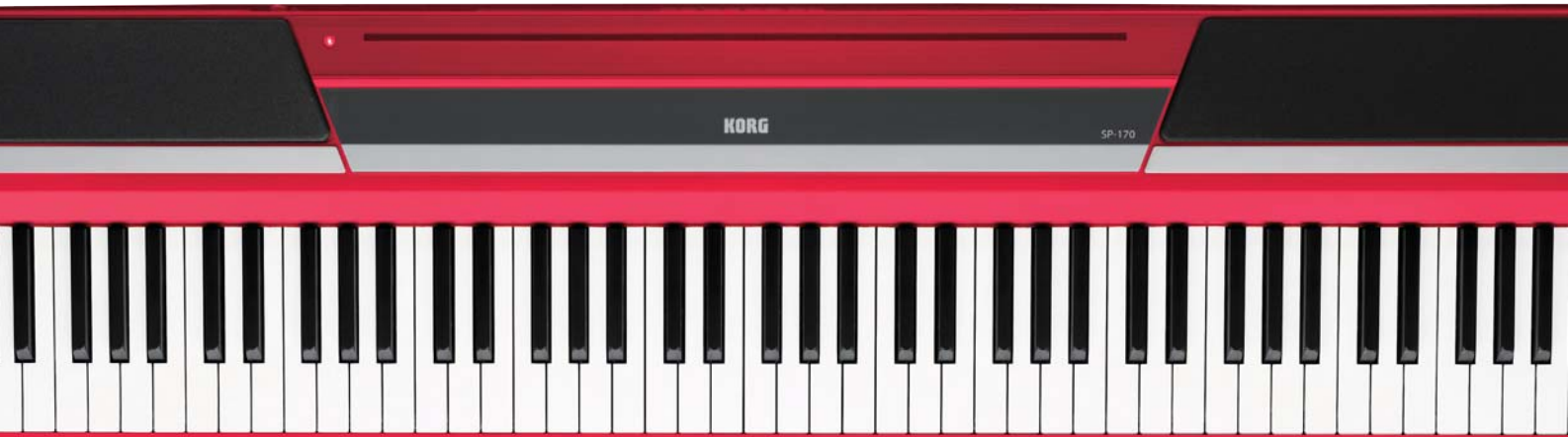
## Constant Control

Avid has rolled out the M-Audio Oxygen 88 USB MIDI controller keyboard, which combines the feel of a piano with the power of a modern MIDI controller. It features DirectLink technology and an 88-note hammer-action keybed. The Oxygen 88 also has 32 assignable buttons, knobs and faders, offering users complete control over virtual instrument and DAW parameters. MSRP: \$749.95. [avid.com](http://avid.com)

KORG | SP-170RD

## Lady in Red

Korg's new limited-edition SP-170RD offers a vibrant red color option for the SP-170 digital piano. The instrument features a duo of concert grand piano sounds, numerous velocity layers that are used to capture nuances of playing dynamics, and selectable reverb and chorus effects to add warmth to the sound. MSRP: \$699. [korg.com](http://korg.com)



# Great Digital Pianos Begin Here

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CANNONBALL | LYNX

### Top Cat

Cannonball's new Lynx Bb lightweight trumpet is made with the high-note player in mind. Its unique bracing and medium-large bore combined with the leadpipe create its distinct sound. [cannonballmusic.com](http://cannonballmusic.com)

VANDOREN | VD5

### Big Tipper

Vandoren has introduced the VD5 clarinet mouthpiece. This model features a much bigger tip opening than existing models with a medium-long facing. It produces a rich, full sound with relatively light reeds and handles large amounts of air with ease. [vandoren.com](http://vandoren.com)



YAMAHA | 900 SERIES

### Terrific Toms

Yamaha's new 900 Grand series concert toms are ideal for any solo or ensemble performance. They're constructed with an exclusive air-seal system process and feature the YESS II mount, which allows for increased sustain and tone without sacrificing stability. The toms come with the WS-860A stands. [yamaha.com](http://yamaha.com)





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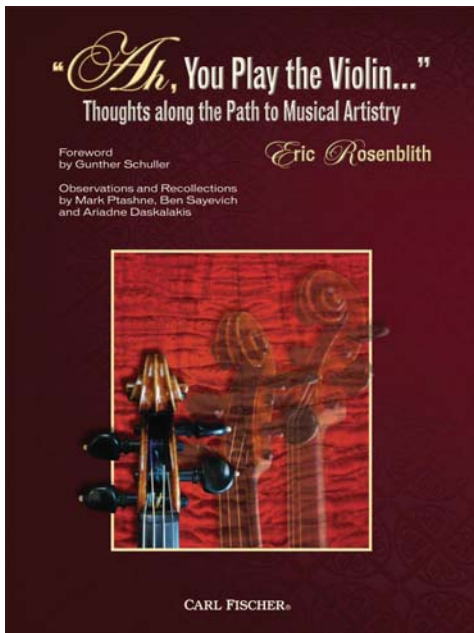
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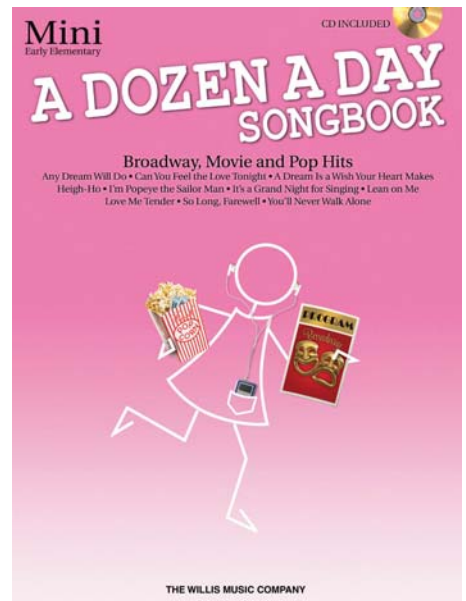
CARL FISCHER | 'AH, YOU PLAY THE VIOLIN'

## Violin Afficionados



Carl Fischer's new *Ah, You Play The Violin: Thoughts Along The Path To Musical Artistry* offers a logical progression through the intricacies of violin technique and playing. It guides the reader through topics related to the left arm, the functioning of the right arm and posture, while establishing a methodical and effective practice routine. MSRP: \$24.95.

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



WILLIS MUSIC | 'A DOZEN A DAY'

## Daily Dozen

Willis Music has released Edna Mae Burnam's *A Dozen A Day Songbook* series, featuring 10 Broadway movie and pop piano technique books. It's available in book-only and book/CD editions and features different songs depending on the level. MSRP: book only, \$6.99; book/CD pack, \$12.99. {[willismusic.com](http://willismusic.com)}



KORG | T-SHIRTS

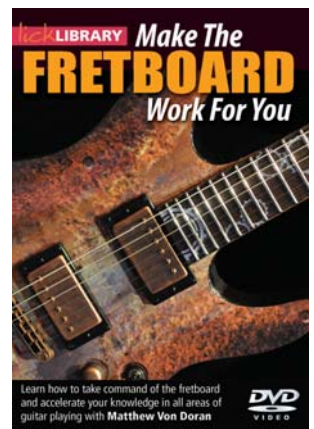
## Grin & Wear It

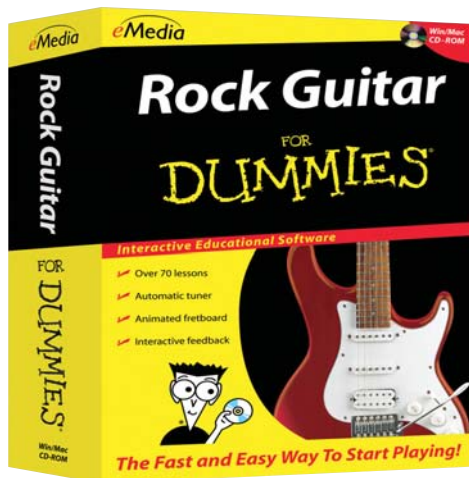
Korg has launched a collection of retro-style T-shirts that pay tribute to the company's history of electronic musical products. Inspired by actual Korg promotional art of the 1960s, '70s and '80s, the Korg Vintage T-shirt collection captures the retro-cool of the company's hippest synths. MSRP: S-XL, \$21.99; XXL, \$22.99; collector's four-pack, \$79.99. {[korg.com](http://korg.com)}

LICK LIBRARY | 'MAKE THE FRETBOARD WORK FOR YOU'

## Fretboard Frenzy

Lick Library's new guitar tuition DVD, *Make The Fretboard Work For You*, takes players through scales, chords and arpeggios. It helps strengthen guitar playing skills by exploring shapes on the fretboard and showing users how all the smaller parts can be put together to create the sort of music they want to play. {[licklibrary.com](http://licklibrary.com)}



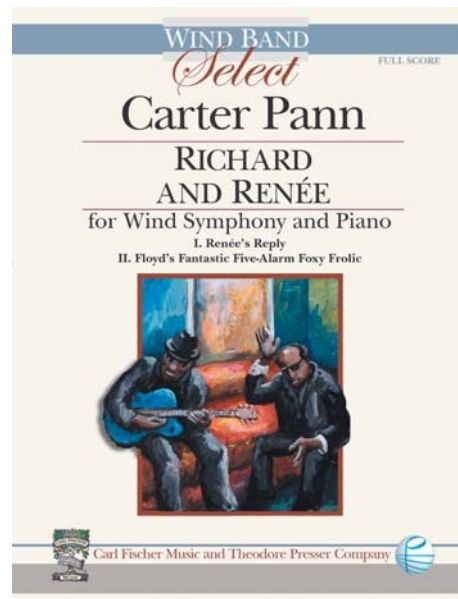


EMEDIA MUSIC | DUMMIES SERIES

# Not So Dumb

EMedia Music has released *Rock Guitar For Dummies* CD-ROM, *Bass Guitar For Dummies* CD-ROM, *Guitar For Dummies Level 2* CD-ROM, *Piano For Dummies Level 2* CD-ROM, *Guitar For Dummies Deluxe* and *Piano For Dummies Deluxe*. All the new titles offer interactive instant feedback, which listens through a computer's mic as the user plays. MSRP: \$29.95-\$59.95.

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



THEODORE PRESSER | WIND BAND SELECT

# Golden Selections

The two newest releases in Theodore Presser's Wind Band Select series are *Richard And Renée* and *Dragon Rhyme*. Widely known wind ensemblist Carter Pann contributes to *Richard And Renée*. *Dragon Rhyme* consists of two contrasting movements inspired by Beijing opera music. The instrumental texture is rich in colors, from transparent and delicate to angular and strong.

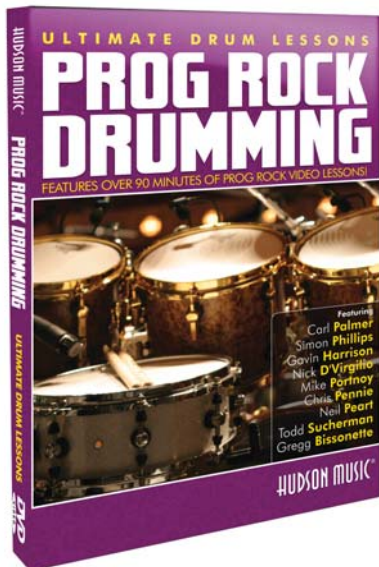
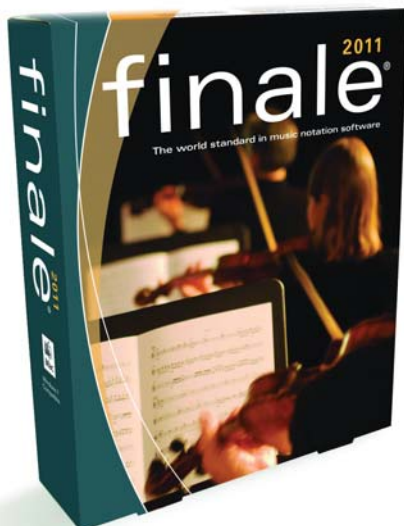
{[windbandselect.com](http://windbandselect.com)}

MAKEMUSIC | PRINTMUSIC 2011

# New & Improved

MakeMusic's Finale PrintMusic 2011 updated version offers new features and provides compatibility with current operating systems and files created with Finale 2011. The new version includes more easily entered lyrics, new staff layout and new music fonts.

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



HUDSON MUSIC | ULTIMATE DRUM LESSONS

# Ultimate Rock

Hudson Music has released the first two titles in its Ultimate Drum Lessons series. *Ultimate Drum Lessons: Double Bass Drumming* contains lessons from drummers best-known for their technique and musical application of double bass, including Thomas Lang and Russ Miller. *Ultimate Drum Lessons: Progressive Rock* contains lessons and performances from some of the genre's best-known icons, including Neil Peart. MSRP: \$14.99.

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



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PIONEER | HDJ-1000

## Sweet 'Phones

Pioneer Electronics has released the limited-edition HDJ-1000 pro DJ headphones. Along with the original chrome model, the headphones are offered in both black and gold. The HDJ-1000's 38-micrometer diaphragm and 1.5-mm voice coil are more efficient in generating the critical midrange and mid-bass frequencies and produce a more linear response at high volume levels. MSRP: \$209.

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



MBT LIGHTING | LEDKINGTUT

## Fit for a King

MBT Lighting's new LEDKINGTUT contains 24 clear lenses arranged in a pyramid-shaped all-metal housing. Six ultra-bright 3-watt LEDs create 144 colorful beams. The light features a dual-operation mode switch, audio sensitivity knob and compact size.

MSRP: \$199. {[mbtlighting.com](http://mbtlighting.com)}



HERCULES | 4-MX

## Hero's Console

Hercules' DJ Console 4-Mx is the latest model in its professional DJ console line. The controller features large jog wheels that are each equipped with a touch sensor, a built-in audio interface tailored for easy connection with existing analog gear, and intuitive control over two and four virtual decks. MSRP: \$449.99. {[hercules.com](http://hercules.com)}



ALLEN & HEATH | XONE:DB4

## In the Xone

Allen & Heath has unveiled the Xone:DB4, a fully digital DJ mixer with a Quad FX Core DSP engine, providing four FX BPM Loop record engines with channel EQ filters. Features include multi-channel USB audio with MIDI, an input source matrix and an OLED display screen. {[allen-heath.co.uk](http://allen-heath.co.uk)}

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**George Quinlan Jr.**  
Quinlan & Fabish  
Burr Ridge, Ill.

In 2009, we completed a major expansion with the acquisition of Blessing Music. Our store count advanced from four to seven locations and expanded our presence in Northern Indiana and Southern Michigan schools.

This year, we expanded our warehouse and repair facility. That certainly provided room for growth but also allowed us to improve operations, particularly during the busy rental season.

>>>

**Jeff Long**  
Long & McQuade  
Pickering, Ontario

We are always striving to improve our company and services, and we have always had a strong rental business. This past year, we refocused some energy on refining our services and promoting our rental departments through advertising and catalogs. We also focused on improving turnaround time for instrument repairs.

We continued to expand the resources allocated to staff training, as well as acknowledged the efforts of our staff by upgrading the rewards for our Top Performers Program. Additionally, we mandated a company-wide staff appreciation night for all of our locations.

Spending energy on developing our social media presence has helped. We have also augmented our Web site with a wish list, local store specials, and a new and improved search engine and better landing page. Along with updating the Web site, we have invested heavily in upgrading our stores with renovations of almost half of our 45 locations.

>>>

**Jon Haber**  
Alto Music  
Middletown, N.Y.

I am taking full advantage of the bad economy. I bought another building for a big expansion next year in our Dutchess County store, as well as moved an existing store into substantially improved and bigger digs.

Constant remodeling in our existing stores helps, and we have a focus on expanding our Web business. Three years from now, I will not ask "what if."



>>>

**Trevor Isetts**  
Blvd-Music  
Boiling Springs, S.C.

## How did you, a past REX winner, improve your business this year?

It has been a rough year to improve business, but we are taking many different steps to assure we are going to be around for the next few years. We have slimmed down costs, and we know we have to get lean and mean and get a real tight grip on inventory to ride this whole thing out. One way we've gotten lean this past month alone is by moving our store to a

smaller location. This new location has a little bit more manageable square footage, and moving was tremendously cheaper because of the recession. Now is a great time to move, and it will help us out a lot.

We have also put a large concentration on used and vintage gear. We will obviously continue to carry the new stuff, as well, but we

have noticed that our service dollars are way up and that people are repairing their instruments instead of buying new ones.

We've noticed customers are buying a lot more used gear now. So, we are really putting effort into buying as much used gear as possible. And if you buy it right, the markets are great for it right now.

>>>

**Chuck Surack**  
Sweetwater Sound  
Fort Wayne, Ind.

We have always been very relationship-oriented. When the economy slowed, we worked even harder to establish strong relationships with our customers and to develop new customers. Even if they weren't buying gear currently, we knew that if we became a trusted partner they'd

come to us first when times got better. We also added many new product categories in order to more fully take care of our customers' needs.

In tough situations like this lie great opportunities. One of those for us was the ability to hire some really great people and train them, so we'd have an extremely strong team in place when the economy eventually started to turn around. As a result, our sales force is bigger, more experienced and more knowledgeable than ever.



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