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TAMING HURRICANES

How Fred Schiff battled chains, real estate bubbles and the cruellest forces of nature — and lived to tell about it PAGE 40

Separk Music Creates Music Educator Hang

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Why Texting Can Be Good for Business

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School Music Retailers Go Boutique

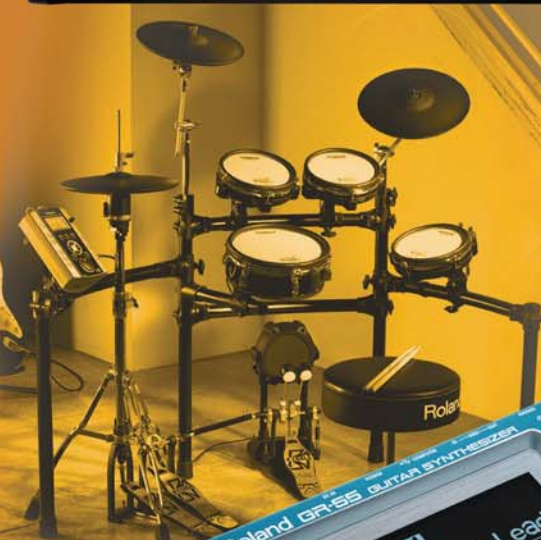
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Fred Schiff of All County Music: "The rush of competitors into our market made me a better businessperson."

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A collage of images showing the V-Drums interface. On the left, a man plays a V-Drum set. In the center, a laptop screen displays the 'V-Drums Lessons' interface with a 'DOWNLOAD' button. On the right, a screen shows the 'V-Drums Friend Jam' interface with a 'TOTAL 26:58:55' timer and a 'V-Drums Friend Jam' logo.

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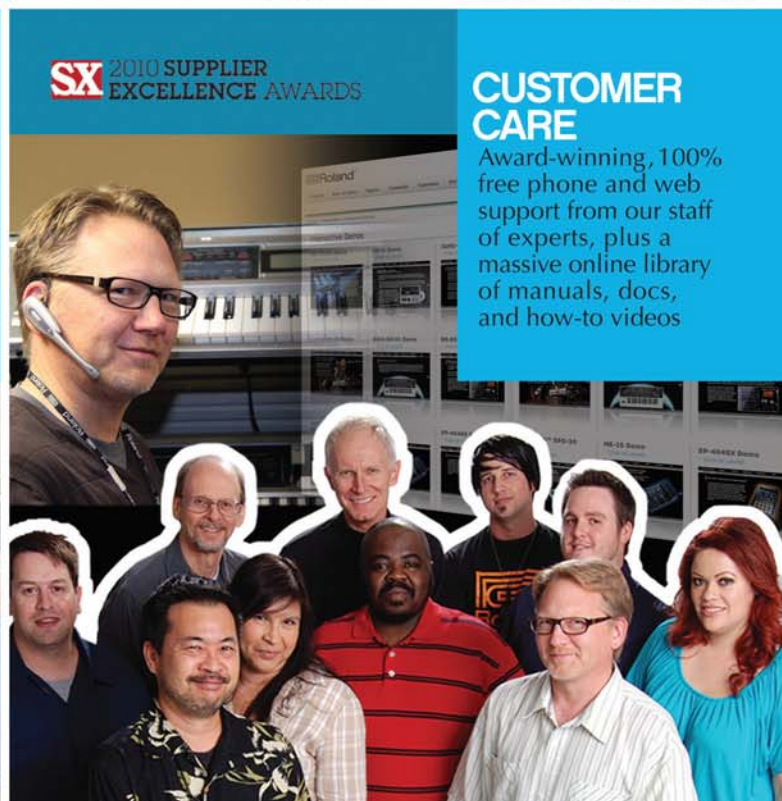
A collage of images showing various music-related events and competitions. On the left, a man plays a guitar. In the center, a man plays a drum set. On the right, a man plays a keyboard. The images are overlaid with text about contests and competitions.

CONTESTS
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Los Angeles
Roland ATELIER ORGAN FEST
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A collage of images showing students in a music education lab. On the left, a man plays a drum set. In the center, a woman plays a keyboard. On the right, a man plays a drum set. The images are overlaid with text about Music Ed.

MUSIC ED
Unique electronic drum set labs designed for educators and students

A collage of images showing customer support. On the left, a man wears a headset. In the center, a man wears a headset. On the right, a man wears a headset. The images are overlaid with text about customer care.

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Fred Schiff



Photo by Stephen Flint

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PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY FRANK ALKYER

THE GAME OF YOU BET YOUR BUSINESS

This month's cover article has been nearly 15 years in the making.

We've been trying that long to find the right time to tell the story of All County Music. Why? Well, Fred Schiff — a son of the boss who bought All County from his father, Mel — has been a bit busy.

When we first approached Schiff in the mid-1990s, he declined our offer. He was in the midst of dealing with new competition in his backyard — Sam Ash, Guitar Center and the now-defunct Mars Music were rolling out superstores in South Florida. Any independent retailer who lived through the era knows the sleepless nights even one of those competitors caused. Now, multiply that times three.

We thought it would be perfect to get an independent store owner's view on the chaining of the music products industry. But Schiff would have none of that. He was too busy rethinking All County Music, assuring his staff that the company was sound, working overtime to tell his customers why All County was superior to the "other guys" and remodeling — instead of retrenching — to ensure that his store looked as good as, or better than, the new kids on the block.

The next time we approached Schiff was around the turn of the new millennium, right after the Internet bubble burst. Again, he declined our interview,

noting that he needed to focus on recreating his business again.

We've been turned down so many times that I can't remember the exact order of the rejections. Once, he was installing a new software system, then he was setting up an affiliate store network, then he was opening a second store, and on and on.

But we understand. Like any good entrepreneur, Schiff walks into his store every day and plays the game of "You Bet Your Business." He and his team take calculated risks to improve the company, deepen relationships and drive sales. Some of them work, some don't. The idea is to have more hits than misses.

We're proud to catch up with Schiff finally for this month's cover story, "Taming Hurricanes." All County is a worthy, road-tested business with strong infrastructure and stronger people working for the company. That combination lets Schiff think about his next bet, such as his new high-end flute business, Florida Flutes. It also lets him focus on his customers in depth. Schiff, a strong music educator, has a history of putting his band directors first. For example, when one of his band directors was laid up, Schiff and his staff filled in until the director could get back to the bandstand.

"He was the first customer of my dad's who grew a substantial program," Schiff told *Music Inc.* Editor Zach Phillips. "I don't want to say I owe him, but this was one way of keeping his program strong and not letting it slide. Because without a band director, kids aren't going to play."

The willingness to take risks and the concept of doing well by doing something good are just two reasons we've wanted to feature All County Music all these years. For many more, check out the article on page 40. [MI](#)

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Thanks From Kitt's

Thank you for the coverage of the recent acquisition of Jordan Kitt's Music in the cover story "The Buyout" (August 2011). My partner, Ray, and I appreciated the work that went into this and the thoroughness with which you reported on the different aspects of the new company during the acquisition process and moving forward. And, yes, we chuckled at the "Honey, I shrunk the Kitt's" line.

As we continue heading through a bumpy economic recovery, it is exciting to be part of reviving this great 100-year-old institution. While there are risks and uncertainties ahead for any business, the key for us is that we are blessed with extremely talented employees both at Steinway Piano Galleries in Atlanta and Jordan Kitt's Music in the D.C. market. We thank everyone who had a part in this project, from our vendor and financing partners to our valued employees who faithfully stuck with us. Our primary mission is to take care of our customers and our employees.

Chris Syllaba
President & CEO
JKM Music Group

Get in Tune

I literally laughed out loud with joy when I read Editor Zach Phillips' *Perspective* "Turn, Turn, Turn" in the August 2011 issue of *Music Inc.*

First, extend my round of applause to John Giovannoni at The Music Room in Palatine, Ill. Taking the time to set up a guitar before it goes on the floor is the greatest sales tool a store has, and it blows me away that almost nobody does it. I believe it really does create a win-win-win



situation for everyone involved. The retailer wins simply because it now has a better-playing selection than anyone else in town, the manufacturer wins because its product is now represented in its best light, and the customer wins because he or she is now better able to make an informed purchasing decision. It is brilliant, and I hope that the shops in San Diego County take note because apparently no one around here bothers to do so.

Although I am an industry guy, I am still a fan and a consumer, and it always chaps my hide when I walk into a retailer to make a purchase and the guitars on display aren't set up. I don't care what the price tag is — \$100 or \$10,000. How can you expect me to give you my money if you can't even take the time to sell a

properly working product? Would a car dealership ever think of putting a car on the showroom floor without making sure there was air in the tires, the brakes worked and it had an alignment?

Josh Vittek
Joshua Paul Vittek and Associates
Media Relations

Being Retail-Ready

I wanted to say thank you to *Music Inc.* for all of the information it provides to the industry. While I find each of your issues must-reads, I found the June 2011 issue to be particularly loaded with powerful and necessary ammunition.

You have many talented writers, and I'd never want to leave any of them out because they are much-appreciated. However, Kenny Smith's piece,

"No Downtime in Sales," was timely. I travel extensively, and while I find many stores at the top of their game, there are way too many that aren't retail-ready and proactively seeking out new opportunities, as Smith wrote.

By no means is this limited to retail stores. In talking with counterparts from other companies, it's apparent many sales reps aren't taking the time to search actively, not only within their current territories but also on the Web, to look for new customers. When so much information is available to us at the click of a mouse, there's no limit to potential customers. It's simply too easy for all of us not to venture out of our comfort zones. One industry leader refers to this as the "cow path mentality."

Thanks again, and by all means continue to keep these articles filled with priceless nuggets of information. We're all depending on them to assist in keeping our industry alive.

Ken Fuente
Vice President of Sales
Gator Cases

Correction

In the September issue's Summer NAMM coverage, we mentioned that Rosi Johnson of Mississippi Music took the helm of the National Association of School Music Dealers. In fact, Joel Menchey of Menchey Music is the current president of the organization. We regret the error.

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RETAIL

SEPARK MUSIC | BY JEFF CAGLE

BAND DIRECTOR HUB

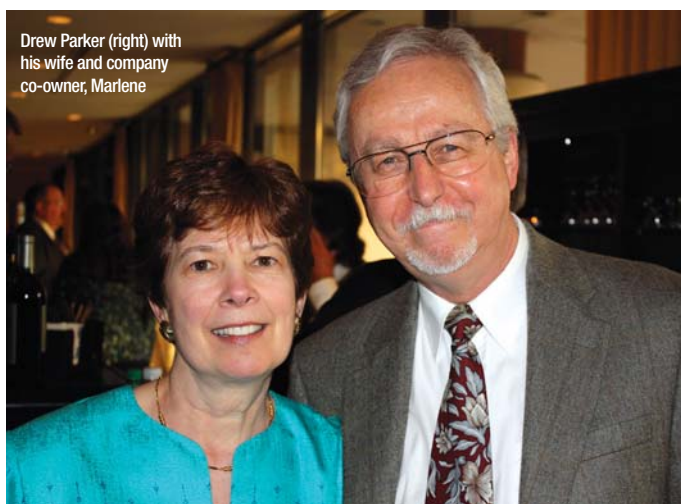
In most industries, professionals have a place to hang and talk shop, be it athletes at the clubhouse or office workers at the water cooler. But up until now, band directors have been left all by their lonesome.

For that reason, Drew Parker created the Red Room. Filled with scores, recordings and a coffee machine, it's a centerpiece of Separk Music's new store in Lewisville, N.C., which opened this past August.

"Every day after marching camp, the guys come down to hang out just to see how things are going," said Parker, owner of Separk Music, which was previously headquartered in Winston-Salem. "It's become a meeting place, and that's exactly what I wanted this store to be: a place to come and spend time together. I was a band director. I understand that side of the coin and there being a necessity for guys to get together and support each other."

THE MARKET BUILDER

Separk's lifestyle retail vibe isn't confined to the physical store. At the end of July, Parker also hosted the Building Better Bands workshop for band directors. He credited retail veteran Denny Senseney for putting the idea in his head as a way



Drew Parker (right) with his wife and company co-owner, Marlene

'My quarter is up 29 percent, and my year is up 6 percent.'

for Separk Music to grow from a regional to statewide entity.

"Denny pitched it to me as, 'Let's shoot for 25-30 directors because that would be a success,'" Parker said. "We budgeted for 50 people, thinking we were being optimistic, and we ended up with 93 directors in attendance."

The workshop aimed to give band directors a little positivity in this climate of budget cuts and uncertainty. They got it with speakers Paula Crider — whose session featured Tai Chi and a focus on the healthy, whole in-

dividual — and Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser. "Dr. Tim talked about all the things that band directors do and don't take credit for and that they should feel good about their work," Parker said. "They came out almost cheering."

Other featured guests included retired Col. Lowell Graham from the U.S. Air Force Band, Jan Metzger, Johnnie Vinson and Separk's repair tech, who talked about when an instrument should be brought in for maintenance.

"The way to build better bands is to build better band directors," Parker said. "The young guys who are coming out of college have just started another phase of their education. That education is going to come from their experience at the front of the classroom and their ability

to network with other directors and call on their colleagues to help them out of spots when they have a problem."

HIGH TRAFFIC, HIGH VISIBILITY

Parker planned the clinic while moving from Winston-Salem, where Separk Music had resided for more than 70 years. He said Lewisville is a growth area, and the new store is a stone's throw from several major customers.

The location also reflects a shift in focus for Separk Music since Parker bought the business in 1995. At the time, 95 percent of its business was print music, which is now down to 17 percent.

"We are a pretty solid school music dealer now, and downtown [Winston-Salem] was not the right location for that," he said. "It was too hard for people to park. This move has been a breath of fresh air."

Separk's old location was spread across three floors in two buildings side-by-side. The new Lewisville building has one floor that boasts natural flow and high visibility, according to Parker. And, he added, business has taken off since the move.

"I had a great July," Parker said. "My quarter is up 29 percent, and my year is up 6 percent. That would seem to indicate that the move was good." **MI**

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»»» RETAIL



Fred Myers Pianos' David Myers (left) and Sweetwater's Chuck Surack

SWEETWATER | RENOVATION

SWEETWATER EXPANDS RETAIL STORE

Sweetwater Sound celebrated the grand opening of its expanded retail store on Aug. 2 at the company's campus in Fort Wayne, Ind. The expansion is the result of Sweetwater recently becoming the exclusive authorized Yamaha piano and Clavinova dealer in the region, including northeastern Indiana, northwestern Ohio and south-central Michigan.

A press conference, which included Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry, Yamaha National Sales Director Bob Heller and Sweetwater President Chuck Surack, featured a torch-passing from Fred Myers Pianos owner David Myers, who held the local Yamaha dealership for 28 years, to Surack. Heller also presented a plaque of appreciation to Myers in recognition of Fred Myers Pianos' years of support.

The original Sweetwater retail space, which was completed in 2006, has undergone numerous improvements since opening. The company added an additional 3,500 square feet to the store, almost doubling its size to 7,500 square feet in order to accommodate the new piano and keyboard inventory.

With the expansion, Sweetwater has also introduced interactive displays and technology to improve customer service and the overall purchasing and checkout process.

"The grand opening formally acknowledges Sweetwater as the largest retailer of pianos and keyboards in the region," Surack said. "Our expanded retail store is now the largest in northern Indiana selling music instruments and audio technology."



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From left: Ken Stanton Music's Scott Cameron, Scott Witkowski and Kenny Stanton

KEN STANTON MUSIC | EXPANSION

Ken Stanton Opens in Alpharetta

Ken Stanton Music recently celebrated the opening of its sixth retail store, located in Alpharetta, Ga. Held July 29–31, the weekend-long grand-opening event featured specials on hundreds of items. The company's five other stores are located in Marietta,

Roswell, Woodstock, Stone Mountain, and West Cobb, Ga.

"We are excited about being in such a great area as Alpharetta and look forward to offering better service to musicians and local schools in that area," said owner Kenny Stanton.

MUSICAL INNOVATIONS | EVENT

INNOVATIVE WORKSHOP

Flutist Ali Ryerson culminated her Greenville County, S.C., school tour with a concert and clinic at Musical Innovations in Greenville on May 17.



Ali Ryerson

The event featured a short recital and workshop covering jazz basics. Attendees learned various exercises from Ryerson's instructional book, and a brand-new Brio! student flute was donated as a prize by Gemeinhardt, which co-sponsored the event with Carolina Flutes.

Tracy Leenman, owner of Musical Innovations, said Ryerson was "very well-received by the students."

WOODWIND & BRASSWIND | VENUES

WW&BW to Close Retail Store, Call Center

In August, Woodwind & Brasswind announced it will close its South Bend, Ind., retail store and move its call center to Indianapolis. The move will eliminate roughly 115 jobs and make the retailer an online-only operation.

Previous Woodwind & Brasswind owner Dennis Bamber has held the lease on the building since Guitar Center purchased the company in 2007. He recently told local television station WSBT that he may move back in after Woodwind & Brasswind moves out in February, when Guitar Center's lease expires.

Bamber currently runs Music Factory Direct, a full-line Internet retailer. The move, according to Bamber, could add as many as 30 employees. (His company currently has 10.)

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TRIBUTE

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

Dale Beacock

Dale Beacock, co-founder of Beacock Music, died on Aug. 4 after being hit by a logging truck's trailer while riding his bicycle. He was 81.

A saxophone and clarinet player, Beacock joined the U.S. Navy while studying at the University of Portland and attended the Navy School of Music. He also earned a Master of Music at the University of Portland. After college, Beacock worked as a band director. He also served as the orchestra director for the Miss Washington Pageant and the New Horizons jazz band. More recently, he performed with a band at Mount Hood's Timberline Lodge in Oregon.

In 1976, he founded Beacock Music in Vancouver, Wash., with his wife, Sue. The full-line dealership is now co-owned by their children, Gayle and Russ.

A memorial service was held for Beacock on Aug. 12.

"There were colleagues from 30–35 years ago, students past and present that spanned over decades, employees past and present, friends from his flying group, his current New Horizons band members, the players from the many bands he currently was playing in, community members that grew to know and respect him, and of course, his extended family members," Gayle said of the service. "He touched the lives of so many people, always with a loud laugh and a witty anecdote. He was one of the wittiest and most clever people I knew."

"What I would like you to know is that our dad was a great dad. Both he and my mom always worked at least three jobs at a time — school teachers, gigging musicians and then the music store — but we *never* were without our parents at our events or at home."

"We have lost a very talented man," wrote Kathy Condon, a business communications trainer and owner of KC Solutions, in *The Columbian*. "Dale Beacock understood that the little things made a difference. When he gave you a hug, for that moment, he was totally connected with you."



BETHEL MUSIC CENTER | PROMOTION

Bethel Founder Stars in Google Ad

Bethel Music Center founder Bruce Treidel recently became the star of a Google video promotion.

Google chose Bethel, Conn.-based Bethel Music for its success using Google AdWords. The segment, filmed May 20 at the store, features Treidel discussing his love of promoting music in the community and how using AdWords has boosted his business.

During the segment, he said business has "never been this good. In the last year, because we've been really targeting with Google AdWords, we've grown about 15 percent — at a time when a lot of businesses



are failing."

Treidel mentioned that the shoot took all day.

"They transformed the store into a movie set and filmed all day," he said.

QUINLAN & FABISH | EXPANSION

QUINLAN & FABISH OPENS NEW HQ

Quinlan & Fabish of Burr Ridge, Ill., christened its new headquarters on Aug. 7 with an open house.

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, live music from Sundance entertained attendees feasting on barbecue in the food tent. Tours of the facility were also given throughout the day. The event drew in crowds of Quinlan & Fabish employees, customers and suppliers.

The new 52,000-square-foot facility boasts roughly 10,000

square feet of showroom space, including a high-end violin room, and a 30,000-square-foot warehouse. The building also adds teaching studios and a conference and event room.

Quinlan & Fabish began the buildout in winter 2010. The warehouse, repair area and offices were completed by June, and the showroom was finished this past August.

George Quinlan Jr., company president, acknowledged that the best time to move would've been



From left: Quinlan & Fabish's George Quinlan Jr., Lewis "Lewie" Brown and George Quinlan Sr. Brown, a longtime employee, received a Lifetime Achievement Award

five years ago, but "the market was right to buy now."

"We had run out of space five to seven years earlier and operated out of two separate buildings

in Burr Ridge," Quinlan said. "Having everyone under one roof will improve efficiencies and allow us to grow all aspects of our school music operation."



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Note from Joe

**"A government that robs Peter to pay Paul
can always depend on the support of Paul"**
-George Bernard Shaw

I'll bet most NAMM Members would not consider themselves overly political. But recently, I'm sure you have noticed more laws and regulations coming out of Washington and your State Capitols, and some are making your job harder than ever. Heightened regulation and enforcement, byzantine tax laws that favor some while penalizing others, frivolous lawsuits that cost a fortune to defend no matter what the outcome and insurance costs that have risen at five times the rate of inflation are increasingly placing extra burdens on already overstretched business owners.

If you care about the future of your business and the industry, get involved. And in my opinion, one of the most important things you can do is belong to the one association that represents the interests of 9,000 music products companies. NAMM has been the industry's voice in our government for more than 100 years. And the current political environment makes it more important than ever that we work together on the matters that impact us the most.

NAMM's longest running legislative priority has been music education, ensuring that every child in America has the opportunity to learn music. This is not only good for our industry, it's the right thing to do for our society. Our love of music and the value we place on it is the one thing that unites us all. Protecting NAMM Member trademarks and copyrights has also been a top priority. And the Lacey Act has impacted our industry and put many NAMM Members at a level of risk they never dreamed of.

When an issue like the Lacey Act comes into the national news like it did with the recent raids on Gibson, it is interesting to see the anger and frustration manifest itself on cable news programs and on blogs. But I can tell you that while that may be a popular response, addressing the root problem is the only solution. That means long, tedious legislative work, and NAMM and our partners in D.C. are at it daily. It includes countless visits to Members of Congress and their staff, carefully working with regulators to communicate the views of the business community and getting them to fix the unintended consequences of well-intentioned legislation. It's not glamorous work but it is ultimately the only way we're going to create the kind of business-friendly environment that is needed to compete in the 21st century global economy.

Go to namm.com/publicaffairs to learn more. Join one of NAMM's task forces and come to Washington with a fly-in delegation. But please know that by just belonging to NAMM you are making a difference. Your Membership contributes to improving conditions for the entire industry.

We are grateful for your support and will continue to do our best on your behalf.

Joe Lamond

Joe Lamond • NAMM President/CEO



Former NAMM Chairman Tom Schmitt and other NAMM Members and supporters plead with Congress to support music education for all students.

A record 40 NAMM Members traveled to D.C. and held more than 103 meetings with Congress members to address key music products industry issues.

Joe and former Secretary of Education under President Bill Clinton prepare their remarks at a recent Capital Hill event.



NAME NAMM News October 2011

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SUPPLY

MEL BAY | BY HILARY BROWN

DIGITAL OVERHAUL

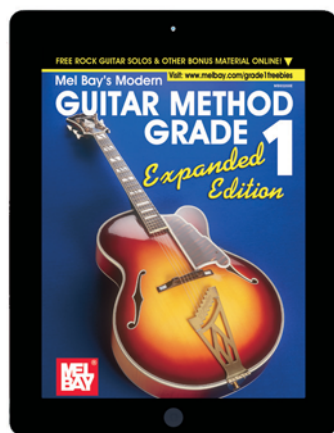
As the print industry undergoes drastic changes, Mel Bay has been doing some transforming of its own.

In 2009, the company's third generation of leadership took over, with Bryndon Bay's appointment as president. Since then, he and his brother Collin have overseen a major restructuring and taken measures to better acclimate Mel Bay to the digital world.

"Mel Bay really had to take a hard look at just what it is that we do," said Collin Bay, who handles artist relations and product development. "In a sense, we're a media company; in another, an education company, a music company. We've had to expand the definition of our company in order to account for changes in the market."

CHANGING LANDSCAPES

Adapting to those changes hasn't been painless. This year, for instance, the print music publisher laid off an undisclosed number of employees. Bryndon cited a demand for "non-traditional education methods" and "a general devaluation of intellectual property" as two of the print industry's biggest

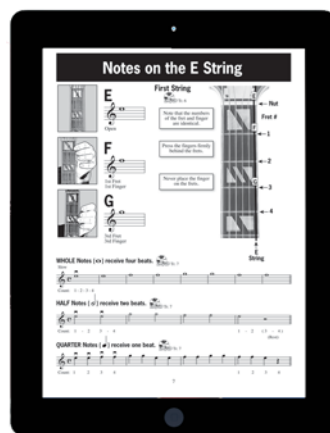


challenges. Still, he said the international market continues to prosper, particularly outside of North America.

Collin added that the print industry's challenges have also helped Mel Bay crystallize its online objectives.

"The biggest changes in the market have been discussed for about 10 years now — the decline of the recording and print industries, the digital revolution, the changing ways people relate to music," Collin said. "We are a much more artist-driven, Internet-driven company than we were 10 years ago."

One particularly promising initiative for Mel Bay is its digital print marketplace, where consumers can access electronic versions of Mel Bay titles straight from the company's website.



Mel Bay's new leadership seeks growth in the digital domain

Launched in November 2010, the program now offers thousand of e-books, and Bryndon said immediate plans are in the works to expand the initiative.

ADAPTING TO A DIGITAL WORLD

This means making the sale of Mel Bay's electronic titles more convenient and efficient. In order to address both digital and traditional print customers, the company is now releasing print and electronic versions of new Mel Bay publications

simultaneously.

Bryndon said he plans on digitizing the remainder of the Mel Bay catalog and increasing the availability of more out-of-print publications within the next few months. Additionally, he wants to promote Mel Bay's monthly new releases more effectively.

"Over the long-term, we will adapt our product — including content, look, feel, media and delivery system — to better serve the transforming marketplace," Bryndon said.

Dealers can also benefit from Mel Bay's future plans to enhance its online presence. In the first quarter of 2012, the company will be launching an e-book affiliate program in order to provide e-book services to retailers at no cost.

Until then, the third-generation Bays are confident in their strides toward becoming more Internet-friendly. That said, they know it won't happen overnight and there will be obstacles.

"Given the tumultuous times our industry is in, it's fair to say the landscape is ever-changing," Bryndon said.

"My brother and I bring a different perspective to Mel Bay that is helping us adapt the company to the changing marketplace and consumer." **MB**

KALA | BY HILARY BROWN

RAISING UKE AWARENESS

Two years ago, Rick Carlson wanted to find a way to keep school music alive and still move his company's product. He found a solution outside the States.

In Canada, ukulele education has been widespread since the 1960s, and educator James Hill has successfully hyped his *Ukulele In The Classroom* curriculum.

"It was just something that was of immediate interest to Kala," said Carlson, director of sales and marketing for Kala.

His company joined forces with Hill and added *Ukulele In The Classroom* into its business plan. Carlson noted that the partnership was inspired by a demand for an economical, comprehensive student music curriculum.

"It was something to allow us to put packages together," he said. "We'll find teachers and try to work it into their budgets, so their schools can initiate the program."

CROSS-GENERATIONAL LEARNING

Influenced by Canadian ukulele education pioneer J. Chalmers Doane, Hill's three-volume book series, published by Empire Music, features a combination of exercises and repertoire. It has gained popularity with children as young as 6 years old, but Hill mentioned that its appeal in multiple learning environments has made it accessible to a broad customer base.

"There's no doubt it's designed to thrive in a school classroom and also in community groups, which tend to be more adult learners and seniors," Hill said. "But we've also found that people use it really effectively



Kala's Rick Carlson (left) and Mike Upton

for self-teaching and their own self-practice."

The partnership also lets Kala include Hill's educational materials in two of its uke packages. These provide students with a soprano or concert-size ukulele, gig big, pitch pipe, and *Play Ukulele Today!*, an abridged version of Hill's series published by Hal Leonard. Carlson noted that the packages are popular not only with music curriculum distributor Empire Music but also such brick-and-mortar chains as West Music and George's Music.

PUBLIC RESPONSE

Kala's presence on the school music scene has also sparked a grassroots movement in support of school ukulele programs. Because of the packages' economical price, Carlson said he's often contacted by alumni and benefac-

tors looking to make donations.

"It's been an overwhelming response," said Hill, who gauges return on investment based on how many times the curriculum's free online advocacy kit gets downloaded. "We get people from all over the world requesting that kit every day." He also noted that attendance in his teacher certification program has increased dramatically, and people will even fly in internationally to be educated on the method.

Kala recently finished a series of nationwide uke circles and clinics and is planning to boost its marketing presence by expanding the teaching program into the United States. The company received additional publicity after joining in the NAMM Fly-In to Washington, D.C., in May, where the Kala team made its pitch to the Department of Education.

"We organized with NAMM a strum-and-drum circle," Carlson said. "They actually brought in a couple busloads of children from local schools, Remo supplied some percussion instruments, and we had quite an event right there. We received a lot of publicity."

So how can music retailers get a foot in the door? According to Hill, the free advocacy kit is the ultimate resource, as it lets retailers pitch the book series more effectively.

"Students are able to take those skills and move them over to another instrument, which is not true of other methods that teach instrument-specific techniques exclusively," Hill said.

Carlson added that the social aspects of the uke make it highly desirable, as well. "It goes beyond what you can do with a recorder." **MI**

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ONLINE

Marshall Electronics Partners With Shopatron

Marshall Electronics has signed an agreement with retail-integrated e-commerce provider Shopatron to add online shopping capabilities to its website. Marshall Electronics plans to promote its new consumer-targeted line of camera-top monitors, MXL microphones for consumer recording, and video and business applications on the new e-commerce platform.

"When deciding how to best distribute our new consumer-targeted products, Shopatron was the logical solution," said Perry Goldstein, sales and marketing manager for Marshall Electronics. "With Shopatron's solution, we give consumers the convenience of online shopping, while still including our valued retail partners in the sale." mars-cam.com

OUTREACH

Jody Jazzes Up Band

JodyJazz sponsored the Harvey, Ill.-based Brooks Middle School Jazz Band's saxophone section at last December's Midwest Band Clinic by donating mouthpieces.

"The JodyJazz mouthpieces are working out fantastic," said Roos-

evelt Griffin, director of the Brooks Middle School Jazz Band. "The sound of my sax section opened up immediately. JodyJazz hit a home run on this one." jodyjazz.com



HONORS

Blue Named Top 5000

Blue Microphones has been named to *Inc.* magazine's annual Inc. 5000, a ranking of the nation's fastest-growing private companies. Earning a spot on the list for a second year in a row, Blue Microphones comes in at No. 1,081, jumping from No. 1,481 in 2010.

"We are honored to be included for a second year in the Inc. 5000," said John Maier, CEO of Blue Microphones. "We continue to push forward with the development of leading-edge audio products and expanding availability across the globe. We are proud of our growth and will continue developing products that integrate updated technologies with the highest-quality audio capture." bluemic.com

NAMM | LEGAL

NAMM SENDS LACEY ACT COMPLAINT TO OBAMA, CONGRESS

In the wake of federal agents' Aug. 24 raid on Gibson's facilities (see opposite page), NAMM recently drafted a complaint to President Barack Obama and members of U.S. Congress on behalf of the music products industry. A representative of NAMM said the letter would be sent the week of Sept. 5.

The statement, signed by NAMM President and CEO Joe Lamond and Chairman Kevin Cranley, specifically addressed how NAMM's member companies have been negatively impacted by the Lacey Act, which the statement called "a well-intentioned law, but one with unintended consequences that we feel are damaging to our industry and the economy."

The statement also said that the law's lack of clarity has made compliance difficult for music industry companies.

"The confusion is due in large part to the law's ambitious scope, including enforcement of the laws from all other

countries that are the source of these natural materials.

"The recent high-profile raid (multiple federal agencies with automatic weapons) of Gibson Guitars, a leading NAMM member company in Tennessee, compounded with the slow response on needed guidance for compliance that we have been seeking has created fear and uncertainty for all those involved in the manufacturing, distribution and retailing of instruments and, increasingly, artists and owners of musical instruments."

NAMM added that it has concrete ideas for improving the law and is ready to work with members of Congress and federal agencies to make changes that fulfill the intended vision of the Lacey Act.

The Lacey Act was designed to combat trafficking in illegal plants and wildlife. In May 2008, the law was amended to protect a wider range of plants and plant products. namm.org

D'ADDARIO | VENUES

D'Addario Canada Makes a Move

D'Addario Canada has moved into a larger 21,000-square-foot facility in Markham, Ontario, and has implemented a new system to meet the needs of its retail base.

"It's an opportunity for us to improve both our outgoing and incoming order flow," said Larry Davidson of D'Addario Canada. "With a larger floor space, our aim was to minimize the footsteps and simplify the picking and packing process."

Part of the reason for the move was to consolidate operations under one roof. "In 1988, we started off in one single unit, then gradually acquired four more independent units totaling five," Davidson said of D'Addario Canada's original location in Richmond Hill, Ontario. daddariocanada.com



D'Addario Canada's new Markham, Ontario, location

SLM Takes on Dixon

St. Louis Music (SLM) is now the exclusive U.S. distributor of Dixon drums, hand percussion, hardware and accessories. Effective immediately, SLM will manage all sales, marketing, U.S. artist relations, clinics and after-sales service in the United States.

"We've long wanted to expand into drums and percussion but were waiting for the right brand," said SLM's CEO Mark Ragin. "Dixon drums and hardware are great products and a perfect fit with the rest of our combo offerings."

Since striking the deal, SLM hired Jim Uding as the brand director for Dixon. Uding will also serve as product manager for SLM's drum and percussion products. He owned Drum Headquarters in St. Louis, a Five-Star Drum Shop, which closed this past July.

"It was thrilling for SLM to get a line like Dixon Drums, and now we have a talented and experienced industry professional like Jim to manage it," Ragin said. "He's respected and admired by drum dealers all over the country, and we feel fortunate that he's able to join the team."

{stlouismusic.com; dixondrums.net}



Jim Uding

GIBSON RAIDED ... AGAIN

On Aug. 24, federal agents with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service executed four search warrants on Gibson's facilities in Nashville and Memphis, Tenn. The agents seized several pallets of wood, electronic files and guitars.

According to a statement from Gibson, the wood seized came from a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified supplier and is FSC-controlled wood. Therefore, it complies with the standards of the FSC, a nonprofit organization established to promote responsible management of forests worldwide.

In November 2009, Gibson's Nashville factory was raided and authorities seized six guitars and pallets that were allegedly stacked with ebony wood that was in violation of the federal Lacey Act, which bars the importation of endangered woods.

Gibson is cooperating with the investigation, according to the statement. {gibson.com}

KORG & VOX RING IN

Korg has released new ringtones from Korg and Vox brands, available for free download. The Korg ringtones, all created with Korg instruments, let musicians choose from a variety of

synth sounds, including bass, lead and vocoder. The Vox tones range from the famous Vox AC30 chime to a more aggressive riff from a Vox Night Train amp. {korg.com}

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TRIBUTE

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

Jane Barker

Musicorp sales representative Jane Barker died on Jan. 24 after battling cancer. With nearly 33 years of service to Midco and Musicorp, Barker played an integral role in the company's growth and success,

according to a statement from Musicorp.

"She loved working with her customers, and they loved working with her," said Dan Roberts, vice president of Musicorp. "Jane's positive attitude and demeanor was always inspirational."

Gwen Bailey-Harbour

Gwen Bailey-Harbour, senior vice president of sales for Alfred and associate member at large on the Retail Print Music Dealers

Association board of directors, passed away Aug. 11 after a battle with cancer.

Bailey-Harbour began working at Alfred more than 23 years ago and held roles in marketing, sales and operations.

"We were blessed to have Gwen come to Alfred Music on June 13, 1988," said Ron Manus, Alfred's CEO. "Over the last year, we have watched Gwen battle cancer. How she faced adversity with strength, conviction, class and character continues to be an inspiration for me."

"We are all mourning this incredibly tragic loss, and we will celebrate her life and legacy as we pay tribute to this remarkable woman and dear, dear friend who we love so much."

Danny Rocks, now of The Company Rocks, had worked with her at Alfred.

"Gwen was warm and wise, optimistic and objective, amiable and assertive," Rocks said. "Many people looked to her for advice and direction. Gwen served as an outstanding role model for many people in our industry."

She is survived by her husband, Rod, and two sons.



Michael Healy

Michael Healy, a founding member of The Healy Group, passed away on June 26. He was 59.

The Healy Group has represented American DJ, American Audio, Elation Professional, Acclaim Lighting, Global Truss and Arriba Cases on the East Coast for more than a decade.

"It was impossible to spend any time with Michael and not feel better about life," said Scott Davies, general manager of the American DJ group of companies. "He will be sorely missed."



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APPOINTMENTS

KMC Names VP of Global Percussion

ender has appointed Mark Nelson to the position of senior vice president of global percussion for KMC Music. In his new role, Nelson will oversee the branding of all KMC Percussion worldwide, including Latin Percussion, Toca Percussion, Gretsch Drums, Gibraltar Hardware and Sabian.



Mark Nelson

Nelson is a 23-year music industry veteran who most recently served as vice president of merchandise for drums, media and general accessories at Guitar Center.

"Mark has been one of the true leaders and innovators in the drum industry, and we're thrilled to have him on the KMC team," said Jay Wanamaker, KMC's senior vice president of sales.

SHS International has named Sky Caserotti director of information technologies.

Earthworks recently appointed Craig Breckenridge as its new product specialist.

Blue Microphones has tapped Michael Huckler as the vice president of worldwide sales, pro division.

Radial Engineering has appointed David (Shuu) Guidish as the new territory manager for central North America.

Caroline Polster recently joined **Full Compass Systems** as its human resources manager.

American Music & Sound has named Justin Eggleton as the national product training manager for Allen & Heath and Turbosound.

Ted Harshberger is the new senior director of global operations for **JBL Professional**.

Optek Music Systems, makers of the Fretlight Guitar, recently named music industry veteran Bill Abel director of music industry sales for North America.

The Music Group has appointed Mark Wilder vice president of marketing communications.

SHURE | AWARD

SHURE NAMES REP OF THE YEAR

Shure recently named S.K. Macdonald as the company's Representative of the Year for the 2010–2011 fiscal year. The president of S.K. Macdonald, Perry D'Angelo, received the award at InfoComm 2011 in Orlando, Fla.

"The selection process was difficult this year," said Jim Schanz, Shure's

director of U.S. and Canada field sales. "S.K. Macdonald made significant reinvestments in the company that helped it continue to offer best-in-class dealer support and drive the Shure brand to new levels in its territory."

S.K. Macdonald has represented Shure in the Mid-Atlantic region since 1933. shure.com



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IDEAS

InsideIDEAS > Independent Retail Page 32 > The Lesson Room Page 34 > The Retail Doctor Page 36 > Streetwise Sales Page 38

THE CUSTOMER WHISPERER | BY GREG BILLINGS

WHY I DON'T SELL PIANOS ONLINE ...

Dr. Smith (name changed to protect the foolish) was a typical prospective client. A successful physician practicing somewhere in the Midwest, he purchased a retirement home on Marco Island. We met when he stopped by the Gallery last year looking for a vintage Steinway grand for his Marco home. We didn't have the size he wanted, but he said he wasn't in a hurry.

During the next few months, I let him know about various pianos that came along, and last spring, I was disappointed to learn that he'd purchased a 1922 Model A on eBay. He, of course, was thrilled to have found a completely rebuilt and refinished piano for less than \$20,000. I was suspicious because the cost of properly rebuilding and refinishing a Steinway grand alone is more than \$20,000.

THE STING

Still, the good doctor was excited to hear about Pianomation



**... and
why you
shouldn't
either**

II from QRS. We agreed that the Gallery would receive and inspect his piano and install the player. The seller reluctantly agreed to ship the piano to us, and about a month later, it arrived late on a Friday afternoon. It only took 15 seconds to see that something

was fishy. The legs on the piano weren't from 1922. And things got worse, fast.

The piano had been refinished some time ago with a black lacquer I'd never seen before; it was somewhere between high-polish and not high-polish. The finish was very cloudy with deep surface scratches. The oversized pins indicated the pinplank hadn't been replaced, and some of the cheap plastic keytops were coming unglued. All the action parts were original and worn.

"Maybe they just got the date wrong," said our tech.

Vintage pianos are dated by looking up the serial number in the venerable *Pierce Piano Atlas*. But here's the thing about serial numbers: They're stamped in ink on the piano's plate. So, when you refinish the plate, you have to reapply a serial number — hopefully, the original one. The new serial number on this plate disagreed with the shadow of the old serial number I could see partially through the new finish (because they hadn't properly

stripped and sanded the plate). I checked the key frame, another spot where you can find a Steinway's serial number. This is where the story turns ugly. The serial number had been sanded off of the key frame.

There are many reasons why someone would remove the serial number from a piano, a car or a gun. None of them are good reasons. By now, I was feeling a little queasy about the whole investigation, so I sent an e-mail to my good friend David Kirkland, head of archival services at Steinway & Sons in New York. He promptly wrote back that the serial number in question had been assigned to a mahogany M sold in New York in 1926. This piano was an impostor.

It's not unusual to find suspicious Steinways. Not all Steinway rebuilders are Steinway dealers, and not all have the same standards. A large number of pianos in various degrees of decay come from schools, churches and estates. Some shops even cannibalize several pianos to

Without further investigation, I called Dr. Smith to report what I'd learned so far. After discussing the possibility of starting the restoration from scratch, he said, "But I'll still have a piano with a phony serial number." I suggested we could determine the correct serial number, but at that point, he felt deceived. Of course, he had been deceived.

A few minutes later, I got a call from the seller who wanted to argue with me about my assessment. He protested that he hadn't broken any eBay rules. I suggested that he review the e-mail I received from Steinway & Sons, and I forwarded it to him.

‘No matter how much buyers protest price in the beginning of their searches, in the end, most of them are more concerned about quality and value than price.’

I never heard from him again. After numerous phone calls and broken promises, the piano was picked up by a guy moving pianos in a horse trailer. Dr. Smith

eventually got most of his money back. He has put off buying a piano until next season and isn't returning calls or e-mails.

CLOSE CALL

Had the piano been delivered to his home and the problems discovered over time, it's unlikely he would have been able to return the piano. We had a similar case with a seller on Craigslist and were able to help the customer get a refund. She eventually bought a piano from us.

A search of pianos for sale online will reveal mostly gray-market Yamahas, private-label low-end imports, some obscure new piano brands, a few Steinways like the one described and a motley collection of worn-out used pianos. Why has the piano

market failed to present reasonable offerings online, thereby opening up a vacuum filled by carpetbaggers, when other industry segments have successfully exploited Internet marketing?

There are several reasons.

First, none of the major piano suppliers lets its new pianos be sold online. My guess is if they thought this was a viable way to market pianos, they would do it themselves. Why would they need dealers if they could sell their pianos from a Web page? The absence of high-quality, name-brand merchandise opens up an opportunity for bottom feeders.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MATH

Next, pianos are big, heavy, bulky instruments that must be wrangled into place, wrestled

[illegible]

into tune and constantly serviced. The piano business is not for the faint of heart. It's almost impossible to move a piano any significant distance for less than \$1,000. With locals selling old consoles and spinets on Craigslist for a couple of hundred dollars, delivering one across a state makes almost no economic sense. And properly regulating and voicing a 20-year-old upright is so expensive that the cost cannot be recovered selling at the current market price. So, anyone purchasing a middle-aged console online will probably have a piano with performance far below even an inexpensive new model bought from a local dealer. When it comes to uprights, the math just doesn't work.

Grands are a different story.

I suppose one could justify a \$1,200 moving bill for a \$5,000 piano, but wouldn't the customer be better off buying a \$6,200 piano locally? And if we have a client in our store considering a \$6,200 purchase, might we have a chance to sell them a really good piano? No matter how much buyers protest price in the beginning of their searches, in the end, most of them are more concerned about quality and value than price.

If we arbitrarily assume that 10 percent of the purchase price was a reasonable freight cost, we could reason that \$12,000–\$15,000 pianos would be a viable Internet product. Of course, this is precisely the entry price range of pianos major manufacturers won't allow to be sold online.

LEFTOVERS

This leaves private-label imports and used grands as the most likely candidates for Internet selling. Most used grands are more than 25 years old and need extensive action work to be appropriate for normal use. Regulating and voicing a grand action, without parts, is nearly a week's work for a trained technician. Therefore, selling one of these pianos for less than \$5,000 is problematic unless you cut corners, which is dangerous to do on a piano you're shipping out of town.

The problem with used pianos is that there aren't many good ones. We're able to sell all the good pianos we get on trade to local customers without much difficulty. And given the market disruption caused by Craigslist,

we have no incentive to buy up used pianos as we did a generation ago. That said, there's still a very good business to be had nursing old Steinways back to life. Properly rebuilt and refinished, their selling price justifies the investment. Since we can sell them locally, why would we want to market them to the lowest-price buyer online?

THE BIG QUESTION

This is the fundamental business question at hand. Do we really want to be the lowest-cost piano provider? The Internet shopper naturally gravitates toward price because it's not reasonable to present products as subjective as acoustic musical instruments on a 13-inch screen, through 2-inch speakers.

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It's impossible to be the lowest-cost provider on the Internet because there will always be someone, somewhere willing to advertise a lower price. Countless hours can be wasted negotiating with out-of-town prospects who want the lowest price. In the rare cases where a sale is made, it's for less money than we could sell the piano for locally. We love pianos and our customers. We want to provide excellent, meticulously prepared instruments to clients who will enjoy them for generations, pay us to service them and refer their friends. We cannot fulfill that mission and be the low-cost provider.

LIES, LIES, LIES

And finally, the Internet can be a liar's club. Posters are

invisible and unaccountable. A perfect example is the supposed testimonials on their websites. In 35 years, we have received hundreds of thank yous from customers. Usually, they are cards and rarely more than a sentence or two. Mostly, they thank us for the flowers we send with deliveries.

I'll go out on a limb and say most of the testimonials I've seen online are fabrications. The same is true with the endorsements. Pianists just aren't predisposed to write long evaluations. The majority of evaluations I have seen were biased. Many were ridiculous.

We've serviced a half-dozen or so pianos people have bought online. None is a great piano, and none of the customers got

'It's impossible to be the lowest-cost provider on the Internet because there will always be someone, somewhere willing to advertise a lower price.'

a particularly good deal. Some of them are nightmares.

The bottom line: Unless you're

willing to cut corners and provide poor customer value, like the dealer who sold Dr. Smith his ill-fated Steinway, you're unlikely to make much money selling pianos online. And if getting customers' money by providing poor value is your objective, why mess with pianos? They're too big, too heavy and too much trouble.

Many of us remaining in the piano business are committed to our customers and our products. It's hard work but very rewarding. The Internet is a great place to find and communicate with customers. But we want them to see, touch and play their pianos before taking them home. **MI**

Greg Billings whispers to customers at the Steinway Piano Gallery in Naples, Fla. He welcomes questions and comments at greg@steinwaynaples.com.

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INDEPENDENT RETAIL | BY TED ESCHLIMAN

Surviving in Retail

Our local Sunday morning paper recently ran an article — no, make that *lament* — chronicling attempts to convince local grocers to open corner stores downtown for the emerging population of “urban lifestyle” residents. Any number-crunching business owner could see why the grocers were reluctant.

One resident dreamed of “something like a Wal-Mart Express that’s cheaper but less corporate and more local.” Another wanted a downtown pharmacy that offered milk and eggs but at convenience store prices. The reality is these residents valued price over convenience and remained committed to driving out of their neighborhood for cheap groceries.

Pondering the extinction of the corner grocery store begs a question: What’s in music retail that makes a business viable? The three main requisites are: price, convenience and soul. And any two out of the three are crucial to survival.

Price. Contrary to popular belief, no one wins at retail by offering the cheapest price. Selling your goods at cost or lower is a recipe for chronic failure. Profit is a necessity for viability, but there are other ways to offer price besides simply selling everything cheaper. You can “guerilla price” random visible items, and you can move products at a reduced margin faster and smarter — given an appropriate population and healthy traffic.

With Google search and Internet shopping, our customers are more aware of market pricing than ever before. They know what they can pay, and if you aren’t at least within the game, you don’t stand a chance of getting their return business.

Convenience. We usually think “location” when it comes to convenience, but there’s so much more to it. Are your store hours open

when customers are shopping? The Internet is, and it’s open 24/7. Is your showroom uncluttered? Is product easy to find, labeled and priced? Are your employees helpful or condescending? Are they responsive and accessible? How quickly can customers check out but still leave the store with everything they need to make their musical activities enjoyable?

Soul. This third element is more circumstantial, but we know it when we see it. The store that supports every arts organization; has a staff of earnest, overt music appreciators; and carries a vibe of always going to the nth degree to satisfy customers has soul. Reputation, honest community investment, demonstrable integrity and a consistent fairness are the hard-earned elements that inspire your customer to belong to your club.

So, here’s the rub. You need two out of the three requisites just to keep the doors open. You can have price and convenience — box stores excel at this — but no soul. Still, they survive.

To really win requires all three. You need a plan for strategic pricing, one that instills profitability but demonstrates a viable competitiveness on the items people shop the most. You need a storefront that’s easy to get to and makes the lives of your customers easier.

The hardest to attain is soul. This is something that’s earned over a long period of time. It requires integrity, not just attention to the customer’s wallet, and a commitment to nurturing and developing music making skills and enjoyment. **MI**



The three main requisites for being a viable retail business

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

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THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Word Travels Fast

Last month, I discussed the findings of an independent national music lesson survey that my store, Alta Loma Music, participated in. The survey asked, “How did students first hear about your lessons program?” I’d mentioned our top area of discovery was through word-of-mouth at 36.2 percent, followed by existing customers for another product or service at 21.93 percent.

In that article, we looked at converting current customers into lesson students. Now, let’s look at word-of-mouth and what it encompasses.

THE POWER OF THE SPOKEN WORD

Students, parents and others in the community, such as band directors, your staff and teachers, are all part of getting the word out about your store. (Don’t forget last month’s discussion about promoting your music lessons to everyone who comes through your door.)

What prompts talk about your music lessons program? You and your staff being excited about it! Having great teachers, student performance events and student retention, along with students that are visible performing in school bands, equals great word-of-mouth.

Another sub-question in the survey asked, “What prompted students to go to Alta Loma Music for music lessons?” The top response was recommendations from other parents. And parents see progress in students through student performance events. Sixty-four percent of our respondents had participated in these events, but the national average for this category was only 29.3 percent. Why did we get those numbers? Because our approach is getting students to play, period.

We hold eight student showcases each year, a drum contest, a guitar contest, a summer rock band, summer jazz bands, two summer concert bands and a summer “Glee”-type vocal program. It’s hard work, but we get lots of people talking about what we do. You can see it in these survey numbers.

When students get to perform, retention rises. The more they play, the more you retain. You also create excitement with the

students and parents, and they share their excitement with others. Let’s face it: Taking lessons is OK, but becoming a musician is exciting and something people talk about.

WIRED TALK

What do you post on your store’s Facebook page? Do you post student performance photos and videos? Students and parents will repost performance videos, especially if they are in them. The same goes for YouTube.

Make sure to add band directors to your company’s Facebook page. This keeps them in touch with what’s going on in your store. Remember: On Facebook, you’re creating your own word-of-mouth advertising, and you want others to spread it for you.

Ask parents and students to write Google, Yahoo and Yelp reviews. The more reviews, the more buzz. Start talking this up with your teachers, and get them involved with the project.

Also, post comments and recommendations from students and parents on your website. A website is a good place for such comments. And, of course, make sure it’s connected to your store’s Facebook page and YouTube channel. **MI**

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



‘On Facebook, you’re creating your own word-of-mouth advertising, and you want others to spread it for you.’



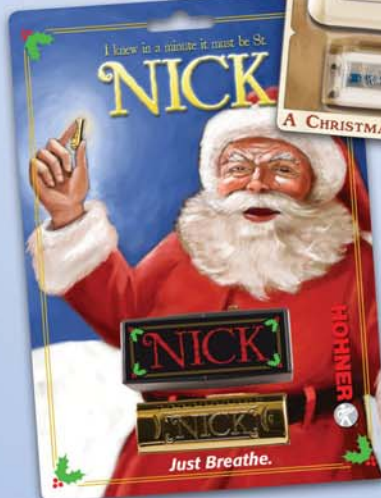
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THE RETAIL DOCTOR | BY BILLY CUTHRELL

Texting on the Job

I originally intended to write an article that blasted employees who text and use Facebook at work. Don't get me wrong: I'm not against texting and social media. I've seen plenty of abuses but also a few good uses in employees hanging out on Facebook while being paid to work. I have a couple of employees who check into their Facebook pages via their cell phones to say they are at work and to update their friends on some events that we have going on. It's free advertising for us, and I appreciate the employees giving us plugs on their pages.

That said, work is not the place to text your friends or be on Facebook if it's not business-related. Unfortunately, as I found out recently, sometimes it's hard to know how employees are using their time.

NOT ALL TEXTS ARE CREATED EQUAL

A few weeks ago, I saw a staff member sending text messages between helping customers at the front desk. The nerve! He knew I'd just let an employee go for spending an hour and a half on Facebook, and he was standing right in front of me texting. He'd been doing a good job assisting walk-in customers and answering the phones, but I could hear his cell phone chirping every few minutes. In between his desk duties, he'd grab his phone and type a quick message before going back to work. This went on for 20 minutes.

When the shop calmed down in the afternoon, I addressed the issue with all intentions of reminding him of our policies. As I began explaining the proper use of cell phones in the workplace and how there's a time and place for them, he stopped me and asked for a chance to explain himself.

I figured he'd have some lame story about how his band's bass player got thrown out of his girlfriend's house or needed bail money.

I've heard it all before and was in no mood for a woe-is-me tale.

Instead, he told me about a sale he'd just made over text. He signed up three new students and sold them three guitar packs, all in 10 minutes of texting back and forth with their mother.

She'd made contact with him through his Facebook page to discuss open music lesson times and instrument packages. Our em-

ployee told her he would check times and prices and text her the following day. She agreed to stop in and pay for the lessons and instruments that afternoon, and it only took six text messages and maybe 240 characters to close the sale.

NEW TEXTING POLICY

That was my wake-up call. I had to rethink my position on texting and Facebook use. Our policy no longer reflected how texting and social media have become a mainstay in business culture. We are now in the process of writing new company policies on the use of social media and texting.

I still ask all of our staff to use common sense, and I remind them of the importance of knowing what's appropriate and what's not when using their cell phones. (Remember Anthony Weiner?)

Our policy is still worded so employees know that continually texting and using Facebook for non-work-related matters is cause for termination. It's hard to police what texts are business-related and what aren't, but I can't ignore the bottom line — three guitar pack sales and three new students. I encourage everyone to rethink their texting and Facebook policies. **MI**

Billy Cuthrell rarely texts, but he does answer e-mails at billy@raleighmusiclessons.com.



The wake-up call that has me rethinking my texting and Facebook policies

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STREETWISE SELLING | BY KENNY SMITH

Get Back to Value

Selling on price alone is like being sucked down a black hole: Once you enter, it's hard to go back. Salespeople can acquire the addictive habit of discounting constantly to make deals, but customers aren't in your store only for the best price. Consider these guidelines, and help lead our industry back to profitability.

Avoid the "I want to be a good guy" syndrome. Once you start discounting to be cool and to keep customers faithful, they'll expect it every time. I've seen brand-new salespeople make decent margins with customers who normally get big discounts. Newbies are excited about what they're selling and often don't know about our industry's legacy of discounting. Even if you're a seasoned vet, sometimes it pays to think like a new guy.

Don't be intimidated by Internet shoppers. Music products are impulse items. Use that to your advantage. A product in a customer's hands is worth much more than the ability to order the same thing online and wait for it to arrive.

When it gets down to the nitty-gritty on price, put a brand-new product in customers' hands. As they're admiring the shiny new item, tell them, "It's not exactly how much you asked for, but we're really close. It's only a few dollars more." Done smoothly, this works like a charm. And if customers object, take it away from them immediately. Place it where it will taunt them as you reinforce the benefits of purchasing it from you. Even if you've already mentioned that your store offers excellent service, music lessons, rentals and repairs, say it again. Look directly at customers when you say it. If they loosen up in any way, ask them to buy but at your price.

Make the case that you're worth it. A

savvy young salesman who worked for me was extremely knowledgeable about high-tech equipment. A customer he'd been working with came back ready to buy. The customer had phone-shopped the product and found it for \$900 less at another store. The salesman knew the customer couldn't enjoy the product without post-sales assistance. As the buyer headed out the door, the salesman said, "Go ahead and buy it there, but you'll

never be happy." Two hours later, the customer returned and said, "You're right. The other place just dropped the box on the counter and said, 'Here you go.'" My salesman got the deal, the store made an excellent profit, the customer received quality assistance and everyone was happy. You don't need to have the lowest price if you can prove to customers that you're worth the difference.

Stay away from price in the beginning. When salespeople used to ask me if they could discount a product, my answer was, "What's the customer's first name?" If they didn't know it, I'd tell them to go back and do their job first.

Switch hats. When it's time to bargain, throw your musician and product-expert hats aside, and put on your banker's cap. This means not only thinking like a banker but speaking like one. When you're talking serious money, keep the volume down and the conversation private.

And in the case that you have to discount to a professional musician, don't despair. Make the deal, but get the customer to promise to send you at least one good customer. These guys have students and groupies. This has brought me more business over the years than I can remember. **MI**

Kenny Smith is an industry veteran and consults both retailers and suppliers. Find him at kennysmithsalesguru.com.



'You don't need to have the lowest price if you can prove to your customers that you're worth the difference.'



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BY ZACH PHILLIPS

PHOTO BY STEPHEN FLINT

Taming Hurricanes

Why Fred Schiff credits his toughest challenges for making All County Music South Florida's premier school music dealership

It's Monday in mid-August. Fred Schiff should be preparing for the school rental season, his busiest and most lucrative time of year. Instead, he's stripping instruments off the walls at his Tamarac, Fla., store.

Hurricane Irene looms over the Bahamas, and it's heading northbound. Schiff and his team move their stock to the warehouse as a security measure in case they lose power. For All County Music, it's business as usual.

"Hurricanes are a part of life," said Schiff, owner of the full-line dealership, which specializes in school music. "In 2005, we were stripping the walls every week. It's what we do."



Fred Schiff

Turns out it was a near-miss. Two days later, Irene bypasses Florida by a hair to wreak havoc on the Carolina coast. Schiff's showroom gets restocked, and he hits the road to visit schools. "We dodged it this time," he said.

Not that he's always been so lucky.

During his 20 years at the helm of All County Music, Schiff has fought all types of hurricanes, literally and figuratively. His market, South Florida, was ground zero for chain-store expansion in the mid-1990s. A decade later, the speculative real estate boom yielded a brief spike in business until the bubble burst, and burst hard. Then there's those darned forces of nature. Schiff estimated he'd closed shop for "a solid month" in 2004 and 2005 because of storms. "During Wilma, we were out of electricity for almost two weeks."

A retailer with a weaker stomach might cry "uncle" and shutter his doors for good, but Schiff seems to thrive on it. In fact, he credited his biggest challenges for spurring his biggest successes. And at the top of that list is building All County Music into South Florida's premier school music dealership.

"The rush of competitors into our market made me a better businessperson," said Schiff, who worked for nine years in the banking industry prior to joining All County in 1989. "I had to determine who we were going to be and how we were going to be, what we were going to do and how we were going to do it. What were the things we were going to push aside, and what were the things we were going to do even stronger."

CHAIN-STORE INVASION

A Mars Music going-out-of-business sign sits on a desk

outside Schiff's office. It's less a badge of honor, more a reminder of difficulties he's faced. In a way, he's grateful for the now-defunct chain superstore. It motivated him to build a better mousetrap.

During the chain-retail blitzkrieg of the mid-'90s, Mars Music opened its corporate headquarters and a Fort Lauderdale superstore roughly seven miles from Schiff's Tamarac headquarters. The chain promised dirt-cheap instrument rentals, a highly publicized lesson program and a showroom that would fit a dozen All County stores. Not long after, Sam Ash Music and Guitar Center opened nearby.

"We were the first and only market where all three competed," Schiff said. "We were the test market."

"They were going to put more inventory in those stores than we could sell in a year. That's pretty daunting."

And it was only the beginning. According to Schiff, representatives from one of the chains met with his top school music customers, promising to put All County Music out of business. The company's head repair tech and road rep then became the first of many employees to be given competitive job offers by the retail giants. And, of course, new stores kept opening — to the tune of one every three months. Each time, Schiff noticed a 30-percent dip in his monthly retail business.

He said he remembers one especially sleepless weekend during this period. When he returned to work on Monday, he decided to hit back.

He made attractive counteroffers to employees being recruited by the chains. He changed All County Music's instrument rental plan to compete with Mars' policy, making the first month's

'We were the first and only market where all three chain stores competed. We were the test market. They were going to put more inventory in those stores than I could sell in a year.'

rent free. He began buying deeper from manufacturers that refused to sell to the chains. And he hired design expert Glen Ingles to give his showroom the first of many facelifts. This last expense caused Schiff's father, Mel, who founded All County Music in 1976, to raise his eyebrows.

Schiff's response: "I said, 'How can I not afford to do this? We're never going to be that big, but we have to let our customers know that this is a good place to come shop. And we're going to be current, particularly with what was happening.'"

All County Music also began expanding its band director and student outreach during this period. The company hosted several in-store festivals — one-day events that spotlighted a particular instrument with clinics and sales.

"We would have 100 people come into a small store," Schiff said, noting that his Tamarac showroom is roughly 3,000 square feet. "And not only did they come, they were *buying*."

Over the years, All County's location in Tamarac has proven to be a boon, as well. (The company has a second store 24 miles away in Pembroke Pines.) Situated on the west side of town, All County tended to attract a more affluent customer than Mars did, which was located to the east.

"In a metropolitan market, we're not calling out on the boondocks," Schiff said. "So people have to drive out to your store. They're coming in to rent instruments. In our home town, you can't do rental nights. [Schools] don't allow them. So it's all store-driven." He added that location has also been critical to his lessons business, as people tend to study music close to their homes.

The outcome of all this work? Despite the dips in his retail business, Schiff claimed he lost "very few" rental customers and lesson students, and not a single employee went to the chains.

"They wanted our people, but they never got them," he said.

"We're still here, and we've gotten better and bigger since [the chains] were here," said Chris Zeruth, All County's school service manager and a road rep of 16 years — and one of the first people the chains tried recruiting. "They should be embarrassed over that. It's like some little mom-and-pop hamburger joint putting McDonald's out of business."

"All County Music's past and future success is dependent on our committed employees and the dedication of the band directors and music teachers who choose to partner with us," Schiff added.

When Mars Music finally liquidated in 2002, he made a beeline for the Fort Lauderdale store and bought up all of its band inventory.

"People were trying to see

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what kind of deals they could get,” he said. “I thought, ‘This is a great time to get that inventory out of the market.’”

THE BIGGEST COMPETITOR

Chain mania abated by the mid-2000s, only for All County Music to gain a new, unlikely competitor — one that has proven to be its most formidable to date.

“My biggest competitor is the school system,” Schiff said. “The school system owns too many instruments.”

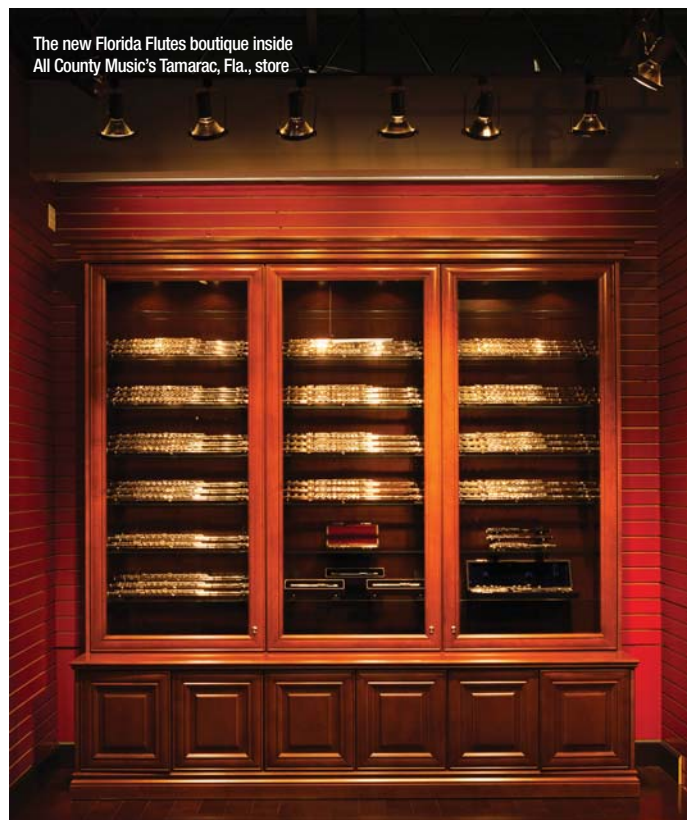
Ironically, he acknowledged that this is partly his own fault. The speculative real estate bubble in South Florida a half-decade ago yielded an explosion of new schools. They needed instruments, which meant a two-year surge of bid business for All County Music. “We were opening new schools left and right, and those were all bids,” Schiff said. It gave the company a huge short-term bump but, unfortunately, left schools with a glut of inventory.

“Long-term, it really didn’t do any good,” Schiff said. “But if you didn’t make the sale, somebody else was getting it. Bottom line: The instruments were going to be purchased.”

Since then, he’s been fighting not only overinventoried schools but also unrealistic perceptions among customers. According to Schiff, parents often think they can rent instruments for the same dirt-cheap prices schools rent them. He said he combats this by pitching quality in everything All County Music does — retail, service and post-sale support.

“I want our customers to know that if they have a problem, it’s not a problem,” he added.

“And then hopefully the program grows beyond the inventory, and you sell some instruments. Band directors also know that



after a while school instruments are depreciated.”

During the past few years, a boost in All County’s step-up sales has helped put a dent in the problem. According to Schiff, these sales are mainly the result of persistent salesmanship.

“We’re marketing directly to the schools,” he said. “We’re doing trial programs. We’re bringing the product into the schools and allowing kids the opportunity to play instruments.”

“There is no secret to step-ups. Put the instrument in their hands and let them try it. We’ve stepped up our efforts.”

That said, he acknowledged that the recession may have helped inspire the surge. “People were going to value. As much as people were saying, ‘I can’t afford this,’ they also couldn’t afford to buy cheap. A lot of people did, but a good part of the population said, ‘If I’m going to spend my hard-earned dollars, the flight to

value is a good idea.’”

And then there’s All County’s ongoing marketing. Schiff has continued to host and create new events. He took first place at the “Best Ideas” session during the 2009 National Association of School Music Dealers convention for his private sales to schools. At these events, price tags get changed to reflect the school’s colors and logo, and students are offered one-night-only specials.

“We take a little less money for some of our instruments, but we *do* sell instruments,” Schiff said. “It’s great for sales.”

Other events are less mercenary but still lead to instrument purchases. This past April, for instance, All County Music hosted French Horn Day, featuring a clinic with the Cleveland Orchestra’s principal and second chair French horn players. Schiff noted that he sold Conn French horns because of the event, only

not that day.

“We’re always throwing seeds down. Always.”

For each rental season, All County also prints a large full-color brochure, which goes to middle school students. Every year features a different motif: One brochure had Harry Potter lightning-style fonts, another had “American Idol” themes. This year’s brochure has an iPad on the cover. Schiff creates the concepts and outsources the layout to a local graphics designer.

“I am my ad agency,” he said. “Because no one feels for this business the way I feel for this business. Nobody understands our customers’ psyche better than we do.”

FIGHTING THE COMMODITY CULTURE

While dealing with August’s hurricane scare, Schiff was finalizing his latest project: Florida Flutes. It’s a 10- by 10-foot alcove in the Tamarac showroom with a custom-made maple cabinet, hardwood flooring and soon-to-be-installed glass doors. Inside, customers will find what Schiff called the largest high-end flute selection in Florida — roughly 50 models at any given time from the likes of Powell and Haynes. The mini-boutique will be staffed by existing employees, and for inventory, Schiff turned to suppliers who were equally excited by the concept. Total cost of the project, not including stock: \$10,000.

“It looks magnificent,” said Mel, visibly proud of his son.

This year marks All County Music’s 35th anniversary, and Schiff’s banking on such niches to propel his company into the next 35 years. As he explained it, Florida Flutes gives him a competitive niche in an era of commodity everything and dirt-cheap e-commerce. And, he added, it’s a concept that lends itself well

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to a brick-and-mortar.

"There are certain parts of the market that want to be niche, where [customers] want to experience something they can't get somewhere else," he said.

The boutique will be marketed in large part on its service offerings. Recently, the company set aside a dedicated bench solely for flutes, which customers can see if they want a full tour of All County's Tamarac facilities.

"To know that you have the technician right there who can make those subtle adjustments on the spot, that's our marketing angle," Schiff said. "This is totally hands-on. This is totally their choice of instrument.

"If you've got a \$20,000 flute, you don't want to put it in the mail for service. You'd like to bring it somewhere. And if it

means you have to travel a couple of hours to do that, that's certainly better than having to ship it."

He'll soon install a mirror, so customers can see how they look playing a particular model under the halogen lights. "It's jewelry. It really is."

So why flutes, as opposed to saxes or trumpets? "I think the product lends itself well to the families that are buying them," Schiff said. "It's a group of musicians who really want to fine-tune and be able to play different options. I think once parents hear what their children are playing and how it makes a difference in their sound, they're going to be more apt to purchase that and understand the difference between a \$5,000 and \$15,000 flute."

FUNDING FIASCO

The next symbolic hurricane to hit All County Music will likely be the 2011-2012 school year. Schiff and many industry pundits have predicted it to be the worst to date in terms of education funding, and that may go double in the Sunshine State.

"Florida is behind in the recovery," Schiff said. "The state is in disarray now."

To lessen potential dips in business, he's been carefully forecasting inventory levels. Starting in the spring, road reps were charged with being his eyes and ears at schools. They checked in with directors for estimates of how large their programs would be in the fall and continued to do so through the end of summer.

Schiff acknowledged that it's still a crapshoot, as he placed

most of his stock orders in February and March. Still, the constant flow of information helps him make ongoing inventory tweaks. And those tweaks can make a big difference in All County's profitability.

"It's the difference between having too much inventory sitting on the shelf afterwards or not," he said.

"If you've been managing your business well, when things go bad, you are able to move and adapt more quickly. And that comes from information. That's due to our staff members getting the information that we need to make good decisions and our staff members relaying that information back to me and all of us discussing what it is we need to do. It's not happening in a vacuum." **MI**

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TRENDS | BY KATIE KAILUS

BOUTIQUE CHARM

School music is the latest industry to go upscale.

Across the United States, several premier dealerships have embraced luxury retail, moving their high-end instruments to dedicated rooms. This gives their shops a boutique flair and, oftentimes, a way to sell in-house specialists' know-how. And the concept continues to gain momentum.

"Each of [our] shops reach a higher-end customer who is

School music retailers find new revenue streams in boutique B&O pro shops

looking to do business with a specialist rather than a generalist," said Mark Goff, owner of Paige's Music in Indianapolis, which has

three high-end boutiques within its showroom: Chops Percussion, Encore Orchestral Strings and Indy Flute Shop.

"By branding and staffing them separately from our store, we are able to position ourselves as the expert in that particular field and set ourselves apart in the customers' minds. The collection of specialty shops also has a trickle-down effect because it raises the overall perception of Paige's Music to our core customer — the band and orchestra

teacher."

Like Goff, Frank Pampenella, owner of PM Music Center in Aurora, Ill., has targeted band and orchestra teachers by hiring a specialist to work in his orchestra-specific room. This section features not only high-end instruments but also step-up and student models.

"We brought our string specialist around to schools last year to promote our new room," Pampenella said. "We plan to follow up with it again this year."

And the efforts have proved successful. Pampenella has noticed a 169-percent sales increase in step-up instruments and a 112-percent increase in student instruments.

"We are definitely spending money to do this, but it's making a big difference," he said.

Likewise, Paige's Music's business has doubled in its specialty categories since creating a specialty room, according to Goff. "The results have been very encouraging," he said. "In every case, we have doubled our business in the specialty category, and we are still growing and learning."

THE VALUE OF STAFFING

Having a trained staff that specializes in high-end instruments makes all the difference, according to Pampenella. When he hired a string specialist, who also happens to be a former orchestra teacher and concertmaster at a local symphony, Pampenella noticed a change in clientele. "Orchestra teachers didn't take us as seriously before," he said.

Along with advising the customers on their purchases, PM

+ MENCHEY MUSIC



Menchey Music's bowed string gallery features hardwood floors, leather chairs and area rugs, creating a lavish shopping experience.

Music Center's string specialist also hand-selects the instruments and play-tests each one as a quality-control measure.

"We've flown her down to St. Louis and out to California to meet with manufacturers," Pampenella said. "So she has a real hands-on role."

George Quinlan, president of Quinlan & Fabish in Burr Ridge, Ill., recently added a high-end violin room at his company's new headquarters. And he mentioned that his product specialists aren't confined to the showroom. They're also available for clinics, demos and special school events.

Chain retailer Schmitt Music has saxophone and trumpet pro shops at its Brooklyn Center, Minn., location. Joerg Hermsen, Schmitt's vice president of marketing, said having the right staff is mandatory.

"For each of the rooms, we've hired players with a very high commitment level to the instrument," he said. "They sleep, breathe and think their instrument and have an extremely high knowledge of their merchandise, paired with a deep insight into the player community."

Paige's Music's Goff agreed.

"When you are talking to high-end customers, you absolutely can't fake it," he said. "Each of our specialty staff members are extremely skilled and knowledgeable about their craft and actively engaged in teaching and playing at a high level."

DISPLAY TACTICS

Presentation of the instruments is just as important as the specialists selling them.

When PM Music Center recently moved to a larger location about a mile away, Pampenella made sure his orchestra room displays were brightly lit and clean. The room features

+ SCHMITT MUSIC



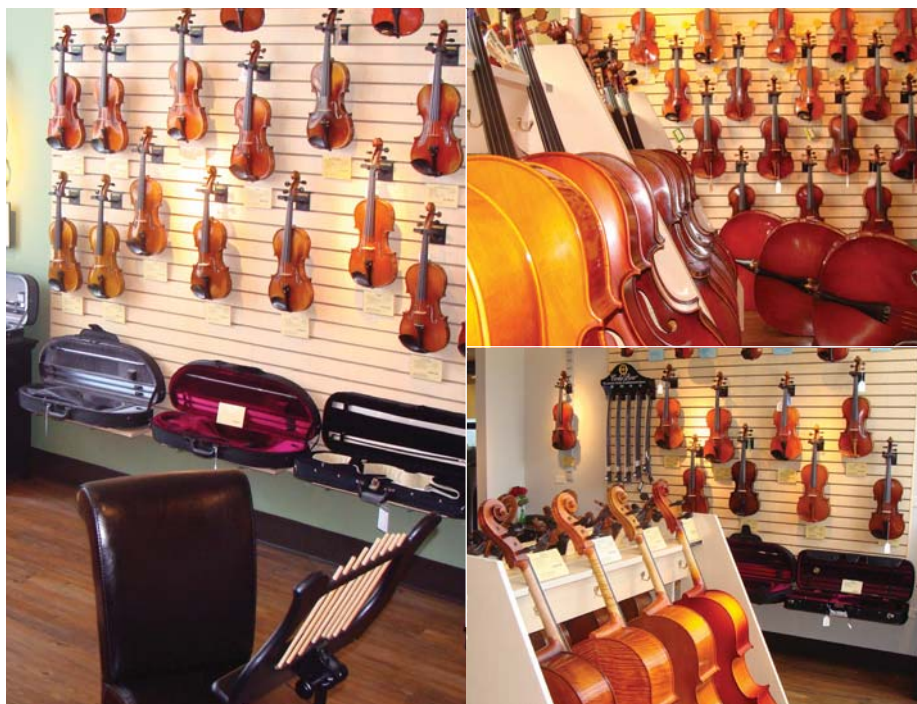
Schmitt Music's trumpet room (top) boasts hardwood floors and track lighting, while the saxophone room (below) features a more laid-back vibe with leather couches.

+ QUINLAN & FABISH



George Quinlan Jr. said he believes avoiding fluorescents whenever possible is a must. The simple lamp in his string room gives off soft light.

+ PM MUSIC CENTER



PM Music Center's string room includes leather chairs and wooden music stands, so musicians can try out instruments.

+ PAIGE'S MUSIC



Clockwise from top, left: Paige's Music's Chops Percussion exudes an industrial feel with high ceilings and banners on the walls; Indy Flute Shop features wooden cabinets with glass windows; Encore Orchestral Strings offers a leather seating area, along with track lighting and framed art on the wall.

hardwood floors with area rugs, leather chairs and wooden music stands. The instruments are merchandised on slatwall and floating displays.

Schmitt Music's Hermesen agreed that using the space in a creative way separates the instruments from the rest of the stock.

"The separated presentation makes it its own dedicated world," Hermesen said. "[Our space features] leather couches, a tryout recording setup and even an espresso machine. The concept shows our commitment to serve the customer tailored to the specific needs of this instrument group."

Chops Percussion, Paige's drum specialty shop, features an industrial feel with high, unfinished ceilings. But the company's Indy Flute Shop and Encore Orchestral Strings boutiques opt for a more sophisticated feel, boasting track lighting, leather chairs and hardwood floors.

THE GREAT EXPANSION

Joel Menchey, owner of Menchey Music in Hanover, Pa., said that in adopting this model he can better focus and dedicate certain resources to his bowed string gallery.

"It lets the customer know that this is a dedicated specialty area beyond our core business," Menchey said.

Thanks to the increase in business Menchey has seen over the last year at his string gallery, he mentioned he might add another specialty shop at his Hanover, Pa., location.

Hermesen said Schmitt Music may also create more specialty boutiques due to its success with the trumpet and sax shops.

"Based on the results we've had so far, we have considered expansion," Hermesen said. "Time will tell." **MI**



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EDITED BY KATIE KAILUS



2011 HOLIDAY SALES GUIDE

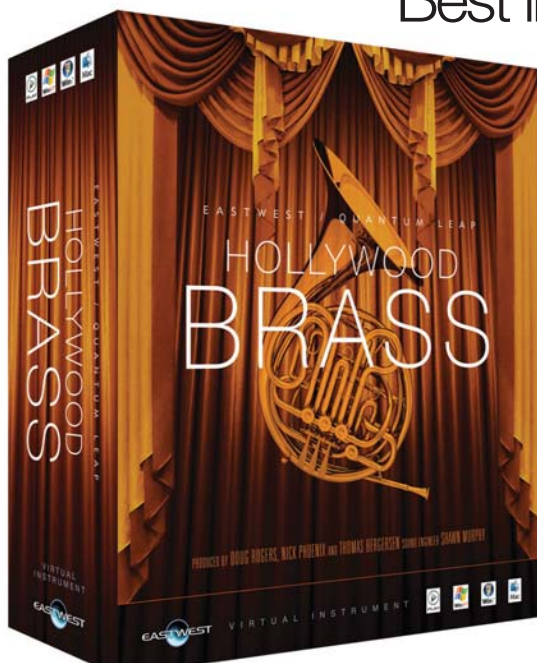
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BAND & ORCHESTRA

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EastWest is now shipping Hollywood Brass, a 150 GB virtual instrument that features the new Play 3 playback engine. Hollywood Brass is the second installment in the Hollywood series and includes a list of articulations, techniques and features. MSRP: Brass Diamond Edition, \$995; Brass Gold Edition, \$595. **{sounds online.com}**

MIGHTY BRIGHT | LED MICRO LIGHT

Mighty Micro

Mighty Bright has debuted Micro Light two packs for its Keychain, Carabiner and MicroClip (pictured) LED lights. The compact LED Micro Lights last for 100,000 hours. They're energy-efficient and made of strong, lightweight polycarbonate. **{mighty bright.com}**



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CAROLBRASS CUSTOM MATERIALS | TRUMPETS

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CarolBrass Custom Materials is offering new trumpet models that are made based on selected materials used in the construction process. Models include the CTR-7770L-YST, which features 70-percent copper and a bright sound, and the CTR-4440L-PSM, which features phosphor bronze and a strong, rich sound. carolbrass.com

RS BERKELEY | GRIFFIN MOUTHPIECE

Griffin's Glory

RS Berkeley's new Johnny Griffin Legend series mouthpiece is an exact reproduction of Griffin's original gold-plated model. It's finished in a deep, rich 24-karat gold plating. rsberkeley.com



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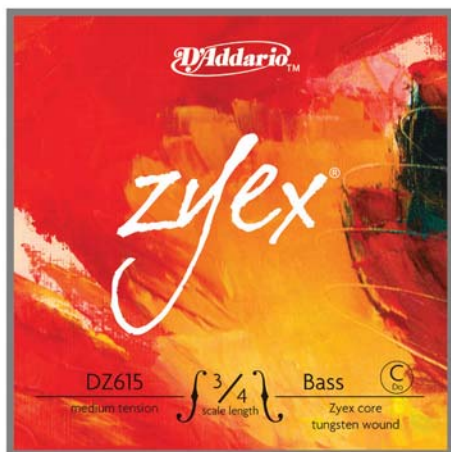
Otto Link Vintage for tenor sax.



www.jjbabbitt.com



MOUTHPIECES FOR CLARINETS AND SAXOPHONES



D'ADDARIO | ZYEX

Double Trouble

D'Addario has unveiled the Zyex Double Bass C-extended-E string. These strings augment the standard Zyex set. However, like the standard set, the string uses a synthetic Zyex core, which provides a gut-like rich and complex tone, combined with power and clarity. MSRP: \$125. daddario.com

GEAR >

BAND & ORCHESTRA

VANDOREN | MASTERS
MOUTHPIECES

Master's Choice

Vandoren has launched the Masters series of clarinet mouthpieces. It includes two models: the CL4 and CL5. They're available with a special MO ligature that's available in pewter, black, silver and 24-karat gold. The line is responsive and glides through the entire clarinet range via a new approach taken to the tip opening and facing length relationship. {dانسr.com}



SCHILKE | FLUGELHORN

Good as Gold

Schilke's recently introduced Bb flugelhorn incorporates a new design and configuration. Produced with a gold brass bell and small bore valve block, this model offers a smooth, warm characteristic sound and controlled feel. It includes a third valve trigger and two leadpipes, providing different tapers for small and larger shank mouthpieces.

{schilkemusic.com}



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CORT | CR SERIES

Hard Rockers

Cort Guitars has released the CR series of single-cutaway electric guitars. The new models include the CR280, CR200, CR100 and CR250 (pictured). The latter boasts a mahogany body with a maple top, rectangular white pearl inlay, ClassicRocker II humbucker pickups and vintage-style tuners. MSRP: CR100, \$349; CR200, \$489; CR250, \$549; CR280, \$769. cortguitars.com



BLACKSTAR | HT-5R

HT-5 Expands

Blackstar recently added the HT-5R combo, HT-5RH head, HT-5RS mini stack and HT-112 cabinet to its HT-5 tube amplifier line. The HT-5R combo and HT-5RH head offer real tube sound in a compact format. The HT-5R and HT-5RH are both two-channel amplifiers, offering clean and overdrive channels. The HT-5RS includes the HT-5R head and two HT-112 cabinets. blackstaramps.com



ELECTRO-HARMONIX | RAVISH SITAR

From Guitar to Sitar

Electro-Harmonix has introduced the Ravish Sitar pedal, which transforms a guitar into a sitar. The pedal features three independent level controls. It also boasts individual timbre controls for the lead voice and the sympathetic strings. MSRP: \$319. ehx.com

CRAFTER | DV250-EQ

Acoustic Genius

Crafter has released the DV250-EQ, a dreadnought acoustic with a solid spruce top and solid maple back and sides. An L.R. Baggs element pickup and pre-amp with built-in tuner makes the guitar ideal for live situations. MSRP: \$1,399. crafterusa.com



PIKINBOARD | STRUM DRUM

Strummin' Along

Pikinboard's new Strum Drum lets users strum their guitars and play any percussion sound they want, using the mini washboard percussion device as a trigger for a drum sound module. pikinboard.com



HOLIDAYSELLERS



Pedal Displays

Randy Luna, Guitars Boutique



We created this trend for ourselves.

"We decided to invest in a large guitar effect pedal display, and it has worked extremely well. You could say we created this trend for ourselves. The display could have anywhere between 125–150 pedals at any given moment. Because of the selection, people from all over the island come to purchase pedals. The display holds brands, such as Electro-Harmonix, Fulltone, Z.Vex, Xotic, MXR and many others."

GEAR >

GUITARS, AMPS & ACCESSORIES

LEVY'S LEATHERS | GUITAR STRAPS

Southern Comfort

Levy's Leathers has unveiled new southern rock guitar straps, designed for different genres of country and rock. The 2-inch straps are made of heavyweight, soft cotton webbing and feature a contrasting woven border and leather ends with a cowboy-boot-design embossing. The straps are available in tan, brown and black.

{levysleathers.com}



MOD KITS | THE TRILL

Mod's Trill Thrills

Mod Kits' new pedal, The Trill Tremolo, offers classic tremolo tones in an easy-to-build kit. The Trill's speed knob provides a wide range from a very slow to rapid-fire effect, while the depth knob varies the ratio between effected and dry signal. Using modern, low-noise transistors makes operation of The Trill quiet with no signal drop when engaged. {modkitsdiy.com}

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REUNION BLUES | BANJO CASE

Banjo Bag

The new RB Continental banjo case from Reunion Blues is built to fit both plectrum and five-string banjos. A Ballistic Quadraweave exterior features corded edges and seams that are double-stitched with high-tensile thread and reinforced at tested stress points. The case includes the RB Continental Zero-G palm-contoured handle, designed with a weight-distributing foam core. A 1-inch-thick shock-absorbing Flexoskeleton exterior is lined with reinforced impact panels. MSRP: \$269.95.

{reunionblues.com}



FLOYD ROSE | FRX TREMOLO

Retro Rose

Floyd Rose has debuted the FRX Tremolo system. It can be retrofitted to any guitar with a hard-tail/stop-tail bridge, including Les Paul, SG and Flying V models. floydrose.com



HOLIDAYSELLERS



MusicNomad

Paul Tobias, Tobias Music

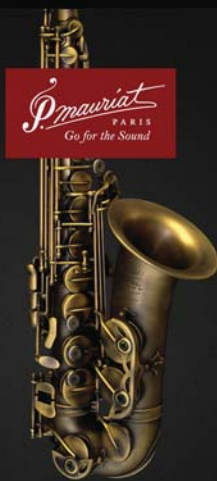


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“One product that we want to display is the MusicNomad Guitar/Equipment Care products. These guys sent us some samples of their polishes, cleaners and polishing cloths, and we were very impressed. The products have great packaging and are reasonably priced. They will be a perfect add-on or last-minute holiday gift. What guitar player wouldn't want a little care package for his or her guitar?”



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James Bethea, The Perfect Bass

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tally trend-
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“L ightweight amplification is totally trending hard this year. Even on the guitar side, we’re selling more smaller combos rather than heads and cabs, and the heads that are popular are smaller low-wattage units. This has been trending for a while now, and I expect it to continue through next year. It’s just too practical, and the products are really great in this category.”



SAMICK | GD100SCE PK

Muscular Sounds

S amick has released its latest Greg Bennett Design acoustic guitar, the GD100SCE PK. The solid top instrument features new Thunderflex bracing, providing a loud, powerful sound. The GD100SCE PK also boasts a Fishman Isys pre-amp, solid Sitka spruce top and Nato mahogany back and sides.

{gregbennettguitars.com}



GRETSCH | G6120 EDDIE COCHRAN

Somethin' Else

G retsch recently unveiled the G6120 Eddie Cochran Signature hollow-body guitar. This single-cutaway boasts a western motif and a resonant sound that combines features based directly on Cochran’s main guitar, the orange Gretsch 6120 Chet Atkins hollow body. The signature model includes a two-piece maple neck, 9.5-inch radius rosewood fingerboard with 22 standard frets and western-themed pearloid inlays. MSRP: \$3,625. {gretschguitars.com}



VINTAGE GUITARS | VRC800AMF

Vintage Beaut

Vintage Guitars has added the VR-C800AMF model to its resonator guitar line. The new model features a gently curved body shape and flamed maple finish. The guitar boasts an ideal level of acoustic volume, but the warm tones of the single-coil, chrome-covered lipstick pickup in the neck position let players plug in if needed and bring an extra dimension to the guitar's tone. jhs.co.uk

PEAVEY | TNT 115, TKO 115

Dynamite Amps

Peavey has launched the TNT 115 and TKO 115 bass amps. The TNT 115 (pictured) is a 600-watt max power bass amplifier boasting a footswitchable optical compressor. Both amps share a seven-band graphic EQ. MSRP: TNT 115, \$719.99; TKO 115, \$649.99. peavey.com



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HOLIDAYSELLERS



Mini P.A.s

Paul Tobias, Tobias Music

Mini P.A.s have done well lately.

"Mini P.A.s have done well lately, and we will be stocking up for the holiday season. The Fishman LoudBox Mini and the Samson Expedition lines continually do well."



FENDER | ACOUSTICS

Acoustic Boom

Fender recently added several new acoustic models. They include the USA Select 1, the company's first acoustic guitar made in the United States since the 1990s; the T-Bucket Bass; the Ukulele Mino'Aka and Ukulele U'Uku; and the CN-240SCE Thinline, ideal for beginners looking for a classical guitar. **{fender.com}**



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REVEREND GUITARS | THUNDERGUN

Thunderstruck!

Reverend's new Thundergun bass comes in Wine Red. It features Joe Naylor-designed pickups, a korina body, a string-thru bridge with a top-load option, a five-piece neck and a pan-control. The Thundergun is a set-neck bass with a thick brick pickup at the bridge and split brick pickup at the neck.

{reverendguitars.com}



RECORDING KING | RD-316

Six-string King

Recording King has debuted the RD-316, an Adirondack-top, all-solid nitrocellulose-finished guitar. The RD-316's top is crafted from solid AAA Adirondack spruce. The guitar's back and sides are made from solid African mahogany and feature an ebony fretboard and bridge. MAP: \$689. {recordingking.com}



www.fishman.com

He's ready. Are you?

Introducing the new Loudbox Artist. It's the evolution of acoustic amplifiers. Incredibly lightweight and portable, it packs 120 watts of ultra-clean, bi-amped acoustic power. Featuring two versatile input channels with Fishman's legendary tone and feedback-fighting controls. Plus, a new dual digital effects section, balanced XLR outputs and 24V phantom power make this the ultimate acoustic amplifier for the serious musician. And best of all, the street price is under \$500.

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LOUDBOX ARTIST



ALTO PROFESSIONAL | TRUESONIC

Super Sonics

Alto Professional has introduced the TrueSonic TS112A and TS115A active loudspeakers. They're available in two-way 12- and 15-inch sizes, respectively. With 800 watts of Class D power and an SPL of 125 dB for the TS112A and 126 dB for the TS115A, both speakers offer a high level of power and performance. MAP: TS112A, \$299; TS115A, \$349. altoproaudio.com

EAW | VF SERIES

All in the Family

EAW has unveiled its latest line: the VF series of passive products. The new series includes five models of VFR two-way full-range loudspeakers and two VFS subwoofers, along with three two-way horn-loaded VSM stage monitors. eaw.com



AMERICAN AUDIO | COLORED HP 550

Color Crazy

The new Colored HP 550 headphones from American Audio are available in three bold colors: Lava, Lime and Snow. The Colored 550s include a high-power input, ideal for monitoring high sound levels, and a hermetically sealed body for sound insulation. The headphones also have a flexible, soft-touch housing that delivers maximum comfort and allows for double- and single-ear monitoring. MSRP: \$69.95. adjaudio.com



JOECO | BBR64-MADI

Straight to USB

JoeCo recently unveiled the BBR64-MADI version of its Blackbox Recorder. Designed for audio acquisition and capturing live performance, the recorder enables multichannel audio to be captured directly to a USB2 drive in broadcast WAV format without the need for a computer. The BBR64-MADI records and replays up to 64 channels of MADI data while still occupying just one unit of rack space. The recorder can capture the full 64 channels at standard sample rates, with double sample rate MADI recording up to 96 kHz also accommodated. joeco.co.uk



AUDIX | DP-QUAD

Blend Effect

Audix has launched the ADP-Quad series of drum microphones. Featuring the D6 for kick, i5 for snare and two ADX51s for overhead, the DP-Quad creates a blend effect between close and overhead miking. The D6 and i5 are high-SPL dynamic microphones, ideal for close miking. MSRP: \$825. audixusa.com



CAD AUDIO | GXL BLACK PEARL

Anniversary Gems

CAD Audio has introduced the 10th Anniversary GXL Black Pearl Mics and Studio Packs. The GXL1200BP, GXL2200BP and GXL3000BP condenser mics feature a black pearl chrome finish. They're compact and road-rugged and include a shock mount or mic clip, vinyl pouch and polishing cloth. cadaudio.com

BEYERDYNAMIC | TOURING GEAR

Shipped Out

Beyerdynamic recently began shipping its Touring Gear series. The line boasts 25 different mics for live performance and features a new uniform design, top specifications, and an easy-to-understand classification system. The four categories of the Touring Gear series include the TG 30, TG 50, TG 70 and TG 90. beyerdynamic.com



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GATOR CASES | PRESONUS STUDIO LIVE

Transport Safely

Gator has added the StudioLive 16.0.2 mixer bag to its Presonus StudioLive mixer line. Made of a virtually indestructible Polyethylene plastic, the hard-shell mixer case features a sleek look with a black uninterrupted aluminum valance design. The StudioLive 16.0.2 mixer is held safe with a 1-inch EPS foam-lined interior and specialized adjustable interior wedges, which hold everything securely in place during transport. Heavy-duty TSA locking latches let the case be checked and transported via air. gatorcases.com



HOLIDAYSELLERS



Payment Plans

Anthony Mantova, Mantova's Two Street

Being patient has helped our cash flow.

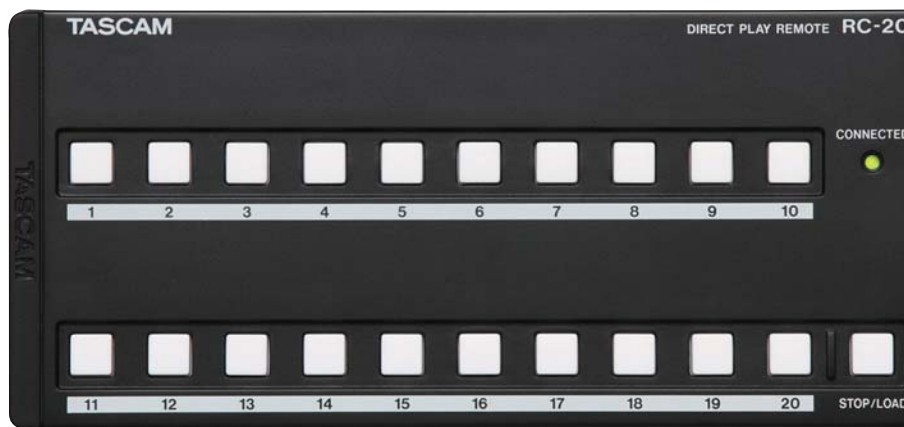
"The rough economy has hurt the spending power of our customers, so we focus on offering payment plans that work with budgets of all shapes and sizes. Sure, we all want to get paid for a big sale upfront, but being patient and letting the checks roll in has helped our cash flow during the rough times."



BEHRINGER | PRO MIXER DJX900USB

Mix Like a Pro

Behringer's new Pro Mixer DJX-900USB builds on the legacy of its Pro Mixer DJX750 with the addition of USB connectivity and the infinium contact-free VCA-controlled optical crossfader. The DJX900USB also includes a revved-up FX processor, which lets users change FX parameters in real time and create sets with their own custom-tailored effects sounds. behringer.com



TASCAM | RC-20

Tascam Releases Rockin' Remote

Tascam has launched the RC-20 Direct Play Remote. It brings instant playback through flash start to the CD-500 or CD-500B. A set of 20 push buttons on the remote play the first 20 tracks on a CD when plugged into the remote jack on the CD-500 or 500B. The remote includes space to label each track to help locate the target material. tascam.com

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Peter Dods, Easy Music Center

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“The Alesis digital drums have been very strong. Anything below \$900 has been hard to keep in stock. They represent a great value at all of their price points.”



TAYE DRUMS | METALWORKS

Workin' It

Taye Drums has added a limited-run snare to its Taye MetalWorks snare drum series. This model features a 14- by 6.5-inch heavy gauge stainless steel beaded shell, coupled with long vintage-style tube lugs. The shell construction provides for sharp attack, full body and sensitive snare response. MSRP: \$459.99. {tayedrums.com}



PRO-MARK | PMBRM2

Swept Away

Pro-Mark's new PMBRM2 Small Broomsticks are a scaled-down version of its broomsticks. The sticks are shorter and smaller in diameter for additional control. The Small Broomsticks produce a sound that falls in between brushes and hot rods. MSRP: \$32.95. {pro-mark.com}



ZILDJIAN | DAVE GROHL ARTIST SERIES

Drummers' Nirvana

Zildjian has introduced the Dave Grohl Artist series drumstick model, which features a metallic two-color design — the same as the tattoos on the Nirvana drummer's arms. The sticks are crafted from hickory and feature an acorn-shaped tip for sound clarity. {zildjian.com}

TOCA | SYNERGY FIBERGLASS CONGAS

Synergetic Set



Toca has introduced a fiberglass version of its Synergy series conga set. The new fiberglass congas feature 28-inch-tall shells with 10- and 11-inch head diameters. The drums are fitted with natural rawhide heads that combine with the shells to produce penetrating projection and high, bright tones. The congas also boast EasyPlay hoops and chrome tuning lugs. MSRP: \$369. tocapercussion.com

HOLIDAYSELLERS



Cajon Fever

Lew Ditommaso, *Daddy's Junky Music*

I've seen **cajons** gaining popularity and taking over congas.

"I've seen cajons gaining popularity and taking over congas, which ruled the earth for many years. Bongos have also been very popular. Kids percussion from Remo, LP, Meinl and Hohner has also remained consistent."



BITCHSTRAPS | HI-HAT HOLSTER

Stick 'Em Up

Bitchstraps recently released multiple lines of guitar straps, as well as capo, slide, harmonica and hi-hat holsters. Pictured is the hi-hat holster, which holds sticks and allows for easy access with the nonplaying hand. This unit can be used in conjunction with an existing floor tom-style bag to give the drummer the security of having sticks easily accessible. bitchstraps.com



OVERTONE LABS | TUNE-BOT

Tuned In

Overtone Labs recently launched the Tune-Bot, an electronic drum tuner. The device measures actual sonic frequencies, giving a true indication of the drum's pitch. The Tune-Bot offers a wide variety of tuning options and can be used with drums on or off the kit, with specific functional features tailored to each situation. The unit is lightweight, fits in any stick bag and comes fitted with a simple clamp system. tune-bot.com



GEAR >

PIANOS & KEYBOARDS

KAWAI | CL26

Digitally Tuned

Kawai recently rolled out the CL26 digital piano. The model uses Kawai's harmonic imaging sound technology with 88-key piano sampling, so all 88 notes of Kawai's EX concert piano have been digitally recorded and reproduced. The CL26 is compact and occupies a minimal amount of floor space. kawaius.com



ALESIS | CADENZA

Musical Genius

Alesis has released the Cadenza, an 88-key hammer-action digital piano. The hammer-action keys equip players with a full range of musical expression. Users can play along with songs by connecting their MP3 players through the stereo auxiliary input. alesis.com



HOLIDAYSELLERS

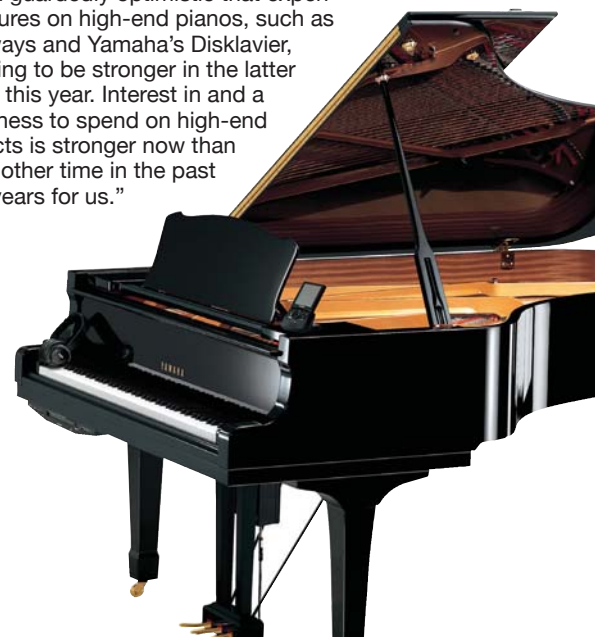


High-End Pianos

Craig Gigax, Meridian Music

Willingness to spend on high-end products is stronger.

"I am guardedly optimistic that expenditures on high-end pianos, such as Steinways and Yamaha's Disklavier, are going to be stronger in the latter part of this year. Interest in and a willingness to spend on high-end products is stronger now than at any other time in the past three years for us."

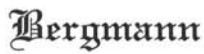


CASIO | LK-280

Lesson Learned

Casio's new LK-280 features sounds and functions to inspire learning in first-time musicians. The keyboard has 600 built-in tones, including stereo grand piano, and 180 built-in rhythms. A Step-Up Lesson System lets beginners learn songs easily with its lessons tailored to each player's personal pace. casio.com

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ALFRED | PREMIER PIANO COURSE

Deck the Halls

Alfred recently expanded its Premier Piano Course series with two new supplemental books of Christmas music, Levels 5 and 6. The 24-page books assemble familiar motivational pieces for the holiday season. Arranged to reinforce the concepts presented in each corresponding lesson book, the Christmas titles continue the pedagogical focus while providing enjoyable popular holiday music. MSRP: \$6.99. (alfred.com)

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HAL LEONARD | 'CHRISTMAS STRUMMING'

Island Holiday

Hal Leonard has added *Christmas Strumming* to its Ukulele Play-Along series. Players follow the written music, listen to the CD to hear how the part should sound and then play along with the separate backing tracks. The CD is playable on any CD player and includes eight holiday favorites, including "Away In A Manger," "Deck the Halls" and "The First Noel." MSRP: \$12.99. **(halleonard.com)**



HOLIDAYSELLERS

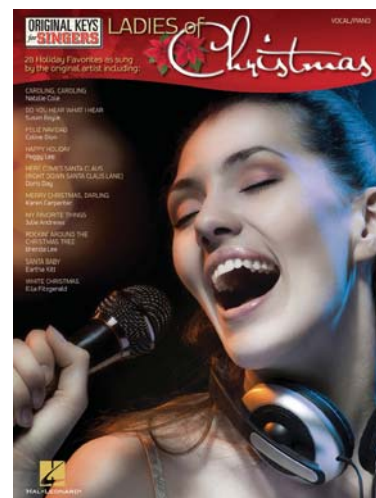


Christmas Browsers

Marcia Stearns, Bookmark Music

We set up
Christmas
browsers
within all
our print
sections.

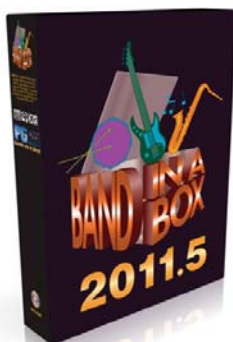
“We set up Christmas browsers within all our print sections, according to the instrument the music is for. We also have fun with window and in-store displays. We'll highlight Christmas products, stocking stuffers and gift suggestions until they're ready to go into our official Christmas displays, which are finalized close to Thanksgiving.”



PG MUSIC | BAND-IN-A-BOX

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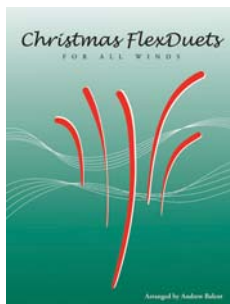
P G Music has launched version 2011.5 of its Band-in-a-Box music accompaniment software for Mac. The new version adds 101 new jazz, rock, pop and country RealTracks. The software features improved timing resolution under Snow Leopard and Lion, smoother playing in waltzes, better pushes and more simple variations, and bigger soloists with more riffs. The new Web demo feature lets users audition a style in the StylePicker, without changing their existing arrangement, by playing a streaming demo from the Web. pgmusic.com



KENDOR MUSIC | 'CHRISTMAS FLEXDUETS'

Kendor Spreads Holiday Cheer

K endor Music has released *Christmas FlexDuets*. These grade 1–3 duets are written to be played by any two instruments. Songs include “Angels We Have Heard On High,” “Away In A Manger” and “Deck The Halls.” MSRP: \$8.50–\$10.95. kendormusic.com



LICK LIBRARY | 'LEARN TO PLAY METALLICA VOL. 3'

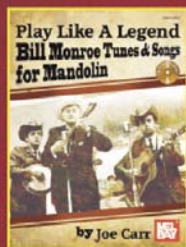
Thrash at its Best

L ick Library's new *Learn To Play Metallica Vol. 3* guitar tuition DVD looks at five of the most popular Metallica tracks. Metal guitarist Andy James takes users through the solos and unusual bending of “Seek & Destroy,” “For Whom The Bell Tolls” and “Creeping Death,” among others. licklibrary.com



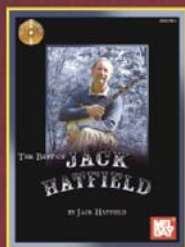
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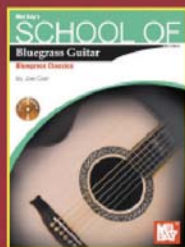
THE BEST OF JACK HATFIELD
by Jack Hatfield.
Beginning Level. This book is an anthology of Jack Hatfield's most successful teaching arrangements, jam session favorites, show tunes and original compositions. Although it is not a teaching method per se, there are many arranging concepts and general tips included.

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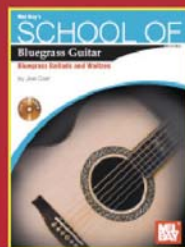
BLUEGRASS STANDARDS FOR BANJO MADE EASY
by Ross Nickerson.
Intermediate Level. The arrangements are presented in tablature with chord changes. Tips for learning to read tab, learning the chords, as well as for memorizing songs are featured as well.

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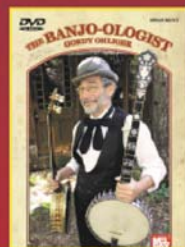
SCHOOL OF BLUEGRASS GUITAR: BLUEGRASS CLASSICS
by Joe Carr.
Beginning Level. This book helps guitarists develop fiddle tune like solos to bluegrass songs and tunes, who are currently stuck playing simple melodies. 13 songs are presented in Carter and fiddle style arrangements.

Book/CD set
21740BCD • \$14.99



SCHOOL OF BLUEGRASS GUITAR: BLUEGRASS BALLADS & WALTZES
by Joe Carr.
Beginning Level. The tunes in this book are presented in both Carter and flatpicking style arrangements. Perfect for beginning lead guitarists.

Book/CD set
21672BCD
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THE BANJO-OLOGIST
by Gordy Ohliger.
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DJ & LIGHTING

MBT LIGHTING | LEDRANGER & LEDROBOPAR

Lights Out

MBT Lighting has unveiled two new models. The LEDRANGER incorporates a 10-watt LED light source, color wheel and gobo wheel. The LEDROBOPAR includes three 10-watt quad color LEDs, 540-degree pan and 220-degree tilt movement. MSRP: LEDROBOPAR, \$759; LEDRANGER, \$779. {mbtlighting.com}



HOLIDAYSELLERS

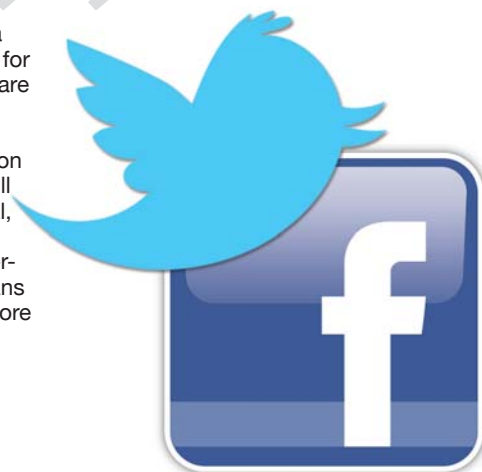


Social Media Marketer

Tim Barrett, Ray's Mid-Bell Music

We are moving more towards marketing on Facebook.

“We used to do a paper catalog for holiday sales, but we are moving more towards in-store marketing, along with marketing on Facebook. The site will [have] a coupon portal, along with some contests, in order to generate more Facebook fans and buzz about the store during the holidays.”



NOVATION | TWITCH

Twitchin' & Scratchin'

Novation recently debuted Twitch, a touchstrip DJ controller. Developed in collaboration with Serato, the unit comes complete with Serato Itch, a program that can automatically beat-match tracks to let users get creative with their sets. Twitch also includes versatile touchstrips, a unique slicer mode and MIDI compatibility. {novationmusic.com}

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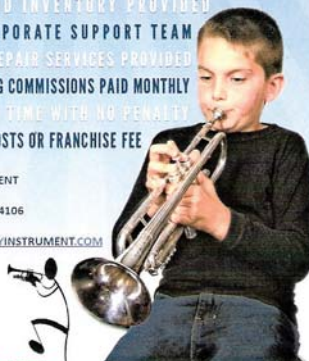
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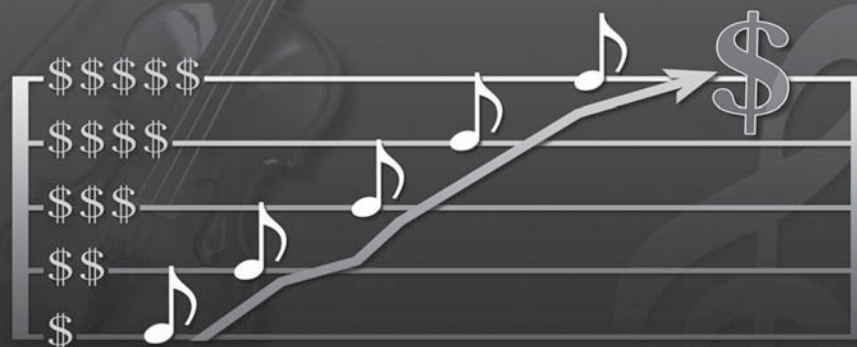


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For More Information, Contact:

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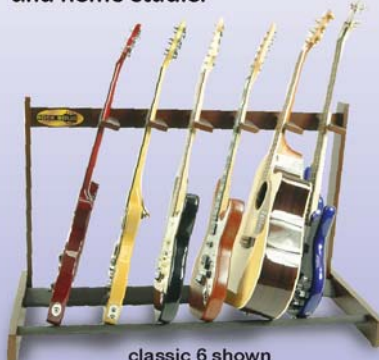
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Nick Rail

Nick Rail Music
San Diego

Back to school is our favorite time of year, and we're looking for a repeat of 2010, which was up 12 percent from 2009.

We've added some new accounts since last year, which should benefit our numbers, and our managers have done a great job getting their teams organized and motivated to do their best.

Good forecasting, flawless preparation and the best service we can provide are the keys to success, and we're ready.

>>>

Todd Heid

Heid Music
Appleton, Wis.

We have been putting a bigger focus on band and orchestral accessories. We had to position ourselves more competitively this year with different reed pricing and different monthly specials for directors. We're giving our road guys more tools for going into the schools. It's about giving us an edge to differentiate ourselves from competitors and not just asking for the same order.

We're looking to invest in a complete revamp of our online presence by the new year. We hired a director of sales to assist with weekly meetings and sales training and a director of marketing to facilitate all the other promotions we're doing. With those two positions, we're trying to find the right Web presence to help bring us full circle and hopefully catapult us to that next level.

>>>

John Tarpley

Tarpley Music
Amarillo, Texas

We have been growing our back-to-school rental business consistently the last several years and have started this year out well. Texas is having state budget issues, and there has been much uncertainty about school [music] programs' money. However, things have calmed down, and it is business as usual right now. Schools will have less to spend, but it is not as big a drop as first anticipated. Business has been good, so we hope it will continue through the fall.



>>>

Rosi Johnson

Mississippi Music
Hattiesburg, Miss.

What are your expectations for the **school music** rental season?

Our school music season started the first of August, so I would say we're in the middle of it.

Right now, we are definitely seeing an increase in business. We don't have all the numbers in, but our expectations are that we're going to increase our unit sales.

We have continued to provide the same school service that we've always provided to our band directors. At the end of the school year, we contacted all of our band directors,

which we always do.

We've done more of it this year to prepare for the upcoming seasons, and next year, we'll have everything they need. We'll do whatever we can to get that parent at the band parent meeting.

We also hope to increase our online presence. We've already seen somewhat of an increase in this. We just felt like last year was naturally down due to economic conditions. And, of course, the economy is still on a roller coaster ride. But we

do feel parents are wanting to invest in their child's education, so they are making that sacrifice.

We feel like it's more grassroots, and that's definitely what we're seeing — I've been talking to my road reps to see what they feel is happening.

Last year, especially with smaller programs, we saw less numbers, but this year, we're seeing a slight increase. So I feel like people believe the economy is getting better and are feeling more comfortable.

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