

THE INDUSTRY RESPONDS TO GUITAR CENTER'S MAP LETTER **PAGE 16**

FOR PROGRESSIVE MUSIC RETAILERS

MARCH/APRIL 2012
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Christi Foster: "Now there are no commissions, and it's a better way of dealing with our customers."

Retail **REFOCUS**

How piano dealer Foster Family Music found record profitability

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THE NAMM SHOW 2012

The industry's most complete coverage of this year's convention

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Jim and Christi Foster

Photo by Dave Rhoades

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Piano retailer Foster Family Music finds record profitability thanks to a scaled-down business model and community-centered promotions.



George Benson

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THE NAMM SHOW 2012

This year's NAMM show saw an uptick in attendance and exhibitors. *Music Inc.* has highlighted the biggest gear and news from the convention.

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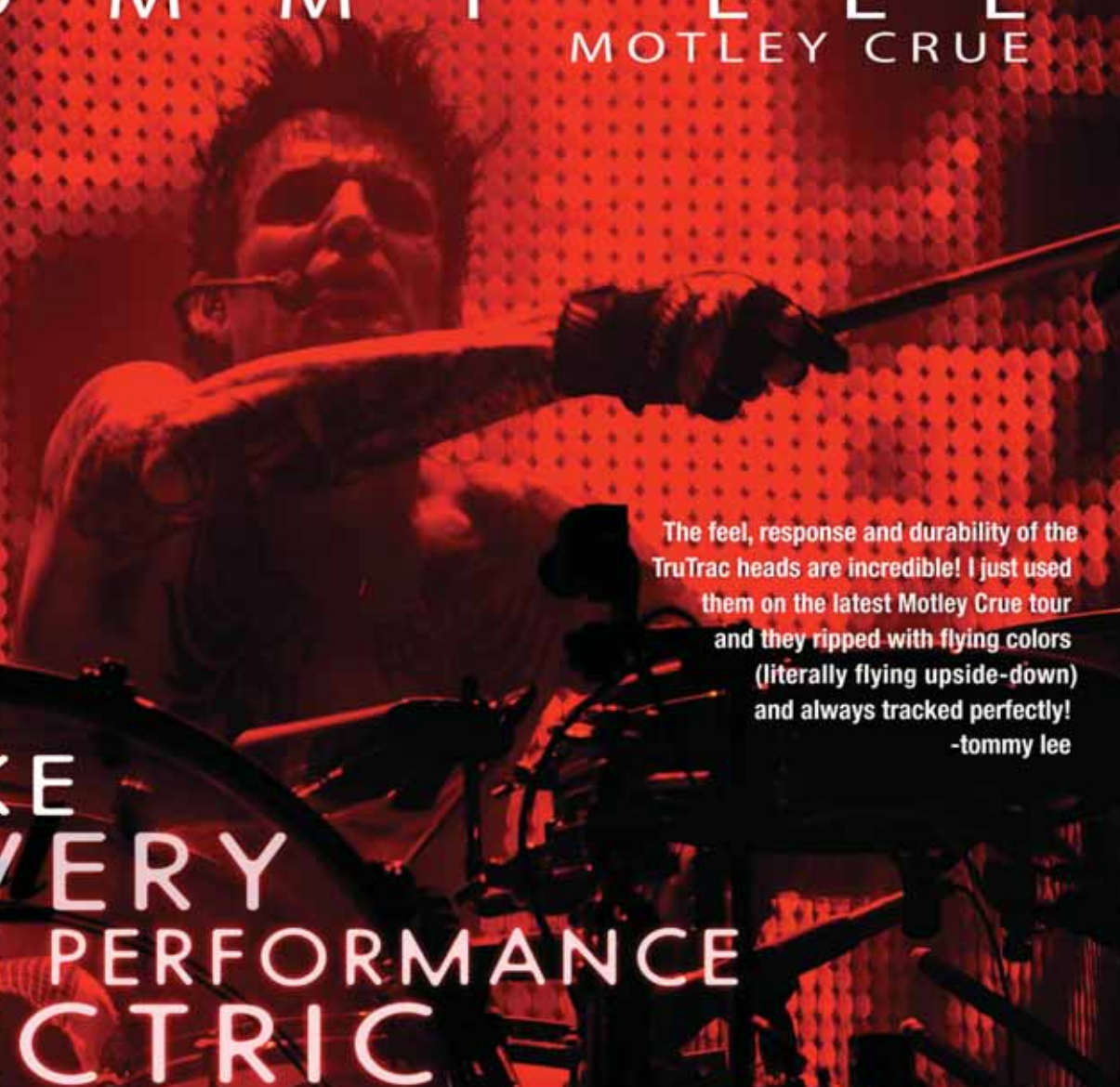
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-tommy lee

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PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY FRANK ALKYER

RETAIL TRUTHS

We always say editing *Music Inc.* is like getting a continual master's degree in music retail. Every month, the staff has an opportunity to speak with the best in our industry, then package their wisdom, experience and knowledge into a manual of best practices.

Enter Chip Averwater to prove that point.

Averwater is a third-generation musical products retailer who serves as chairman of Amro Music in Memphis, Tenn. He understands the nature of family business, learning music retail from his parents and grandparents and honing the concept with his brother, Pat, and his son, CJ. He's also a former NAMM chairman, a featured speaker on retail around the globe and a contributor to the pages of this magazine on many occasions because he is — flat out — one of the most thoughtful entrepreneurs you will ever meet.

Take, for example, his contributions to *Music Inc.*'s 20th anniversary feature, "Lessons Learned" (July 2010). Averwater gave us a series of quick-hitting doses of retail wisdom, many involving the value of people in retail. Take, for example, "Good people don't produce 10- to 20-percent more; they produce 200- to 300-percent more," and "A good salesperson is the high expense you want." Then, he backed those statements up with proof.

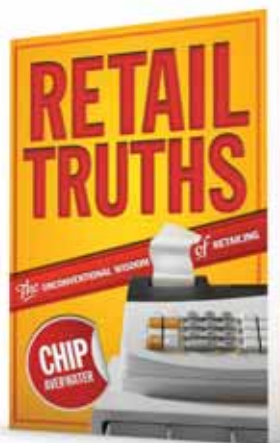
Now, Averwater's gone one step further. He has packaged 427 quick-hitting ideas like these into a book called *Retail Truths: The Unconventional Wisdom Of Retailing* (ABB Press). It should become a dog-eared companion to anyone who hopes to succeed in this business. Each "truth" is no longer than a few hundred words, making the book an incredibly quick read. That is, if you don't stop to ponder, question and visualize how it applies to your company. In *Retail Truths*, Averwater makes you think with each and every item.

I got stopped from the get-go on "truth" No. 2: "It's not whether we can do it; it's whether we can do it best." Simple enough. Of course, it's true. But in explaining the idea, Averwater delivers a hammer point.

"Each shopper chooses only one store for his purchase, the one he feels offers the best value — not just quality and price but convenience, selection, security, atmosphere, etc.

"The winner takes all. Second place gets nothing, no matter how great the effort or how close the race."

Retail Truths is packed with this kind of honest, straight-up assessment of the infinitely complex world of successful retailing — from selling to profits, from hiring and training to accounting and cash flow, from operating multiple stores to leadership. You can come back to it any time you've got a few minutes or when you've got a business issue you need to solve. *Retail Truths* is a book you'll be reading and adapting to your business for years. You can find out more about it at retailtruths.com. **MI**



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LETTERS

Zero Tolerance for Pompous Attitudes

Recently, your magazine has been reporting on the loss of Daddy's Junky Music and the disbelief reflected by its clientele, as well as the suppliers Daddy's had done business with for 30 years. Unfortunately, I see this trend continuing for what some refer to as the "old guard" in the MI retail industry. One need not look any further than right here in my neck of the woods.

We have been in operation as a brick-and-mortar for three years and have been online for about 16 months. We directly serve a small community approximately 25 miles from the larger market consisting of Panama City and Panama City Beach, Fla. We are a small store and have been in competition with the two larger stores nearby since we opened our doors.

We offer all the same services they do and strive to keep all the essential accessories one should expect. Even so, people in our surrounding area drive right past our store to go to the larger showrooms for the perceived larger selection offered by our neighbors.

So, with plenty of potential customers, nice showrooms and 30-plus years of existence, how does Daddy's all of a sudden shut its doors? Asking its clientele will bring forth a garden variety of reviews, some positive but the rest overwhelmingly negative when it comes to one specific point: customer interaction.

I started out working for a retailer that was the oldest MI supplier for that region. I saw it there and from countless others, from the big-box to the shoebox. The pompous, "I know what's best," mentality was reflected most often by the big sellers or salesmen with 10-plus years

under their belts. These guys make me sick and are most likely responsible for the downfall of more than one retail store.

There is never an excuse for belittling a customer because his or her price point isn't going to make your sales quota for the month.

It should be expressed to your readers that if they see this behavior in their stores and do nothing to stop it, they too will face a going-out-of-business sale sooner or later. Sure, the mega online retailer's customer service line usually won't serve up a load of product knowledge or technical data. But that online retailer will take your order with a cheerful and helpful disposition. For most people, this is priceless.

Brandon Chalker
General Manager
St. Joe Music
Port St. Joe, Fla.

Vic's Big Thanks

Thank you for the wonderful article on my store, Chicago-based Vic's Drum Shop, in the January 2012 issue of *Music Inc.* You guys are the best! The response from industry insiders has been amazing. I greatly appreciate your support.

Victor Salazar
Owner
Vic's Drum Shop
Chicago

Correction

In *Music Inc.'s Gear Guide* (February 2012), Mojave Audio's MA-101SP writeup featured the incorrect photo. The microphone pictured was the MA-301fet. *Music Inc.* regrets the error.

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»»» ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ RETAIL



RHAPSODY PIANO AND GUITAR | BY KATIE KAILUS

RHAPSODY IN RICHMOND

When piano retail chain Jordan Kitt's changed owners in June 2011, the company's Richmond, Va., location was set to close. But Paul King, previously Kitt's regional vice president, saw an opportunity to fulfill his dream. Four months later, Rhapsody Piano and Guitar opened two miles down the road from the former Kitt's location.

"I love Richmond, and we just saw this opportunity to have fun again and grow the music school that was started at the old Kitt's store," King said.

He and his business partner, Wesley Pollard, former director of education for the Richmond Kitt's, managed to retain all the students and teachers from the former location. "Basically, we unplugged from the old Jordan Kitt's store and plugged in here," King said.

Previously a spa, Rhapsody's 4,350-square-foot location is broken up into four main rooms. There are six lesson studios, where close to 100 students now take weekly piano, guitar and voice lessons. Roughly half of the space houses the piano showroom, which features new Yamaha acoustic and digitals, as well as a variety of used and vintage pianos. Two soundproofed guitar rooms include new Crafter and Yamaha models, as well as

some vintage instruments.

Rhapsody's lobby area features print music, accessories and small music-related gifts, including music-themed pillows, mugs and glass trinkets — all items that King said help land sales. The store also sells handmade piano bench seat pillows that can be customized.

"We wanted [our store] to be a place where people can have fun and shop," King said. "I think we've succeeded." **MI**

GRAND PIANO HAUS | EVENT

GRAND PIANO HAUS HOSTS CONCERT SERIES

On Feb. 3 and 4, Grand Piano Haus of Skokie, Ill., held The Steingraeber Concert, a two-night event inside the dealership's showroom.

Performers included pianist George Lepauw, violinist Aurelien Pederzoli, students of piano teacher Sueanne Metz and University of Illinois professor William Kinderman.

"We basically wanted to expose Steingraeber to the public," said Jeff Tasch, president of Grand Piano Haus. "We wanted to show everyone that these pianos can work well with chamber instruments and in concert halls."

The concerts drew an audience of more than 100 attendees each day. Steingraeber's President Udo Steingraeber also gave a lecture both days on the history and technical achievements of his company.



From left: Grand Piano Haus' Fritz and Emmy Tasch, Steingraeber's Udo and Delia Steingraeber, and Grand Piano Haus' Jeff and Laman Tasch

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RESPONSES TO GUITAR CENTER'S NEW MAP POLICY

Decoding GC's Letter

I just read a copy of the controversial "MAP letter" Guitar Center sent to its vendors, which triggered several thoughts in my aged brain. Some of these thoughts may surprise you, and some will only serve to reconfirm what many of us know as undeniable truths from our years of experience in music retailing. Here are a few comments from that little voice in my head, which some might argue is the beginning of my dementia.

First, I remembered the \$2.1 billion Bain Capital paid for Guitar Center five years ago, representing a 26-percent premium to the stock's closing price prior to the announcement. Back then, I used to think Wall Street investment bankers and the investors who followed their leads were way smarter than us dumb-ass old accountants. My calculations, based on the last published operating income in the financial statements of publicly held Guitar Center, told me Bain overpaid for GC by more than \$1,000,000,000. (I thought I'd type those zeros rather than write \$1 billion to emphasize my view of Bain's miscalculation ... or perhaps they knew something I didn't.)

Next, I considered all that debt Bain had saddled GC with and the tens of millions in interest expense now annually eroding profitability. And then I pondered whether GC was suffering from the same downturn in sales and gross profits that most of my firm's music store clients have experienced. Frankly, I wasn't thinking about Music & Arts — a well-run, growing division, in my opinion — or Musician's Friend — a division that, in my opinion, has raised the bar of selling music products online. What I thought about was whether the jobs lost, homes foreclosed upon and retirements now put on hold were hurting GC store sales.

As Bob Dylan once sang, "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows."



And now we have this MAP letter, which I can assure you was written by some very smart person with some very smart people signing off on it. Guitar Center did not become a music retailing giant without some very knowledgeable, experienced and business-savvy people in its management.

So what does this letter mean? One of three things: It's Guitar Center's way of telling vendors that it's simply going to ignore all dealer agreements and MAP policies because it can (highly unlikely); it's Guitar Center's way of telling vendors to start doing a better job of policing their MAP policies (more likely); or it's Guitar Center's polite way of telling vendors that it, too, is suffering financially as much as, if not more than, everyone else, and it needs vendors' assistance in figuring out what to do with cash-sapping, overstocked, slow-moving inventory (most likely).

I want to summarize this whole rambling with a few short remarks. Bigger is not smarter. Guitar Center = smart; Bain Capital = not sure. Bad economies affect everyone, and I mean everyone. It's a dangerous game to overextended yourself and financially bank on the future unless you can predict it with absolute certainty. And lastly (the same

advice I gave a decade ago when Mars Music was invading the music retailing marketplace), keep your head down, your nose to the grindstone and your eye on the ball, and you'll be OK no matter what happens to Guitar Center, MAP policies and my dementia.

Alan Friedman
CPA
Friedman, Kannenberg & Co.

Another Outcome

I read your coverage of the latest MAP development, "Guitar Center Fights Vendor MAP Policies" (February 2012). The easy conclusion in reading GC's letter to vendors is that it's a gloves-on-the-mat, all-out assault on MAP policies as



we know it. Indeed, we may find out, as time goes on, that's exactly how this will play out.

But I'd like to offer another possible outcome. If you take the letter as it's written, one could argue that GC's goal is actually to support MAP pricing. It's possible that GC's firing a warning shot, using the threat of its considerable power to "encourage" manufacturers to see to it that the spirit of MAP pricing is upheld. If this analysis is true, then GC's goal could be to add meaningfulness to existing MAP policies.

Which analysis is correct? Will this destroy MAP policies or support them? Time will tell, and I suspect that we're in for some interesting showdowns in the meantime. If I were still in retail, I'd be awfully concerned about the resale value of my inventory for all manufacturers that do business with Guitar Center. It makes me glad that I am where I am.

Gerson Rosenbloom
Managing Director
Wechter Guitars

Vendors, Cut GC Loose

I would like to urge all the vendors and manufacturers that GC is attempting to strong-arm to just cut 'em loose. GC

is the antithesis of great customer relations and service, which thousands of caring, small brick-and-mortar music stores across the nation demonstrate daily.

To reinforce this argument, I personally interacted with a young man in my own showroom within the past six months who represented himself as one of the "luthiers" at a GC about 40 miles away. I politely verbalized to him that, in my opinion, the terms "luthier" and "GC" were contradictory since I have seen many new American-made, GC-purchased Fender Strats and Teles pass over my bench that weren't set up or playable. He retorted that the GC corporate management doesn't allow the luthier staff to touch a stocked instrument unless it sells for at least \$1,000 in their showroom!

There's my market niche, and that's the reason the non-service big-box stores in the music industry will always lose money. They simply don't care about each individual customer as we "little guys" do. What's more important: low price or value with service?

Peter Van Alstyne
Pete's Music Center
Yuba City, Calif.

Greed & Arrogance

If Guitar Center follows through with its plans to ignore MAP policies, I hope every vendor has the guts to pull its dealership authorization.

We had to close our doors four years ago because we couldn't survive on the narrow margins provided by MAP policies. It is precisely because of large corporate Internet and mail-order "stores" like GC and Musician's Friend that those policies were established in the first place!

There are a lot of unpleasant adjectives I could use to describe the very notion that they are above conforming, but I think greed and arrogance covers it very well.

So, advertise any way you want, but I hope the distributors and manufacturers revoke your dealerships, as they have always threatened to do to the mom and pops.

Cliff Gassett
Robins Music Brokers (now closed)
Warner Robins, Ga.



EVENT

Indie Retailers Gather in Elkhart

Last October, the Independent Music Merchants Group (IMMG) hosted its biannual member meeting in Elkhart, Ind. IMMG is a non-competitive sharing and buying group with 43 active members across the country. Along with two business and sharing meetings, the event included a tour of the Conn-Selmer factories, as well as tours and sessions at the E.K. Blessing, Gemeinhardt, American Way Marketing and Fox facilities.

AWARDS

Kephart Inducted

The Iowa Rock n Roll Music Association recently announced the induction of veteran retailer Russell (Rusty) Kephart and his dealership, Kephart's Music Center, as recipients of the Hall of Fame Lifetime Achievement Award. The official ceremony will be held this coming September in Okoboji, Iowa.



PERSONNEL

FC Appoints Two

Full Compass Systems of Madison, Wis., recently promoted Kyle Kjensrud from product specialist to assistant product manager, publications and e-commerce. He'll play a key role in merchandising initiatives, selecting products for print publications and assisting with stock recommendations. Kjensrud will also work closely with the marketing department to enhance the Full Compass website.

Additionally, the company hired Jim Ripp as its new assistant sales manager. Ripp comes to Full Compass with a wide range of sales and management experience related to the music industry.



Music & Arts' Kenny O'Brien

MUSIC & ARTS | EXPANSION

M&A RINGS IN 2012 WITH NEW FORMAT

Following a banner year in 2011, school music retail chain Music & Arts recently rolled out a new store format and made several key personnel changes.

The new store model, which debuted at the company's Arundel Mills, Md., location, is designed to improve the customer experience and create a community atmosphere. Features include a dedicated performance stage with a professional lighting and sound system, as well as seating for 50 people; a workshop room; 12 music lesson studios; expanded group lesson offerings; a parent lounge; a climate-controlled, soundproofed acoustic guitar room; an Ultrasonic Power musical instrument cleaner; and an ongoing series of free classes and clinics. Music & Arts also recently added four new retail locations.

Additionally, the company has hired Anjan Shah as director of marketing and promoted David Fuhr to vice president of retail sales. Shah has more than 18 years of experience in entertainment and retail marketing with an emphasis on the music industry. Fuhr began his career with Music & Arts in 2001 and, in his most recent

role, led a team of sales managers that doubled the profitability of the lesson program, grew overall store profitability by 25 percent and maintained positive lesson enrollment growth.

"2011 was a banner year for Music & Arts, and we're thrilled to begin 2012 with such great momentum," said Kenny O'Brien, president of Music & Arts, which is based in Frederick, Md. "When my father opened the store six decades ago out of our family home, he never could have imagined the success of our music shop today. We're excited to begin 2012 on a high note and look to greater success in the future as we continue to introduce and encourage the importance of music education into the lives of families across the country."

That message got an extra push, with the company's launch of Pass the Music On! last year. The non-profit partnership with Music 4 More collects and refurbishes donated used instruments and redistributes them to underprivileged kids. Music & Arts also supports the Mark Wood Electrify Your Strings school tour, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's OrchKids Program and El Sistema programs.

STEVE WEISS MUSIC | TECHNOLOGY

Steve Weiss Gets Boost With Mobile Site

Steve Weiss Music has bolstered its online business via the power of mobile websites. According to Dan Sullivan, general manager of the Willow Grove, Pa., dealership, the company's number of mobile transactions is up 150 percent since it launched a dedicated mobile site in September 2011.

The site, which uses the same underlying structure as its desktop counterpart, was built completely in-house by Sullivan and Kurt Gawinowicz, Steve Weiss Music's Web designer. Sullivan added that there were no costs in developing the site except for roughly 120 hours of salary.

"We weren't sure it would be worth the investment," Sullivan said. "Any doubt we had quickly disappeared.

"This approach reduces maintenance, as we only need to maintain one set of code. All of our pages have the same address, regardless of whether you're on a phone or a laptop. And because it's a website and not an app, our customers don't need to have a specific phone to get all the benefits."

Since September, the company's mobile conversion rate is also up 40 percent over the same prior length of time (March through August). The average mobile order is up 3.4 percent.

"We've always been known for having a cutting-edge website, so the mobile site has been on our radar for quite some time," Sullivan said.

"It has thoroughly exceeded expectations. We are glad that we jumped on this opportunity when we did — it has been paying off tenfold."



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From left: The Music Techs' new hires Doug MacCormack, Russell Magnuson and Mark Huzar with Joe Lacerda

THE MUSIC TECHS | OPENING

DADDY'S TECHS GO BACK TO WORK

With the closure of Manchester, N.H.-based Daddy's Junky Music late last year, many of the company's repair techs were out of work. Not so anymore. Joe Lacerda, owner of local dealership Manchester Music Mill, recently opened The Music Techs, an instrument and electronics repair facility. For talent, he hired several of Daddy's Manchester-area techs.

"Manchester has been really fortunate to be such a hotbed of talented musicians, quality gear and unmatched technical expertise — I just couldn't let that slip away," Lacerda said. "These guys are way too talented to do anything else, or nothing at all."

"Having a professional with the aptitude, acumen, attention to detail that these technicians have is invaluable."



KORG | HONORS

KORG AWARDS TOP RETAILERS

In January, Korg USA named the winners of its 2011 Korg USA Key Note Awards during The NAMM Show 2012. The annual honor recognizes retailers that have excelled in a variety of categories.

This year's winners include Guitars Etc. for Best New Dealer; ProAudioStar for Overall Growth; Ken Stanton Music, Sweetwater Sound and Kraft Music for Commitment to Excellence; and Bananas at Large and Washington Music Center for Marketing and Promotions. Pictured above (from left) are Korg's Richard Formidoni, Washington Music Center's Ed Spence and Adam Levin, and Korg's Jason Gano.

"Korg USA is proud to recognize those retailers that have exemplified excellence this past year, as well as shown exceptional loyalty to Korg USA's brands and products," said AJ Reitz, Korg USA's national sales manager.



Sweetwater's recording clinic with students in the Huntington North High School vocal ensemble

SWEETWATER | EVENT

SWEETWATER HOSTS IMEA

In January, Sweetwater held the Indiana Music Educators Association's (IMEA) state convention at its Fort Wayne, Ind., headquarters for the second straight year.

The company, which served as the title sponsor for the convention, offered two sessions for music educators at its in-house Performance Theatre prior to the convention. The first session, led by Sweetwater's recording studio staff, focused on miking and recording techniques and featured a vocal ensemble and combo from nearby Huntington North High School. The second session, with Sales Engineer Vern Crews, featured an overview of live sound techniques and equipment.

NEW MANAGERS

Sweetwater also recently hired two new managers in its merchandising department. Jon Croft has been appointed as the senior category manager for guitars and drums. Most recently, Croft was the platinum guitar manager for Guitar Center at its corporate headquarters, where he was responsible for all higher-end guitars in the GC chain and online.

The Fort Wayne, Ind., retailer offers two sessions for music educators at its in-house theater

Matt Duncan has also been named a senior category manager for amps, pedals and effects. He hails from Medford, Ore., where he served as the amps, pedals and effects buyer for Musician's Friend.

"I'm very excited to have Jon and Matt on the merchandising team here at Sweetwater," said Phil Rich, vice president of merchandising for Sweetwater. "Their extensive MI experience in both sales and merchandising will be a key factor for our continued success and growth, particularly in the area of guitars and amps, where their talents will be utilized."

TRIBUTE

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

Ed Roman

Ed Roman of Ed Roman Guitars in Las Vegas passed away on Dec. 14 following an illness. He was 61. As a retailer and guitar builder, his customers included everyone from Ted Nugent to Keith Urban to John Entwistle. Roman also published his outspoken opinions on the Guitar Rants section of his company's website. Prior to building guitars, he worked on motorcycles.

"He had a very kind, gentle heart," his daughter Lindsey Star Roman told the Associated Press.

"He's going to be remembered with a smile. He made everyone laugh. And he's certainly going to be immortalized through his guitars."





PERCUSSION MARKETING COUNCIL | AWARDS

PMC NAMES 2011 WINNER'S CIRCLE

The Percussion Marketing Council (PMC) presented Retailers Winner's Circle Awards for 2011 during The NAMM Show in January. The organization identified a number of music retailers who made significant contributions and supported PMC programs. These initiatives were designed to create more industry growth by focusing on promoting drumming to new players. PMC Co-Executive Director Brad Smith made the presentations.

Smith's pictured in the bottom row, far

right with the winners. Next to him, from left: Chris White of White House of Music and Scott Spindler of U Rock Music; top row, from left: Gus Willman of White House of Music, Ryan Bogusecz of U Rock Music Center, Glenn Noyes of Guitar Center, Jeff Ryder Jr. of Jeff Ryder Drum Shop, Rob Joly of Jim's Music and Darren Goldstein of Jim's Music Center. Winners not pictured: Mike Henry of Percussion Center, Rick Collier of IRC Music and Andy Keesan of DiCenso's Drum Shop.

CASCIO INTERSTATE MUSIC | EDUCATION

Students Take the Stage at Cascio

Cascio Interstate Music of New Berlin, Wis., recently hosted a concert with three student bands: Seven Seas, Strive and Outsourced. All participated in the second session of the company's Band Together group lessons program. Evans, Pro-Mark, D'Addario and Planet Waves served as sponsors for the event, which was held in-store on Cascio's SoundStage.

Band Together is a 10-week program featuring instruction on group dynamics, form, harmony, tonality, melody and phrasing, along with tips on music marketing, promotion and networking. The program also offers live performance opportunities, including a chance to play on Milwaukee's WMSE 91.7 FM, which also supports Band Together. Plus, students receive savings on Cascio products. The program costs \$250.



Participants in Cascio's Band Together program perform at an in-store concert

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Note from Joe

Politics and NAMM Member Action Committees

For decades, NAMM Members have worked together in coalitions to support music education for all children. Indeed, it's a core belief in our vision statement. These efforts have helped keep school music programs strong in spite of the fiscal shortfalls that seem to never end. Here the obstacles are budgets and competition for class time from subjects like math, science and reading. Yet public opinion polls reinforce our message: The vast majority of Americans believe that music and the arts should be a part of every child's education, and, when we meet with politicians and policymakers, most agree and want to help as much as they can.

More recently however, NAMM has worked closely with our Members on issues directly impacting their business like global intellectual property protection and regulations such as the Lacey Act. NAMM has supported these efforts with government relations staff, professional services, compliance education webinars and communications to inform people about important regulations impacting the industry so that everyone can make their own decisions on how to best respond. But this has unleashed some new challenges.

Pending legislation to restrict overseas websites profiting from counterfeit versions of Members' products has created a national debate on internet regulation, innovation and free speech, and has pitted those interested in protecting their intellectual property against tech giants like Google. Threats of consumer boycotts of those who support tougher

regulations has been a sobering reality. Conflicts accelerated during January when both Houses of Congress decided to put aside current intellectual property legislation and essentially go back to the drawing board. Music industry counterfeiting concerns persist, and NAMM is working closely with the U.S. Patent and Trade Office to offer training to protect products and brands.

The Lacey Act has had well-documented effects on our industry, and NAMM Members have diligently worked to pass the RELIEF Act, which addresses concerns while reinforcing our industry's commitment to protecting and sustaining our natural resources for generations to come. However, environmental groups who see any action with the Lacey Act as a negative one have wrongly accused our industry of supporting illegal logging, leading to a brief protest during the opening day of the NAMM Show. These types of activities seek to exploit NAMM and our Members to further an agenda and are a consequence of our work to address concerns relevant to the industry. As our good friend Governor Mike Huckabee was quoted as saying, "If you enter the political arena, you'd better get used the sight of your own blood." It sure makes lobbying for music education seem tame by comparison!

These issues are important to our association, and we are committed to working with our Member Action Committees to help create dialog and positive change. We urge those impacted by these issues to learn more and get involved by visiting www.namm.org/publicaffairs. This will be a busy year for our industry with many important political events coming up, including our Washington fly-in, the Democratic and Republican National Conventions and the presidential election in November. In our diverse Membership, opinions can vary on these important issues, so let us know where you stand and learn how you can make a difference.

Sincerely,

Joe Lamond • NAMM President/CEO



NAME NAMM News

March No 2012

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

Summer NAMM 2012

FEATURING

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Top 100
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Summer ¹² **NAMM**® | Take it
to the **Top**



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Gets support from Super Bowl
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SUPPLY

TANGLEWOOD GUITARS | BY JEFF CAGLE

TANGLEWOOD'S SPLASH

To break into the North American market, Tanglewood has capitalized on the value of a backstory.

In the case of the 24-year-old British guitar company, this includes a pedigree as a top brand in the United Kingdom, Australia and France.

"We're not just a Johnny-come-lately startup that nobody's ever heard of that's not been in the business," said John Kelley, general manager of Musiquip, Tanglewood's North American distributor. "We've been in business for more than 20 years and are one of the top five up-and-coming brands in Europe."

NEW OPTIONS

After growing its dealer base by about 25 percent in 2011, Tanglewood recently expanded beyond acoustics in the United States with the introduction of its Signature by Tanglewood electric guitar series and Overwater basses at The NAMM Show 2012. With these new lines, the company now offers a range of products from \$199 entry-level models to \$2,000 hand-built MasterDesign instruments.

Still, acoustics are Tanglewood's bread and butter, ac-



John Kelley

The British guitar company makes a pitch to the U.S. market

According to Kelley. He noted that Tanglewood's acoustic product line is broad enough that he can offer six or seven SKUs that don't create any redundancies for dealers on even the most mature guitar walls.

"Tanglewood offers a vari-

ety of shapes, sizes and material configurations that aren't available on the market from other brands," Kelley said. "So no matter what you have hanging on your wall, there's always four or five things I can point to [for different options]. And if you're willing to give it a shot, we can start there."

TERMS & DATING

Kelley added that with distribution through Musiquip, he's able to alleviate worries dealers might have about high buy-in requirements, especially when it

comes to taking on a new brand. "I am a small distributor," he said. "I'm much more interested in what I can do for them than what I'm requiring them to do for me."

Though Kelley said he takes pride in Musiquip's size, he added that he has the additional resources of SF Marketing, a leading pro audio and lighting distributor in Canada, behind him.

"For a small distributor, I have extraordinary resources that allow me to offer terms and dating," Kelley said. "They allow me to offer freight and discount programs that many other small distributors simply can't afford to offer."

With Tanglewood's expanding dealer base, product range and distribution network, the brand is poised to make a splash in the United States.

"Tanglewood really strives to be the best instrument at every price point," Kelley said. "The sell-through rate has been the single most important factor in my dealer retention and growth in the U.S. A little sell-through on the wall goes a long, long way in building dealer confidence with a brand. And when you hang Tanglewood guitars, they sell." **MI**



AT4050URUSHI
Multi-pattern
Condenser Microphone



AT4050/LE
Multi-pattern
Condenser Microphone



AE5400/LE
Cardioid Condenser
Vocal Microphone



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AE4100/LE Cardioid
Dynamic Vocal
Microphones



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Hypercardioid Dynamic
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ATH-M50b/LE
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Headphones



Audio-Technica celebrates its 50th anniversary with an array of limited edition introductions offering stunningly clear, high-resolution sound and elegant design. Models range from the AT4050URUSHI with hand-painted Japanese maple leaves, to the legendary ATM25 instrument mic brought back for this special occasion. Each microphone is etched with a unique serial number commemorating 50 years of passionate listening. audio-technica.com



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PASSIONATE
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GATOR CASES | BY SARA FARR

GATOR'S RESTLESS SPIRIT

Gator Cases founders Jerry Freed and Crystal Morris have found a great deal of success by working within the box — or “case,” as the case may be.

In 2000, the Florida-based father-and-daughter team decided to capitalize on Freed’s 43 years of experience as a rep for another case supplier and create a new kind of company. Soon after, Gator made its debut at Summer NAMM with five guitar cases.

That restless spirit has led to Gator’s rise in the market. At this year’s winter NAMM show, the company introduced DJ cases with an articulating arm that can hold a monitor, laptop or iPad; a backpack cymbal bag; and pro audio cases for large-format mixers.

“We look at it from the standpoint of, ‘What’s the latest [product] out there?’” Morris said. “A few years ago, DJs didn’t use laptops, so we evaluate the market around those new opportunities and that’s how we continue to evolve.”

About five years ago, Gator began focusing on the rapidly changing A/V and electronics market. The company has also branched out into the business conference, sports, rental company and trade show sectors.

Still, Morris stressed that Gator’s committed to the music industry. For evidence, she noted that many low-priced guitars aren’t sold with a case, and if they are, it’s often a wood case that doesn’t travel well. Gator, she added, has developed a special TSA locking latch on many of its cases, which makes travel easier for musicians.



Crystal Morris

WEB OVERHAUL

Additionally, the company’s website lets musicians search by manufacturer and product, so users can locate a case that will work for a particular instrument. Plus, the site has a search-by-dimensions feature for instruments that aren’t included in the database. And when dimensions determine fit, a case can often be used for multiple products, decreasing the number of SKUs a dealer has to stock, Morris added.

On individual Web product pages, the company also provides links to dealers who keep that exact SKU in stock. The program is available to any Gator retailer.

More recently, the company invested heavily in redesigning the website — the new version is scheduled to launch soon, according to Morris. The site incorporates more video content and social media. Plus, Gator

The case maker invests in a new, dealer-friendly website and increased U.S. manufacturing

has created a dealer-accessible video database that provides hands-on training and demos.

“I really think the videos have helped at the dealer level,” Morris said. “It helps them understand the products and know why they are the right solution.”

Online videos also double as an employee training tool. (The company has a mandatory monthly training program for all staff.) Created using local talent, the videos provide extensive product information.

“It also gives them marketing tools and allows them to have a more personal touch with customers,” Morris said.

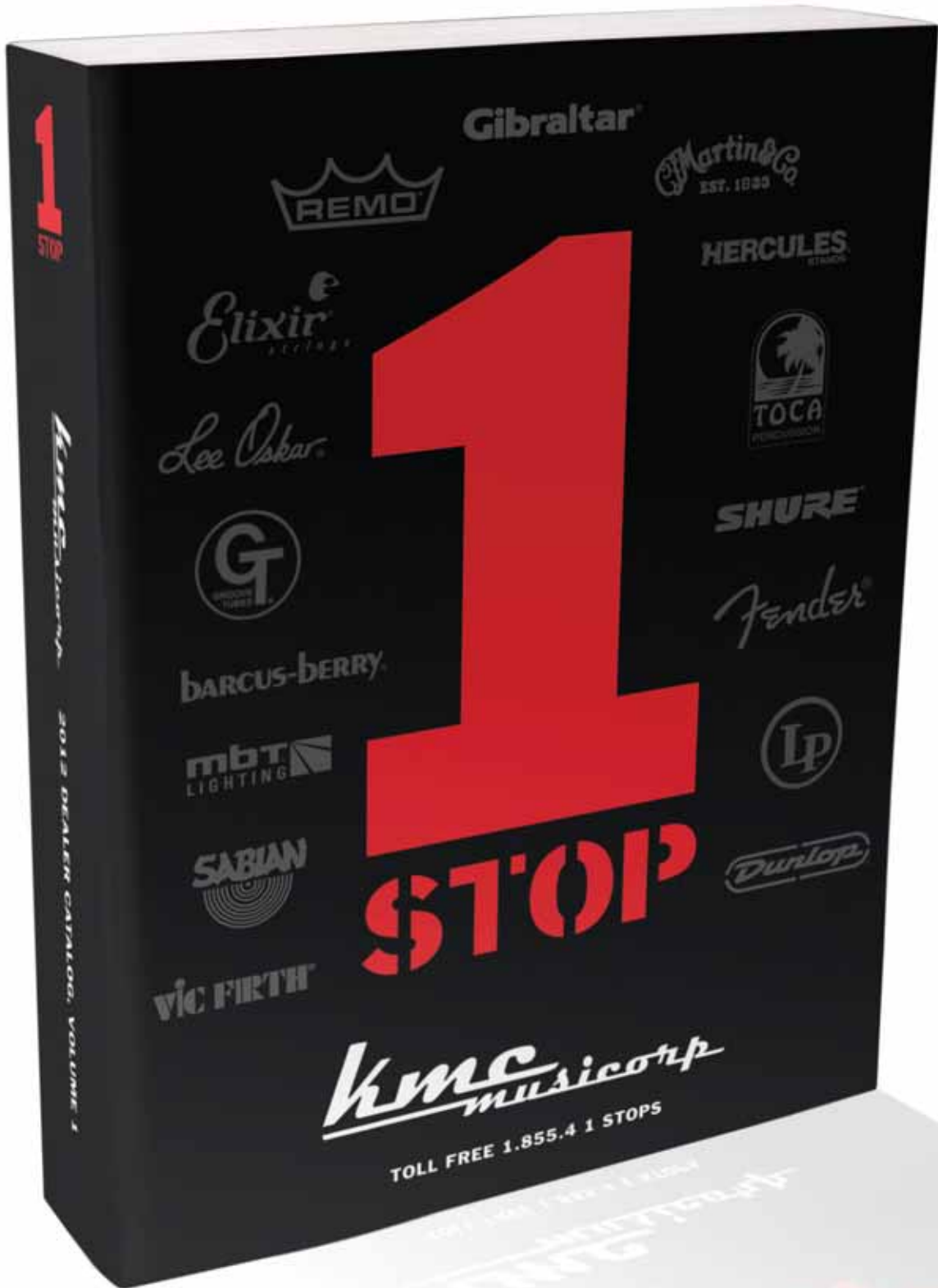
REINVESTING EARNINGS

According to Morris, Gator has actively worked to create a dealer-focused culture, which she said helped the company tremendously during the economic downturn.

“When a lot of people were pulling back, we invested in our business and inventory,” she said. “We put the customer first. We spent a lot of effort to keep price increases to a bare minimum; offer different promotions, including free freight programs; and make sure our product was positioned correctly in the market.”

The company invested more than 30 percent of its earnings back into the business. This went into updating its systems and expanding its Indiana-based manufacturing plant through the purchase of new equipment that more than doubled the facility’s production capacity. Morris said that approximately 15 percent of Gator’s manufacturing is now based in the United States, and the company aims to add about 25 more jobs at the Indiana plant. Gator also employs about 25 people at its Florida headquarters and has a distribution warehouse in Chattanooga, Tenn.

“It gives you a great feeling of commitment when you’re able to hire in the U.S.,” Morris said. “You’re able to control the manufacturing process, and you get better products, better customer service, produce product faster and get it to the customer faster.” **MI**



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ANNIVERSARY

Warwick Prepares to Celebrate 30

Warwick will celebrate its 30th anniversary on Sept. 13 with clinics and workshops for bass players. Throughout that week, Warwick will be holding factory visits and the workshops at its facility in Markneukirchen, Germany. Additionally, Warwick will release a limited-edition reissue of the original Streamer Stage I bass from 1983. The new Streamer LTD 2012 Warwick 30th Anniversary bass features a cherry wood body that has been aged 25 years. The instrument will be limited to 75 units worldwide. warwick.de

PARTNERSHIP

Floyd Teams With GJ2

Floyd Rose has announced that the Floyd Rose Titanium tremolo system will be fitted to all GJ2 rosewood Arete 5 guitars and other select models.

"GJ2 initially built this guitar with a regular Floyd Rose, which of course worked great, but the guitar is so special that we felt it needed that extra something," said Grover Jackson, owner of GJ2 Guitars. "We installed the titanium unit, and it not only reduced the weight of the guitar but added even more sustain and dynamics than it had before." floydrose.com

LAUNCH

Wilder2 Targets Pro Audio, MI Industry

Music industry marketing veteran Mark Wilder has joined forces with his wife, Corrie, to form Wilder2, a full-service boutique advertising and marketing agency.

"By offering advertising, strategy and placement; Web design and development; product launches; brand identity; and, of course, social media strategy, our aim is to enhance the in-house marketing team or be that team where it doesn't yet exist," Corrie said.

Wilder2's services include advertising, branding, product launches, Web design and development, social media, brand identity, e-commerce solutions, point of purchase, packaging design, social media integration, and more. wilder2.com

JAPAN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS ASSOCIATION | OUTREACH

Instrument Relief for Japanese Quake Victims

The Japan Musical Instruments Association has launched a fund to repair and replace musical instruments damaged by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan.

More than 785 musical instrument manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers in the country have launched a project called the "School Music Revival" to help repair damaged instruments or purchase new ones at approximately 1,850 schools that were affected by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

The three-year project, led by Mitsuru Umemura, chairman of the Japan Musical Instruments Association, will receive funds from the newly created Children's Music Revival Fund in order to support the inspection, repair and maintenance of instruments at kindergartens and primary, middle and high schools across disaster-hit Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima areas of Japan.

The country-wide effort is also



aided by New York-based composer and musician Ryuichi Sakamoto, along with a host of Japanese artists and celebrities who will donate money to the Children's Music Revival Fund from charity concerts and other live events over the next few years.

"Just like water and food, music is definitely necessary for human beings," Sakamoto said. "I hope to continue this support for a long time."

schoolmusicrevival.org

STEINWAY | PARTNERSHIP

Steinway to Sell Conn-Selmer

Steinway has reached an agreement in principle to sell its band division to an investor group led by Dana Messina, Steinway's former CEO, and John Stoner, Conn-Selmer president. Samick, owner of 33 percent of Steinway's common stock, will provide a portion of the financing and acquire equity interest in Conn-Selmer.

The parties expect to execute a definitive purchase and sale agreement, subject to committed financing, in the next 30-60 days. The definitive agreement will include a go-shop provision under which a committee of Steinway's board of directors will be permitted to solicit, receive, evaluate and enter into negotiations with alternative proposals

Steinway reaches an agreement to sell its band division, Conn-Selmer

for a 60-day period. The committee will solicit alternative proposals during this period, according to a press release issued by Steinway. The release went on to say that "there can be no assurance that the company will enter into a definitive agreement for any transaction or that any transaction will be completed." conn-selmer.com

Led Zeppelin



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90TH ANNIVERSARY



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LAUNCH

Industry Veteran Rolls Out Maher Marketing

MI industry veteran John Maher recently launched Maher Marketing. The new firm will help MI clients with such projects as overall strategy, Web consulting, Facebook advertising, SEO, art direction, e-mail marketing, video shoots, product reviews, press releases, artist relations, catalog design, sales presentations, YouTube management, product launches and trade show coordination.

Maher has experience that includes the initial media launch for Crate Amps, the first Farm Aid collaboration with Alvarez Guitars, the introduction of the Peavey Access accessory program and the creation of Fender's *Frontline Magazine*.

He also developed sales programs for Roland and Boss and served as the vice president of marketing for Brook Mays and special projects manager for Guitar Center.

"With today's economy, there is a growing need for consultants," Maher said. "Many companies who are not in a position to hire full-time people still have the ability to budget for experienced outside assistance. That's where I come in." mahermarketing.net



VENUES

Metric Halo Busts a Move to Florida

Metric Halo has moved to a 10,000-square-foot facility in Safety Harbor, Fla. The new location will serve as the company's management, manufacturing, and research and development nerve center. Every single member of the Metric Halo staff is moving with the company, which means no break in continuity or sales for Metric Halo's users.

"After a lifetime of braving winter in New York, we're done," said Joe Buchalter, president of Metric Halo. "While I'm pretty sure that some of us will be back to the Northeast to visit friends and family, the operative word is 'visit.'" mhlabs.com

TEAC | PARTNERSHIP

TEAC PARTNERS WITH ONKYO

Teac announced the formation of a strategic alliance with Onkyo on Jan. 20 at The NAMM Show.

Through the partnership, the companies will acquire shares of each other's stock.

According to a statement from Teac, the companies are exploring ways to share manufacturing facilities, logistics centers, and research and development resources.

Teac President Yuji Hanabusa said that the alliance will make both organizations more competitive in the marketplace.

Onkyo President Munenori Otsuki

Teac joins forces with Onkyo, making both organizations more competitive

stated that the alliance offers unique opportunities for both companies to leverage each other's strengths to provide "innovative, life-changing products" to customers. tascam.com

ST. LOUIS MUSIC | DISTRIBUTION

SLM Forges New Partnerships

St. Louis Music (SLM) has been named the exclusive distributor of all Hamilton Stands combo-related stands and products.

"Hamilton Stands is pleased to partner with St. Louis Music for the expansion of our combo line," said William Carpenter, Hamilton Stands president.

"St. Louis Music is a proven leader in our industry and we have enjoyed decades of working with them. SLM will be representing not only current combo stands but also the largest expansion of [the] Hamilton combo line ever. These products will allow us to offer dealers quality and price alternatives in keyboard, microphone, speaker and guitar stands."

Hamilton's B&O-related products will still be distributed by Dansr.

In other SLM news, the company is now handling principal distribution of BG Franck Bichon products in the United States.

"BG has created premium accessories popular with essentially every band and orchestra retailer in the country," said St. Louis Music's Craig Denny. "St. Louis Music is thrilled to be able to distribute this fine line of mid- and professional-level woodwind accessories."

stlouismusic.com



MUSIC FOR ALL | CHARITY

Music for All Announces 'Learn to Play Day'

Music for All, a U.K.-based MI charity, has declared March 31 the inaugural national Learn to Play Day.

On this day, the U.K.'s musical instrument shops will open their doors and offer free instrument lessons to the general public.

"Music for All knows how much music can change and enrich people's lives," said Paul McManus, the organization's chief executive. "We are hosting the annual Learn to Play Day to allow as many people as possible to experience the wonderful world of making music."

Music for All has also partnered with the Musicians' Union, Arts Council England's Take It Away Scheme, MusicTeachers.co.uk and Musicradar.com for the one-day event. learntoplayday.com



APPOINTMENTS

Alfred Promotes Fraser

Doug Fraser has been promoted to Alfred's vice president of digital sales. In his new role, Fraser is responsible for implementing and overseeing the company's digital initiatives. He started at Alfred in 1990 in the sales department. In 1993, Fraser was named Alfred's data processing specialist in the EDP department. He was promoted again in 1996 to MIS director and again in 2008 to director of digital sales.



Doug Fraser

Harman's Studer recently appointed Roger Heiniger as product manager.

Music Group has named Paul Wright vice president of global sales.

American Way Marketing has added Steve Rorie to its B&S USA instrument division. In this position, he will lead all sales and marketing activities for B&S soprano



Roger Heiniger

brass, Hans Hoyer French horns, Meinel Weston tubas and euphoniums, and the Johannes Scherzer rotary trumpets.

Porter & Davies recently appointed Jerome Marcus as its new artist relations consultant.

EAW has named Scott Pizzo the North American sales manager, eastern region.

Yamaha Corp. of America has promoted Reed Larrimore to director of national sales for the pro audio and combo division.

Elation Professional has named industry veteran Mark Haney senior market manager of broadcast video and lighting.

KMCMusicorp has promoted Roger Hart to vice president of merchandising.

Brian Mason has been added to Mapex and Majestic Percussion's artist and education roster.

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DPA | ARTIST APPROVED

DPA LIVES A TEENAGE DREAM

Katy Perry's engineering team used DPA Microphones' 4088 cardioid headset mic during the pop star's recent "California Dreams" tour.

"When selecting a microphone, I wanted something that would provide a well-balanced, open and airy sound for Katy," said Peter Keppler, Perry's front-of-house engineer. "She's a strong singer with a great voice, and I thought finding a good headset mic would be a challenge. From the moment we tried the DPA 4088, I knew the sound was no longer going to be a problem."

The design of the DPA 4088 microphone, which makes the mic almost invisible, combined with its ability to eliminate feedback and background noise makes it a suitable choice for Perry's tour.

This mic came in handy during her performance of the song "Hot N Cold," where she changes outfits seven times throughout the song.

"The 4088 has held up amazingly well," Keppler said. "Sonically, it always delivers. The hardware and wiring are both surprisingly robust, especially considering the abuse they take on a nightly basis." dpamicrophones.com



Katy Perry

YAMAHA | CORPORATE

Yamaha Merges Two Subsidiaries

Effective April 1, Yamaha Electronics Corp. USA (YEC), the U.S. sales and marketing company for audiovisual products, will be merged into Yamaha's U.S. sales and marketing subsidiary, Yamaha Corp. of America (YCA).

Both companies are located in Buena Park, Calif.

YEC was originally established as a 100-percent-owned subsidiary of YCA in 1981.

The merger's objectives include realizing maximum synergies; increasing management efficiency, principally in administrative business processes; and implementing closely coordinated sales and marketing of musical instruments and A/V products. yamaha.com

MARSHALL | ANNIVERSARY

MARSHALL TURNS THE BIG 5-0

Marshall Amplification is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2012

"To be honest, when Dudley Craven, RIP, Ken Bran and myself teamed up with the idea of building the world's first rock 'n' roll amplifier in the autumn of 1962, we would have been delighted if we could have made and sold 50 of them," said company founder Jim Marshall. "We had no idea if the company would last 50 days, let alone still be going strong 50 years later."

Marshall built his now half-a-century-old amplifier after listening to the tonal wishes of up-and-coming rock guitarists who frequented his small music shop outside London. "They told me what they were looking for from a guitar amplifier," Marshall said.



Jim Marshall

"Because there was nothing available at the time that quite did exactly what they wanted, I decided to put together a team that could build an amp that could recreate the sound I could hear in my head based on what the lads described to me." marshallamps.com

NAMM SCORES AT SUPER BOWL

NAMM's Wanna Play? public service television announcements featuring actors Robert Downey Jr. and Jack Black ran during the coverage of the Super Bowl on Feb. 5.

The spots featured the celebrities discussing why they play music and why it's a fun, beneficial activity for players and potential players of all ages. The pair of 15-second Wanna Play? PSAs ran for 15 hours during Super Bowl weekend approximately eight times per hour on multiple screens during the game.

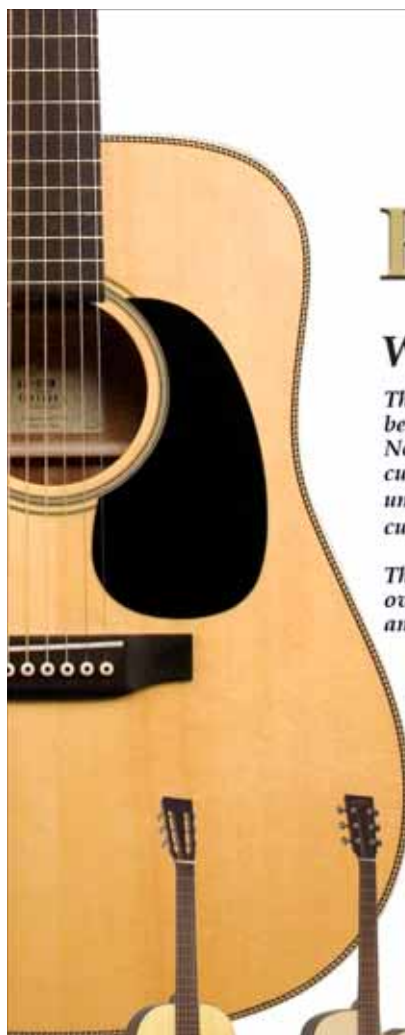
"We're so excited to have a NAMM presence at the Super Bowl," said Vanessa Wojtala, director of programming and events for Grazie Media, the company that organizes content for the Super Bowl screens. "Our organization feels that NAMM's presence at the Super Bowl will instantly connect with the audience through celebrities like Jack Black and Robert Downey Jr.'s message asking them to consider playing a musical instrument." namm.org

Ernie Still Jammin' at 50

Ernie Ball is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. In commemoration of the milestone, the company held The All-Star Jam on Jan. 20 at The NAMM Show. Performers included Albert Lee, Steve Morse, Paul Gilbert, Blues Saraceno, Steve Vai, Randy Jackson, Dave

LaRue and Joe Bonamassa.

During the last 50 years, Ernie Ball has expanded its reach from selling custom string sets through the back of founder Ernie Ball's Tarzana Guitar Shop to distributing its products to more than 120 countries worldwide. ernieball.com



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TRIBUTE

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

John Majeski

Longtime editor of *The Music Trades* John Majeski died on Dec. 17, 2011, after a two-year battle with Alzheimer's disease. He was 90.

Majeski spent four decades at the helm of the magazine. He's survived by his wife of 62 years, Vivian; daughter, Jane Ann; and sons, Brian and Paul; current editor and publisher of the magazine, respectively.

BY ED ENRIGHT
PHOTO BY DAVE RHOADES

Lean & Keen

Piano retailer
Foster Family
Music is more
profitable than
ever with a
scaled-down
business model
and a devotion
to one crucial
mission

In 2004, Jim Foster had an epiphany: The piano industry was imploding, losing out big time to all things technology-related, and the crisis would never be solved through conventional wisdom or proven sales techniques, no matter how hard he tried.

“The first four years of that decade were very hard for us,” said Foster, who founded Foster Family Music in Bettendorf, Iowa, in 1983 and currently helps run the business with his daughter, Christi.



Christi and Jim Foster

At the time, Foster Family Music had been doing things the way it had “always done them,” Jim said. This included TV, print and radio ads; truck and armory sales; and county fairs. Inexpensive Chinese pianos were entering the market, and gross margins were slipping.

“I didn’t understand what was going on, but I knew I was working harder and harder trying to keep our numbers up,” he said. “You had a smaller number of customers, smaller sales — contraction all the way around. I never sales-trained so hard in my life, and it wasn’t helping. And I thought, ‘Something’s got to change here.’”

Meanwhile, Christi, who’d been working as a buyer for a high-end department store chain, expressed interest in joining the family business.

“So she went online and researched the entire history of the piano industry,” Jim said. “She saw the numbers from 100 years ago when there were 300,000 pianos built every year in the United States and how the trajectory had gone down, come back up and then gone way down again. She got all the bad news that there was to have, and there was plenty. And she still wanted to do it. So, we made some radical changes.”

REFINED FOCUS

The Fosters came to the realization that the business had undergone a drastic, permanent change due to a shift in the way parents viewed piano lessons, as well as increased competition for kids’ time and attention from sports, video games and Internet distractions. So, Jim and Christi sat down and tried to figure out what a successful piano store in the new era would look like.

“One would be a full-line

music store that has a piano department, and they’re going to sell a certain number of pianos by accident,” Jim said. “The second type is going to be the Sam’s Club model, the low-cost guy — he’ll sell a piano for \$500 over cost, it will be right out of the box and won’t be prepped. The third type would be the kind of store that we would be, which is a piano specialty store, a store

that is totally devoted to pianos, piano study and performance.”

Their next step was to determine what that meant in terms of day-to-day operations.

“You’re probably not going to be open seven days a week anymore because you don’t need to be,” Jim said. “And it would be a store that’s going to deal with what is and what could be.

“What is’ is customers who have to have a good piano: piano teachers, college music professors, church musicians, professional performers. They’re going to buy a piano, and they want to buy it from somebody they trust, someplace where they’re going to see a big selection of big-name brands that are meticulously prepped. ‘What could be’ is the people who, by our evangelizing on the power of music and the benefits of playing the piano, can envision that this is fun and that this is important. ‘What could be’ is somebody who comes in to buy a piece of sheet music, and they’ve never before seen a

Yamaha Disklavier in action.”

Change also came by attrition at Foster Family Music. When two of its full-time salespeople left, Jim and Christi didn’t replace them. This put the owners out front and ultimately contributed to a more efficient business model.

“We’re talking about a \$70,000-a-year sales manager and a \$50,000-a-year profes-

‘I think it’s important that the owners be directly involved. Now there are no commissions, and it’s a better way of dealing with our customers.’

— Christi Foster

sional lifetime piano salesman,” Jim said.

With the new model and a clarified mission in place, it didn’t take long for the Fosters to start seeing positive results. “Profitability has changed quite a bit for the better,” Christi said. “It actually has been very efficient with me and my dad. I think it’s important that the owners be directly involved. Now there are no commissions, and it’s a better way of dealing with our customers.”

According to the Fosters, 2010 turned out to be a record year for the store’s bottom line, followed by an equally profitable 2011.

VISIONARY PROMOTIONS

Foster Family Music’s 8,000-square-foot store is dedicated to pianos. The company carries Yamaha instruments almost exclusively, including acoustic models, Disklaviers and Clavinovas. Plus, the store sells used pianos, many of them

Steinways that have been rebuilt or reconditioned on the premises, as well as a huge selection (some \$80,000 worth) of print music.

Foster Family Music also creates strong relationships with piano teachers, churches and colleges throughout eastern Iowa and western Illinois, which leads to countless referrals and perpetually seeds the educational market. The store even has its own dedicated recital hall and performance space, complete with a Yamaha conservatory grand, that’s available to any piano teacher who wants to use it during store hours. Most important to the company’s long-term success, though, is the visionary zeal behind its popular piano-centric promotions.

Foster Family Music’s annual Clavinova Festival started in 1989 as a way to help parents, students and teachers understand that playing piano can be just as exciting as any other extracurricular activity that involves competition and cutting-edge technology. After doubling in size each of its first four years, the concept was adopted by Yamaha and made available for any of its piano and keyboard dealerships nationwide.

“We did the first Clavinova Festival in order to give people a chance to see what they could do with their piano skills utilizing the sequencing, extra voices and rhythms,” said Jim, referring to the digital piano’s performance- and practice-enhancing features. “We started to sell quite a few of them and noticed that students were coming in our store and doing stuff that was way off the charts with multitrack sequencing and the layering of different sounds. This was a piano on steroids, and it would compete with video games and all the other whiz-bang things that kids

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could do.”

Held the first weekend of November, Foster Family Music’s Clavinova Festival uses area piano teachers to judge participants’ piano skills, as well as the creativity and ingenuity put into recording the accompaniments. Students perform live and compete for first-, second- and third-place trophies, and the following day, the finalists play a concert at nearby St. Ambrose University. Participants can also approach a performance as a recital event, without taking part in the competition. Everyone is

automatically entered in a drawing to win a \$3,000 Clavinova, and students who come to the store three or more times leading up to the festival to work on their pieces have their names put into the drawing twice to boost their odds of winning.

“Clavinova Festival isn’t so much about selling pianos as it is to give kids a performance opportunity that is the big leagues,” said Jim, noting that the event grew out of his store’s Monster Concerts, which began at Foster Family Music’s original mall location in the 1980s. “It’s about

what could be, and it makes a better piano player out of you.”

“It’s also about getting more people talking about piano study,” Christi added. “To be frank, there are soccer games, football games and swim meets — you wouldn’t practice if you didn’t have some kind of competition you wanted to win. This gives you another competition, and it’s fun and creative.”

It’s an extremely popular event with piano teachers, who have reaped the benefits of having thousands of students perform and compete at the festival over the years. Currently, 15 of the region’s top music teaching studios are involved, according to the Fosters.

Educators and students are also keen on Piano Celebration, a large-scale weekend-long event produced by Piano for a Richer Life Group, which includes Jim and Christi and an alliance of area piano teachers and technicians. Held annually every spring, Piano Celebration takes place at the nearby NorthPark Mall, where some 450 students perform over the course of two days for the public on Yamaha conservatory grands. Sponsored by businesses large and small, the event increases awareness of the benefits of piano study and raises funds for Ronald McDonald House, a charity that aids the families of hospitalized children. Sponsorship comes in the form of monetary donations or free media advertising in support of Piano Celebration’s chosen charitable and educational causes.

Foster Family Music uses one particularly powerful tool in promoting the importance of piano lessons: the 1995 music-and-the-brain study, conducted at University of California, Irvine and publicized by NAMM. The study brought to light

the so-called “Mozart Effect” that links piano lessons with improved child development. “That’s our Holy Grail,” Jim said. “It’s what we carry to the top of the mountain every day.”

He is quick to point out the important role that donated advertising plays in supporting the higher mission of his family business, which no longer advertises under its new business model.

“Ten years ago, our advertising budget was over \$100,000 per year. We used to spend \$50,000 a year on television spots alone. But we don’t have it in our budget now, so display advertising just doesn’t make sense.

“So how are people going to hear about the benefits of piano study? Well, we successfully raise over \$30,000 in advertising now and donate it [to Piano Celebration]. It’s not advertising a piano sale — we make no attempt to sell anybody a piano. In fact, we do it in the blind — Foster Family Music’s name is not in any of it. But we have \$10,000 in television spots running, \$5,000 in radio spots, \$7,500 in newspaper ads and \$5,000 in billboards all over town advertising that piano study equals brain development. And we get a lot of media attention by raising money for this great cause.” To date, Piano Celebration has raised more than \$248,000 for the Ronald McDonald House charity.

It’s impossible to quantify exactly how many Foster Family Music customers have been inspired to purchase a piano as a result of the publicity surrounding Piano Celebration. Still, Jim and Christi Foster are certain that everyone knows the store is deeply involved in the promotion. And they stress that supporting the cause itself — which

FOSTER'S AT KEPHART'S

When retailer Ken Mott of Ken Mott Pianos & Organs died in a plane crash in 2000, the Dubuque, Iowa, market was left without a Yamaha piano dealership. To help fill the void, two Iowa-based retailers, Foster Family Music and Kephart’s Music Center, stepped up to form Foster’s at Kephart’s.

Foster Family Music, being a piano specialty store that stocks Yamaha pianos and digitals almost exclusively, had the inventory end of things covered. And Kephart’s Music, an established combo and band and orchestra retailer with three stores in Iowa, had the ideal Dubuque location.

“We worked out an arrangement,” said Jim Foster, who noted that at one time Kephart’s also carried pianos among its many product lines but had gotten out of the market. “We called our friends Rusty and Wendy Kephart and talked about placing a piano display inside Kephart’s. We now have three grand pianos there and about 15 uprights and Yamaha Clavinovas.”

Each piano on display is marked with a special Foster’s at Kephart’s logo. Customers who express an interest in the instruments are referred to Foster Family Music, which makes appointments to meet with them at Kephart’s or invites them to visit Foster to view the company’s full inventory. Kephart’s faxes lead sheets to Foster’s, so the piano retailer can follow up, and Kephart’s gets credit for the sale.

“We’re very upfront about what we’re doing,” Foster said, noting that the Dubuque market isn’t quite large enough to support a dedicated piano store with as large an inventory as Foster Family Music’s. “Kephart’s Music is family owned, and we are, as well. So we’re serving the same people through this department. It’s about trust. It’s a good arrangement, and it does a good job of covering that market.”

Foster’s at Kephart’s customer base includes Clarke University, the Dubuque Symphony Orchestra and the Northeast Iowa School of Music.

“We’ve held workshops up there, and we’ve also done Clavinova Festivals in Dubuque,” said Foster, who currently lives about 20 minutes from Dubuque. “There’s a strong presence there.” — E.E.

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Announcing the latest in Kawai's legendary MP Series... the new MP10 and MP6 Professional Stage Pianos. With new keyboard actions, new piano sounds and new EP sounds, these instruments take tone and touch to a whole new level.

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- 88-key piano sampling
- RM3 wooden-key action
- New piano sounds
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- USB recorder – MP3, WAV & MIDI
- 27 ultra-quality sounds/156 user setups
- Single-zone MIDI control



- Progressive Harmonic Imaging
- 88-key piano sampling
- RH graded-hammer action
- New piano sounds
- New EPs with amp simulation
- Tone wheel organ generator
- USB recorder – MP3, WAV & MIDI
- 256 sounds/256 user setups
- 4-zone MIDI control

MP6

The MP6 boasts new pianos, new EPs and a tone wheel organ generator. The new RH graded-hammer action also includes let-off and Ivory-feel keys. With 4-zone MIDI control, it's the perfect stage piano for the pro on the go.

KAWAI
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they view as important for the Quad Cities region as a whole — is worth all their efforts. They've even tried to spread the idea into other markets but so far have had no success in doing so.

"To my dismay, other music stores haven't been able to see putting so much effort into something that isn't going to result in an extra \$20,000 in sales," Jim said. "But Piano Celebration is bigger than

that. If this could be replicated in the top 200 markets in the United States, we would have more than \$2 million annually in media attention for 'piano study equals brain development.' What would that do to make people think about piano lessons? What parent would not make sure their kid took piano lessons if they knew they could raise their IQ and their academic studies?"

"Teachers know this is advertising for

them, too," Christi said. "They realize it isn't a sales event, that it's a partnership with them."

BRIGHT SPOTS

Foster Family Music's leaner business model and strong promotional inclinations are a highly effective formula for running a successful 21st century piano retail business. But there's always room for improvement, according to Christi, who's in the process of purchasing the business from the rest of the family as Jim prepares for eventual retirement.

"There are certain things that fall by the wayside sometimes, like our electronic newsletter," she said. "We're doing it in-house — we don't have an IT department working on it. It's just me and my assistant. Since we don't advertise, this needs to be a priority. We also need to do a better job of keeping up our database of customers and prospects."

Keeping up with the church market has also become a big priority, as Foster Family Music is now the exclusive dealer for Allen Organ for nearly all of Iowa.

"This is something we need to get the word out about," Christi said. "We had just acquired Allen in this area not long before I started here, but now we cover a much larger area. We call it Allen Organs of Iowa Sponsored By Foster Family Music because in Des Moines they don't have Foster Family Music. We're working right now on putting together a big concert of some sort in the Des Moines area, where I'd like to have an Allen organ, as well as a pipe organ. We've done that in Rock Island, and it was hard to tell the difference between the two different types of organs."

Beyond that, Christi's main goal for the future is to grow and nurture all the positive aspects of what her father started. She said she has no desire to open new stores and is more interested in continuing the company's advocacy efforts, maintaining Foster's reputation as a one-price house and building relationships with influential people in the community. In the face of all the challenges the ever-dwindling piano industry currently faces, she sees opportunity.

"There are bright spots, definitely," she said. "I don't want to see this go away." **MI**

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InsideSHOWS

> The NAMM Show 2012 attracted 95,709 total attendees, a 6-percent bump compared to last year.
> International registration also saw a 15-percent boost compared to last year.
> The conference attracted 1,441 exhibitors, including 236 first-timers.

SHOWS



THE NAMM SHOW 2012 | BY ZACH PHILLIPS, WITH REPORTING BY FRANK ALKYER & KATIE KAILUS

THE iSHOW

The most important company at The NAMM Show 2012 didn't exhibit. Yet you'd be hard-pressed to find a corner of the Anaheim Convention Center not influenced by Apple.

From Jan. 19–22, exhibitors showed a dizzying array of new wares made to interface with and capitalize on iDevices.

Exhibitors at a healthy NAMM 2012 embrace the iRevolution

Music retailers, take heed: Most of these weren't giveaway apps. They were peripherals designed to sell on the show floor, and

they spanned nearly all segments of the music products industry.

The pro audio and recording markets embraced the iRevolution from the start, and this year, they kicked it up a notch. Mackie made a splash with the DL1608,

a 16-channel live digital mixer that can be controlled with an iPad. Featuring a \$999 MAP, the DL1608 lets users remove the iPad and tweak their mixes from anywhere in a venue. Bonus: It supports up to 10 iPads.

1. From left: Vinny Appice, Rex Brown, Eddie Jackson and Billy Sheehan sign autographs at the Samson booth; 2. From left: Roland's Chris Bristol, Fender's Larry Thomas and Roland's Kaz Tanaka; 3. NAMM Chairman Kevin Cranley (left) and President and CEO Joe Lamond; 4. From left: Pro-Active's Bill Walzak, Samick's Glenn Derringer and Pro-Active's David Hall; 5. Executives from Dansr and Vandoren present Gov. Mike Huckabee (third from left) with a \$5,000 donation to the NAMM Wanna Play? Fund; 6. From left: Bootsie Collins celebrates his new Space Bass with Warwick's Hans Peter Wilfer and Marcus Spangler

“The good thing about having this iPad-based front end is the user interface is very consistent with the traditional type of layout that an iPad user will expect,” said Christopher Mael, director of forecasting and planning for Loud Technologies, Mackie’s parent company.

Apple’s fingerprint extended to the way products are being marketed, too. Blue’s Spark Digital is what company CEO John Maier called “really the first true professional studio recording mic made specifically for iPad and GarageBand.” The unit, which carries a \$200 street price, features a condenser capsule and a Focus control for two different voicings.

Amid guitar and amp exhibitors, IK Multimedia rolled out the iRig Stomp, a stompbox guitar interface for iDevices that lets players integrate iOS apps into their existing pedalboard setups. Likewise, DigiTech showed the new iStomp. This stompbox lets users program in their choice of DigiTech pedals and change them anytime through an iPhone, iPad or iPod.

“We have developed and created the stompbox of the future,” said Scott Klimt, marketing manager for DigiTech.

Time will tell whether piggybacking on Apple’s brand is healthy for the industry in the long-term. But for now, it has brought new innovation and excitement to MI.

TRAFFIC SURGE

If an innovative spirit at this year’s conference pointed to better times ahead, the show’s raw numbers were equally optimistic as indicators go. While recent winter NAMM conventions have seen slight upticks in attendance, this year boasted a 6-percent increase in showgo-

1. Kephart’s Music’s Wendy and Rusty Kephart; 2. George Benson discusses his new Ibanez L GB300 hollow-body guitar; 3. The NAMM Young Professionals board, from left: CJ Averwater, Ryan West, Aaron Soriero, Jenn Triquet and Bryan Akers; 4. Mackie’s Ben Olswang; 5. Stevie Wonder outside the Anaheim Marriott; 6. Mindi Abair and Dave Koz perform at Audio-Technica’s 50th anniversary concert; 7. From left: Pete “Pops” Escovedo, Peter Michael Escovedo and Sheila E. perform at the Toca booth; 8. Colbie Caillat jams at the Line 6 booth; 9. Blue Microphones’ John Maier and Hillary Money; 10. Ray’s Midbell Music’s Michael (left) and Ray Guntren

ers, with a reported 95,709 total attendees. Exhibitors were up slightly, with 236 first-time exhibitors taking out booths. And many were buoyant about the convention and the state of business.

“This has been a really good show,” said Don Ostler, regional sales manager at Chesbro Music. “I think our booth has really distinguished itself compared to the other booths. It has attracted a lot of attention. I don’t know how they are going to top it next year.”

Larry Thomas, CEO of Fender, announced a year of bold initiatives for his company. Among them, Fender has nearly 800 new products in R&D, according to Thomas.

“We want to drive innovation, and we want to drive new products,” he said. “This year, 2012, you’re going to see the beginnings of that because we have new products with every brand.”

“I think the booth traffic has been fantastic — better certainly than the last three years but even better than some of the strong years prior to that,” said Rick Young, senior vice president of Yamaha Corp. of America. “The dealers are excited. They want to do a good job for everybody. We’re excited. Now, how do we get that third group, the customers, as excited as we are? That’s the most important thing to do now, the follow-up.” **MI**



TECH

SMART

BY KATIE KAILUS

Guitar suppliers show their tech-savvy new releases to bustling booth traffic

If the guitar segment at this year's NAMM show could be summed up in two words, they would be "tech savvy." Multiple manufacturers showed new releases that interfaced technological advancements with a traditional guitar.

"Right now, there is a convergence of people that are familiar with software products, technology and music," said Chris DeMaria, Fishman's director of marketing and artist relations. "So [we're] coming out with the right products for people to really have fun with and products that have an amazing amount of musicality to them."

One of these products is Fishman's new wireless guitar controller, TriplePlay. It features a full, accurate notation function that gives users the opportunity to share their music with members of their bands and integrate



a guitar with any virtual instrument or hardware synthesizer for onstage access to many instruments, samples and sounds. Users can also integrate a guitar with a DAW running on a PC, Mac or iPad as a music recording and production tool. The best part about it? Its universality.

“It can be added to any electric guitar,” said Andy Lewis, senior manager of new business and product development at Fishman. “We even have brackets for Gibson Les Pauls, where you have a Tune-o-matic bridge. So there are a bunch of different mounting methods for different guitars.”

Roland launched its VG Stratocaster G-5, which combines a Fender Stratocaster with Roland’s COSM technology. The G-5 provides a slew of electric and acoustic guitar tones recreated by COSM, including instantly accessible alternate tunings. The pickup lets the player separate the audio from each string. Sound goes into the six-channel input processor, and users can change the tuning of each string or put sounds on different strings.

Peavey partnered with Antares Audio Technologies to create its AT-200 Auto-Tune guitar. The instrument electronically self-tunes and intonates continuously as a player plays.

“There are no buttons or moving parts,” said Michael Smith, product manager for Peavey Electronics. “Most important



1. The KMC Musiccorp team; 2. Fishman’s Chris DeMaria (left) and Andy Lewis; 3. Yamaha’s Allen Gore; 4. From left: Peavey’s Hartley Peavey, Antares’ Max Mobley and Andy Hildebrand, and Peavey’s Fred Poole; 5. From left: St. Louis Music’s Stan Morgan, Mark Ragin and Chris Meikle

is whenever you want to play, it is always going to be in tune, no matter what.”

With its built-in software upgrade capability, new features from Antares can be loaded into the guitar and controlled via any MIDI source, including MIDI footswitch controllers and iPads or iPhones running dedicated Auto-Tune control software.

THE UKE INFLUENCE

From the high-tech to the highly popular, ukuleles continued their domination at NAMM.

“Last year, the demand was so high with our existing customers that we put a short moratorium on opening up with new companies for a while, and we have paid a lot of attention to expanding our line,” said Rick Carlson, director of sales and marketing for Kala. “Asia is going big with ukes, and there’s a lot of interest in South America, as well.”

Interest in ukuleles has also influenced a rise in mandolin, banjo and more exotic stringed instrument sales. Godin Guitars debuted the MultiOud, a Middle Eastern string instrument similar to a lute. The company’s take on the instrument includes updated tuning pegs.

“What we have done is revolutionized the oud for players of today,” said Richard Bunze, press relations manager for Godin. “We’ve included electronics, so, for the first time, oud players can play with a band onstage and be heard. We have really cornered the market on this and have seen a high rate of success with them.”

Tanglewood introduced its ukulele, banjo and mandolin lines at last year’s show, and this year, the category continued to show growth.

“This segment has taken off ridiculously,” said Erik Lind, product manager for Musiquip, Tanglewood’s distributor. “We let that product category test the waters in Tanglewood’s native U.K., and they had all kinds of success with, of course, the ukuleles but also the banjos and

mandolins. We will be expanding the line later in the year.”

HEAVY TRAFFIC

Guitar and amp suppliers had a good audience for introducing their new products, as many exhibitors reported an increase in booth traffic.

“This show has been fantastic,” said Chris Thomas, artist relations manager for Martin Guitars. “The first day of the show we did better than we did all four days last year, which I think people can relate to. I feel that the economy has picked up a little, and people aren’t as afraid as they have been in past years. I don’t think that is unique to us, but we certainly noticed it.”

Along with an increase in visitors to its booth, The Music Link, which debuted the AXL USA Bulldog, saw a boost in sales.

“Not only have we had a lot of traffic, but the sales have been good, as well,” said Ashley Atz, The Music Link’s public relations manager. “I’d say it’s been stronger than in past years.” **MI**

1. Fujigen’s Hiro Kamijo; 2. AP International’s Andrew Papiccio; 3. Fender’s Allen Abbassi; 4. Electro-Harmonix’s Lawrence DeMarco; 5. Gator Cases’ Brian Larsen; 6. Daisy Rock Guitars’ Tish Ciravolo; 7. D’Addario’s Brian Vance; 8. From left: Seymour Duncan’s Lisa Vander Meulen, Scott Marceau, Saulina Martinez and Scott Olson; 9. Crafter’s Joey Arias; 10. Marshall’s Luke Green (left) and Jonathan Ellery; 11. Musiquip’s John Kelley (left) and Erik Lind; 12. Martin’s Chris Thomas; 13. MusicNomad’s Rand Rognlien; 14. Kala’s Rick Carlson; 15. The Music Link’s Ashley Atz

IT MIGHT GET LOUD

BY ZACH PHILLIPS

Pro audio suppliers unleash new loudspeakers that go to '11' in volume and features

Front and center at Behringer's NAMM booth sat a 4-foot-tall, 900-pound speaker, the iNuke Boom. Dubbed the world's largest boom box, it features a top dock for iPods, 10,000 watts of power and a \$30,000 MSRP. And while it served as little more than a novelty to draw show traffic, the iNuke Boom indirectly signified the pro audio market's theme at NAMM.

All across the exhibit floor, suppliers showed what can only be described as loudspeakers on steroids. Elsewhere at Behringer's exhibit, for instance, the company highlighted the Eurolive B115D and B115MP3. As Craig Reeves, Behringer's DJ product marketing manager, noted, these new models break "the 1,000-watt barrier" at a \$299 price point.

Yamaha began the show with the launch of the DXR and DXS powered speaker lines in what



may have been the loudest press conference in recent memory.

“We’re now in the powered speaker business in a real way,” said Rick Young, senior vice president of Yamaha Corp. of America.

He added that the DXR and DXS series offer “really high wattage, incredibly efficient and powerful speakers, and a low price.” They range from \$500–\$800 and boast lightweight, economical packaging.

On the somewhat higher end, Line 6 unveiled smart speakers with the StageSource line. The StageSource L3t loudspeaker features six modes for different performance scenarios. These modes set automatically by detecting whether the speaker has been pole-mounted or tilted on its side for monitor use. With a \$1,200 MAP, the speaker’s tri-amped design offers 1,400 watts of audio. The StageSource L3s subwoofer also delivers four modes.

“People who are responsible for their own sound are going to be able, in any kind of venue, to get the confidence to sound great without having to have the expertise and the depth that traditional live sound gear has required,” said Mike Muench, Line 6 president and CEO.

Numark, which embraced the iRevolution in full force at NAMM, unveiled the Alto iPA music system, a 400-watt, two-way powered speaker with a universal dock for iPad. It’s ideal for karaoke or listening to music on an iTunes library.

“I think there is definitely increased demand for powered loudspeakers,” said Kurt Heiden, Numark’s marketing manager. “In today’s economy, more people are turning to DJing and live music to make ends meet, and everyone loves live entertainment, so loudspeakers have a little something for everyone who loves to entertain. In addition, the convenience of not needing to carry external power amps is very appealing to

almost every user. Plus, with digital amp technology, powered speakers are light, powerful and efficient.”

On the other end of the spectrum from Behringer’s iNuke Boom, Samson rolled out its smallest portable P.A. system to date, the Expedition XP150. This 24-pound unit features a five-channel mixer, a pair of 150-watt speakers and digital reverb. Each channel

also has a two-band EQ.

“Samson’s Expedition XP150 stands out with a unique combination of powerful stereo sound, portability and simplicity,” said Mark Menghi, Samson’s director of marketing. “The XP150 is the ultimate in portable sound, perfect for schools, conferences and presentations, as well as musicians and singer-songwriters.” **MI**

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— Theresa Case – PianoCentralStudios.com

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1. The Behringer crew introduces the iNuke Boom, a 900-pound boom box; 2. Allen & Heath’s Debbie Maxted and Glenn Rogers; 3. From left: Line 6’s Simon Jones, Marcus Ryle, Mike Muench and Mike Paganini show the SoundScape M20d mixer and StageSource L3s subwoofer; 4. Tascam’s Maiko Kimura and Jeff Laity; 5. Audio-Technica’s Phil Cajka; 6. Universal Audio’s Bill Putnam Jr.; 7. From left: Avid’s Sheldon Radford, Mark Williams and Derk Hagedorn; 8. From left: Yamaha’s Rick Young, Wayne Hrabak and John Schauer introduce the DXR powered speaker series; 9. DPA Microphones’ Bryce Boynton; 10. Harman’s Michael MacDonald (left) and Paul Bauman

CREATIVE CONTROL

BY HILARY BROWN

DJ suppliers embrace modular setups

No two DJs are alike. Some are still disciples of the vinyl era, while others have ventured into the digital revolution. This is the age of the personalized workspace, and DJ exhibitors at NAMM renounced convenient, mobile units for creative — and customizable — concept designs.

Manufacturers steered away from the cookie-cutter, all-in-one chassis that dominated last year's show floor and embraced the modular setup. Behringer's Command (CMD) series set the precedent for custom DJ workflow, featuring linkable, MIDI-controllable modules.

"If you wanted to have something along the lines of our Studio 4A [controller], you could put two of the platter modules with a mixer module, and you've got that experience," said Behringer Product Marketing Manager Craig Reeves, who added that the 6- by 12-inch units offer standard-sized controls for real feel.

Behringer's CMD LCD-1 clip-based live control module is also an enticing option for Ableton Live junkies, as is Keith McMil-



len's QuNeo pad controller. And other products, such as Native Instruments' Traktor Kontrol F1, further signify that the shift toward modular is industry-wide.

BIRTH OF THE DJ-PRODUCER

More DJs are dabbling in music production than ever before. Along with its iPad-compatible wares, Numark fused elements of the stage and studio in its yet-to-be-released concept product known as MPC DJ. The software-based Akai Pro-style MPC controller is sandwiched between two Numark NS7 direct-drive decks, which Product Specialist Felix Pacheco said will eventually let DJs sequence, sample and chop in

1. American Audio's Tom Freret; 2. American DJ's Steve Castillo; 3. Odyssey's Carlos Gonzalez; 4. Behringer's Craig Reeves; 5. Numark's Felix Pacheco (left) and Jack O'Donnell; 6. From left: Gemini's Jim Rockwell and Alan, Isaac, Aaron and David Cabasso; 7. American Music & Sound's Darren Desouza; 8. Pioneer's Mark Barbagallo; 9. Hercules' Andrew Beckwith; 10. DJ Stubbs at Denon DJ's booth

a studio setting.

"A big part of DJ booths, when I walk in, I see Akai controllers on the side," Pacheco said. "There's a lot of DJs that travel with their MPCs, so we've tried to incorporate them together."

Pacheco added that the most common customer recommendation is a feature that will let DJs sample their scratching in real time and bring it back to the lab. **M**

THOROUGHBREDS



IronHorse Head shown with DMX112 Cabinet

DarkHorse Head shown with DMH12 Cabinet

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- Three Stage Clean/Pure/Solo Mode Switch
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- Series Effects Loop
- Selectable 4 & 8 ohm Outputs for Varying Cabinet Configurations
- Accepts Optional Two Button foot switch
- All Metal Chassis
- Made in Canada

DARKHORSE

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- Operates in full Power (6V6) Mode or Low Power 2-watt (12AU7) Mode
- Simple Gain, Bass, Treble & Master Volume Control Set
- Brit / USA / Pure Switch for the Tone Stack
- Uses Hand Selected 12AX7 (x2), 6V6 (x2), and 12AU7 (x1) tubes
- Versatile Speaker Outputs
(allows Dark Horse Head to drive Varying Cabinet Configurations)
- All Metal Chassis
- Made in Canada



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OLD IS NEW AGAIN

BY HILARY BROWN

Drum exhibitors tweak vintage offerings with 21st century specs

While NAMM bustled with talk of the latest iDevice innovations, the cacophony on the drum floor bore little evidence of anything digital.

“Last year, the look was super-mod,” said Mike Swenson, creative director and co-founder of Crush Drums, which debuted far more understated Sublime kits this time around. “We’re showing a lot of vintage woods. We’re appealing more toward the folks who like the traditional feel.”

Retro wares and a penchant for classic American gear were très chic as always for drum manufacturers. But this is 2012, and even the most pristine '57

1. Remo's Bob Yerby and Sue Kincade; 2. Dream's Andy Morris; 3. From left: KMC Music's Joe Mazza, John Palmer, Mark Nelson and Jeff Ivester; 4. Sabian's Robert (left) and Andy Zildjian; 5. Tama's Terry Bisette; 6. KMC's Ed Miller (left) and Jay Wanamaker; 7. Taye's Todd Trent; 8. Vater's Mark Pozzo; 9. Tycoon's Spencer Chapman; 10. LP's Angelo Arimborgo (left) and Joe Vasko; 11. Crush's Mike Swenson; 12. Vic Firth's Mark Wessels; 13. Sakae's Shinji Kurematsu; 14. Toca's Victor Filonovich



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Bel Air won't stand the test of time without a bit of bodywork. In that vein, drum manufacturers tweaked their vintage offerings with 21st century specs.

Even Zildjian, which highlighted the Gen16 cymbal modeling system at the 2011 show, took a backseat on technology to give its K Constantinople cymbals a facelift with new hammering techniques, revamped bell profiles and updated lathing processes.

Always the poster child of Americana percussion, Ludwig revisited — and revamped — its Club Date drum series and Atlas hardware, a line that, until being precision-engineered this year, hadn't changed since its conception.

"More drummers are playing four-piece kits than ever before," said Ludwig Business Manager Jim Catalano, who explained that by adding new configurations to the Club Date series, Ludwig has made the jazz-style kit universally accessible to drummers of all genres. The new-and-improved shells tout a center lug that cuts down on total lugs and opens the drum up sonically. And in the way of hardware, Ludwig has streamlined its Speed King pedal.

"The footboard on the new design is similar," Catalano said. "The function is different in that it's lighter and more sensitive, but you still have power."

In line with the new-spin-on-a-classic motif, Pearl restyled its Session Studio Classic shells with a sandwich of birch and kapur plies to better suit the drums for contemporary recording applications.

"The original recipe was birch and Philippine mahogany," said Steve Armstrong, Pearl's director of marketing. "Kapur has similar tonal characteristics, but it's definitely an upgrade to the wood."

According to Remo Vice

President of Sales and Marketing Bob Yerby, the company's Clear Vintage Emperor drumhead aptly combines the old and new schools, resulting in a durable, functional solution for today's "tough economic times."

"We started coming out with drumheads that gave [a vintage] sound with today's bearing edges," Yerby said.

CAJONOVATIONS

Without a doubt, hand percussion enthusiasts gravitated toward traditional looks and feels, exotic woods and minute, hand-carved details. Cajon manufacturers conversely opted to think "outside of the box," experimenting with different shapes and materials in an effort to "capitalize on the strength of the market," noted Gon Bops U.S. Sales Manager Randy Chasolm.

Gon Bops' El Toro cajon reiterated the new direction of the category. The cajon sports a slanted surface for pronounced top end. Meinl and Remo tapped into the burgeoning cajon market but fine-tuned specs to align with the needs of an uncharted cajon customer base: high-end players. Their pro cajons offer percussive creature comforts, such as tone-differentiating texture targets and a more resonant front plate.

"The screws are not embedded into the front plate, so it boosts the bass response and you definitely get a lot more clarity," said Peter Towle, Meinl sales and product specialist.

By introducing a fiberglass cajon, Latin Percussion optimized the resonance and low end of its boxy offerings, while Tycoon served up a cylindrical cajon-conga hybrid. Made from Siam oak, the cajon congas have a bubinga top for smooth transitions between instrumental tones. **MI**

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KEYBOARD UPTICK

BY BOBBY REED

At NAMM, smiles were prevalent in the piano and keyboard world. The mood among exhibitors was far more positive at the convention than it was in 2011.

"We had an uptick in our domestic business and a good increase in our international business," said David Campbell, service manager of Pearl River Piano Group. "So we're much happier than we were a year ago, and happier than two years ago. We did some business here."

The optimistic spirit was also evidenced by the launch of strategically priced products that give the user ample bang for the buck.

Casio made a big splash by re-entering the professional synthesizer market with two new models, the XW-G1 and the XW-P1. "The XW series of synthesizers are the first synthesizers that Casio has had on the market for over 21 years," said Mike Martin, general manager of Casio's Electronic Musical Instrument Division. "We found an area where our technology could create a unique product."

The XW-P1 is a 61-key performance synthesizer loaded with 400 fully editable PCM-based sounds. It also has a new drawbar organ mode, providing nine steps for each drawbar, vibrato, percussion and rotary speaker control. Plus, the XW-P1 can be used as a controller. It has an MSRP of \$699.

Alesis introduced the QX61 USB MIDI controller with a 61-



note keyboard. With a \$199 street price, it's a bargain for the first-time player or working musician who needs an affordable keyboard.

At the Yamaha keyboard division's dealer meeting, Yamaha artist Tony DeSare gave an entertaining demonstration of the NU1, a new hybrid piano that combines the traditional sound and feel of an acoustic instrument with advanced digital technology. The NU1 uses Yamaha's newly developed acoustic technology to reproduce the characteristic resonance felt when playing an acoustic piano.

NEW CAMPAIGNS

On Jan. 22, the final day of NAMM, Roland President Hidekazu Tanaka announced that Rodgers Instruments Corp., a member of the Roland Group, would assume responsibility for marketing and distribution of all Roland and Rodgers console organ products in the United States, effective Feb. 1.

"We believe this strategy allows Rodgers and the total Roland Group to take full ad-

vantage of the complete organ product line that Roland and Rodgers currently have for expanding total organ distribution in the U.S. market," Tanaka said. Both Rodgers and Roland console organ products will share in the "All About Organ" identification.

Kurzweil Music Systems aims to generate a YouTube hit with a promotional film that debuted at NAMM. It All Started With Ray chronicles Stevie Wonder's technical challenge to inventor and current Chief Strategy Officer Ray Kurzweil. That challenge was to recreate the sound of a grand piano accurately with the same technology used to create Wonder's new print-to-speech reader system for the visually impaired. The 11-minute film is posted at Kurzweil's new YouTube channel, KuzweilUSA. **MI**

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B&O THROWBACK

BY ED ENRIGHT

B&O exhibitors bank on instruments with vintage stylings

The band and orchestra market continues to release instruments with vintage appeal, as more manufacturers at NAMM showed new wares featuring the design and appearance of horns and gear from yesteryear.

Conn-Selmer, for example, made some throwback adjustments to its Series II and Series III saxophones. “They put a darker lacquer finish on them,” said Tim Caton, the company’s director of marketing. “Now it looks more like the vintage Selmers.” Plus, the company released its Bach Artisan brass mouthpiece line, a tribute to 1920s Bach mouthpieces.

Powell Flutes used the vintage King Super 20 saxophone as inspiration for its first foray into saxophones. The Silver Eagle, the flagship of the new line, features a sterling silver bell, toneholes and neck.

Andreas Eastman named its new 52nd Street saxophones after the legendary New York City strip where jazz clubs thrived during the 1950s. “The horn is



unlacquered and has a little bit of treatment to bring out the aged look,” said Roger Greenberg, saxophone specialist for Eastman.

RS Berkeley continues to make refinements to its Virtuoso series saxophones, which are modeled after classic Selmer Mark VI instruments. “We recreate a true-to-form modern Mark VI,” said multi-instrumentalist Franco Sattamini, who was on hand at the RS Berkeley booth. “It’s a vintage design that feels identical to the original Mark VI.”

Vintage appeal was also on display at P. Mauriat with its cognac-lacquered 66R tenor and 76 series tenor.

1. Schilke’s Andrew and Julie Naumann; 2. Connolly Music’s Kevin Reynolds; 3. Saxophonist Don Braden and bassist Christian Fabien perform at the RS Berkeley booth; 4. Flutist Ali Ryerson appears at the Gemeinhardt exhibit; 5. Eastman’s Roger Greenberg; 6. Buffet Group’s Antoine Beussant; 7. P. Mauriat’s Craig Denny; 8. Manhasset’s Barry Heid; 9. Industry gurus Larry Linkin (left) and Vince McBryde; 10. From left: Vandoren artists Eric Marienthal, Jerry Vivino and Gary Smulyan at this year’s VandoJam

“What I like about the various finishes we offer is that they’re different enough where they create different sound profiles,” said Craig Denny, P. Mauriat’s brand director. “The different lacquers fit in with the character of the brand, which is a full professional brand.” **MI**

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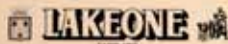
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Bustling booth activity made print music publishers feel optimistic at this year's NAMM.

Alfred, now celebrating 90 years in business, boasts a catalog of 90,000 titles. Two of the company's recent, hot products include the sheet music collections for the video game *Super Mario Bros.* and its sister title, *The Legend Of Zelda*.

"Our video game music has been explosive," said Antonio Ferranti, director of sales, national accounts. "*Super Mario Bros.* has been a runaway hit. It came out at the end of October, and after seven weeks, we had sold out of the Easy Piano [edition], and now the Intermediate-Advanced Piano Solos [version] is just about gone."

Mario and *Zelda* were acknowledged during this year's NAMM "Best in Show" session.

Another "Best in Show" winner, Hal Leonard's Cheat Sheet series, includes *Guitar*

Cheat Sheets — Acoustic Hits and *Piano Cheat Sheets — Top Downloads*. This format offers lyrics, chord symbols and chord voicings. Also earning a "Best in Show" honor was Hal Leonard's *Todd Sucherman Methods & Mechanics II* drumming DVD.

Three new products Mel Bay promoted at NAMM were *Selected Compositions 1999–2008*, a manuscript of small-group compositions by jazz pianist Vijay Iyer; the instructional book/CD set *First Lessons: Voice* by Michaela Neller; and guitarist Pepe Romero's DVD *Plays Concierto Festivo* by Ernesto Cordero.

"We had a lot more foot traffic in the booth this year, and many new accounts were set up," said Collin Bay, artist relations/product development for Mel Bay. "It's encouraging, and this show was probably the busiest we've been in three or four years." **MI**

1. Mel Bay's Collin Bay; 2. Alfred's Danny Smolenski (left) and Antonio Ferranti; 3. Hal Leonard's Brad Smith (left) and David Jahnke



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On Jan. 22, music retail and gear experts kicked off the last day of NAMM by revealing their favorite products and services at the convention during "Best in Show." Held at the Anaheim Hilton, the session was moderated by *Music Inc.* Publisher Frank Alkyer. More than 860 attendees listened as the panelists discussed their top choices in four categories.



Gayle Beacock
Beacock Music
Vancouver, Wash.

Something Small:

Alfred Teach Yourself Pro Audio series and Super Mario Bros. and The Legend Of Zelda series

Alfred's Teach Yourself Pro Audio series is a great addition to any type of store, and The Super Mario Bros. series is currently a hot item. If you don't have these in-store, no matter what your product mix is, you can get add-on sales from them.

Gotta Stock It:

Yamaha THR amplifiers

This is a phenomenal little amp. It's a state-of-the-art modeling amplifier, and the power is amazing. [Yamaha] had it merchandised on a coffee table, showing that it could be ideal for anyone. It has a wide sales appeal. I think everyone is going to want one.

Companies to Watch:

Line 6

Line 6's products are forward-thinking, unique and innovative. They provide a completely new way of running live sound. They are so far ahead when it comes to technology.

Best in Show:

Conn-Selmer pBone plastic trombone

The pBone was a plastic practice tool and a novelty, but now, it's become mainstream. It's giving us something in band and orchestra, one of the most important segments, that is fun to look at, talk about and merchandise. They come in blue, green, red and yellow. Band directors are getting them in their school's color.



Victor Salazar
Vic's Drum Shop
Chicago

Something Small:

Hal Leonard Todd Sucherman Method & Mechanics II DVD

This is very entertaining. It goes beyond your basic instructional DVD. Sucherman gives you technical, musical, philosophical and career advice that can be applied to real-world applications.

Gotta Stock It:

Gibraltar Quick Release hi-hat clutch

It's very easy to learn the technique to do this, and it's fast to use. There are no tools, no drum keys. It's not going to slip, and it definitely saves time.

Companies to Watch:

Mapex

They have been taking a bold move by launching a custom drum shop called MyDentity. What makes this so unique is that they are offering over 500 million combinations of shell finishes, hardware finishes, shell material, configurations and sizes to comprise a drummer's set with a 30-day lead time. I'm anxious to see them execute these plans.

Best in Show:

Ludwig Atlas Hardware

They have been working on it for the last four years, and what they have come up with is really quite remarkable. They've used an old name, Atlas, that pays homage to that style and flavor. When you look at the wing nuts and thumb screws, it looks like Ludwig hardware. However, it is all updated.



Stephen Fortner
Keyboard Magazine
San Bruno, Calif.

Something Small:

Ultimate Support Apex keyboard stands and TS-100 series self-elevating speaker stands

It lifts speakers up to 50 pounds with only a little assist from you. This is really a time-saver and a life-saver for anyone who gigs regularly.

Gotta Stock It:

Casio XW-P1 and XW-G1 synthesizers

Both of them have a sonic quality that I would describe as incredible. They just sound really, really good. What's attractive about them is the price. They have exactly the right combination of features for someone who wants to get into keyboards.

Companies to Watch:

Line 6

They are famous for the Pod, which is a virtual guitar amp. But I think they are moving beyond that space into live mixing and making it so easy. They are changing the paradigm of how live mixing is done so much.

Best in Show:

Line 6 StageScape M20d Smart Mixer and StageSource loudspeaker series

Anyone can sound good mixing a band on this thing. It completely smashes the barrier to live mixing, and absolutely anyone can do it. The StageScape M20d is a game changer.



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Tim Pratt
Dietze Music
Omaha, Neb.

Something Small:

Korg Pitchclip and Hal Leonard Cheat Sheets series

Everyone is doing clip-on tuners, but Korg put an interesting twist on it. There are eight different colors, and you can put them in a point-of-purchase box on the counter to start conversations with customers.



Gotta Stock It:

Yamaha THR amplifiers

It's a very cool little piece. I was blown away by the bass response and clarity. It's awesome-looking, and I can't wait to get them into the store.

Companies to Watch:

Fishman

Fishman's new products, the TriplePlay wireless guitar controller and the Nomad digital wireless audio system, blew me away.

Charvel Guitars

Charvel took a new direction with its newly resurrected line. The fit, finish and quality control on these guitars are beyond anything we stock.

Best in Show:

Mapex MyDentity Drum Builder

Think about the concept marketing between your store and Mapex with these kits. You can post kits that you build. Lots of color, lots of fun, lots of interest. Lots of people looking at Mapex and looking at your store.



Jonathan Lipp
Full Compass
Madison, Wis.

Something Small:

K-Array ecodock, distributed by Sennheiser

It has no moving parts, batteries or electronics, but you can put your iPhone or iPod into it and it'll increase the sound by 10 dB.

Gotta Stock It:

Yamaha THR amplifiers

For a non-musician, this is a piece that really knocked me out. The design of this amplifier is really revolutionary.



This is the beginning of a series of technologies that are going to change the way professionals sound.

Companies to Watch:

Behringer

Behringer got its start bringing value to products that people wanted at much lower price points. What I've seen in the last couple of years is them becoming innovators since purchasing Midas and Klark Teknik.

Best in Show:

Mackie DL1608 mixer

It's an absolute rethinking of what a mixer should be. There's nothing new in terms of technology, but it's the way they packaged it and the way it does what it does. I'm sure we are going to see a lot of new products with this mind shift that will continue in this direction.



Chris Basile
South Jersey Music
Sewell, N.J.

Something Small:

OnStage Stands iMount

We tried some other iPad holders, and I just wasn't happy with the way they held the iPad. But this one is a real winner.

Gotta Stock It:

Planet Waves American Stage cables

I chose the Planet Waves American Stage cables because, with the help of Neutrik, they designed the plug at the end called a Geo-Tip, and it provides a full connection and doesn't pull out easily. I chose to stock them heavily, and I think they are going to do well for us.



Companies to Watch:

Casio

They have brought their new performance synthesizers down to a range for moms that want to buy them for their children or for musicians that just can't afford the big guys. I thought the over 650 sounds were fantastic. It's light and easy to carry, and you can record with it. It's just amazing. It's going to ramp up Casio's business quite a bit.

Best in Show:

Mapex MyDentity Drum Builder

With over 60 color choices, you can design a four- to six-piece set. The price points are great, and the 30-day delivery time is awesome. This is going to be a great drum set for Mapex dealers.

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Steve Vai accepts the Les Paul Award

TEC AWARDS | HONORS

VAI RECEIVES TOP HONORS AT TEC AWARDS

Audio professionals behind Robert Plant's *Band Of Joy*, Adele's *21* and Roger Waters' "The Wall Live Tour" were among the big winners at the 27th Annual Technical Excellence & Creativity Awards. The event, co-presented by the TEC Foundation for Excellence in Audio and NAMM, was held during NAMM on the evening of Jan. 20.

The big honor of the night, the Les Paul Award, went to guitarist, composer and producer Steve Vai. Sponsored by the Les Paul Foundation, the award is given annually to a musician or recording professional whose work has epitomized the marriage of music and technology. The award was co-presented by Russ Paul and bassist Billy Sheehan.

The show was hosted by "Late Show" veteran Will Lee and featured performances by Lee, the 2 Cold ChiliBone TEC Band, Steve Vai, Billy Sheehan and Orianthi.

In the category of Technical Achievement, winners included Avid's Pro Tools 9 (Workstation Technology), Venue 2.9 (Sound Reinforcement Console) and Pro Tools | HD Native (Computer Audio Hardware), amongst others. The award for Record Production/Album went to Adele's *21*.

The Film Sound Production award went to the sound designers and editors behind "Inception." tecfoundation.com

GAMA | EVENT

GAMA TACKLES THE LACEY ACT

Guitar and Accessories Marketing Association (GAMA) devoted its annual membership meeting to the hot-button issue of the day: The Lacey Act. Held Jan. 18 at the Anaheim Marriott, the meeting featured a panel of legislative experts who weighed in on recent developments with the environmental protection law.

"No one at NAMM is calling for the repeal of The Lacey Act," said Jim Goldberg, NAMM's legislative advisor. "What we are trying to do is fix some of its unintended consequences."

He explained that the RELIEF Act — which, if passed, will exempt pre-2008 instruments from Lacey enforcement — currently has 18 co-sponsors.

"We feel, as they say, cautiously optimistic. But it's going to take the help of everyone in this room."

Leo Coco of lobbying firm Nelson Mullins also urged everyone in the music industry get involved in the cause. He pointed out that the RELIEF Act was introduced by Republican and Democratic U.S. representatives



Leo Coco of lobbying firm Nelson Mullins discusses The Lacey Act at GAMA's annual meeting

working together.

Mary Luehrsen, NAMM's director of public affairs and government relations, mentioned that NAMM has formed a working group with members of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. "And they're really interested in making some adjustments for our industry," she said.



OCCUPY NAMM?

Friends of the Earth protested NAMM outside the convention center during the show. Representatives of the organization held a "Musicians Against Illegal Logging" banner and said that NAMM aims to gut The Lacey Act's effectiveness in fighting illegal logging and trade. According to Friends of the Earth's literature, the RELIEF Act, which NAMM has lobbied for, would mainly provide relief to illegal loggers, not musicians, if passed.



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From left: Raso Music Accessories' Patricia Morris and Paulo Henrique Silva, MDA President Ellen Cavanaugh, and MDA board member Don Rhodes

MDA | DISTRIBUTION

MDA Holds Annual Show & Tell Day

Two days before The NAMM Show, the Music Distributors Association (MDA) hosted its annual Show & Tell Day at Disneyland's Paradise Pier Hotel. During the event, MI suppliers showed off their new wares to distributors and buyers via tabletop exhibits.

Ellen Cavanaugh, MDA's current president and the executive vice president of The Cavanaugh Co., said Show & Tell Day gives members the opportunity to network with one another before the bustle of The NAMM Show begins.

"It's a great day to sit face-to-face and have no interruptions like you would on the NAMM show floor, show new products and sales promotions, and just talk business," she said. "It's also a great way to form new relationships with new people that come in and discuss with past distributors."

Cavanaugh added that she has high hopes for this year's convention.

"I think the economy is beefing up," she said. "Where I live in Sarasota, Fla., the newspapers are saying locally that manufacturers are hiring more and building up for the future. So we are hoping to see the same thing here."

MDA, which launched in 1939, saw one of its largest rises in membership in recent years. Ten new members joined this year, bringing the organization's total number of members to 65.

"It is a great trend to see with all the new members," Cavanaugh said. musicdistributors.org



International Gathering

The International Coalition for the Promotion of Music Making gathered during The NAMM Show. Made up of opinion leaders and heads of MI and pro audio associations from around the world, the 40 delegates heard presentations on the Thai and Russian MI markets and discussed Lacey Act implementation and sustainable material issues. Discussions at the annual International Coalition Meeting often inspire cooperation across borders for programs designed to create more music makers globally.



Meet NAMM's New Board

NAMM introduced eight new board members during the annual meeting of members on Jan. 21. From left: Kevin Cranley, chairman; Tom Bedell, founder of Two Old Hippies; Jyotindra Parekh, president of Rice Music House; Keith Brawley, president of Gibson Guitars; Tim Carroll, vice president of worldwide audio programs for Avid Technology; Jon Haber, president of Alto Music; Crystal Morris, president of Gator Cases; Jeff Mozingo, president of Mozingo Music; Menzie Pittman, president of Contemporary Music Center; and Joe Lamond, president and CEO of NAMM.

Lowrey Fetes Dealers

Stan Beagley (right) from Piano Gallery in Murray, Utah, receives the Frederick C. Lowrey Award from Lowrey's Sejiro Imamura and Joanie Manero during the company's annual dealer awards at The NAMM Show. "Lowrey dealers are the most valuable Lowrey asset," Imamura said.





Buffet Group
President
Antoine
Beaussant

BUFFET GROUP | BRANDING

BUFFET GROUP REVEALS NEW NAME, VISION

Buffet Group, formerly called Buffet Crampon Group, unveiled its new name and logo at The NAMM Show. The new identity unites the company's five brands and 10 subsidiaries behind a single vision.

"Strategically, the Buffet Group wants to become the worldwide reference in wind instruments," said Antoine Beaussant, Buffet Group president.

Beaussant explained that with all of Buffet's acquisitions in recent years, the company now offers a full range of wind instruments. "This is why we thought that we had to change our name, to express this new positioning as a global wind company," he said.

Buffet Group's five brands include Buffet Crampon, Besson, Antoine Courtois, Julius Keilwerth and W. Schreiber.

The new company logo contains a silver square that symbolizes the Buffet Group's unity, as well as its foundations and history. The logo also has a five-line musical staff in motion that represents the company's momentum and musical identity.

"We are working very hard on new instruments and preparing a few new reference instruments in the clarinet, saxophone, trumpet and oboe segments," Beaussant said. "Everything we do in this group is with and for the musicians. We have this in our blood. This is a real characteristic of our group: to be so close to musicians."

Francois Kloc, vice president of Buffet Group, said that the company achieved 18-percent overall growth between 2010 and 2011, and that today, it has 550 employees worldwide. "We want to show everybody what the Buffet Group is about," he said. buffet-group.com

PMC | EVENT

PMC MEETS

On Jan. 21, the Percussion Marketing Council (PMC) met to review its 2011 achievements and firm up its future agenda. This included getting more members participating in its International Drum Month, Vans Warped Tour Lesson Lab Tent and Percussion in the Schools programs. "This is an opportunity for the retailer to get back into a school," said Karl Dustman, PMC's executive director, about Percussion in the Schools.

Participants in this year's PMC meeting



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Hofner's Klaus Scholler (left) and Graham Stockley

HOFNER TURNS 125

Hofner received a NAMM Milestone Award in celebration of its 125th anniversary at The NAMM Show. The company was founded in 1887 by Karl Höfner. hofner.com



Sabian founder Bob Zildjian receives a cake in celebration of his company's anniversary

SABIAN CELEBRATES 30 YEARS WITH NEW CYMBALS

Sabian commemorated its 30th anniversary by announcing the winners of its Players' Choice cymbal campaign on Jan. 19. During the competition, Sabian fans were able to cast their votes for four new additions to the 2012 lineup, all of which were hand-tested by such artists as Terry Bozzio, Mike Portnoy, Dave Weckl and Neil Peart.

Portnoy and Bozzio were on hand to announce the winner of the competition: Sabian's AAX Aero crash.

The cymbal's hole pattern offers drummers a cutting sound with equally balanced frequency. "With the success of the Holy China last year, we were playing around with that hole pattern, and we felt that it worked incredibly well in a crash cymbal also," said Sabian Master Product Specialist Mark Love. sabian.com

TAKAMINE HITS THE BIG 5-0

Takamine Guitars celebrated its 50th anniversary at NAMM on Jan. 19, with a dinner and concert featuring Chris Hillman, Herb Pedersen, John Jorgenson, Bill Bryson, Brad Davis and Lance Allen.

Held at the The Ranch Restaurant and Saloon in Anaheim, the event attracted more than 200 retailers, industry VIPs and Takamine employees, who packed in to celebrate the golden anniversary.

"This is a great milestone for any company," said Mike Markure, product manager for Takamine Guitars. "We want to thank our dealers for their support."

"The party was absolutely a packed house. We had to shoe-horn everyone into the place. We were very nervous we weren't going to have enough folks and it was going to be sparsely attended, but that was totally unfounded. It was great for us."

Takamine commemorated the anniversary with the release of the limited-edition T50th guitar, which features a growing vine. The instrument also boasts a Sitka spruce soundboard, cocobolo back and sides, and gold binding and leaves on the pickguard inlay. Only 50 of these guitars were produced and have already been sold.

"We have so much support around the world, and we came out with a really special guitar, made 50 of them, and all our customers said, 'We'll have it,'" Markure said. takamine.com



Takamine clinician Lance Allen

A-T COMMEMORATES 50 YEARS

To celebrate its golden anniversary, Audio-Technica went to the happiest place on earth.

The pro audio manufacturer welcomed a select group of music retailers and members of the press to Disneyland on Jan. 19 for a gala dinner at Napa Rose and a concert at California Adventure, Stage 17.

During the dinner, Phil Cajka, president and CEO of Audio-Technica U.S., recognized a select group of music retailers that have supported the company from the start, such as Full Compass and Skip's Music. He also singled out producers, engineers and artists who've been key A-T endorsers, most notably Phil Ramone and Kenny Chesney. And referring to the company's employees, Cajka said, "I want to sincerely thank them for their achievements."

The following concert, hosted by saxophonist Dave Koz, featured performances by saxophonist, singer and songwriter Mindi Abair and singer Patti Austin.

A-T also rolled out a lineup of anniversary products during The NAMM Show, including the AT4050URUSHI, a limited-edition version of the AT4050 multipattern condenser microphone. It features a traditional urushi lacquer finish with hand-painted maple leaves and an etched-on serial number. audio-technica.com



Audio-Technica's President and CEO Phil Cajka

BIG ANNIVERSARY FOR NATIVE INSTRUMENTS

Native Instruments North America is celebrating its 10th anniversary. The festivities are symbolized by a large-scale billboard on Sunset Boulevard, right outside the new Native Instruments offices in the heart of Hollywood. The American branch of the company recently relocated to new offices that offer three times the size and now include the company's own R&D facilities.

Founded in Berlin in 1996, Native Instruments opened its first U.S. office on Hollywood Boulevard in 2002.

The anniversary was celebrated with an invite-only club party at L.A.'s Dim Mak Studios on Saturday, featuring a star-studded lineup with top acts, such as DJ Craze, Tommy Lee & DJ Aero, Tim Exile, DJ Shiftee, DJ Skribble and other forward-thinking DJs and performers associated with the company's products. Guests from all around the world received a red-carpet reception and witnessed LED walls curated by top artists using both DJing and performance tools by Native Instruments.

For 2012, Native Instruments looks toward continued growth in its U.S. market share and to make even more use of local U.S. talent for its product design and development projects. The company also plans to expand its worldwide staff.

Within the last year alone, Native Instruments nearly doubled its revenue in the U.S. with such products as the Traktor Kontrol S4 DJ controller, according to company officials. native-instruments.com



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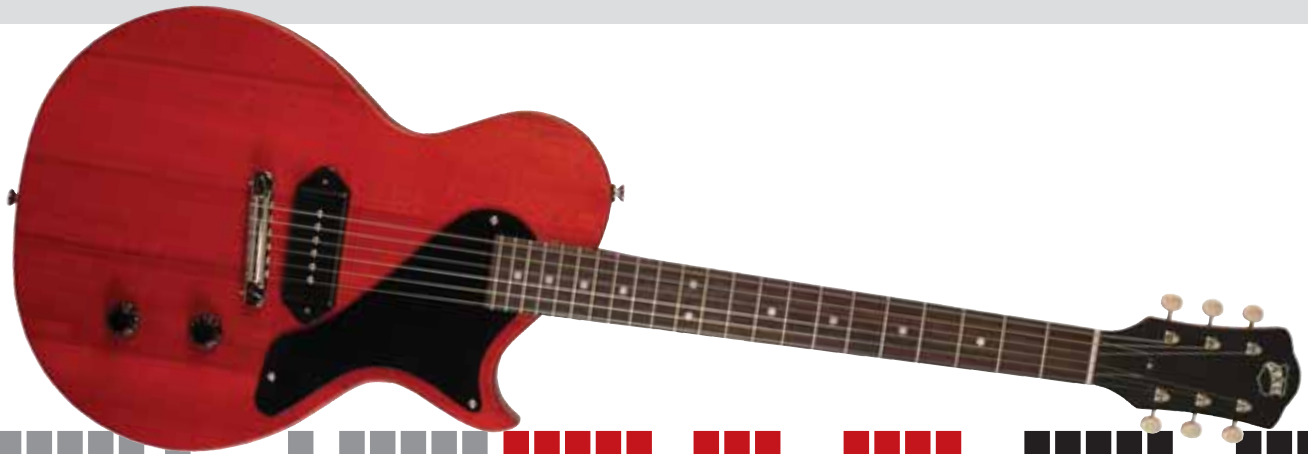
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Fifty premier products at
The NAMM Show 2012

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- 77 | AX ARSENAL**
- 82 | PROFIT CENTER**
- 86 | BAND STANDOUTS**
- 88 | SMART AMPS**
- 90 | STAGE & STUDIO**
- 95 | PIMPED-OUT GUITARS**
- 99 | DRUM BEAT**

TASCAM PCM RECORDER APP

A companion to Tascam's iM2 stereo mic and iXZ mic and guitar interface, the PCM Recorder Application turns an iDevice into a stereo recorder that's based on the company's DR-series. The app features input and output level faders with an on-screen meter to help users check levels, as well as EQ, limiting and a low-cut filter. It's free at the iTunes store.

{tascam.com}



BLUE MIKEY DIGITAL

This external condenser microphone transforms an iPad, iPhone or iPod into a high-quality stereo recording device. With a \$99 MSRP, Mikey Digital features automatic and manual gain control, along with an auxiliary input for direct recording. It has a 230-degree rotating head for optimal positioning.

{bluemic.com}



1 DIGITECH iSTOMP This guitar stompbox is essentially 24 pedals in one, letting players dial in any sound they want through an iDevice. Initially, Digi-Tech plans to offer 24 pedals for iStomp, and the Total Recall Delay and Redline Overdrive are included for free. Scott Klimt, marketing manager for DigiTech, mentioned the iStomp is great for retailers "because they only have to carry one SKU." Street price: \$150. digitech.com

2 ON-STAGE STANDS iMOUNT SYSTEM On-Stage Stands left no iPad-mounting option unexplored at NAMM. The company showed the new iMount System, a suite of products that includes a tablet mount, stand and compact stand, each sold separately. With the tablet mount, there's no need to remove an iPad from its cover — the mount itself is the cover. onstagestands.com

PHOTO BY J. BARRY O'ROURKE

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MACKIE DL1608 The DL1608 combines a 16-channel live digital mixer with the control of an iPad. What does this mean? Total mix tweakability from anywhere in a venue, huge portability and a bevy of touch-sensitive plug-ins. With a \$999 MAP, the DL1608 also supports up to 10 iPads. As Jonathan Lipp, CEO of Full Compass and a "Best in Show" panelist, commented, "It's an absolute rethinking of what a mixer should be."
{mackie.com}

ALTO MASTERLINK LIVE SERIES

The MasterLink Live 16 and 24 stood out for capitalizing beautifully on the iDevice explosion. The mixers feature three-band EQs with sweepable mids, dedicated analyzer and talkback mic inputs, independent channel compressors, and low-noise mic pre-amps. With an iPad dock, users can take advantage of the Live Drive app, which delivers processing control, real-time audio analysis and the ability to record an entire gig. **{altoproaudio.com}**



ALESIS AMPDOCK

The Alesis AmpDock harnesses the processing power of an iPad, letting users unleash their ultimate guitar tones. Building upon the design and technology of the Alesis iO Dock, the AmpDock enables tonal shaping through the iPad's processor. The unit fully encloses an iPad in a rugged, portable device made especially for guitarists and bassists. Its inputs and outputs include a quarter-inch high-impedance guitar input and an XLR quarter-inch combo input. **{alesis.com}**

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Korg Pitchclip "Best Accessory or Add-on"
Honors at Winter NAMM 2012

KORG

1 IK MULTIMEDIA iRIG STOMP

iRig Stomp gives players the ability to integrate iOS signal processing apps into an existing pedalboard setup. Based on IK's AmpliTube iRig interface, the unit is compatible with any iOS guitar, amp or instrument app and comes with the AmpliTube Free app. iRig Stomp can be used with other effects pedals or directly connected to amplifiers and P.A. systems via a standard quarter-inch cable. Street price: \$60. ikmultimedia.com

2 AKAI MPC FLY Constructed with the tech-savvy producer in mind, Akai's MPC Fly for iPad 2 connects — and simultaneously charges — an iDevice using the accompanying hardware and a double-hinged case. The dedicated iPad app features 16 backlit MPC pads, a four-track mixer and a sound library. It also offers sample editing and EQ capabilities for super-intuitive production. akaipro.com



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1 WECHTER SCHEERHORN ROUND NECK RESONATOR SERIES This instrument puts the classic sound of a genuine resonator into the hands of most any guitarist. The RS-6610FC Scheerhorn Round Neck Resonator (MSRP: \$1,099) features a comfortable neck design, fretted fingerboard and convenient cutaway with a resonator body created by designer Tim Scheerhorn. The RS-6610F (MSRP: \$1,065) has the more traditional non-cutaway form factor. Mahogany tonewoods and classic F-holes give players a distinctive resonator tonality. wechterguitars.com

2 TETON 12-STRING Chesbro upped the bang-for-the-buck ante with its Teton STC105NT-12 12-string acoustic. For a \$369 list price, the instrument offers surprising tone and projection for an entry-level model. It includes a solid cedar top, mahogany back and sides, rosewood fretboard, and bone saddle. tetonguitars.com

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www.uaudio.com

 UNIVERSAL AUDIO

FRAMUS GUITARS The folks at Warwick basses and Framus guitars are delivering killer products. Among the most beautiful at NAMM were the Vintage and Artist series from Framus. On the Vintage side, the 5/150 Star bass Bill Wyman model (pictured) and Billy Lorento guitar were standouts. So, too, was the new Artist series Earl Slick Signature model. These guitars have the combination of great technology, attention to craft and a cool vintage design. framus.de

CHARVEL DESOLATION The Desolation series returned with two classic body shapes: the DST and DX. The DST-1 ST Star boasts Charvel's classic star body and includes a rosewood fingerboard with 24 jumbo frets and shark tooth inlays. The DST-3 FR 1H Star also offers a star body and features a bolt-on maple neck with angled heel and 12-inch radius rosewood fingerboard. The DX-1 ST Soloist has Charvel's classic Soloist body and includes a multi-ply binding and a maple neck with scalloped heel, scalloped upper horn and compound radius rosewood fingerboard. charvelguitars.com

AXL USA BULLDOG This true rock machine is a single-cutaway slab-body instrument with a Lindy Fralin P-90 pickup. The guitar boasts a Bite Switch, a push-pull pot that bypasses the tone potentiometer to give a biting mainline sound, which increases the treble response for shimmer and snarl. Other features include a TonePros Featherweight wraparound bridge, CTS pots, Orange Drop Capacitor and TonePros Kluson vintage-style tuners. MAP: \$549.99. axlguitars.net




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1 CASIO XW-P1 The XW-P1 is a 61-key performance synthesizer loaded with 400 fully editable PCM-based sounds, such as stereo pianos, vintage electric pianos, brass, strings, guitars, basses and drums. It has a new drawbar organ mode, providing nine steps for each drawbar, vibrato, percussion and rotary speaker control. The XW-P1 can be used as a controller for other instruments, including iPad apps. This synthesizer offers real-time control and provides a powerful array of sounds at an affordable MSRP of \$699. **{casio.com}**

2 GATOR G-TOUR DJ ARM CASE Gator's all-in-one solution for mobile DJs comes equipped with a fully rotational internal arm, which utilizes a VESA mount to hold laptops, tablets and LCD screens. The streamlined road case with aluminum hardware boasts a removable front panel and thick padding that can accommodate several models of mixers. A coffin-style case with similar twist latches is also available for two CD players or a 10- or 12-inch mixer. **{gatorcases.com}**

3 PLANET WAVES AMERICAN STAGE CABLES Planet Waves pumped up the volume with the custom-designed American Stage cables. This new addition features the brand's exclusive In-Out technology for optimum signal transparency, in-line solder joints for conductivity and strength, and Geo-Tip design for improved fit in all jacks. The cables are available in 10- to 30-foot lengths. MSRP: \$39.99-\$69.99. **{planetwaves.com}**

4 ULTIMATE SUPPORT AIR-POWERED LINE Ultimate Support got some serious air with its Air-Powered series speaker stands. Sturdy yet lightweight, the stands can easily raise and lower a speaker weighing up to 50 pounds. Plus, the Air-Powered series features an internal shock that requires just one hand's worth of effort to raise the speakers. **{ultimatesupport.com}**



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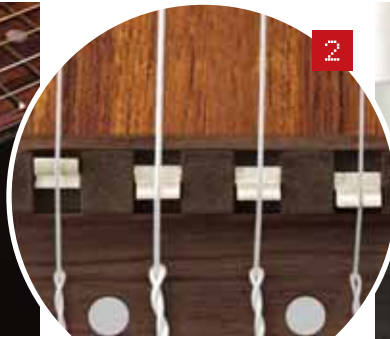


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f YouTube

1 LR BAGGS M80 LR Baggs taps into the soul of the guitar with its new M80 pickup. The M80 senses the entire frequency range of the top, back, side and neck resonances in all three dimensions. Tap on the body, and the M80 makes it sound as if there's a full-range mic inside the guitar. lrbaggs.com

2 LANIKAI TUNAUKE This aims to solve the age-old issue of poor uke intonation. Since short-scale instruments are more susceptible to imperfect intonation, TunaUke uses lower-tension nylon or Nylgut strings, so fretting notes results in a higher string pull. It's made of a compensated nut combined with a movable saddle platform that requires no tools for adjusting. lanikaiukes.com

3 QRS PNOmATION II Piano retailers at NAMM had good reason to be raving about PNOmation II. It offers full wireless control of a piano's player system and the possibility of networked lessons, performances and recordings. The unit also lets users perform and practice with built-in MIDI sounds. Plus, it's Wi-Fi-enabled. As one dealer at NAMM put it, "PNOmation II is the dream perfected." qrsmusic.com

4 SHUBB LITE CAPOS Guitarists often need new capos, and these beauties give retailers a couple of extra talking points. Made from aircraft-grade aluminum, they weigh less than half as much as the company's original models. They also boast vibrant red, blue, green and violet colors. shubb.com

TriplePlay

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GEMEINHARDT BRIO! ALI RYERSON SIGNATURE FLUTE Jazz flutist Ali Ryerson worked directly with Gemeinhardt's designers and engineers to create this professional signature version of the company's Brio! step-up flute. The instrument has an NG1 headjoint with a shaped lip plate and a gold riser for ease of response, and the keywork has been modified to tighten up the scale. It plays with a light feel and a beautiful, slightly dark sound. The flute also features Ryerson's signature as an added touch. gemeinhardt.com

THEO WANNE MANTRA TENOR SAXOPHONE Mouthpiece maker Theo Wanne entered the saxophone market with the Mantra tenor, an innovative horn designed to be incredibly solid and resonant. Nothing is soldered to the neck of the Mantra — the saxophone's Resonance neck brace and Resonance octave key are totally isolated, so there's no damping effect. The screws, thumb rest and bell-to-body brace are all made of solid titanium. Featuring a large bore and bell, the saxophone has a constant tenor taper from the first tone hole to the last. thewanne.com

ANTIGUA-BACKUN CL3230 B-FLAT CLARINET Antigua hasn't offered a wooden clarinet until now, with the release of an instrument designed by Morrie Backun. The CL3230 is made of grenadilla that's aged 25 years or more and is provided by Backun from his Canada-based company's stash of high-end woods. Keywork and assembly are completed in Antigua's factory overseas, and customers have the option of silver-plated or nickel keys. Other features include undercut toneholes and black Valentino synthetic pads. antiguawinds.com



CONN-SELMER JIGGS WHIGHAM PBONE The pBone, a plastic trombone officially endorsed by jazz musician Jiggs Whigham, puts an intriguing twist on the traditional trombone. Originally developed in the United Kingdom for classroom use by beginning students, this is a phenomenal-sounding, lightweight trombone that costs only \$150. Available in red, blue, green or yellow, it's already starting to prove popular among college pep bands. conn-selmer.com



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Yamaha went retro with its THR guitar amplifiers. They feature realistic multieffects and classic amp modeling and also function as a guitar recording interface. Though compact, the amps pack a lot of power for electric guitars, acoustic guitars or basses. Fully portable, the battery-powered THR series features the company's virtual circuit modeling effects. The amps also include an input for an MP3 player and a USB direct input. yamaha.com



ORANGE MICRO TERROR & PPC108 CAB Want the sound of a full-blown stack amplifier in your 10 by 10 bedroom? Enter the Orange Micro Terror, the smallest amplifier in the company's Terror series. It has a single 12AX7 pre-amp tube with 20 watts RMS of solid-state output. The Micro Terror harnesses Orange's classic vintage sound, along with a clean crunch and full-blown overdrive. When coupled with the new PPC108 cab, which has an 8-inch speaker and punchy tone, the two become a mini-stack with surprising power. orangeamps.com



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LINE 6

UNIVERSAL AUDIO APOLLO As Universal Audio founder Bill Putnam Jr. said, "Apollo is the culmination of 10 years of analog and digital audio development" at his company. The high-resolution audio interface lets users track through UAD Powered plug-ins in real time via an 18 x 24 FireWire, Thunderbolt-ready interface with 24-bit, 192-kHz sound quality. Apollo's Core Audio and ASIO drivers also make it compatible with all major DAWs, including Pro Tools, Logic Pro and Cubase. uaudio.com

AVID VENUE SC48 REMOTE SYSTEM Avid's big NAMM release, a compact digital live sound system, adds the benefits of remote I/O functionality. Featuring the Venue SC48 console, Stage 48 remote box, Ethernet Snake Card and Venue 3 software, the system lets users place the I/O closer to sources for optimal sound. As a bonus, it also eliminates cable clutter via Ethernet AVB snake connectivity over lightweight Cat5e cable. MSRP: \$31,000. avid.com



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LINE 6 STAGESCAPE M20 & STAGESOURCE

Line 6 unveiled two techno marvels at NAMM, both of which can work alone or together for extra power. The StageScape M20 mixer breaks with the standard live mixing paradigm with touchscreen control instead of faders, letting users mix from an intuitive graphic display of a stage setup. Plus, StageScape M20 has auto-sensing line and mic inputs that can automatically configure the channel gain, EQ, effects and routing. Using an iPad, users can mix and make tweaks from anywhere in a venue.

Connect StageScape M20 with Line 6's new StageSource speakers, and the system automatically configures stereo signals and effects, as well as individual speaker performance. The StageSource L3t loudspeaker offers six modes for different performance scenarios. The modes set automatically by detecting whether the speaker has been pole-mounted or tilted on its side for monitor use. The StageSource L3s subwoofer also features four modes. line6.com

SAMSON CS SERIES The CS (Capsule Select) series offers essentially two mics in one via interchangeable vocal and instrument mic elements. Both capsules feature a supercardioid pickup pattern but can support different miking applications. The CS1 vocal mic delivers clear vocals, minimal handling noise and a 60 Hz–18 kHz frequency response. The CS2 instrument mic offers wide frequency response on the low end for capturing most instruments. samsontech.com





1 STUDIOMASTER ACOUSTIC IMAGE

LINE Studiomaster's Acoustic Image Distributed Mode loudspeaker series deserves props for concept alone. These flat-panel speakers are the result of the company's investment in the latest NXT technology developments and manufacturing advances. They can be wall-mounted and feature a sound field that's virtually omnidirectional across the frequency range. Models include the Acoustic Image4 and Acoustic Image6 (passive) and Acoustic Image4A and Acoustic Image6A (active). studiomaster.com

2 PIONEER DDJ-ERGO Pioneer's DDJ-ERGO not only caters to enthusiastic beginners but also mobile DJs looking for an all-encompassing software solution. As a convenient plug-and-play option, the compact, sleek piece is MIDI-functional and operable with such programs as Traktor, Serato and DJay. A noteworthy focal point is DDJ-ERGO's pulse control feature, which offers bright visual cues for easy beat-matching and pitch-detection. pioneerdj.com

3 SENNHEISER XS WIRELESS SERIES

This entry-level line, which features four distinct packs, gets users into a Sennheiser wireless system for less than \$500. The transmitters boast a battery life of up to 10 hours, and a switching bandwidth of up to 24 MHz allows for flexibility in frequency choices. The systems are also easy to use: They automatically search for free frequencies, and transmitters are synchronized with their receivers through a wireless link. sennheiserusa.com



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1 BEHRINGER COMMAND SERIES DJ CONTROLLERS With the Command series, Behringer lets DJs decide what they want in their rigs. The series includes five modules — all the same size at 6 by 12 inches — that can be attached to let DJs create their perfect control systems. The modules include a digital vinyl controller, mixer, live control module, platter controller and drum controller. Each module is priced between \$99–\$149 MSRP. behringer.com

2 AURALEX PROMAX PANELS These stand-mounted, portable StudioFoam absorbers can act as an instant vocal booth, a quick acoustical fix for recording drums or a simple way to block reflections in a listening room. Featuring an adjustable contour for precision positioning, the panels are easy to set up, transport and disassemble. They can extend up to 8-feet high. auralex.com

3 YAMAHA DXR & DXS SERIES These economical, bang-for-the-buck powered speakers deliver high-fidelity sound even when cranked. On the DXR series, three-channel signal inputs on the back panels include XLR, phone and RCA jacks, and the Link function lets users configure a stereo or dual-mono system with two models. Plus, the speakers are priced right, from \$500–\$800. yamaha.com




The advertisement for TRX Young Turks features the brand name in large, blue, stylized letters. Below it, the text "Young Turks" is written in a smaller, blue font, followed by "DEALER INQUIRIES INVITED." in white. The ad is divided into three columns of contact information for different regions: New England/NY Metro, Southeast U.S., and All Other Regions. At the bottom, there is a photograph of several TRX cymbals, including LTD, NEG, TRX, and MDM models.


The advertisement for CYMPAD Cymbal Washers has a red background. The brand name "CYMPAD" is written in large, white, outlined letters, with "CYMBAL WASHERS" below it. The main headline reads "Optimize your cymbal sales." in white. Three cymbal washers are shown: an Optimizer (black), Chromatics (blue), and Ride (red). Each washer has the website "www.cympad.com" printed on it. At the bottom, contact information for Direct Music Supply and Kelley Percussion is provided, along with the website "www.cympad.com" and the slogan "„optimize your cymbal sound“".




LUNA ORACLE SERIES Luna took its Oracle series to the next level with three new models. The Oracle Rose offers a solid spruce top with flower blossoms and leaves of inlaid padauk, mahogany and ebonized maple. The Oracle Butterfly features a solid cedar top with a flower at the sound hole inlaid in padauk and quilted and ebonized maple. The Oracle Phoenix and Koi boast solid spruce tops inlaid in rosewood and mahogany, respectively. All four instruments feature mahogany back and sides and satin hardware. **{lunaguitars.com}**




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1 FENDER SELECT SERIES Fender got choosy with its new top-of-line Select series. The five guitars and two basses in the series include the Select Stratocaster, Stratocaster HSS, Select Telecaster, Select Carved Koa Top Telecaster, Select Carved Maple Top Telecaster, Select Precision Bass and Select Jazz Bass. They boast choice tonewoods, figured tops, figured and quartersawn maple necks with compound-radius fretboards, and specially voiced Fender Select pickups that deliver masterful tone. fender.com

2 FISHMAN TRIPLEPLAY Fishman's TriplePlay is a wireless guitar controller that lets users compose, perform and record. Players can integrate their guitars with any virtual instrument or hardware synthesizer for onstage access to an array of instruments. Full, accurate notation gives users the chance to share their music with members of a band. Additionally, TriplePlay lets players integrate their guitars with a DAW running on a PC, Mac or iPad as a music recording and production tool. fishman.com



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G-5 This team effort between Roland and Fender nails the ideal combination of price and features. Driven by a GK-3 Divided pickup, the on-board COSM engine delivers 20 sounds, including a Strat, Tele, 12-string, acoustic and jazz box. On top of that, users can instantly access five alternate tunings, and a reverb effect is available for acoustic guitar models. Street price: \$1,300. rolandus.com

2 PEAVEY AT-200 Peavey's AT-200 brings Auto-Tune to the guitar masses. In a partnership with Antares, Peavey developed the AT-200 complete with Antares' DSP technology. There are no gears. Just strum the strings, hit a button and the on-board software system instantly delivers perfect tuning. What's cool is the speed and flexibility of getting alternate tunings, such as drop D, D-A-D-G-A-D or baritone. With a street price of \$499, the AT-200 will get players experimenting. peavey.com



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1 TYCOON PERCUSSION CAJON

CONGAS Tycoon put a spin on one of this year's most prominent trends, modifying the classic cajon design with a new round shape. The 28-inch-tall cajon-conga hybrid sports a Siam oak wood body and a bubinga head, which simplifies transitions between deep low end and crisp slap tones. To add versatility to a hand percussion setup, this model is available in 10 1/2-, 12- and 13 1/2-inch sizes. tycoonpercussion.com

2 DREAM CYMBALS DARK MATTER

SERIES MOON RIDE Before an extensive aging process, Dark Matter series cymbals are tempered and fired twice, a process that contributes to their blackened look and multidimensional tone. The high-cutting Moon Ride builds on this concept but features a heavy, unlathed bell for dry wash and steamy, complex overtones. dreamcymbals.com

3 PEARL TRUTRAC ACOUSTIC-TO-ELECTRONIC CONVERSION PACK

Pearl's TruTrac drumhead packages let percussionists transform their acoustic drum setups into electronic kits. The No-Drill Adapter eliminates the need to modify shells. Available in two types of packages, TruTrac heads now mount to almost any drum shell and can be connected to custom configurations of modules, hi-hat controllers and cymbals using the drum's air vents. pearldrums.com

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When the economy turned down, we quickly reordered our priorities and implemented key initiatives.

On the defensive side, we sought to reduce costs in every department by improving production efficiency, seeking improved terms from our suppliers and reducing employee perks. We also judiciously pared down our inventory. Our real challenge was to ensure that we fully maintain the high product and service-quality standards that have always been our mission, as well as the foundation of our reputation.

On the offensive side, we utilized our strong balance sheet to pursue a strategy to increase market share. We secured new brands and hired highly experienced new sales personnel, available to us only because some of our less strongly capitalized competitors had to downsize. We also opened new stores on a more affordable lease basis.

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Steve Datz

Netzow's Pianos
Milwaukee

I downsized a bit and renegotiated my lease. We also revamped our website. I think that's probably the best way we get our customers — a site that's newer and more efficient. We're calling on schools and churches more. We catered to families before, but because of the downturn in walk-in traffic, we have to rely on cold-calling schools, colleges and churches; introducing ourselves; and talking about the products that we offer.

We're not just pianos anymore. We're stocking digital pianos, and a lot of churches have gone digital and gone to more contemporary services. A lot of them don't even know about this stuff. They're so stuck on traditional acoustic pianos, and they're surprised.

We also reach out to teachers more because we have a huge sheet music department. We offer them a slightly larger discount if they test out a new Clavinova, or we'll promote different ones. We ask them to sit down and evaluate what they think of it, and it helps us. The teachers will tell their students about it, so it helps us get more business indirectly.



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John Gist

Gist Piano Center
Louisville, Ky.

How have you changed your business model since the **piano market downturn?**

The economic downturn has forced us to halt our inertial marketing strategies and re-evaluate everything we do. Focusing only on products that will turn within 90 days, we consolidated our product lines and reduced our inventory. We also launched a heavy PR and social media campaign, which features a series of wild YouTube videos and a number of private Facebook discussion groups. We even provided our service team with piano accessories and training on how to sell piano care products to their clients.

We canceled expensive and ineffective advertising programs, such as news-

paper, radio and TV, and channeled our marketing dollars into building meaningful relationships with teachers.

By far, our biggest focus over the last two years is our Partners In Education (PIE) teacher outreach program. Its mission, "working together to build our musical future," has attracted the very best piano educators and students from around the state. Now the largest organization of its kind in Kentucky, PIE is already over 3,000 members strong. The results have been dramatic. Participation in such theme recitals as Halloweekend or Hollywood Nights has

grown by over 500 percent. Our print music and accessory sales have seen double-digit growth, and our piano sales are up about 15 percent from where they were two years ago.

Our Web marketing has undergone a number of changes designed to simplify workflow. We schedule piano tunings, recitals, workshops, appraisals and even piano sale appointments online now. This has dramatically reduced our sales team's time on the telephones without damaging our relationships with clients.

In a way, the downturn has forced us to get better at what we do.



dave
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