

FOR PROGRESSIVE MUSIC RETAILERS

JUNE 2012
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FAST FURIOUS GROWTH

How Michael and
Leslie Faltin of
Instrumental Music
Center tame
surging sales

PAGE 40

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Faltin. "It's because
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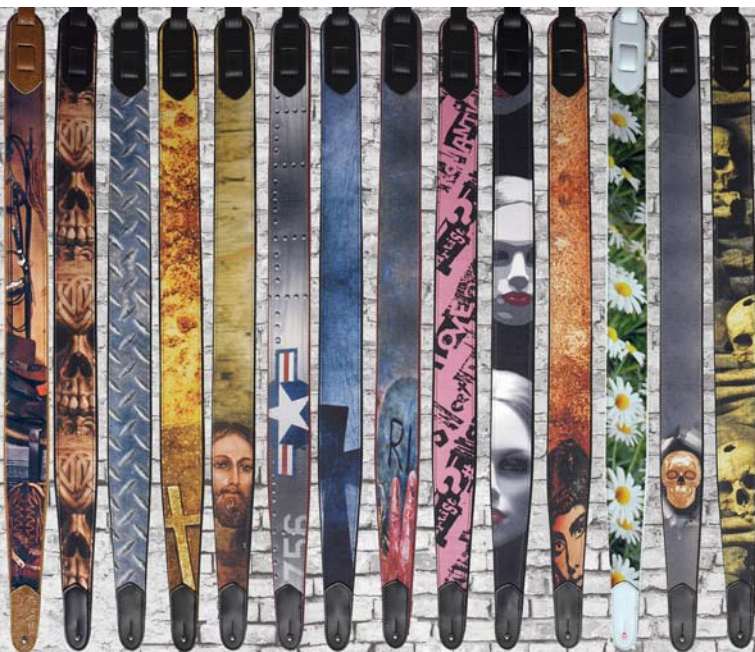
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Michael and Leslie Faltin

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– [Simon Bradley, musicradar.com](#)



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PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

UP AGAINST AMAZON

If you're frustrated by Amazon.com's referral-fee hike, you're in good company. The Internet giant's recent announcement that it will take a larger cut from affiliate sellers — from 12 to 15 percent — has left droves of music retailers feeling used and abused. Many joined the site's referral program as far back as five years ago, only to watch Amazon start selling more musical products directly and become a bigger competitor.

Instrumental Music Center, this month's cover subject, is one of those retailers.

The Tucson, Ariz., dealership uses Amazon to market specific products, especially fast-turners and high-visibility items, as well as to publicize its name.

And the company has no plans to alter its Amazon strategy anytime soon, even in light of this news.

Leslie Faltin, who co-owns Instrumental Music Center with her husband, Michael, called the fee increase "annoying" but "not a game-changer" for her business. (Their story begins on page 40.)

"[Using] Amazon is all about turns, profit and found sales," she said. "If I'm clearing 10 percent on a sale after fees, shipping and packaging costs; not sacrificing my local market; and selling a product that I wouldn't normally sell that day, then it's all good."

"The truth is, someone will sell that trumpet on Amazon even if it's not us, and they will be making some money, not us," Michael added. "The monster will be created whether we are part of it or not, so we've decided to make some money and play their game."

For Leslie, the trick now is keeping an even closer eye on the prices and net profits of items she's selling on Amazon, then determining whether they're still worth listing. "We may need to increase the price online, and we may need to stop selling certain items," she said.

But for a long-term solution to this bugaboo, Michael said retailers need to pressure manufacturers that sell direct to Amazon. "This would keep the affiliates valuable and give the customer better recourse if they have issues with the product."

I heard Amazon's news while attending the annual Retail Print Music Dealers Association convention in Los Angeles, where the e-tailer turned out to be the hot-button issue. There, I sat on a panel discussion titled "Future View" and was asked what brick-and-mortar retailers could do to compete against Amazon. I urged them to capitalize on their unique strength: creating a customer experience by hosting in-store events and selling their service.

For the Faltins, who doubled their business last year, this strategy is working. "There's a little bit of a backlash against the Internet going on," Leslie said. "Amazon has gotten a lot of press for treating the brick-and-mortars as its showroom. I have had people come in and say, 'You know, I could buy this a little bit cheaper online, but I'm going to choose you guys.' Lately, I've had probably 10 customers tell me that." **MI**

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A photograph of two young women with long brown hair sitting on a red leather bench. The woman on the left is wearing a white button-down shirt over a black top and leopard-print boots, holding an acoustic guitar. The woman on the right is wearing a black top and blue jeans, holding a microphone. Between them on the bench is a Samson XP150 mixer. On either side of the bench is a Samson speaker on a black stand. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

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adjective

to be portable, yet affordable : *Hey man, my Samson XP150 is totally portaffordable, and it sounds great! Available now, \$299.*

LETTERS

Outrageous Claims

As a 26-year veteran of the music products industry — 20 of which have been in wholesale — I cannot adequately express the outrage I felt upon reading Greg Billings' May column, "He's Just Not That Into You." To me, Billings' article seemed intent on painting the majority of suppliers with a very large, mean-spirited brush. The characterizations used so casually by the author could not be further from reality, both for me and the people I work with.

I'm certainly not packing up at 5:00 most weekdays. I usually work on weekends, often talking with or e-mailing dealers and salespeople. And contrary to Billings' blanket assumption, this industry and my role in it matter to me 100 percent. It is my life. I view my dealers and their salespeople not as pawns to be toyed with but as my partners in a very long process, the goal of which is to place a quality instrument into the hands of a music enthusiast.

As for my colleagues at Kawai, there are no empty "suits," as Billings supposes. Everyone on our sales team, from the reps on up to our vice president of sales, has significant retail experience. Our sales reps often spend their weekends not on a golf course but in showrooms, hotel ballrooms and colleges assisting dealers with retail promotions. And everyone with a sales or marketing management position has been with the company for many years — many for longer than a decade.

I certainly agree that there are some bad eggs in wholesale. This is also true of retailing, publishing and every other segment of the industry. But in my



opinion, Billings' us-versus-them diatribe does little to address this problem in a constructive manner and gives the impression that combat and mistrust, not cooperation, are the keys to retailer and vendor relations.

Tom Love
Senior Director for Online
Marketing & Electronics
Kawai America/Kawai Canada

Still Going Strong at 90

Thank you for the great "Alfred at 90" article and interview that ran in the May issue of *Music Inc.* We are very honored to be a part of this wonderful industry where we have so many friends and partners.

For 90 years, Alfred has been dedicated to helping people experience the joy of making music. As we look forward to

'Billings' article seemed intent on painting the majority of suppliers with a very large, mean-spirited brush.'

— Tom Love

the next 90 years, we see so many exciting opportunities, and we will continue to work with all our partners and the great retailers in this industry to help people learn, teach and play music.

Thank you to all the music retailers who work tirelessly to

fuel music making in our world. And thank you to Frank Alkyer, Zach Phillips, Katie Kailus and everyone at *Music Inc.* You obviously work very hard to report accurately on the pulse of our industry and to shine light and bring everyone valuable insight on the issues, ideas and successes within our great industry. Thank you for all you do. Rock on!

Ron Manus
CEO
Alfred Music Publishing

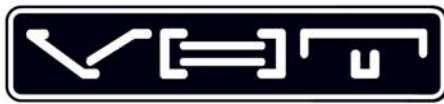
A Mighty Mantova Thank You

A mighty thank you from the grand pooh-bahs of Mantova's Two Street Music in Eureka, Calif., for featuring us in *Music Inc.*'s *The Source* in the May issue. It's always fun to share ideas with the MI world. We were talking last month about the importance of supporting American products, but perhaps equally important is promoting the role of musical clubs.

Starting a group encourages the customer community to spend more time socializing and enjoying themselves. For us here at Mantova's, we have the Jumping Flea Ukulele club, a fun ukulele ensemble that practices once a month at our Eureka store. Don't just shop American; encourage people to hang out, too.

Anthony Mantova
Mantova's Two Street Music
Eureka, Calif.

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»» ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ RETAIL

BACH TO ROCK | BY HILARY BROWN

ONSTAGE EDUCATION

Television crews and crowds of nearly 1,000 fans huddle outside Washington, D.C., venue The 9:30 Club for a highly anticipated Battle of the Bands. From the looks of the packed venue, Brian Gross knows how to promote his acts. Many of the performers have barely touched a guitar.

Gross is the president of Bethesda, Md.-based music lessons studio Bach to Rock, which currently boasts six locations in the northern Virginia and Maryland area. The biannual Battle of the Bands — a showcase of elementary, middle and high school-aged students — is only a fraction of what he calls a “robust marketing plan.”

Bach to Rock students graduate with a lengthy resume of public performances, from church bazaars to major-league baseball stadiums. Like any band manager, Gross knows the merits of projecting an image. For Bach to Rock, that image is simple: We’re not learning “Chopsticks” here.

GOING PUBLIC

The essence of Bach to Rock is its “team sport” philosophy, which emphasizes the interplay and collaborative challenges not usually tackled in



Brian Gross

one-on-one teaching situations. The school’s calendar of public concerts offers a stage for students to display their skills, not to mention a soapbox for Gross to promote the program.

“While the norm is private lessons, what makes it engaging is putting musicians together in bands, ensembles and glee choirs and giving them the opportunity to play together,” said Gross, who added that events deliver the school’s biggest source of new students. “Add into that putting them in public and performing.”

Gross also noted the popular-

ity of the school’s professional recording studios. They offer an educational experience that’s a far cry from the age-old concepts of scales and finger exercises.

“It’s taking it to that next level of working on your own original music and actually laying down those tracks,” he said.

With a repertoire that regularly dabbles in the works of Mozart and Motörhead, it’s only appropriate that Bach to Rock includes interactive “master classes” from touring musicians.

“We’ll have a musician who may be in town performing come in and do a special class,” Gross

said, mentioning that Bach to Rock has also created a new DJ school. “It’s definitely something that we see as an add-on to our core business.”

BANDING TOGETHER

Collaboration is also the fabric of Bach to Rock’s marketing efforts. The school regularly partners with such music retailers as Music & Arts Center, which sponsored Bach to Rock’s recent Battle of the Bands and rents instruments to students in the middle and high school bands.

“You can come to us to rent, and Music & Arts Center supplies it,” Gross said. “We also have relationships with manufacturers and wholesalers. It just makes sense with what we do.”

Gross makes sure to tap into Internet marketing during the school’s two peak business seasons — the September through June school year and summer camp months. Using social media to interact within parenting forums and schools bolsters the Bach to Rock community.

“We are an umbrella of companies and music schools, and the music school itself is very community-centric,” Gross said. “It’s become part of the fabric.” **MI**



Top: Kidder Music's new drum studio; bottom: the new rehearsal space

KIDDER MUSIC | EXPANSION

Kidder Bolsters Education Program

Kidder Music of Peoria, Ill., has finished a three-month project to expand its education facilities and programs.

The full-line dealership leased half of a building that's adjacent to its store and remodeled the space into a 2,700-square-foot educational facility. According to Beth Houlihan, company president, the project cost roughly \$60,000, "which was under budget."

"We wanted to expand our lesson facilities but didn't have the space," she said. "When the building next door to us became available, it was the best option for expansion."

The new digs feature seven teaching studios and a large space for rehearsals, clinics and recitals. The building is handicap-accessible and equipped with Wi-Fi access in the waiting area. The extra space gave Kidder Music enough room to nearly double its teaching staff by hiring four additional private instructors. The company now offers lessons for voice, piano, violin, percussion, brass and woodwinds.

Starting in June, the facility will also host Kindermusik by Faulkner Studios, which specializes in classes and camps for children zero to 7 years old.

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POLICIES

Amazon Raises Fees

Amazon.com recently sent a letter to music retailers who sell on the site, notifying them that it will raise its referral fee from 12 to 15 percent starting May 30.

"Since its launch, we have made significant investments to expand the marketplace, improve customer trust and increase customer traffic, while making only a small number of adjustments to our fees," the letter said.

It added that the fee hike is to help Amazon.com "continue investing in the platform and creating value for sellers and customers." For more information, retailers can go to "seller help" and search for "fee schedule."

REFUNDS

Daddy's Clients Get Paid

Daddy's Junky Music's financier, GE Capital, announced in April that Daddy's customers who paid money toward instruments on layaway can apply for a refund. The refund is available through June 1. Daddy's Junky Music closed in October 2011. The company was based in Manchester, N.H.

CLOSING

Goodbye, Kay's

At press time, George Kay's Music in Joliet, Ill., reported it would be shuttering its doors after 47 years in business. The store is owned by Cathy Knezevic, who has run the business since her husband and store co-founder George Kay died in 1996.

TRIBUTE

Warren Price

Warren Price, founder of Mother's Music, passed away April 20 after a battle with cancer. He was 70. MIAC honored him with the Lifetime Achievement and Outstanding Service to the Canadian music industry award in 2007.

"What I appreciated most about Warren was his humor," said Dan Del Fiorentino, NAMM's historian. "He was a very funny man with many friends. I like the idea that I may be counted among that large number of people."



Full Compass of Madison, Wis., recently played host to the local music, arts and health care communities.

A daylong Madison Music Foundry student recital filled the company's 4,000-square-foot theater to capacity. Students aged 5–60 performed solo or ensemble pieces on professional staging. The day ended with a student jam session. Madison Music Foundry provides musicians with an environment to learn, rehearse and record music.

"We are excited and proud to support this wonderful organization," said

Susan Lipp, chairman of Full Compass.

A recent Steampunk-themed Gala celebrated the 30th anniversary of Madison Ballet. Nearly 200 guests turned out, costumed in Steampunk attire. They were treated to appetizers, cocktails and dinner.

Full Compass also held a benefit for the Journey Mental Health Center of Dane County, a nonprofit provider of mental health and substance abuse assistance programs. The evening, themed "A Night in Casablanca," featured a 1940s nightclub atmosphere.

AUDIOSUPERMARKETUSA | VENTURES

Online MI Boutique to Launch

The world of e-commerce is about to get a little more boutiquey.

AudioSupermarketUSA, a new online pro audio and musical instrument store, has announced its plans to launch at the end of May. According to a statement from the company, it will sell products not generally found at chain retailers and large online sellers.

The site will also feature an editorial component designed to create community and provide a knowledgeable resource in the music and pro audio fields. AudioSupermarketUSA's initial list of brands includes Blade, DVK Technologies, Esteve, Levinson, Lightwave Systems, Mel-da Production and Slap-a-roo.

"There are numerous smaller manufacturers who simply aren't represented by traditional music retailers," said Joey Wolpert, the company's director. "AudioSupermarketUSA is actively recruiting those smaller yet highly innovative brands, meaning that customers will have exposure to a wide variety of great products not currently on their radar."

"With AudioSupermarketUSA, we hope to capture the spirit of an old-school, traditional brick-and-mortar music store — the place where you used to hang out, learn, exchange ideas, improve your craft, get expert equipment advice, check out new products and become part of an active, engaged music community."

The company statement added that AudioSupermarketUSA has extensive support systems built into its site, "covering everything from basic transaction questions to technical support for the store's customers."

AudioSupermarketUSA is currently hosting an opening sweepstakes at its website, audiosupermarketusa.com, for the chance to win several prizes. The grand prize is a matched pair of Violet Design Black Finger microphones. Runner-up prizes include an SM Pro Audio Mic Thing portable acoustic absorption and isolation system, a DVK Technologies GoldTop Fuzz Vibe pedal, and a Softube Mix Bundle. The sweepstakes will run through June 30.



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ALL COUNTY MUSIC | OUTREACH

Panthers Find Groove With All County

The Florida Panthers recently turned to All County Music of Tamarac, Fla., for help during the NHL playoffs. The full-line dealership worked with Mapex Drums to secure a 40-inch bass drum and two 30-inch marching bass drums, all in Panther red. The instruments helped lower the boom on the Panthers' opponents, and the team clinched the Southeast Division championship.

"We received a call from the



Panthers on a Monday morning asking if it was possible to have two marching bass drums, in red, the following day and a concert bass drum by the time the playoffs started the following week," said Fred Schiff, presi-

dent of All County Music. "After a few frantic calls, the people at Mapex stepped up and were able to overnight the marching bass drums and rewrapped a concert bass drum to match the marching drums in time for the playoffs."

IMSO | EDUCATION

MUSIC RETAIL BOOT CAMP

Independent Music Store Owners (iMSO) will offer a full day of intense retail sales and marketing training at Summer NAMM in Nashville, Tenn. Dubbed Retail Boot Camp, the daylong event will be held July 11 from 9 a.m.–5 p.m. at the Nashville Convention Center and will feature retail expert Bob Negen. It's free to all NAMM and iMSO members.

The session is designed to teach attendees how to draft a marketing plan, create a loyalty program, capitalize on social media and spend money to achieve maximum bang for the buck.

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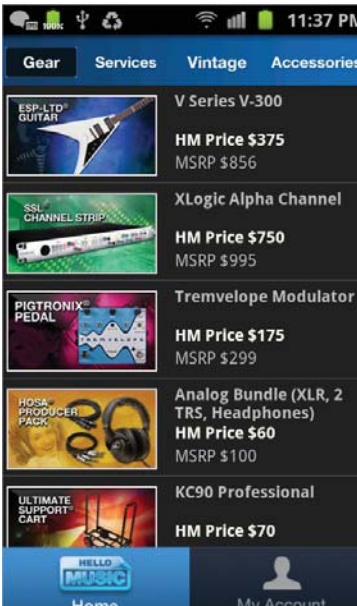
WEBNEWS

Hello Music Gets Android-enabled

Hello Music recently celebrated its first anniversary with the launch of a new mobile platform, Hello Music for Android. The free app gives musicians access to everything from gear to artist development services to vintage products, all from their smartphones. (The company also has an iPhone app.)

"Our goal is to be the most valuable resource in the world for musicians," said Rick Camino, CEO of Hello Music. "We are committed to serving our community through product innovation, including the continued development of our social and mobile platforms. Through this, we've increased our membership, revenues and industry influence exponentially — and expect even bigger things to come as we look ahead towards year two."

According to a statement from Hello Music, the company has acquired more than 225,000 members in one year, more than doubling its membership since November 2011 and currently at a pace of 20 percent monthly.



Product	HM Price	MSRP
V Series V-300	\$375	\$856
XLogic Alpha Channel	\$750	\$995
Tremvelope Modulator	\$175	\$299
Analog Bundle (XLR, 2 TRS, Headphones)	\$60	\$100
KC90 Professional	\$70	

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Guitar Amp	Rack	Microphone	All Others Utility Cases, Speaker Bags, and More	

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SEARCH BY DIMENSION



Sweetwater Sweetens Online Experience

Sweetwater of Fort Wayne, Ind., has added a Case Finder search and browse function to its website, sweetwater.com. The function joins Cable Finder and Guitar Gallery, all of which are designed to enhance a customer's online experience by making it easy to find the right case, cable or guitar.

Case Finder provides multiple ways to search. Customers can tell it what product they're using, and Case Finder will show every compatible option. Or, they can tell Case Finder exactly what kind of cases they need, and Case Finder will only show the products that meet the requirements. Users can also search by case dimensions.

For its Guitar Gallery, Sweetwater photographs hundreds of guitars every week before they are inspected and put into inventory. Customers can browse in-stock guitars through high-resolution photos of each individual instrument and case. Guitar Gallery also lets customers purchase specific guitars by serial number. Cable Finder helps musicians pick the right cable from thousands of potential products.



Uke player Fred Sokolow hosts a clinic at Pacific Winds Music

PACIFIC WINDS MUSIC | MILESTONE

PACIFIC WINDS CELEBRATES SILVER ANNIVERSARY

Pacific Winds Music of Eugene, Ore., celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. The company opened on March 15, 1987, as a band instrument repair shop and has since expanded several times. Its yearlong anniversary celebration includes workshops, events, concerts, giveaways and customer-appreciation specials.

In March, Pacific Winds held several ukulele workshops. Store owner William Knaus added ukuleles to his school music business eight years ago. According to a statement from the company, sales of the instrument continued to climb even during the recession, driven by beginning and advanced uke classes. Pacific Winds maintains a classroom set of 15 ukuleles for school and community use, free of charge.

"We're happy to be celebrating our 25th year in business as a small, independent school music dealer," Knaus said. "Six B&O stores were open in 1987 when we opened our doors, but we are the only ones still in business today. Being nimble and flexible with our business plan has been the key to our success, as economic downturns, school budget cuts and Internet sales have provided constant challenges."

GUITAR CENTER | VENTURES

GC Studios Expands

Guitar Center has expanded operations at its Highland Park, Ill., and Tucson, Ariz., locations by adding Guitar Center Studios, the chain retailer's in-store music lessons facility. Guitar Center Studios provides beginner to advanced music lessons, as well

as one-on-one courses on Pro Tools, Logic Pro and GarageBand.

"The opening of our new GC Studios at our Highland Park and Tucson stores is an important moment for musicians in these areas," said Gene Joly, Guitar Center executive vice president of stores.

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f **You Tube**



Note from Gordy

Celebrate Our Independents at Retail Boot Camp

Summer NAMM's "Take It to the Top" theme is one that resonates with independent music products retailers like me. It's the show where we can learn how to set up our stores for success. By focusing on being our best, we can stay competitive and improve our way of doing business. NAMM U sessions inspire us to look ahead, think outside the box and embrace more technology, and the pace of Nashville is perfect too for quality meetings and networking opportunities. It's important to be at this gathering, as we keep the momentum from the NAMM Show going, and prepare for the fall and holiday selling season. The people we see here are invested in being among the top, and NAMM keeps working to make the show even more valuable to us.

This year's show kicks off with something new and beneficial for industry dealers: Retail Boot Camp. As the president of the Independent Music Store Owners (iMSO) group, I'm proud to partner with NAMM in hosting this program. If you're a NAMM retail member and/or iMSO member, this event is free for you and your staff, and it's perfectly timed on July 11 in Nashville to get you geared up for buying and planning when Summer NAMM starts the next day.

For those who aren't aware, iMSO is a growing organization devoted to sharing information about best industry practices through online forums and meetings. Our community stands together, believing we're



integral to industry growth because we're involved in our communities, we're teaching lessons and we're in the store every day building relationships. And that's exactly where Retail Boot Camp comes in, providing the tools and tips to create value for your customers—beyond the sale. Retail expert Bob Negen of WhizBang Training presents this session to help us jump-start our businesses for our best year ever. It's going to take some time—seven hours of intense training to be exact—but you will walk away with sharpened skills and fresh ideas to use right away.

I've been in the business for 40 years now, and that experience tells me I need to stay open to learning more than ever. We all do. This session isn't just for new dealers or those in need of a boost—even if you're on top of your goals, it will take you a step further toward a more profitable year. I've talked to a lot of industry members, and I get the sense that many of us are ready to embrace change—and this is a great starting point.

Are you and your staff making the trip to Nashville? I hope you make the investment and prepare for continued success with us at Retail Boot Camp and Summer NAMM.

Gordy Wilcher
Founder/Senior Partner of Owensboro
Music Center and NAMM Board Member



NAME NAMM News

June 2012

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SUPPLY

JIM MARSHALL | TRIBUTE

THE FATHER OF LOUD

Before launching an iconic guitar amp company, Jim Marshall ran a music store in West London. There, he met such players as Pete Townshend and Ritchie Blackmore. The encounters would prove pivotal.

"The same guitarists came to me a little later and said, 'Look, we love the Fender Bassman,'" Marshall told *Music Inc.* in 2002. "It has something like the sound we're looking for but not exactly.' They explained to me what they wanted."

In the early 1960s, he worked with a small team to get that sound and produced Marshall Amplification's first unit, which was eventually named the JTM 45.

"We sold 23 the first day," he said. "And we could only build one a week to start with."

His amps have since been played by everyone from Eric Clapton to Jimmy Page to Eddie Van Halen.

Marshall, also known as "The Father of Loud," died on April 5 of cancer. He was 88.

"Jim was a musical innovator for 50 years, building a business and reputation that was highly respected by our industry," said Joe Castronovo, president of Korg, which distributed Mar-



shall for 25 years. "Although he will be greatly missed and the music world will never be the same, Jim's countless contributions to the sound of rock will continue to influence generations to come."

'ONE OF THE GREATS'

During Marshall Amplification's early days, Marshall said he controlled growth by teaching employees "to do every job on the shop floor" and "working 16 hours a day"

himself.

"I used to make all the chassis myself."

In 1984, the company received what Marshall considered among its highest honors, the Queen's Award for Export Achievement.

"In my book, I've never had a difficult time," he said. "We've had good growth all the way through."

In his later years, he continued to attend NAMM shows and sign autographs.

"Jim's passing was sad news indeed," said Frank Alkyer, publisher of *Music Inc.* magazine. "He was a rock star, the frontman of guitar amplification. He didn't actually engineer the amps that bore his name, but he keenly figured out the sound guitarists wanted, then packaged and delivered that sound. He was a gentleman, an entrepreneur, the Pied Piper of Marshall Amplification."

"It was amazing to see Jim at the NAMM shows, signing T-shirts for legions of fans who lined up around the booth — folks who just wanted to shake his hand, get a photo and thank him for creating Marshall. We've lost one of the industry's biggest and brightest stars."

"Speaking as a guitar player and music fan, I feel we all owe a great deal of gratitude to Jim Marshall for his contribution to modern music," said Larry Thomas, CEO of Fender. "He was a legendary figure who was eager to understand the needs of the musician and was always striving to find the perfect powerful sound. He was one of the greats and will be missed."

"Money does not motivate me," Marshall said in 2002. "It's the challenge of seeing what you can do. That's my motivation." **MI**



DEAN ZELINSKY | VENTURES

DEAN ZELINSKY LAUNCHES NEW GUITAR COMPANY

Guitar designer Dean Zelinsky has announced his new company, Dean Zelinsky Private Label Guitars. The brand is comprised of Zelinsky's latest creations, which include the Tagliare and Zenyatta models. The StrettaVita, a reincarnation of a Zelinsky classic, will also be offered for the first time as a hollow-body.

The Design Your Own feature will be available with the Tagliare line, in addition to stock models. Consumers will have the option of customizing their guitars online, instantly see-

ing their creations and purchasing the Tagliare they designed directly.

The Zenyatta features an oversized but ultra-thin body design. The single-cutaway Zenyatta boasts deep carving and highly sculpted aesthetics that add a full "bull nose" edge.

Dean Zelinsky Private Label Guitars will be available worldwide through authorized dealers and online. Prices will range from \$299 to \$1,299. Select U.S.-made custom models will be priced from \$3,599 and up. deanzelinsky.com

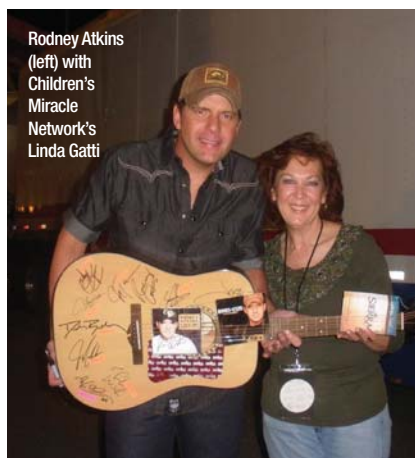
SIERRA GUITARS | CHARITY

Sierra Donates Signed Guitars

Sierra Guitars recently donated two guitars to the Children's Miracle Network for the KICKS Cares for Kids Radiothon and Celebrity Auction in Odessa, Texas. Sierra donated instruments from its Sequoia series and Palisades series.

Country music stars, including Dierks Bentley, Jerrod Niemann, Lee Brice, Rodney Atkins and Joe Nichols, signed the guitars for the auction.

Children's Miracle Network is a non-profit organization that raises funds for children's hospitals. sierraguitars.net



Rodney Atkins
(left) with
Children's
Miracle
Network's
Linda Gatti

ANNIVERSARY



Larry Guay

Happy 7th!

Los Cabos Drumsticks celebrated its seventh anniversary in May. Founders Gillian and Larry Guay began by traveling store-to-store across Canada introducing their drumsticks to musicians and retailers. Now, seven years later, the business has grown internationally and features a catalog of more than 60 different models of drumsticks, mallets and accessories, available in three different types of wood.

Los Cabos Drumsticks will celebrate the anniversary by expanding its operation — adding two new lathes to the manufacturing facility in Hanwell, New Brunswick. loscabosdrumsticks.com

Carl Fischer Turns 140

This year marks Carl Fischer's 140th birthday. Founder Carl Fischer opened his instrument repair shop in the East Village of New York in 1872.

Noticing that many of his customers were searching for instrumental arrangements of well-known works that didn't exist, Fischer began creating and reproducing arrangements, which eventually led him into the music publishing business.

The company continued to grow, causing it to move its headquarters in 1926 to Cooper Square in New York.

Today, the print music publisher and family owned business serves more than 1,400 retailers worldwide. carlfischer.com

FINANCE

Steinway Reports**Revenue Boost in Q1**

Steinway Musical Instruments has reported its earnings for the first quarter of 2012. Sales totaled \$78 million, up \$5 million or 7 percent from the first quarter of 2011.

"We are pleased with our overall results for the first quarter," said CEO Michael Sweeney. "Our top line increased 7 percent and net income rose 17 percent. Our piano division results were satisfactory, with total revenues on par with last year.

"Our band division exceeded our expectations for the first quarter, delivering significant revenue growth and gross margin improvement on a sequential basis." **{steinwaymusical.com}**

VENUES

Shawnee Makes Home in Milwaukee

Hal Leonard recently announced the move of Shawnee Press from Nashville, Tenn., to Milwaukee.

"The Milwaukee and Nashville staff have been working very closely together since the acquisition," said Emily Crocker, vice president of choral publications for Hal Leonard. "Having everyone under one roof will be fantastic and further streamline our publishing operations."

Shawnee employs several exclusive composers across the country who will continue to work remotely. **{shawneepress.com}**

AWARD

Blue Gets the Gold

Blue Microphones recently won two 2012 American Package Design Awards for

Spark and Yeti Pro packaging, presented by *Graphic Design USA* magazine. The awards honor the best designs in packaging, POP and print-related projects.

"The Blue style, creativity and passion that you see embodied in both our product design and especially the visual concepts of Blue packaging are directly influenced by our creative czar, Ken Niles," said John Maier, CEO of Blue Microphones. **{bluemic.com}**



ROBERTSON COMMUNICATIONS | VENTURES

Robertson Branches Out

NAMM's former director of marketing, communications and PR, Scott Robertson, recently launched Robertson Communications, a new PR, branding and marketing agency based in Orange County, Calif.

Focused on meeting the marketing needs of MI, technology and consumer companies, Robertson Communications will provide counsel, strategy and implementation of programs to increase

sales and build market share. "I'm delighted to take all that I've learned during my 10-plus years at NAMM and from all of my friends in this amazing industry and put it to work for some of the best MI, technology and consumer companies," Robertson said.

Robertson Communications is already working with Hello Music, ChordBuddy and JamHub. **{robertsoncomm.com}**

APPOINTMENTS**Korg USA Hires New Sales VP**

Korg USA has hired Nick Owen as its new vice president of sales.

This appointment will arm Korg USA with new sales strategies and insights to help ensure the long-term growth of the company, its brands and its retail business partners.

Over the last 10 years, Owen has worked for Harman, Crown Audio, AKG and, most recently, dbx, BSS, Lexicon and Digitech. In his new position, he will report directly to CEO Joe Castronovo and will be responsible for all aspects of Korg USA's sales and distribution channel strategies in North America.



Nick Owen

Ultimate Support has hired Steffene Copley as international sales manager and Linnea Hallmark as western accounts manager.

Casio America recently added Dan Yuter as western regional manager of the electronic musical instruments division.

Mike Fortin has joined **Randall Amplification** as an exclusive design engineer.

Ashly Audio has named Gary Jones to the newly created position of central regional sales manager.

D'Addario has appointed Pat Zerbo to marketing program director and Ari Simon to inside sales manager.

Radial Engineering recently promoted Steve McKay from sales manager to the newly created position of export sales manager. Roc Bubel has joined Radial as a sales manager.

Alexander Schek has been promoted to vice president sales,

Latin America for **Sennheiser**.

Community Professional Loudspeakers has appointed Loren Robinson to the position of regional manager for western United States and Canada.

Solid State Logic has hired Mark Davidson to the newly created role of global systems and solutions business development manager.

The Music Link recently promoted former national sales manager Scott Thompson to vice president of sales.

Harman has named Paul Shorter technical services manager for Soundcraft, Studer and AKG.

Jerry Antonelli has joined **Universal Audio** as the company's West Coast regional sales manager.



Scott Thompson

SAMSON | EVENT

SAMSON GETS HARD CORE

On April 12, heavy metal luminaries took to the stage at Key Club in West Hollywood, Calif., for Samson's Metal Masters 3 clinic.

Anthrax's Charlie Benante and Frank Bello, Megadeth's David Ellefson and Chris Broderick, Slayer's Dave Lombardo, and Mike Portnoy all demonstrated what metal has to offer, including two Iron Maiden instrumentals, a three-way drum battle and Q&As with the sold-out crowd.

"The Metal Masters Clinic has grown into something bigger than we could have ever imagined," said Mark Menghi, Samson's director of marketing. "The players, lessons, musical jams and audience combine to create one of the greatest experiences any music fan or aspiring musician could witness." **{samsontech.com}**



From left: Megadeth's Chris Broderick and David Ellefson; Slayer's Dave Lombardo; Mike Portnoy, formerly of Dream Theater; Anthrax's Charlie Benante; Samson's Mark Menghi; Pantera's Philip Anselmo; Black Sabbath's Geezer Butler; Anthrax's Frank Bello; and Slayer's Kerry King

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TRIBUTE

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

Elliot Fine

Elliot Fine, Alfred Music Publishing author and drummer, passed away from cancer on May 4. He was 86. Fine grew up playing jazz and backed some of the idiom's greats. As an educator and author, he contributed to several drumming texts, including the classic four-way coordination drum set method books, which he co-authored with his friend and Minnesota Orchestra section-mate Marvin Dahlgren.

"I feel lucky and privileged to have met Elliot and to have spent some time talking, learning and laughing with him," said Rich Lackowski, Alfred's director of marketing, PR and advertising. "His excitement and good spirit was incredibly contagious. Some people are touched by God with talent and kindness, and Elliot was indeed one of those people. He will be missed."

ELATION PROFESSIONAL | ARTIST APPROVED

Elation Tours With Drake

Elation Professional played a part in Canadian rapper Drake's recent Club Paradise Tour. The tour's set featured Elation Professional's EPV762 MH Moving Head LED video panel.

The industrial-looking backdrop is made up of 40 alloy frames that each harbor a number of integrated lighting and video elements. It's mounted at a 90-degree angle, yoked out and spaced congruently with other video products within each cube.

"The effect is done as a very bold statement, where the video image fades to a solid color video wall as the panels start to undulate," said Patrick Dierson, lighting designer.

"As the more 'realistic' video footage starts to come back into play, the audience is only putting various pieces of it together as the panels line up in various random places within the design." elationlighting.com



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THE MUSIC PEOPLE | DISTRIBUTION

THE MUSIC PEOPLE DISTRIBUTE LINE 6

Line 6 recently announced that TMP Pro, the installation division of The Music People, is now an official distributor of the Line 6 live sound product line. TMP Pro will offer the XD-V family of digital wireless systems, StageScape digital mixer and StageSource loudspeaker systems to its installation and integration contractors.

TMP Pro distributes and supports a wide range of products to AV contractors, installation integrators and electrical contractors.

"We're thrilled to have The Music People on-board as a distributor," said Lee Stein, director of U.S. sales, commercial audio for Line 6. "They provide unparalleled support to their customers in the commercial channel." line6.com



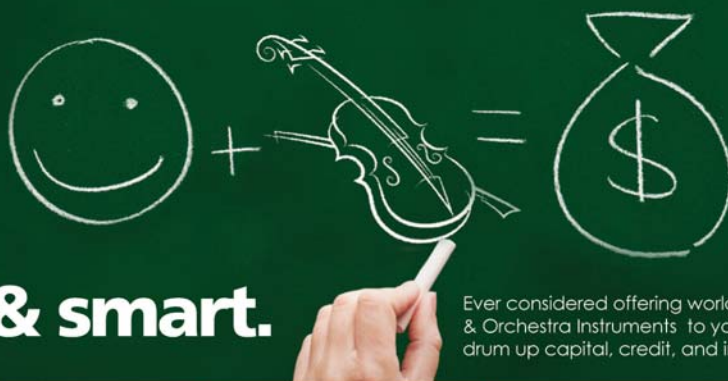
Line 6's Jim Mingo (left) and The Music People's John Hennessey

FENDER MUSIC FOUNDATION | CHARITY

Fender Sells OK Go Guitars

The Fender Music Foundation has sold the 11 Gretsch Electromatic CVT III guitars and Gretsch Electromatic G5222 amplifiers used in the band OK Go's music video for "Needing/Getting."

The instruments were each accompanied by an amplifier and a Fender cable (all used in the video), a letter of authenticity, and a photo of the guitars taken on set during the production of the video. Packages started at \$600. fendermusicfoundation.org



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IDEAS

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INDEPENDENT RETAIL | BY TED ESCHLIMAN

BARF BAG

Employees have varying levels of emotional investment in their work areas. A full-time “career” worker might have more passion for cleanliness and order, inventory fulfillment, and customer care than a part-timer. Still, this isn’t always the case, and it fascinates and confounds me what inspires an employee’s sense of ownership.

As an owner, I’m always trying to foster a sense of personal investment among the troops. Sometimes, I even muse about trying something unconventional to motivate them, including hiring a hypnotist to program a sense of disgust to the sales floor’s ills. The following are the first ills I’d have him address.

Empty hooks. We have a sophisticated software system that tracks inventory replenishment needs, but it’s only as good as the accuracy of a computer count. Store counts go wrong when items are sold under the wrong SKU, transferred from the warehouse incorrectly or stolen. Responsibility for corrections falls on our foot soldiers. We try



to train employees to remember that empty hooks indicate a missing item. If a hypnotist could trigger a feeling of nausea at the site of an open hook, we might have better follow-through from staff. Of course, we’d have to keep barf bags in discreet corners of the store.

Overambitious backstock. The converse is also true with overstock. We let our buyers take advantage of occasional vendor specials, but in today’s lean-and-mean retail battle, turns are everything. Chances are, if the hooks are overflowing and

the bins in back carry more than a 30-day non-seasonal supply, we’ve over-ordered, largely because of inventory inaccuracy. Another clue to investigate: Check for shortages in another branch. Again, I wish overstock made staff physically ill.

Clutter. Counter clutter is tacky, kills productivity and makes customers uncomfortable. It ought to churn employee stomachs, too. Unaddressed trash, such as empty cups and food containers, should never grace the floor. Urp. Barf bag.

Customers not welcomed or attended to. We need to keep a neutral space right inside the door, where folks can acclimate to our showroom before we pounce on them. But beyond that, there’s no defense for a customer not being acknowledged or greeted.

There’s a fine line between being pushy and attentive, and the growing self-service sales culture can be deceiving. It’s seductive to overdo being hands-off with customers. At minimum, we want our patrons to know *we* know they are there. That

won’t happen without a greeting or friendly smile. We also owe it to them to find out why they’re visiting. Ignored bodies in the store should be nauseating.

Idleness. The old saying, “The devil finds work for idle hands,” is true on the sales floor. It also translates into staff obsolescence. If a hypnotist could help instill revulsion to idleness, our stores would be cleaner, more ordered and better stocked. Plus, staff would become self-trained. All of these enhancements manifest in a healthier bottom dollar. A good employee is one who’s self-motivated to *find* work.

Downtime should be a sign that the store is overstaffed, and that ought to get personal at the ground level. It means labor is greater than gross sales — not a recipe for job security. No busy work in the absence of customers? Idle should equal queasy, even without a hypnotist.

Roll out the barf buckets. **MI**

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

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

Secure Your Store

How hard do you work at what you do? If you're like most people in the music products industry, you go home pretty drained at the end of the day. Your devotion to your business and the energy you put into it are a large part of the life force that drives it forward day after day, year after year. The profits that remain at the end of any given accounting period are often the direct result of the blood, sweat and tears poured into your business.



When there's a security breach at your company, any losses realized directly attack your bottom line. And that, to me, is the most personal affront you will ever endure in business.

Sadly, I have a series of psychic scars from a number of losses during my retail career. These were difficult lessons learned indeed. The worst part is how obvious these scenarios seem after the fact. It's like having someone fly a plane into a tall building. Afterwards, you wonder why you didn't think of it before.

Here are some examples and theft-prevention pointers based on my real-life experiences. If even one of these saves you from a loss, I've accomplished my mission.

THE QUICK-CHANGE ARTIST

If you haven't already, someday you'll experience an amazing feat of fancy deception. It goes like this. You're at the point of sale with a customer, likely for a fairly small cash sale. The customer will give you more than is due. As you're counting out change, he'll say, "Wait. Let me give you this, and you give me that back."

Quick-change artists are masters at what they do, and they go from store to store doing it. In the end, if you play their game, you or your people will get short-changed.

The only defense against quick-change artists is to cut them off immediately and not play their game. If what they're asking you to do is not immediately obvious or even slightly confusing, you're about to be scammed.

SHIPPING FRAUD

Shipping fraud tends to be set up well ahead of time. An out-of-town customer makes a couple of purchases by credit card, typically over a period of a couple of weeks. He does enough business that there is actually the appearance of a developing relationship. Then comes the "gotcha."

On his third or fourth transaction, he requests shipment to an alternate address. Don't let your guard down. If this address is not an authorized alternate address on his credit card, you've got a good chance of seeing one of those dreaded chargebacks from your bank. And you'll have absolutely no recourse.

EMPLOYEE THEFT

At worst, you have a blatant crook working for you, stealing cash, inventory or records. But in its more insidious form, employee theft happens when staff treat themselves to "fringe benefits" at your expense.

Pay attention to what your employees buy from you or, more importantly, what they don't buy. If guitarists don't buy strings or if drummers don't buy sticks, you may have a problem. How do you solve it? Awareness is the key, so ask them where they buy their supplies. The greatest deterrent is employees' knowledge that you're tuned in to what they're doing.

The most common types of theft and how to prevent them

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR THEFT

Are your teachers or repair people independent contractors? These folks, even though they aren't your employees, often get the same access as your most trusted people.

Think of this scenario, which actually happened to me. I had a guitar teacher for many years who arrived every day with his guitar case. I assumed he brought his guitar to play along with his students. Instead, he was using it as a means to carry out effects pedals and microphones.

We ultimately solved the issue by finding items we knew were missing offered for sale in a local newspaper. (These days, Craigslist would be a good place to check.)

RUBBISH THEFT

Trash bags are a notoriously convenient way for dishonest people to steal. All kinds of stuff can leave the store masked by candy wrappers, office papers and coffee cups. A would-be robber throws that Les Paul in the dumpster and returns after hours to retrieve it.

The solution? Only one person should handle the trash, and periodic inspections should be routine.

CUSTOMER THEFT

People out to do no good are a constant threat. I can't tell you how many amplifier knobs, tremolo arms and fuse caps I lost to people ripping them off for sport. More unscrupulous villains would steal much more

significant items. Here again, the best defense is awareness. When customers enter your store, you have to make them aware that you're paying attention. That sends an immediate message that they're being watched.

Also, make sure to secure valuable, small items. And when large groups of people come in all at once, be aware that this could be an attempt to create a distraction to take the attention off the person who will do the dirty deed.

FIRE CODE RISKS

Many jurisdictions have fire codes dictating that doors be left unlocked or easy to open for rapid egress during a fire emergency. Sadly, these same rules also provide an easy way

out for would-be thieves, particularly with doors in concealed and less trafficked areas. It's an additional expense, but be certain that all affected doors can be heard throughout the store when they're opened.

Sadly, the list goes on and on. The common denominators in deterring theft are awareness and forethought. In addition, for internal problems, building a culture of mutual trust and a strong team atmosphere helps — but doesn't solve — these matters.

Let's keep your hard-earned money in the till, where it belongs! **MI**

Gerson Rosenbloom is managing director of Wechter Guitars. He's former president of Medley Music and a past NAMM chairman. E-mail him at gersonmusicinc@gmail.com.



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FROM THE TRENCHES | BY MYRNA SISLEN

The New-Idea Contest

A few months ago, I realized I didn't have any more ideas — not just good or great ideas, but any ideas at all. So, I turned to my employees and hosted a new-idea contest.

The goal of the contest was to have my employees come up with ideas to bring new customers into the store. If the contest worked, it would create a stash of ideas that could be implemented during the coming year. I didn't want it to be about selling — just bringing new customers into the store.

And what was the best way to motivate my employees to participate? Pay them. The rules were as follows: Each participating employee had to submit two ideas each week for four weeks. I would select the best idea or ideas each week, and the winner or winners would receive \$25 cash. At the end of the month, everyone would vote, and the grand prize of \$100 cash would be awarded to the winner. Also, the person with the winning idea would be in charge of implementing his or her idea.

And what did that net me? Five of my employees participated in the contest. Five times two times four weeks equals 40 — count 'em — 40 new ideas!

But even better than the ideas — and they were pretty terrific — was my employees' enthusiasm as they participated in the project. Creative juices started flowing, which meant that every idea presented was well-conceived and serious. It was a wonderful thing for me to watch, and it really surprised me to see how invested they were in the project.

Here are the 10 winning ideas:

1. Have a featured Middle C Music Student of the Month video for YouTube, Facebook and our website.
2. Start a Middle C Music blog with product reviews.
3. Add test-drive videos of instruments to our website.
4. Make the website a priority by having a dedicated day and time for updates at least once a week.
5. Set up a YouTube channel, linked to our Facebook page, website and other social media.

6. Actually maintain our social network presence. Get Yelp reviews by giving every customer a reminder flier when they make a purchase.

7. Create a Middle C Music discount card for employees to give out at clubs they frequent.

8. Host a Middle C Music open mic night once a month.

9. Offer a monthly uke-a-long — a ukulele group lesson and jam session.

10. Hold a guitar or violin string-changing class that's open to the public.

The grand prize, by unanimous vote, was to have a regular Middle C Music open mic night once a month and invite the public. The open mics have since been ongoing and have attracted players from all over the city. In the ensuing months, we have worked to implement the other ideas, especially the ones involving our website, Facebook page, Yelp and YouTube.

When it came time to award the grand prize, and after much thought, I couldn't give it to just one person. They all worked hard, so I gave each participant a \$100 bonus. It turned out to be the best money I ever spent, and in the end, admitting that I had no new ideas turned out to be one of the best ideas I have ever had. **MI**

Myrna Sislen owns and operates Middle C Music in Washington, D.C.



Turn to your staff for help when your idea well runs dry



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THE RETAIL DOCTOR | BY BILLY CUTHRELL

The Worst Call of All, II

Last month, I discussed the worst sales call I'd ever heard. At the time, I thought it couldn't get any worse. I was wrong.

Recently, my manager took a call from a salesperson who sold ad space in a local publication. My manager gave me the details the next day, and I had her write it down. The call began with the salesperson asking for me and my manager telling her I was out. Here is what followed:

Saleslady: I wanted to tell him how bad his ads are and let him know we want to work with him to create a better ad in a better magazine — and probably at a much better rate than what he paid for an ad of such low quality.

Manager: Excuse me?

Saleslady: I'm looking at your ad, and I don't even see your company's name. Who runs an ad and doesn't put their company name in the ad? That's not very smart or good for business. You need to tell people your company name. Your ad really sucks.

Manager: How did you know the ad was ours if you didn't see our name in the ad?

Saleslady: I went to the website listed in the ad.

Manager: I have a copy of the magazine right here on our counter. I see our business name listed at the top of the ad, but I think the point of the ad is to drive traffic to our website, which is why the URL is in bold and larger fonts.

Saleslady: I must have overlooked the name before, but that's because it's too small. I know good ads when I see them because I'm in advertising, and there is nothing good about this ad.

Manager: OK. I'll tell the owner you called. Is there a number where he can reach you tomorrow?

Saleslady: (Gives the number) Tell him to call because I would hate to look for your company a year from now and know you went out of business.

Manager: Out of business?

Saleslady: I'm just saying that if you keep running ads like these that don't tell your customer who you are, what you do and why you do it, then I don't see you sticking around for very long.

Make sure he calls now.

When my manager finished telling me about the call, all I could say was, "I hope we never come across a customer like that." But the more I thought about the call, the more I tried to find a takeaway that we could use to better the business. Obviously, the salesperson was obnoxious, but she may have had a point. Sometimes, we overlook critical aspects of ads, such as name placement or contact information. And after looking at our ad, I agreed our name was a bit small, and we could have used a better font. I had a designer work up a new ad.

Unfortunately, that's about the only positive takeaway from the call. The salesperson made too many amateur errors. Obviously, you should never refer to your potential customer as unintelligent or insinuate that you're an expert because you work in a particular field. Also, telling potential customers that you'd hate for them to go out of business because they don't use your product is plain insulting.

Still, out of all the mistakes I picked up, there was one in particular I couldn't get past.

"What business did she say she worked for, and what was her name?" **MI**

Billy Cuthrell owns and operates Progressive Music Center and is the founder of Right-andWrongRetail.com. He welcomes your e-mail at billy@rightandwrongretail.com.



Takeaways from the worst telephone sales call I've ever heard

The Legend Continues

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.

MP10

Streamlined and focused, the all-new MP10 is the *only* instrument for the piano purist. It features new Concert Grand, Pop Grand and Jazz Grand sounds, plus Kawai's new RM3 wooden-key action — now with let-off and Ivory-feel key surfaces. All new EP sounds include tine, reed and FM types with enhanced effects and amp simulation.



- Ultra Progressive Harmonic Imaging
- 88-key piano sampling
- RM3 wooden-key action
- New piano sounds
- New EPs with amp simulation
- 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.

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MY TURN | BY JAMES HARDING

Partners in Education

When I first entered the piano business more than 10 years ago, I was surprised by the rocky relationships most retailers had with their local piano teachers. Over the years, members of both groups have accused one another of insincerity, mistrust, manipulation and neglect. I noticed piano retailers often feeling snubbed or exploited by the teaching community, while piano teachers felt that dealers only cared about them when they needed help making a sale. The result has been two isolated groups that should be enthusiastic partners but, because of their differing industry perspectives, often end up ignoring or even working against one another.

What puzzled me most was that neither side appeared to be happy with the status quo. Everyone wanted to work together but hadn't found a mutually beneficial way to do so. That is how the idea for Partners In Education (P.I.E.) began at Louisville, Ky.-based Gist Piano Center.

HOW PIANO TEACHERS SEE RETAILERS

As the director of sales and marketing at Gist, I couldn't understand why piano teachers didn't flock to our business. We have a tremendous recital facility and all the print music anyone could ever need. Still, most of the teachers I spoke with were very cautious about discussing any kind of long-term relationship with Gist. The more I offered them, the more cautious they became.

It took some time to realize that piano teachers don't see our business the way I do. Due to decades of mutual exploitation, many spent the entire discussion looking for the catch. I realized that I wouldn't be able to see measured improvement in my teacher

relationships until I could prove that I actually cared about them, their businesses and their students.

To be fair, most piano retailers don't call their local teachers unless they want something. Dealers rush to the phones when they have a piano sale coming up or when they've hired an artist and need to fill seats, but they rarely call to ask teachers about

their businesses.

Likewise, I was promoting my business without giving any thought to the needs of the people in my business. I never called to check on a teacher when I heard she was ill and never acknowledged birthdays or student achievements. I was treating my teachers like businesses and not like people who happen to own businesses. In retrospect, I shouldn't have been surprised by their wary responses.

CARING MY WAY FORWARD

Before my outreach programs could build momentum, I had to demonstrate integrity, trust, mutual respect and genuine concern for my teaching community on a consistent basis.

Communication was my first step. I set up private meetings with a number of teachers on their turf and asked for advice. I purposely chose to meet with a few teachers who were friendly to my business and a few who weren't. It helped me get a well-rounded and honest perspective. A few of the questions I asked were: What made you want to become a piano teacher? What kind of method books and equipment do you use? What kind of special programs or recitals do you participate in? When is the best time of day or year for you to attend special events? What advice do you have for



How one dealer improved the local music community — and his business — by reaching out to piano teachers

me as I plan programs for our community?

Their responses helped me refocus my time, budget and promotional efforts on programs that would capture their interest and enthusiasm. The responses also established a valuable dialogue that I could use for feedback at every level of my partnership program development.

BUILDING THE WHY

I began to build a partnership program that would appeal to the piano teachers in my community. I chose to include benefits that only Gist could offer. Some examples are:

- Print music discounts. I eliminated our everyone-gets-a-discount policy in favor of a partners-only program. Now, only P.I.E. students and their teachers

receive a print music discount.

- Free annual piano tuning. I used this benefit to get accurate information on teachers' personal pianos and to make sure their students were working on well-maintained instruments.

- Exclusive access to special teachers-only workshops or luncheons. I set up a regular series of informal luncheons and workshops that are often themed. They created a fun, low-key environment to introduce new products or programs and continued the relationship-building process.

- Exclusive promotional consideration. I chose not to flood my website with a random list of piano teachers in my area. Instead, I developed profiles with social media links and video clips for each of my partner teachers.

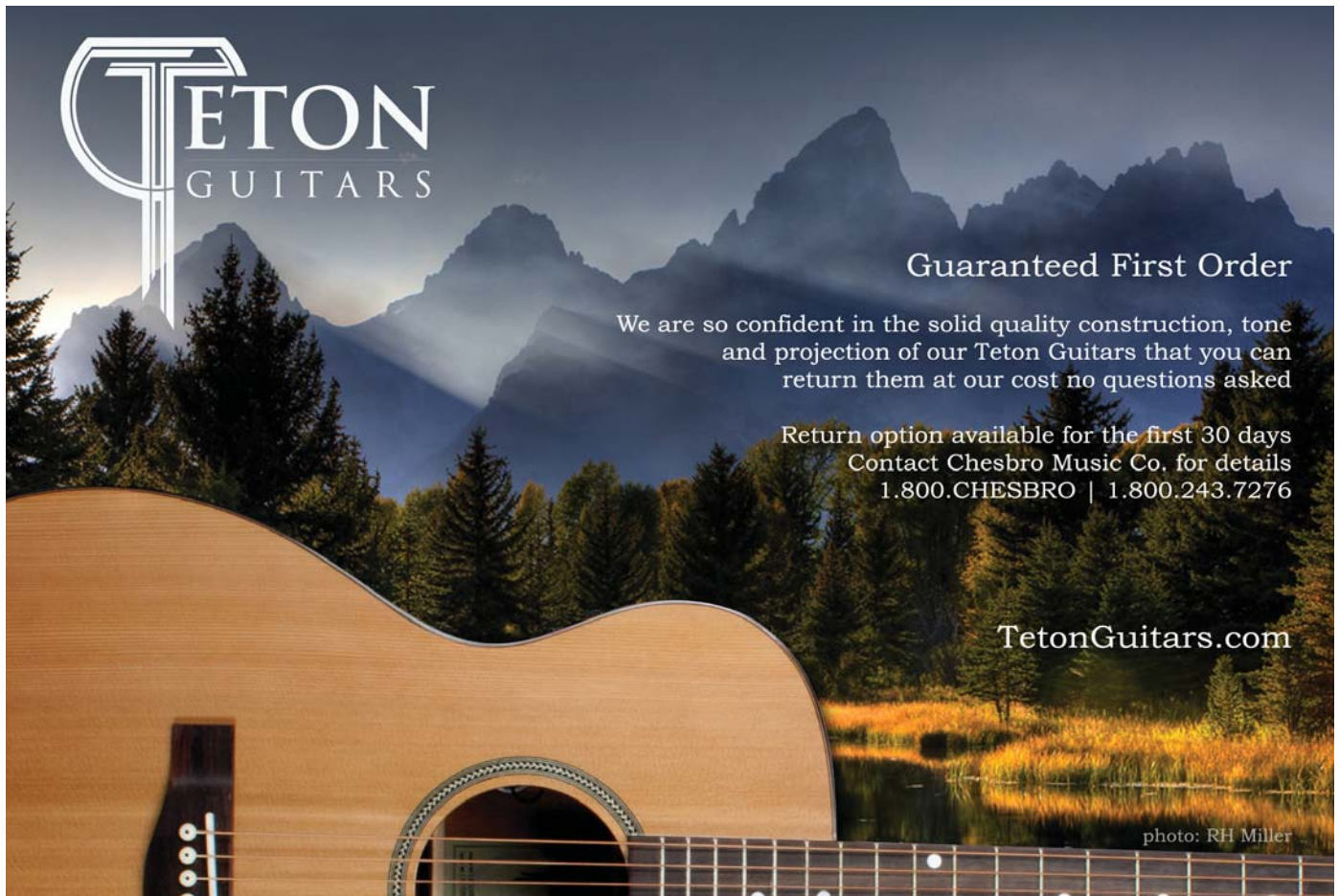
'Dealers rush to the phones when they have a sale coming up or when they've hired an artist and need to fill seats, but they rarely call to ask teachers about their businesses.'

This helped me funnel business referrals to teachers who are actively working with me.

- Free recital space. I decided to make free use of the recital space an exclusive benefit of our partnership program. As the program developed, I chose to leverage recital events with print music specials, coupons and in-store advertising. We even mixed our YouTube videos and video from our piano vendors together and set up a video "pre-roll" to play before each recital.

- Recital DVDs. We purchased an inexpensive digital camcorder and a DVD duplicator so we could record our in-store recitals and provide free DVDs to our member students. The DVDs are Gist-branded, and we make additional copies available for \$5 each.

- Theme recitals. One of my piano teachers suggested that we host a group recital, identify a



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Nan Richerson Educator

➤ A PIANO TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

I moved to Lexington, Ky., in 2009, started a large piano studio, and wanted to join the local Music Teachers Association (MTA) to meet other educators in the area and to become involved in the music community. I found the Bluegrass Area Music Teachers Association on the MTNA website and discovered that meetings were held at Gist Piano Center.

When I first walked into Gist, I was pleased to find an inviting store and a room full of friendly faces. Right before the meeting started, the director of marketing for Gist gave a brief description of P.I.E.

The first time I heard about the program, I was skeptical. I kept wondering what the catch was since there was no fee to join. It sounded too good to be true, and I didn't sign up to be part of it that day.

Over the next few months, however, my skepticism toward P.I.E. began to change. The director of marketing invited me to lunch and asked about my piano studio, the kinds of music and materials I used with students, the specific method books and materials I wanted a store to stock, and the kinds of pianos I used in my studio. During the next few weeks, we exchanged a few phone calls, and I made my second trip to Gist for the following MTA meeting. After that, I decided I wanted my piano studio to be part of the P.I.E. program. It's a decision I don't regret.

The first step in becoming a P.I.E. teacher was notifying the students in my studio that I was going to be part of an exciting, new program. Gist provided me with a letter to send to my students that explained P.I.E., the benefits my students would receive and that there was no cost involved. I requested permission from students through the letter to share their e-mail addresses, home addresses and phone numbers with Gist. My students were assured that they could remove their names and information at any time. I didn't have one student request to not be a part of the program.

During the next two and a half years, my students and I have reaped many benefits from P.I.E. I have a teacher profile on the Gist "find a piano teacher" Web page. It displays a short video clip of me discussing my teaching philosophy, lists my educational background and includes a map to my studio. I have received numerous phone calls and e-mails from interested students saying that they watched my video, found my contact information on the Gist Web page and would like to take lessons.

I hold all of my studio recitals at Gist, and as a P.I.E. teacher, I don't have to pay a fee to reserve Gist's recital hall. The pianos are always tuned prior to each performance. There is a nice stage and 50 comfortable chairs for audience members, and the Gist staff helps with the reception and cleanup afterwards. When my students perform concertos, I am able to request the setup of two pianos in any arrangement that I wish for at no additional fee.

As a member of P.I.E., I get a 15- to 20-percent discount on print music (my students get a 10-percent discount) and a free piano tuning every year.

Also, my students and I enjoy Gist's theme recitals. These wonderful events provide P.I.E. students additional performance opportunities in a fun, relaxed setting. Every October, Gist hosts Halloweekend and goes all out on Halloween decorations in the store and recital hall. Gist provides treats for the students and families at the conclusion of the recital and handles all the organizing, program printing and advertising for the event.

I've had about five students purchase a piano from Gist in the past two years. Each time, I receive a business development grant between \$100-\$200 from Gist. Because of P.I.E., Gist has evolved from simply being a place to purchase a piano into a center for music learning. Because of the warm, positive relationship I have with Gist and its employees, I am comfortable referring my students there since I know Gist has their best interests in mind. Gist's P.I.E. program better serves all parties involved, improves the music community as a whole and ultimately places music education at the center of its business. **MI**

Nan Richerson is a piano teacher in Lexington, Ky.

particular theme and invite our partner students to attend. I budgeted a small amount of money for decorations and snacks.

THE PRICE

I knew that building a promotional plan around the education community would cost money. With some careful budgeting, however, I was able to redirect funds from expensive mass-marketing campaigns, such as radio, TV, newspaper and phone books, into something with a much higher return on investment. Some of our theme recital events only cost us \$250. That's less than the price of a single newspaper ad, and we are guaranteed to get at least 20 families into our store.

I assured the teachers in my area that this program was free. There would never be a membership fee. All I asked for was contact information for their students. This gave me a targeted and steadily growing mailing list to focus my promotional plan around. It also gave me the chance to sell our partnership program to students directly rather than asking a teacher to promote it for me.

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

Once I had an attractive partnership program, I needed a solid, consistent vehicle of communication with member teachers. E-newsletters, social media sites, YouTube and our store blog have been excellent tools to develop and maintain a two-way dialogue with our partner teachers.

Since P.I.E. began in 2009, we've had some pretty dramatic results. Gist Piano Center's P.I.E. program is now the largest piano teacher program in Kentucky. We have 58 member teachers and more than 3,000 students in the

program. We've seen a 300-percent increase in store traffic in both of our Kentucky locations. We're even seeing a huge increase in our theme recital participation, which began with 25 students in 2009 and now averages around 150 players.

But the most exciting trend for us as a piano dealer is the positive trend in referrals. We offer our partner teachers a business development grant for each student buyer they send our way. We've gone from paying a couple of grants per year to at least a few each month. In fact, as I completed the paperwork on a recent piano sale, my client informed me that he was purchasing the piano from our dealership because of our Halloween recital. He felt more comfortable working with us because we demonstrated a commitment to piano education.

As the program continues to grow and develop, we're looking to add new benefits for our members. We've even begun talks with local venues for P.I.E. discounts on concert tickets, private preview showings and even backstage experiences for some of our teachers. We're working with our print music vendors for special gifts and discounts, and we're talking with our banks about special P.I.E. program financing options.

P.I.E. has transformed our teacher relationships and reinvigorated the Kentucky piano business. The economic climate might be crazy, but we're genuinely optimistic about our future. As partners in education, we can make learning the piano an intensely gratifying experience for the next generation of music makers and give music a future in our communities. **MI**

James Harding is the director of marketing and sales at Gist Piano Center.



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THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Here for the Party

Think of your entire store as one big party. Everyone wants an invite. No one wants to be excluded from the crowd. This includes teachers in your music lessons program.

Many times, music retailers complain that their teachers are terrible supporters of the retail side of the business and that teachers advocate shopping online or not buying print music.



Sometimes, a product and brand mix might be partly responsible for this debacle. But for now, let's look at a bigger issue: How do teachers perceive their value at your store? Are they even invited to the party?

Many of our music industry colleagues talk about the inverted pyramid of management. Owner on bottom, management next up, then sales team and, finally, customer at the top. I never see where the music teachers fit into that pyramid. Many of them are independent contractors, but they operate in your stores. They are in direct contact with a large number of your customers.

So, like it or not, they are part of the pyramid. Every interaction your customers have with anyone associated with your store must be positive.

HOST WITH THE MOST

Invite your teachers to the party. Little actions can keep them contributing and fitting into your management plan.

Say "hello" when they arrive to teach each day. Engage them in conversation to let them know they are important to you and your store. Make sure their lesson rooms are ready for students. Be sure chairs, stands, amps and other equipment that often "wanders out" is set up and ready to go. Chat with

them about their student load.

Get their opinion on print music. Purchase some books as samples. Pass them around to the teachers, and get their input. They know their students — and their students are a large part of your customer base.

Invite them to sit in on product reps' presentations. The

teachers will learn more about your products and feel more involved in selling those products.

Attend your teachers' gigs.

Don't you feel good when people show up to see you play? Showing up at teacher gigs also gives you and your staff great material to talk with students and parents about when promoting lessons.

Keep your teachers in the loop. Let them know what's happening at the store with student events, new products and industry trade magazine articles. Ask your teachers for leads on what their students are looking for. Create a retail "looking for" card the teacher can fill out.

Give back to your teachers.

Provide them with an employee discount on their purchases.

Train new staff on the importance of the lesson program and recruiting new students. If your teachers don't get support from them, they will treat your retail efforts as optional.

Take these steps, and you'll be amazed by the effect they have on teachers. Your teachers will become a valuable asset to the success of your music store. So invite them to the party, and get started. **MI**

Pete Gamber is an educational sales representative for Music & Arts in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., and the former owner of Alta Loma Music. He welcomes questions and comments at pgamber@musicarts.com.

'Little actions can keep teachers contributing and fitting into your management plan.'

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BY ZACH PHILLIPS
PHOTO BY STEVEN MECKLER

FAST, FURIOUS

*How Michael and Leslie Faltin of
Instrumental Music Center control
skyrocketing sales and a bustling new store*

GROWTH

Instrumental Music Center's print department is overflowing with horns.

The Tucson, Ariz., retailer has taken in six pallets of new trumpets, saxophones, trombones and flutes, and the back room can't contain them. The order marks the company's largest vendor shipment to date: \$100,000 in Yamaha B&O instruments for the fall rental season, according to Leslie Faltin, who co-owns the full-line dealership with her husband, Michael. And they may order another \$80,000 in horns this summer.

"I could still run out of instruments, even with both of those releases," Leslie said.

She's a little nervous, but in a good way. Right now, the Faltins are dealing with the kind of problem every business owner dreams of: fast, furious growth.

Last year, overall sales doubled at Instrumental Music Center. On top of that, first quarter revenues for 2012 doubled again. This doesn't even account for the surge in business at a brand-new second store.

Not surprisingly, the Faltins are cautious about growth, especially since some of this new business fell into their laps due to a recovering Tucson economy and a few competitors closing.

"Just as easily as it's gone up, it could go down," Leslie said. "I don't think it will, though. I think things have turned, and they're fundamentally better. But there's that fear of growth — that managing of growth."

In a way, the Faltins have prepared for this moment. Since opening Instrumental Music Center in 1999, they've been obsessed with making small daily improvements to create a company that's adaptable to the whims of any business climate. Case in point: From 2006 to 2009 — the worst of the economic recession — annual sales plummeted from \$1.8 million to \$800,000. But according to Michael, he didn't lay off a single employee. Instead, several got raises.

"We're worthy of new business," Michael said with a grin. "It's not because other retailers suck. It's because we're good at what we do, and we give a damn."

'WE DON'T HAVE TO MAKE DECISIONS'

The Faltins opened Instrumental Music Center as a repair and used gear shop because, as



Michael put it, "There was an opportunity in Tucson for something better." Following two buildouts, they expanded their flagship store to 5,000 square feet, and this past August, they opened the second store, also in Tucson. Leslie characterized their customer base as "moms with minivans." ("We've got awesome customers.") The company's now diversified in school music, combo and lessons, and 95 percent of its income is generated in-store, with the rest coming from Amazon.com, eBay and Shopatron sales.

"One of the things I want to impress is that we do a lot of different things," Michael said.

Given the company's recent growth spurt, they're about to do even more. If you wonder how the Faltins handle the load, spend an hour with them. They're list-makers. They constantly talk about ways to tweak their business. Most of all, they use the word "mechanisms" a lot.

"Our store is built with mechanisms because mechanisms take

the pressure off of us," Michael said. "We don't have to make decisions. The mechanism handles the process."

In fact, they've created mechanisms for everything from employee training to placing special orders. These can be as simple as assigning someone to clean the company's PT Cruiser on a specific date each month and as complex as fine-tuning inventory levels. Nowadays, the mechanisms are also essential for keeping Instrumental Music Center's growth under control.

"Our job then becomes basically walking through this group of mechanisms and checking each one to make sure they're all functional," Michael said. "It becomes fairly easy at that point. And then [Leslie and I] get to be creative. We get to think, 'OK, what else are we going to do this month?'"

PERFECT INVENTORY LEVELS

Most mechanisms are delegated, but not all. Every Monday, for instance, you'll find

the Faltins holed up in their office placing vendor orders. Instrumental Music Center's ordering is limited to the first day of the week — and only the first day of the week. Even special orders are handled on Mondays, unless a customer agrees to pay a premium for faster delivery. And according to Leslie, clients rarely object to this policy.

"We only need a week's worth of stock, honestly, in order to satisfy the week," she said.

Sticking to a strict purchasing timetable has saved Instrumental Music Center in many ways — from time to shipping costs. Still, it's only one of several mechanisms in the company's inventory-management process, a key element in controlling growth.

"The No. 1 thing that I think defines profitability is how you buy," said Michael, who noted that Instrumental Music Center turns its inventory on average three times a year. (The industry average is roughly 1.7 times annually, according to NAMM.)

In 2005, Michael and Leslie made a pivotal decision to hire the consulting services of MI retail financial guru Alan Friedman, a partner with Friedman, Kannenberg & Co. "He saved us 10 grand in our first year," Leslie said.

Through him, they learned three critical questions to ask themselves when considering whether to carry a product: Can I sell it? Can I make money on it? When do I have to pay for it?

To determine whether they can sell a product, Michael relies partly on instinct. "I know what I like," he said. Still, he admitted that he recently spent "days and days" poring over price sheets and reviews on YouTube before placing a hefty Ibanez order, which Leslie amended with a

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Plus, mechanisms help them predict what will sell. The company has automatic minimum and maximum stock levels set in its Tri-Tech AIMsi inventory management system, based on past sales histories. These levels get adjusted depending on the time of year and market conditions.

"In the worst days of 2008 and 2009, when things were really, really slow, I would reduce the levels a little bit," Leslie said. "So instead of having three of a particular item in stock, I'd have two. That was one cost-

savings measure that helped get us through it. Instead of reducing the number of hooks, we just reduced the depth of the hook."

If the Faltins are unsure about an item, they'll only order one or two pieces. "I think [retailers] tend to want to jump in the pool without really testing it to see if there is demand," she said, cautioning against this temptation.

To determine whether the Faltins can make money on a product — and pay for it on time — they'll sometimes rely on such formulas as gross margin return on investment (GMROI). "By minimizing

inventory that doesn't turn, maximizing profits and selling, at any price, inventory that has had a birthday, this number will be bigger," Leslie said.

And if product doesn't sell in time, the Faltins have no qualms about cutting bait. Last year, Instrumental Music Center blew out \$15,000 of stagnant inventory in a single day with a rummage sale. Employees hung fliers around town to promote the event, and slow-moving product was displayed in a parking lot tent. A pair of damaged high-end congas sold for a mere \$150, but Leslie said

they were an anomaly.

"It's very rare that [product] goes below cost," she added. "Most of the time, we'll be able to sell it or even sell it a couple bucks above cost, mark it as a sale."

Excess stock also gets blown out on eBay or, in the case of horns, moved to the company's rental pool. "Get something out of them," Michael said. "Clear up those hooks, and put something on there that moves."

Slow-turning items that add panache to the showroom are written off as an advertising expense. "We have a \$4,000 sax on our wall," Leslie said. "We never sell it, but because people can try it without driving all across town and then chose to buy the \$3,000 sax, the \$4,000 sax becomes more of an advertising expense. It never turns but enables our other saxes to sell more easily."

"The Faltins carry the perfect mix and amount of inventory," Friedman said. "It's something we rarely see in this industry."

SECOND STORES ON THE CHEAP

Tight inventory control has also made it possible for the Faltins to open their second store, which, ironically, Michael's trying to avoid right now.

"I need to stay away from it, so it can get strong on its own," he said. "The store has to be a living, breathing thing in its own right."

It's a gutsy move. A year ago, the Faltins' advisors tried talking them out of expanding, citing the classic litany of objections: second stores aren't as profitable as first stores, the owner can't be in two places at once and so on. They've since changed their tune.

"[They] applauded us later for doing it on the cheap," Michael said.

Proven Promos

Setting up mechanisms frees up Michael and Leslie Faltin to work on, not just in, their business. They personally handle Instrumental Music Center's marketing because, as Leslie said, they "want their image a certain way." The following six promotional ideas have paid big dividends for them.

Free band folders for students. Branded band folders cost Instrumental Music Center roughly 60 cents per unit, and the company printed up 6,000 folders during the past year. According to Leslie, they're among her store's most powerful advertising tools. "That folder's in 6,000 kids' hands," she said.

Teacher rewards. "We [reward] our private teachers when they sell something in the store," Michael said. "Ten percent of whatever's sold goes back toward them in cash, basically."

The "new and notable" board. The Faltins appropriated this idea from Amazon.com, which offers customers "new and notable" suggestions. "So I created a new and notable board at our store, and it talks about whatever's new that's come in and whether it's specific to a market or not," Leslie said, adding that this board also gets posted in lesson studios.

Print music stickers. Each title in the company's print music department gets an Instrumental Music Center sticker affixed inside the cover. "I got 10,000 [stickers] for about \$300," Leslie said. "It's kind of a hassle to stick them on each book, but I've gotten customers directly as a result of that."

Laminated student name tags. "Students fill out a colorful name tag that we laminate for their instrument," Leslie said. "One side has store info; the other side is the student's. This low-cost, durable way of helping students find their instruments is also a fantastic advertisement. We've seen kids walking down the street to school and can easily pick out which students have gotten name tags from IMC."

Band director shirts. "The first thing we ever spent money on for marketing was band director shirts," Michael said. "What's better than somebody wearing your logo right on his chest? It cost us, what, \$30 for a shirt? How much does it cost for a radio ad? \$4,000?" — Z.P.

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That meant scoring what he called “a great lease” last May, during the real estate market’s low point. He and Leslie discovered a 2,500-square-foot space on the north end of town, next to the Tucson Mall — an area they considered underserved. The landlord sweetened the deal by taking care of the build-out, new carpeting and necessary permits. The Faltins then did the painting and slat

wall installation themselves. Several fixtures, including the cabinetry, came from Ikea. Leslie also contacted suppliers and asked for their support. “We said, ‘We’re opening a second store. Can you send me some horns on approval?’” The suppliers agreed.

The result is a sleek showroom that’s designed to produce maximum profits per square foot. The store is half the size of In-

strumental Music Center’s flagship location and stocked with items yielding only the highest GMROI. (Cymbals were recently reduced because they didn’t turn fast enough.) The store also doubles as a drop-off point for rentals and repairs.

“It’s set up well because I wanted no more than two people working there at a time,” Michael said. “We really had to reduce overhead for it to be profitable.”

A big reason that’s possible is Ivan Rzeslawski, the store’s not-so-secret weapon. Rzeslawski is Instrumental Music Center’s top salesperson and a co-manager of the new store. “He could sell ice to Eskimos, and he’d do it with a smile and everybody would love him,” Leslie joked. Being Spanish-speaking, Rzeslawski helps attract the untapped Hispanic market. Michael Santander, a former employee of the now-defunct Beaver’s Band Box, also co-manages the store so Rzeslawski can be on the floor as much as possible.

“I calculated that it takes \$666 in sales to keep that place open every day,” Michael said. “They’re averaging \$800–\$1,500 a day.”

At least four times a week, an employee from the flagship store is delegated to run a replenishment report with the company’s Tri-Tech system. That person pulls the needed inventory and hauls it to the second location in the company car. This particular mechanism left an impression on Daniel Jobe, a fellow consultant at Alan Friedman’s firm.

Michael explained: “He said, ‘That’s one of the best things you can do to save time. It takes you off the hook from having to run across town, which would take up all your time and derail your day.’”

Friedman noted that for second stores to work, three key elements must be in place. “There has to be the capital in place, the systems in place and someone trustworthy to manage the store,” he said. “Michael and Leslie have all of those things in place.”

And for the moment, they’re not interested in taking the concept to the next level. First priority is getting those horns cleared out of the print music department.

“To be honest, the mechanisms we create are the blueprints for creating a larger chain than what we operate,” Michael said. “To add another store, or two or three, would be simple at this point, but it’s not on our to-do list.” **MI**

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NASMD'S GOLD

The 50th anniversary of school music retailing's biggest conference delivers great strategies, techniques



1. From left: Senseney Music's Brenda Rohr, Jim Mareda and Lori Supinie; 2. Portman Music Superstore's Chip Lehman rolls the dice during the closing "Rat Pack"-inspired gala; 3. Mississippi Music's Dex Johnson encourages the crowd to join in the Road Rep Olympics; 4. From left: Buffet Group's Chris Coppinger; Menchey Music's Glen Phillips, Ken Husler and Corey Gochenaur; and KHS America's Andy Strayer; 5. Eckroth Music's Mathew Schirado and Tamara Kautzman

Since its inception, the National Association of School Music Dealers (NASMD) has kept the recipe simple for its annual conventions — gather the top school music retailers in North America for a weekend of sharing best practices and killer strategies for improving business back home.

The 50th annual NASMD Convention proved that this cornerstone principle continues to deliver. The association's programmers presented nearly 40 sessions on everything from using key performance indicators to succession planning to creating profitable lesson programs.

The NASMD board also pulled out all the stops on one of the organization's other mantras: make it fun. From the opening cocktail hour to a "Rat Pack"-themed closing party, dealers were treated to a combination of learning and smiling. Even the convention's keynote speaker, author and humorist Scott Christopher, discussed "The Levity Effect" as an important business-building tool.

But this year's NASMD also put its legacy of retailers learning from retailers on full display. In the session "Legends of NASMD," Joe Lamond, NAMM's president and CEO, interviewed a variety of school music retailing luminaries to find out why NASMD has been so successful.

"We had a small group [of retailers sharing ideas] in Chicago with about four dealers," said George Quinlan Sr. of Burr

Ridge, Ill.-based Quinlan & Fabish. "We traded instruments and what we could do for each other. But when NASMD started [in 1962], we just ran with it. NASMD was the groundwork where we found things."

"I was really blessed during that time in my life that I was able to spend time with John Majeski [*Music Trades* magazine], Vito Pascucci [G. Leblanc], Armand Zildjian [Avedis Zildjian] and Jack Maher [*DownBeat*, *UpBeat Daily* and *Music Inc.* magazines]," said Bobby Scheiwiller, founder of American Music Group, which is now part of the Music & Arts chain. "I came to these conventions, and I sat with them and I learned more [about what was really happening]."

"My first convention was in 1969 at the Abbey in Wisconsin," said Warner Paige, former owner of Paige's Music in Indianapolis. "I was a young guy, and my father didn't think [school music] was the right thing to do. It was a Ludwig rep, Bob Southey, who came knocking on the door and said, 'You should do this. You should be in this business.' So, I went, and it changed my life."

This year's event drew 371 attendees, a 15-percent increase over the 2011 convention. Overall membership in NASMD also increased by 5 percent over 2011.

Here, *Music Inc.* highlights some of the best from this year's convention. The 51st installment will be held March 13–16, 2013, in San Antonio. **MI**

— BY FRANK ALKYER



1. From left: Yamaha's Garth Gilman, All County Music's Fred Schiff and Yamaha's David Suter; 2. From left: NAMM's Dan Del Fiorentino, West Music's Steve West and Amro Music's C.J. Averwater; 3. From left: Elefante Music's Michele Stivalo and Stefani Healey with Meyer Music's Mitzi Meyer-Phelan and Pat Phelan; 4. Buddy Rodger's Music's Jo Ann and Bill Harvey; 5. From left: Musical Innovations' Tracy Leenman, Gemeinhardt's Jennifer Baunoch-Crowell and David Pirtle, and flutist Ali Ryerson; 6. From left: International Music Café's Jeff Saltzman, Ted Brown Music's Whitney Grisaffi, Summerhays Music's Scott Summerhays, and Tarpley Music's John and Shelli Tarpley; 7. From left: Musical

Innovations' Tracy Leenman, Hal Leonard's Doug Lady, Summerhays Music's Kris Behrens and Scott Summerhays, and Hal Leonard's David Jahnke; 8. Past NASMD presidents, from left: Greg Way (formerly with St. John's Music), Paige's Music's Mark Goff and Zeagler Music's Grayson Zeagler; 9. From left: Mississippi Music's Dex Johnson, Ashley Johnson, Stan Wellborn and Rosi Johnson; 10. Quinlan & Fabish's George Quinlan Sr. (left) with NAMM's Joe Lamond; 11. From left: *Music Inc.*'s Kevin Maher with Dansr's Greg Grieme and Michael Skinner; 12. West Music's John Feldman (left) and Nate Ersig; 13. From left: Amro Music's Pat and D'Ann Averwater, with Grigg's Music's Vivan and Doug Davis; 14. From left: Menchey Music's Lara Menchey, Paige's Music's Sandy and

Mark Goff, and Menchey Music's Joel Menchey, who's also NASMD president; 15. From left: Peterson Electro-Musical Products' Beth and Pat Bovenizer and Quinlan & Fabish's George, Cindy and Paige Quinlan; 16. Williamson Music's Mark Williamson (left) with Joel Menchey; 17. Joel Menchey presents a plaque to outgoing NASMD board member Peter Sides and his son; 18. From left: KHS America's Dana Bell, Andy Strayer, Mike Robinson and Tabor Stamper; 19. From left: Eckroth Music's Jeff Eckroth, Gator Cases' Crystal Morris, AIMM's John Anning, The Company Rocks' Danny Rocks and Gator Cases' Ken Fuente; 20. Joel Menchey presents a plaque to outgoing board member Barry Draisen of Draisen Edwards Music

THE KEY TO DRIVING PERFORMANCE

George Hines said he believes in universal laws. One of his favorites is, “If it’s written down, it’s real.”

And that’s why the founder and president of George’s Music invests in the concept of creating, writing down and tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) throughout his nine-store chain in Pennsylvania and Florida.

“When we talk about KPIs, every area has them,” Hines told retailers during his NASMD session, “Using KPIs to Drive Growth.” “The trick is to understand what it is you want and create performance indicators to drive that.”

Hines noted that the need for KPIs stems from the fact that retail has changed so rapidly. Since 2008, he said, retail is dealing with a new economy



where everyone is expected to do more with less.

Hines advocates striving for clarity in everything he and his staff do at George’s. He often asks his store managers and key salespeople what they want. If they answer “to increase sales

by 10 percent,” Hines questions whether they have a clear vision of their goal.

“But if you say you want to increase sales by 7.8 percent, and it means this much money, then I’d believe you a little more,” he added. “It’s the clar-

ity, the specificity, that allows you to achieve. Understanding what you want is important.”

CREATING KPIS

Hines has a growing list of KPIs in every department.

“If you’re in finance, you’re going to have finance goals,” he said. “If you’re in sales, you’re going to have sales goals. If you’re an owner, you’re probably going to have profit and operational goals. You’re going to have things that are very important to you in each of your positions. Understanding what you want and what that goal is is what’s going to allow us to pick a good KPI.”

For example, in sales, Hines and his team carefully track two key indicators in every store. First, he measures the number of people per day that come into the store by using a simple counter at the front door of each location. And second is transactions per day, which checks the store’s conversion rate on customers coming through the store.

“I’ve been able to prove that if I get more people in the door, my sales will go up accordingly,” Hines said. “I tested it for three months at one of my stores just to see the impact.

“So, if I can get a 10-percent increase in the people per day and I can get about another 5 or 10 percent on conversion, it’s exponentially a lot more money.” **MI**

CREATING SALES KPIS

The following chart tracks several sales KPIs that George’s Music might track at one of its stores — from people per day to tickets per day to gross margin percentage. The first column shows the goal, which is established and refined each month at each store.

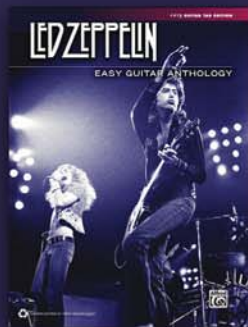
KPI	GOAL	ACTUAL	DIFFERENCE
People Per Day	9,300	9,138	-162
Tickets Per Day	3,720	3,780	+ 60
Conversion Percentage	40%	41.4%	+1.4%
Items Per Ticket	3.2	3.3	+.1
Gross Sales	\$204,600	\$212,625	+\$8,025
Gross Margin	42.1%	42.3%	+.1%

Led Zeppelin

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YOU'RE HIRED!

At White House of Music in Waukeasha, Wis., teachers in its private lessons program are hired as part-time employees rather than independent contractors.

During his session, "A Lesson on Profitable Lesson Programs," Chris White, president of White House of Music, discussed why he thinks it's the better, more profitable approach in teaching his 1,500-plus private-lesson students each week.

White said his company has hired teachers as employees since the 1970s when his uncle Jerry White heard about the concept at an NASMD convention.

But the key to the company's success has been getting buy-in from the sales department and having a manager or A-level sales professional serve as lessons coordinator at each of the dealership's five locations. That coordinator recruits students, matches them with teachers, ar-

ranges schedules and handles communications between students and teachers.

EMPLOYEES VS. CONTRACTORS

"I'm a proponent of saying teachers should be a part-time employee," White said, noting that White House instructors work up to 30 hours per week. "The benefit to you is that you're going to get a 35–50 percent gross margin on this service item.

"We pay [our teachers] once a month. Most will get 60 percent of the tuition rate for the month. So, on an \$80 per month tuition rate, that's \$48 per student. About \$12 a half-hour lesson, or \$24 an hour, is what they're paid."

White acknowledged that some teachers can charge more, but this method and price point works for the majority of the company's instructors and the parents of beginner- and intermediate-level students.



Chris White

White's philosophy on teachers as employees was solidified about five years ago when his company purchased a competitor, one that rented lesson rooms to its teachers. Before switching over to the White House system, those locations charged rent of \$3 per student, at best, with some studios being rented for as little as \$1.

"They had 200 students at one location, four lessons in a

month," he said. "So, their revenue was \$2,400.

"Under our employment formula, you have \$80 tuition, 200 students, at a 40 percent margin. Gross sales were \$16,000 per month. The margin on that was \$6,400. But you also have to match some FICA taxes. Fine, match \$6,400, down to \$5,000. It's still double. And that \$5,000 is more than the rent at that location."

White added that the \$2,400 was even less due to students missing classes and teachers — on the honor system — not reporting all of their lessons taught. "There's no way I can compete with that," he said. "So, we moved on."

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

White House of Music also charges a one-time \$20 registration fee, which White said more than offsets expenses that arise from creating welcome packets, brochures and advertising, as well as administering the program for new students.

"Sign up 25 new students, and you've got \$500 in revenue," he said. "Sign up 50, and you've got \$1,000 that can offset some expenses."

Also, his sales staff creates contests and special displays for the lessons department. Recently, staff selected one SKU, created a display near the lesson rooms and tracked it for 10 days. The result was an additional \$2,000 in sales from that item. **MI**

THE PITCH

During his presentation, White demonstrated how each salesperson at White House of Music presents the store's lesson program. Here's the pitch.

"We've got a great program. It's based on a monthly tuition of \$80, and for that, you're going to receive four monthly lessons — one per week at your designated time, one-on-one with a teacher. We'll chart a course of study so that you're succeeding and enjoying music. In the case that your day shows up five times in a month, hey, that's a bonus lesson. That's there also to offset any might-miss days

because you're coming to Orlando, and you're going to have fun here, or if someone is ill in the family. You're going to get a bonus lesson. Truthfully, if you have perfect attendance, you're going to get about a month's worth of free lessons in a year.

"So it's set up on a monthly budget of \$80. We'll get you set up with one of our lesson coordinators. They'll set you up with the kind of teacher you might want and the times that work in your schedule.

"There's a one-time registration fee of \$20, and we'll get your welcome packet ready and your time slot on the calendar."

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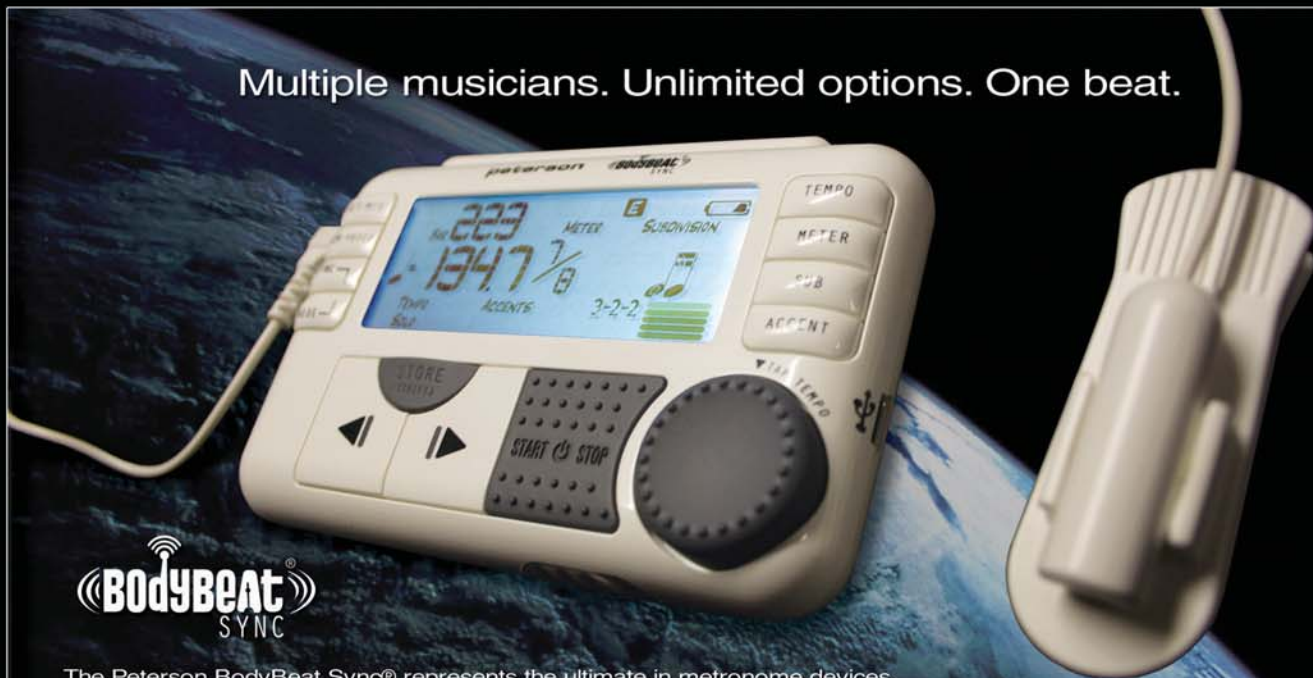
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START PLANNING NOW

When it comes to succession planning, now is always the right time, according to John DelGrego, a managing partner in accounting firm Meyer, Harrison & Pia.

An expert in valuing businesses and succession-plan counseling, DelGrego said the key to keeping a company afloat during times of trouble or successfully preparing its transfer to the next generation of ownership comes directly from planning.

For example, what happens when an owner gets divorced?

"I've seen divorce sink a lot of businesses," DelGrego said during the session "Succession Planning: A Road Map for the Future." "When you get divorced, the courts want to split marital assets. And when they split marital assets, they want to determine the value of your business. In many cases, if your business is your greatest asset, there's no money or other assets to offset it to a spouse. If you've got a business in this column that you own and nothing else, then the court's going to say, 'Your ex-spouse should get half the value of that.' If you don't have the cash to buy out your ex-spouse, then they're going to potentially give your spouse shares."

In response to this potential danger, DelGrego said buy-sell agreements are essential for any business that has multiple owners. Beyond that, he noted that prenuptial agreements are a must for family businesses, especially those with several generations working together.

"For a lot of us, the prenup



John DelGrego

is a little too late — we're already married and already have our business," he said. "But if you're a multigenerational business with kids coming into the business and getting married, you need to have these children sign prenups, so these shares don't revert to non-family members, which absolutely can happen."

DelGrego also discussed catastrophe planning for the potential death or disability of the owner. He said when it comes to death, getting the proper life insurance policy might be the only succession plan a business needs.

"If you can't [get life insurance], you need to supplement that with a number of things," DelGrego said. "One option would be to create a buy-sell agreement that would allow you to be bought out by your partners. Or you need a successor or management team in place that could run the business in your absence. This applies for death or disability."

"That's the most important key here. As you're running your business, you should be phasing

yourself out. That's really the goal. So, as you phase yourself out, the management team runs the business on your behalf, and you [or your family] can just sit back and collect the dividend."

SELLING THE BUSINESS

In terms of succession planning, DelGrego said there are six primary purchasers for any business: three internal buyers and three external buyers.

The internal buyers are employees, family members, and co-owners or partners. The external buyers are financial groups, competitors or going public. "As far as most of your companies — small, privately held music groups — are concerned, financial groups and public offerings are not viable options," DelGrego said. "So, externally, you've got competitors or synergistic buyers."

From his perspective, competitors who see a synergistic opportunity in buying your company might fetch the best price.

"Synergistic buyers are buyers who feel that a particular

business would complement theirs and that combining the two would result in new customers, lower costs and other advantages," DelGrego said. "So a synergistic buyer might come in and say, 'OK, your business is generating X in cash flow, but if I owned this business, I may be able to cut costs, eliminate certain overhead costs and eliminate departments like accounting because I already have one. I may be able to increase gross profit margins because I can buy cheaper. So, I have more bottom-line cash flow owning this business than you do. Therefore, I may be willing, as a synergistic buyer, to pay a premium for that.'"

As for internal buyers, selling to family or employees might not yield the highest sale price, but generally, it's a clean deal at a fair price. But don't be surprised if you're financing a good portion of the purchase. "A big chunk of the money coming from these sales comes from the seller," DelGrego said.

The advantage of a straight sale to an internal buyer is that it's usually a clean deal. You determine a price. You determine a deal, and you're done. The disadvantages are that it's not a tax-advantageous sale, DelGrego noted. The seller pays capital gains tax, and the buyer is purchasing stock in the company with after-tax dollars.

"There's also a big risk of collection," he said. "If you sell your business to employees, and they're not qualified to run it, and you've taken back a big chunk of paper, you might have taken some collateral in the business." **MI**

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BEST OF THE REST

OTHER GREAT IDEAS FROM THIS YEAR'S NASMD CONVENTION

OF VPNS & EGG SHAKERS

During the "Best Ideas for Road Reps" session, Jeff Mozingo, owner of St. Louis-based Mozingo Music, suggested two ideas at the extremes — high-tech road rep tools and the egg shaker as a primal sales tool.

"If you use Tri-Tech, my road reps have laptops out there, and they use the VPN, a virtual private network we can put them through," Mozingo said. "They can be on the road with their laptops and know what inventory is available immediately. They can write up bills immediately. They have wireless printers. They can print out the bills right there and then. It's a very, very good idea, if you use Tri-Tech."

"The second idea that I have is that I do sound clinics. If you have iPads, smartphones, whatever, go to YouTube and type in 'egg shaker.' I am the king of the egg shaker. I love the egg shaker. It's my favorite instrument on the planet. Watch me do an egg shaker routine. It's 46 seconds. I go to schools with my road reps and tell them, 'This is what I offer.' It's called the 'Science of Sound.' You can go to our website, mozingomusic.com, and see it. I do a shaker routine. I do all the percussion instruments and let them see and hear what vibrations are, how sound is created."

"I go through the science of sound and go through the egg shaker routine. Then, I have something for them. I say, 'If you come to my store, I have a free gift for you.' It's an egg shaker. It's cheap. It's easy to give away. And when they come into the store, their parents are there, and it's lesson time. It is private-lesson time. It's time to rent an instrument. It's time to buy an instrument."



BECOMING THE SOURCE

Bobby Powell wants Greenville, S.C.-based Musical Innovations to be an information source for band directors.

"We've had three band directors who could not find bus drivers to get to concert festivals," Powell said. "Their principal said, 'You're not going unless you find someone in a day.' So, I now have sent out a list of available bus drivers in the area. While that's not selling reeds or instruments, I am able to say, 'Hey, remember when I helped you out with so and so?'"



USB, THE SUPER BROCHURE

Bill Harvey, co-owner of Buddy Rodgers Music in Cincinnati, said the Music Achievement Council now delivers the organization's products on USB drives instead of on ink-and-paper brochures.

"Teachers walk out with a USB drive with the Music Achievement Council logo on it," he said. "And on that drive is a greeting from Marcia [Neel]. There's the full recruitment and retention guide. There's the 'Tips For Success' guide. There's a 'First Performance' video, complete with testimonials from parents, students and teachers about how wonderful that program is. And we also include examples of 'Tips For Success,' the video project. When you get a resource like this, you don't toss it out. The response has been wonderful."



COLLECTIONS RESPONSIBILITY

During a session on "Credit & Collections Policies," Jeff Eckroth, owner of North Dakota-based Eckroth Music, said taking responsibility is key to success in collections.

"As an owner, take responsibility for this whole process," he said. "It's probably the biggest part of your business. It's the reason you borrow all that money and the reason you have all these people who owe you money. It's amazing what can happen. I've seen companies that have gone from 10 percent delinquencies to under 2 percent."



GETTING SMART (PHONE) ANSWERS



When Matt Benson's on the road for Paige's Music of Indianapolis, he sometimes runs into a director having trouble with a broken or missing part. Benson can take a photo with his smartphone and even draw an arrow to the part, then send the photo to his repair department for advice. Beyond that, he's found the phone's video function to be a lifesaver for directors who can't figure out how to put together instruments, such as percussion with mounts.

"It's really helpful to capture a video," he said during the "Best Ideas for Road Reps" session. "If a director comes up and says, 'Hey, I have a question about this. Can you tell me how this mounts here with this?' The director doesn't have time to pick up the phone, call the percussion department, send an e-mail and describe his problems in putting something together. It's so much easier to take a video of that."

For example, he showed a video of a drum stand that the director was having problems setting up. Benson shot a video and e-mailed it to the percussion department. The department immediately sent a video back, so he could set up the drum properly.

WRITE TO SUCCEED

During his session on "Taking Control of Your Outlook E-mail Inbox," Danny Rocks pointed out that knowing how to organize e-mail is essential.

"The key to effective business communication, whether it's in writing or whether it's spoken, is not what you want to say," he explained. "It's what you want the reader to think, to do or to remember."

LEGENDS OF NASMD



During Joe La-mond's "Legends of NASMD" session, Paul Heid summed up what many young "sons of bosses" go through when attending NASMD.

"All of us worked for our fathers," he said. "If you didn't come back with some ideas that put money in the cash register, you didn't get to go to Florida. It's not only the ideas but the fact that you get people to say, 'Yeah, you're doing things right.' You bounce ideas off of people."

GIVE US THE BENEFITS

During a session on "Everything I Know, I Learned at NASMD," Tracy Leenman, owner of Greenville, S.C.-based Musical Innovations, and other retailers asked suppliers for more and better product information.

"When you've got road reps going out, the amount of product knowledge in our industry is overwhelming," she said. "With one clarinet company, you used to go on their website and no matter what the model was, the first thing they'd say about every clarinet was '17 keys, six rings.' OK, that's like saying, 'I'm selling a car, and it has four tires.' I don't want to know it has a 0.576 bore. I want to know it has a 0.576 bore because that will give you this."

"Every feature has to have a benefit that means something to the player or the band director. Otherwise, it doesn't really help us."



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PROMOTIONS & PRO RENTALS

P Mauriat's retail-friendly promotions and pro-rental program's success have boosted the young saxophone (and recently trumpet) manufacturer's business over the past few years, putting the company on the map among larger suppliers.

And Craig Denny, brand manager for P. Mauriat, attributes much of that success to P. Mauriat's focus on its dealer base.

DEALER CUSTOMIZATION

One promotion P. Mauriat recently introduced offers select dealers a saxophone that isn't normally marketed to them and pairs it with accessories in a custom package.

"Because St. Louis Music [P. Mauriat's parent company] is a distribution company, we have access to some of the best accessories that you can get," Denny said. This includes wares from such large accessory suppliers as BG, Zonda, Vandoren and D'Addario.

"I personally work with the dealers to figure out what should be in the package and what they know they can sell," Denny added. "They know their customers a lot better than we do, and they know what they are looking for."

P. Mauriat is also offering a second-quarter promotion that's aimed at its customers and music retailers. Customers who purchase an alto or



Craig Denny

How the young P. Mauriat has boosted its business and made a name for itself

soprano between now and July 1 will receive a \$75 mail-in rebate. Anyone who purchases a tenor or trumpet will receive a \$100 mail-in rebate, and all baritone purchases will receive \$250 rebate.

Plus, the company is also providing a \$25 spiff to any salesperson who sells an alto or soprano. For tenors or trumpets, salespeople will receive \$50, and for baritones, they will earn \$100. Authorized dealers qualify for the program with a buy-in of two instruments.

PROGRESSIVE PRO RENTAL

P. Mauriat has also carved out a niche in the pro-rental business. These rentals are available to students using intermediate or step-up instruments.

"Pro rent is a program that works very well for dealers who already have a robust student rental business," Denny said. "The key here is to address the parents after year one or, at the latest, year two. This keeps a dealer's student rental inventory from being too beat up and minimizes the rental credit used toward the rental of the intermediate horn."

While some professionals use these instruments, Denny said pro-rent customers are generally involved in a school music program and planning to play through middle and high school.

About a dozen dealers now

use P. Mauriat in their horn-rental programs, and Denny said he expects that number to continue to rise.

David Krogan, general manager of Rieman Music in Des Moines, Iowa, has seen the brand begin to grow in his area. "After about a year of renting P. Mauriat, we are continuing to build the name in our market," Krogan said.

For P. Mauriat, the pro-rent program has yielded residual sales.

"The Le Bravo line of saxophones is priced to slot in this program perfectly," Denny said. "There are also other opportunities within the line to use models on a rental basis. This should only grow as more dealers develop this type of program for their customers."

P. Mauriat has begun to pro-rent its burgeoning trumpet line after releasing it nearly two years ago.

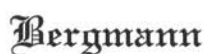
"The 655 series trumpet is a great option for a pro-rent program and fits in well on price and features compared to other trumpets in the category," Denny said.

Be it trumpets or saxophones, Denny said he predicts this year's rental season to be strong.

"Last year, it was very strong despite the shaky economy. I think this year it is only going to continue." **MI**

— BY KATIE KAILUS

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SELLING STAR POWER

One year ago, Gemeinhardt looked like a totally different company.

As its Director of Marketing Jennifer Baunoch noted, the flute brand had become “simply one of the names” under its parent company, Gemstone. Plus, Gemeinhardt faced an impending sale to Angel Industries (which was finalized in June 2011), a change in company leadership and a downsized staff.

“Our dealers were quite concerned, as were we,” Baunoch said.

But a year later, the Elkhart, Ind.-based company has bounced back. And one key reason is its ongoing partnership with famed flutist Ali Ryerson.

BUILDING A NAME BRAND

Ryerson is no stranger to Gemeinhardt or Gemstone. The New York musician was an artist for Sankyo, another flute maker under the Gemstone umbrella. But Ryerson’s relationship with Gemeinhardt deepened when Baunoch saw her at the National Flute Convention in 2009. There, they discussed the transitions Gemeinhardt was going through.

“She was more than willing to say, ‘Hey, it sounds like things are going well there,’” Baunoch said. “She is not fair-weather. She was in it for the long haul.”

Soon after, Ryerson teamed up with Brio!, a division of Gemeinhardt, to help design a professional flute line. Prototypes of the instruments were tested at such trade shows and conventions as The NAMM Show 2012,



Photo by J. Barry O'Rourke

Ali Ryerson

Gemeinhardt capitalizes on Ali Ryerson's star power to tout its instruments

the National Flute Association, Midwest Clinic, the JEN Conference and the Florida Flute Festival this past winter.

The flutes start around \$5,500, and Gemeinhardt has plans to offer more affordable entry-level models. The company will also offer a more upscale option with a golden lip-plate and riser.

THE DOCTOR IS IN

Ryerson is helping market these instruments with a

bevy of clinics at music stores and schools. The events have been so successful that Baunoch and Gemeinhardt President and CEO Dave Pirtle both reported residual instrument sales.

At press time, Ryerson intended to continue hosting the workshops for the foreseeable future. Baunoch added that Ryerson’s extensive experience lets her offer a wide range of clinics for an even wider range of audiences.

“I’ve seen her do this at a middle school level, teaching not just the flutes,” Baunoch said. “Within 10 minutes, she had pretty easily convinced some of the kids to stand up and improvise solos.” Ryerson has had the same effect on classically trained flutists who are too timid to attempt improv jazz.

Her pride in pitching the brand is also a factor in selling the flutes.

“She has no shame in saying, ‘Hey, this particular Gemeinhardt? I think it’s a really good flute,’” Pirtle said. “That carries a lot of weight.”

Plus, Ryerson’s 2011 album, *Con Brio!*, doubles as an advertisement for Gemeinhardt. (The company helped fund the album’s recording.) As the title promises, the album was recorded with Brio! flutes.

Pirtle added that Gemeinhardt is more than willing to help retailers interested in hosting a Ryerson clinic.

“We keep it pretty open for the dealer,” he said. “We let them know that we’ll help sponsor these events.” **MI**

— BY DAVID WOLINSKY

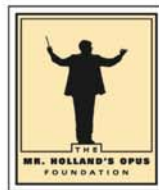
Dear

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

Sincerely yours Joseph Posey



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(Like, for instance, the above letter.)

Help us keep music alive and free in our schools.
Contact The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation at:

www.mhopus.org

Band Standouts

1 CHESBRO MUSIC BLESSING INSTRUMENTS

Chesbro Music has added Blessing to its lineup. The trumpets, cornets, flugelhorn, trombones and marching brass instruments are available in student and professional models. Blessing instruments are hand-crafted in the United States. blessingbrass.com

2 RS BERKELEY DAVID LIEBMAN LIVING LEG- ENDS SERIES

RS Berkeley has debuted the David Liebman Living Legends series soprano saxophone mouthpiece. Liebman's career has spanned more than four decades, beginning in the 1970s as the saxophonist and flutist for Elvin Jones and Miles Davis. The model is available in medium 0.065-inch and large 0.075-inch sizes. rsberkeley.com

3 DAKOTA SDT-1200 Dakota Saxophone recently added the SDT-1200 tenor and SDT-1000 alto saxophones. The instruments feature a bright silver-plate body, bell, bow and neck coupled with 18-karat gold-plated keys, key cups and key guard. saxdakota.com

4 ANTHEM A-5000 OBOE Anthem Instruments has rolled out the new A-5000 oboe. The instrument boasts ABS resin and a brushed body. It features power-forged nickel-silver keys, cork pads, a modified conservatory system and a B-flat vent key. antheminstruments.com

5 SCHILKE ST20 HAGMANN VALVE TROMBONE

Schilke recently unveiled the ST20 Hagmann Valve Large Bore Symphonic tenor trombone. The instrument provides a well-balanced flow in all registers and is easy to maintain. Hand slides are available with a choice of two different end bow alloys and bore sizes. Main tuning slide options include two shapes, square and round, to alter resistance and two materials, yellow or rose brass. schilkemusic.com

6 BACH ARTISAN MOUTHPIECES Bach's new line of trumpet, cornet and trombone mouthpieces features design elements reminiscent of the 1920s-era models built in New York. Artisan mouthpieces let the player experience enhanced flexibility and increased response. The mouthpieces are available in many of Bach's most popular sizes for trumpet, cornet and trombone. Finish options are initially limited to silver plate only. bachbrass.com

7 P. MAURIAT LEBRAVO200A, LEBRAVO200T

P. Mauriat has unveiled the LeBravo200A and LeBravo200T. The instruments feature a matte-lacquered bronze brass body for warmth, clear-lacquered yellow brass keys for strength, straight tone holes and nickel-silver super VI neck for added punch. MSRP: LEBRAVO200A, \$2,099; LEBRAVO200T, \$2,949. pmauriatmusic.com





Stringed Success

1 MEISEL CHIN-CHUM

Meisel's new Chin-Chum is a cushioned, ultra-suede-padded chinrest cover that slips over the cup of the chinrest and protects the player. Chin-Chum also protects players' necks from the chinrest's metal clamp. The unit is available in small, medium and large sizes. meiselaccessories.com

2 KÖNIG AND MEYER BAROQUE BLING

König and Meyer has introduced Baroque Bling, a line of Swarovski crystal-adorned mutes and tailpieces. Each item is handcrafted in the United States. Mutes are available in different shades, including diamond, black diamond, golden, aquamarine, sapphire, ruby, water and fire. MSRP: violin and viola mutes, \$34.99; cello mute, \$44.99. connollymusic.com

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TECH 21 | SANSAMP CLASSIC

Pedal to the Metal

Tech 21 has launched the SansAmp Classic pedal. The SansAmp is available in 17 different models, including eight in the SansAmp Character series line. SansAmp Classic features a bank of eight character switches to adjust tonality, harmonics and dynamics; a three-position input switch to offer a choice of pre-amp styles; and four knob controls to shape pre-amp contours, power amp contours, volume and final tone. MSRP: \$375. tech21nyc.com



FENDER | HALO

Guitarists' Saving Grace

Fender has debuted Halo, a gravity-driven, self-closing guitar wall hanger. Halo boasts rounded, non-metallic construction and TPE overmolded Hyper-Flex fingers that secure the guitar and protect its finish. The hanger installs in minutes and can typically use the same holes as its predecessor, which speeds and simplifies upgrading. Initially available in black, it will soon be available in other colors and finishes. MSRP: \$39.99. fender.com

LEVY'S LEATHERS | STITCHING DESIGN

In Stitches

Levy's Leathers recently released its new stitching design guitar straps. The straps use soft garment leather, foam padding and suede backing. Pictured is the yin and yang design. The six original stitching designs are available in tan or black.

levysleathers.com



ST. LOUIS MUSIC | UNIONSTATION

New Tuner Rolls Into the Station

St. Louis Music has introduced the UnionStation US-DT05 clip-on tuner, which works on all stringed instruments. It clips on easily, stays put and swivels to whatever angle the player needs. MSRP: \$19.99. stlouismusic.com



1 EASTWOOD SIDEJACK VI 30'

Eastwood's new Sidejack VI 30" six-string bass guitar is inspired by the popular Fender Bass VI from the 1960s. The Sidejack VI 30" is the latest member of the Sidejack family. The instrument features a carved, bound Mosrite-style body, as well as a set 30-inch scale neck, making the bass guitarist-friendly. The six-string bass guitars are tuned E-E, a full octave below a standard guitar. eastwoodguitars.com



2 RECORDING KING CENTURY JUBILEE SERIES

Recording King recently updated its Century Jubilee Series Slope Shoulder guitars with an extended scale length and vintage styling. The guitar's classic body shape still delivers the ideal tonal blend characteristic of slope shoulder guitars, but the longer scale provides more volume to help cut through the mix. The 1 11/16-inch bone nut is comfortable for strumming, fingerstyle or flatpicking. MAP: \$499.99. recordingking.com



3 SHS INTERNATIONAL INDY CUSTOM

SHS International has unveiled three new models in its Indy Custom line. The guitars feature a slim C-shape neck with a 7.25-fret radius and an etched neck plate with engraved serial number. These instruments come complete with a hardshell case, an American-made 2.5-inch leather guitar strap and a laminated certificate of authenticity. MAP: \$319.95. shop-shs.com



4 GODIN GUITARS SESSION CUSTOM, SESSION PLUS

Godin Guitars recently added the Godin Session Custom and Session Plus to the Session series. Both guitars feature Canadian basswood bodies, rock maple necks with maple or rosewood fingerboard options, a 25.5-inch scale, the Godin High-Definition Revoicer and the new Godin Tru-Loc tremolo system. This system lets players regulate their own trem arm placement into a custom comfort zone. godinguitars.com

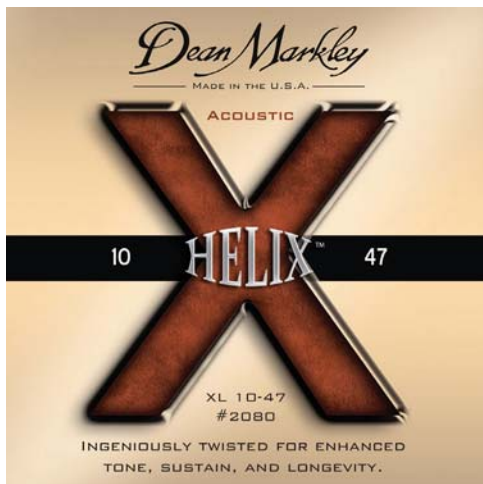


DEAN MARKLEY | HELIX STRINGS SERIES

Dean's DNA

Dean Markley has unveiled the Helix String series.

These strings are made with a new patent-pending hyperelliptical winding technique. This creates a tighter wrap and more mass, sealing the strings without the need for coating. {deanmarkley.com}



65AMPS | THE VENTURA

65amps Adds One

65amps has launched The Ventura guitar amp, the latest addition to its Working Pro Red line. The Ventura uses a 2-6V6 power section. It boasts a clean side using the color channel from 65amps' original London, while the dirty side employs 65amps' bump circuit. MSRP: head, \$1,450; 1 x 12 combo, \$1,750. {65amps.com}



VOX | AC4C1-BL

Vox's Throwback

Vox recently added the AC4C1-BL to its all-tube line. The portable, compact combo amp features gain control, bass and treble tone controls, and a master volume to let any player easily recreate a historic sound. Using a class A all-tube design, the AC4C1-BL provides a pair of 12AX7 pre-amp tubes and relies on a single EL84 power tube to deliver 4 watts of power through a 10-inch Celestion VX 10 speaker. Complementing the blue vinyl and Tygon grille cloth is an old-school Bakelite-inspired Vox handle. MAP: \$299.99. {voxamps.com}





REUNION BLUES |
MIDNIGHT SERIES

Midnight Madness

Reunion Blues recently expanded the RB Continental guitar and bass case line with the Midnight series. The new cases feature an all-black design and a thick shock-absorbing Flexoskeleton exterior lined with reinforced impact panels. An exterior EVA-reinforced multi-pocket features musician-friendly storage for easy access to accessories without having to open the case. **{reunionblues.com}**



HARMAN | HV-5

Powerful Adaptability

Harman's new HardWire HV-5 5-Pedal power adapter cable can power up to five effects pedals. One end of the HV-5 plugs into an effects pedal's 9-volt DC output. The five additional connectors plug into the 9-volt power adapter inputs of other HardWire effects pedals or other brands of pedals with a compatible 9-volt center-negative power adapter input. **{harman.com}**



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DPA MICROPHONES | D:VOTE

DPA Gets Devoted

DPA Microphones recently debuted the d:vote range of instrument microphones. Building on the 4099 instrument clip mic series, d:vote has been enhanced with a new shock mount to provide better absorption. The microphones feature a cable available in heavy-duty 1.55- and 2.2-mm diameter versions. It can be detached from the end of the gooseneck. dpamicrophones.com

HEIL SOUND | PR 35

Heil Updates the PR 35

Heil Sound has upgraded the PR 35 hand-held dynamic microphone, which was first introduced in 2008. The upgraded mic features boosted rear rejection and a concealed two-position roll-off switch, replacing the former thumb switch. The PR 35 comes with three interchangeable colored trim collars that can be mixed and matched. heilsound.com



CERWIN-VEGA | MIXERS

Mixin' It Up

Cerwin-Vega has introduced a line of professional audio mixers designed for live performance and recording applications. Available in 10-, 12- or 16-channel versions, the new mixer range features digital sound effects processing and USB input/output for laptop computer playback and recording. The mixers also boast a commercial-grade metal housing for reliability and longevity. cerwinvega.com



ROLAND | RH-A7

Roland's New Wares

Roland's new RH-A7 headphones are ideal for use with digital pianos. The headphones are comfortable and light with a secure fit for extended periods of play. The open-air construction lets users have a conversation without having to remove the headphones. The RH-A7s are available in black, white, and two-tone black and red. roland.com





DYNAUDIO PROFESSIONAL | DBM50

Dynamite System

Dynaudio Professional has released the DBM50, an active desktop monitor featuring a 7.1-inch woofer and a 1.1-inch soft dome tweeter. Users have the option of adding a controller (pictured).

{dynaudioprofessional.com}



HK AUDIO | LINEAR 5

Fab Five

HK Audio recently rolled out the Linear 5 line, which features high-performance speaker cabinets. The five models include the L5112FA, L5112XA, L5115FA, LSub1200A and LSub2000A. It takes two L5 212FAs to set up a full-fledged, full-range stereo system. Two stackable subwoofer models are available for applications demanding lower bass response, and the tops can also serve as delay line monitors (the XA model) and as speakers for decentralized sound reinforcement systems. {hkaudio.com}

GATOR CASES | G-PA TRANSPORT

Portable Sound

Gator Cases' new G-PA Transport case provides a simple storage and transport solution for portable P.A. systems. The cases' lightweight design features a thick plywood frame covered in a durable high denier nylon covering. {gatorcases.com}



LINE 6 | XD-V55

License-free Operation

Line 6 has launched the XD-V55 digital wireless hand-held, lavalier and headset microphone systems. The XD-V55 systems boast 24-bit, 10 Hz–20 kHz and compander-free performance. The systems provide full-range audio clarity and license-free operation worldwide. MSRP: XD-V55 hand-held microphone system, \$629.99; XD-V55L lavalier microphone system, \$629.99; XD-V55HS headset microphone system, \$629.99. {line6.com}

AHEAD ARMOR CASES | LATIN PERCUSSION CASES

Conga Carriers

Ahead Armor Cases has expanded its full line of advanced Latin and world percussion cases with conga and djembe models. The new units incorporate DX-Core dual-foam interiors with Sherpa fleece lining and a virtually indestructible, waterproof exterior for protection. They also feature Tuc-Away backpack-style straps, double-stitched handles and the patented Dyna-Zip Plus design. **{bigbangdist.com}**

VIC FIRTH | KEITH CARLOCK
SIGNATURE STICK

Signature Special

Vic Firth recently launched the Keith Carlock Signature stick. Crafted in hickory, the stick features a compressed teardrop tip. The small size of the tip creates precise, crisp sound quality, while the characteristic teardrop surface area lets the drums and cymbals speak in warm tones. The fast-sloping taper generates a bounce that makes playing doubles and singles easy. MSRP: \$16.50. **{vicfirth.com}**



BLACK SWAMP PERCUSSION | BSP

Black Swamp's New Bass

Black Swamp Percussion has debuted the BSP Multi-Bass, which is designed for multipercussion performances. The instrument features eight-ply maple shells with exclusive arch-style die-cast lugs, and it offers low-profile wood hoops with direct-connect hoop lugs. MSRP: \$1,250–\$1,598. **{blackswamp.com}**



TAYE DRUMS | TSWM1207SNW

Taye's Specialty

Taye Drums has unveiled the TSWM1207SNW, the latest addition to its Taye Specialty snare line. The drums combine walnut and maple within a 14- by 7-inch shell. The walnut plies give the drums a bright, dry tone, while the maple adds warmth and sustain. Six-ply maple SoundRings add a focused attack, and the high-gloss lacquer finish and vintage-style tube lugs complete the drums. MSRP: \$649. tayedrums.com

MAJESTIC | PROPHONIC SERIES

Majestic New Series

Majestic recently debuted the Prophonic series concert toms and snare drums. Available in eight different sizes with single- and double-headed models, the Prophonic series concert toms, with an ebony burst burl wood finish, feature a combination maple-and-walnut shell for warmth and power. MSRP: toms, \$260-\$700; snare, \$1,055-\$1,265. majestic-percussion.com



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GROVER PRO PERCUSSION | ROLL-RING

Rollin' Roll-Ring



Grover Pro Percussion has released the Model RR Roll-Ring. This circular ring helps concert percussionists easily create the friction needed to produce a smooth, even-sounding thumb or finger roll. The wide, self-adhesive band is specially shaped to conform to the outer circular edge of a headed concert tambourine. The band has a special non-permanent adhesive backing that makes it easy to put on and take off in seconds. The Roll Ring is reusable. MSRP: \$15. groverpro.com



SPAUN | TL USA, TL II

TL Series 'Spauns' Perfection

Spaun recently launched the TL USA series and TL II series. The TL USA series includes eight-ply maple shells, double 45-degree bearing edges, SSS mounts on rack toms and heavy-duty 12.7-mm floor tom legs. The TL II series features 100-percent North American hard rock maple shells to create a rock-solid foundation. spaundrums.com



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**1 ROLAND JUPITER-50 SYNTHESIZER**

Roland recently debuted the Jupiter-50 synthesizer, the second release in the Jupiter keyboard series. Four separate sound engines can be stacked together to create classic fat synth tones. The lightweight keyboard is equipped with a sound engine that's the sonic equal of its big brother, containing all of the SuperNATURAL synthesizer and acoustic tones found in the Jupiter-80. **{rolandconnect.com}**

2 KORG MICROKEY Korg has expanded its microKEY USB-powered keyboard and MIDI controller family. The microKEY-37 is joined by the portable microKEY-25 and the five-octave microKEY-61. As a bonus, the microKEY-61 comes with the Legacy Collection Suite. The microKEY-37 and 61 both serve double duty as a USB hub. Two USB ports let users expand their control center by adding on a Korg nanoPAD2, nanoKONTROL2 or any USB device. **{korg.com}**

3 CASIO XW SERIES Casio has unveiled the XW synthesizer series. The XW-P1 is designed for recording pros, and the XW-G1 (pictured) is ideal for club DJs and dance music performers. Both synths are equipped with a step sequencer that lets artists build and mix performances as they go, as well as a six-oscillator monophonic solo synth that uses Casio's Hybrid Processing Sound Source. The XW-G1 features 420 built-in sounds and 25 multifunction keys. **{casiomusicgear.com}**

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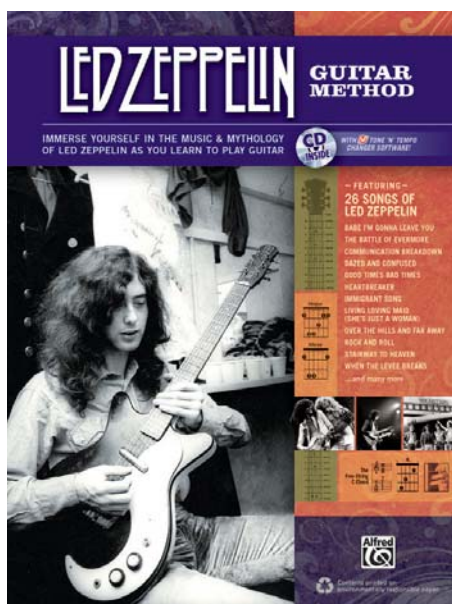
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ALFRED | 'LED ZEPPELIN GUITAR METHOD'

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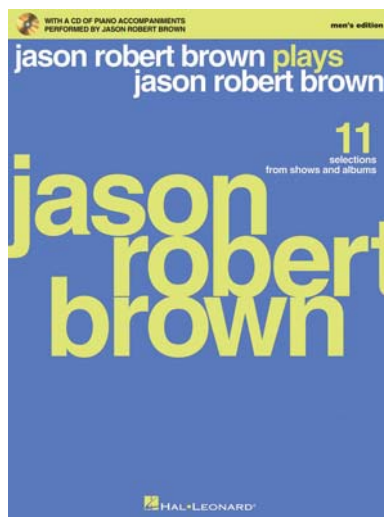
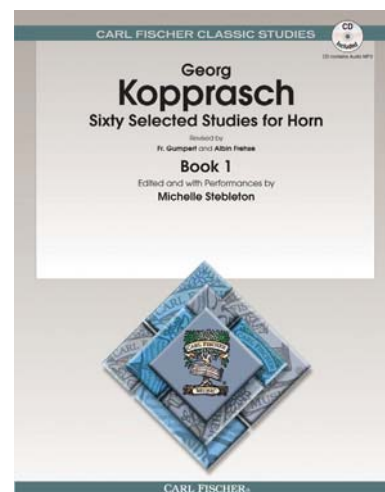
Alfred has released the *Led Zeppelin Guitar Method Book & Enhanced CD Set*, the first guitar method to feature songs from the legendary band, with instructional material by Ron Manus and L.C. Harnsberger. The method teaches the essentials required to play guitar right away, applied to 26 Led Zeppelin hits written in standard notation and tab. Songs include "Stairway To Heaven," "Immigrant Song," "Whole Lotta Love," "Misty Mountain Hop," "Over The Hills And Far Away" and "Babe I'm Gonna Leave You." MSRP: \$24.99. alfred.com



CARL FISCHER | 'SIXTY SELECTED STUDIES FOR HORN, BOOK 1'

Nifty 60

Carl Fischer has unveiled an enhanced edition of Georg Kopprasch's *Sixty Selected Studies For Horn*. The Kopprasch studies were first released in 1939 and have remained standards of excellence for horn players. For this reason, Carl Fischer has prepared a newly engraved version of Kopprasch's first book, edited by educator Michelle Stebleton. This revised edition includes a CD that contains MP3 recordings of all 34 studies in *Book 1*. MSRP: \$14.99. carlfischer.com



HAL LEONARD | 'JASON ROBERT BROWN PLAYS JASON ROBERT BROWN'

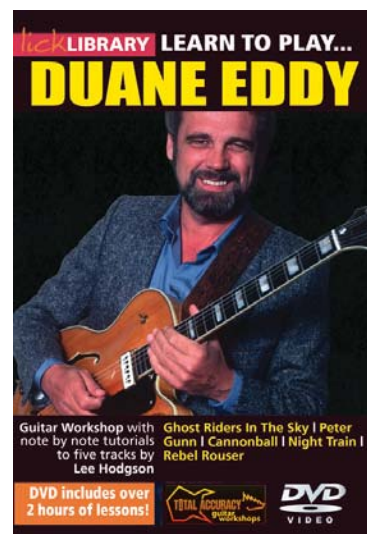
Hal Leonard Covers Brown

Hal Leonard recently released *Jason Robert Brown Plays Jason Robert Brown*. The title is available in a women's edition and a men's edition, and each features 11 songs. Brown's own recorded piano accompaniments are on the included CDs and are enhanced with tempo adjustment and transposition software for Mac and PC users. MSRP: \$22.99. halleonard.com

LICK LIBRARY | 'LEARN TO PLAY DUANE EDDY'

Rock Like Eddy

Lick Library has launched the *Learn To Play Duane Eddy* DVD. Guitarist Steve Trovato teaches students how to duplicate Eddy's sounds by walking through each of the five tracks on this guitar lesson DVD. A split screen enables students to see what the fretting hand is playing while showing what the strumming hand is doing. licklibrary.com



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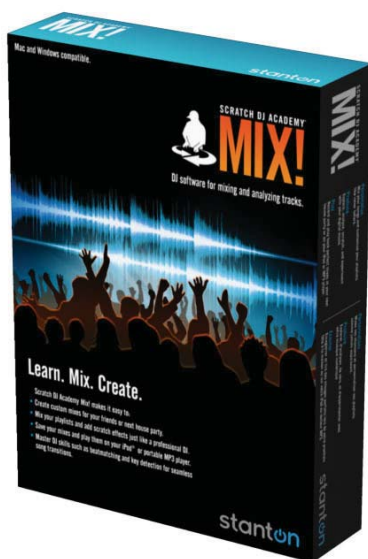


ARRIBA CASES | SOUND SERIES BAGS

Safe & Sound

Arriba Cases has released the Sound series gear bags. The AS-171 is a deluxe tripod bag that's able to transport and protect up to two standard speaker tripod stands. The AS-175 is a rolling speaker bag and stand combo. The AS-190 is a MIDI controller and laptop bag ideal for a variety of MIDI controllers. MSRP: AS-171, \$48.95; AS-175, \$119.95; AS-190, \$89.95.

{arribacase.com}



STANTON | VERSION 1.2 SCRATCH DJ

Stanton Scratches

Stanton has debuted version 1.2 of its Scratch DJ Academy Mix! software. The latest version of Mix! offers more than 10 new features and is ideal for beginners and pros. Mix! version 1.2 also adds advanced automation of DJ mixer controls. With the update, a DJ can build mixes and draw custom automation curves for track volume, overall tempo and three EQ bands. {stantondj.com}

BLIZZARD LIGHTING | PROPAR STEALTH

Stealthy Unit

Blizzard Lighting recently launched the ProPar Stealth light. The redesigned cast-aluminum enclosure and heat sink structure provide ideal cooling for the 18 3-watt tricolor LEDs housed inside the ProPar Stealth's shell, eliminating the need for noisy cooling fans. Main features of the ProPar Stealth include a three-pin input and output, LED four-button control panel, multiple built-in color presets, auto programs and two sound-active modes. MSRP: \$549.99. {blizzardlighting.com}



MBT LIGHTING | LED KANDY BARS

Eye Kandy

MBT Lighting has introduced two new LED Kandy Bar lights, the LEDKANDYBAR RGB (pictured) and the LEDKANDYBAR UV. The new bar lights have a sleek, low-profile design. Each light is a meter long and houses bright 10-mm LED lights. The LEDKANDYBAR RGB features 216 total LED lights, and the LEDKANDYBAR UV houses 192 ultraviolet LED lights. MSRP: LEDKANDYBAR RGB, \$199; LEDKANDYBAR UV, \$239. {mbtlighting.com}



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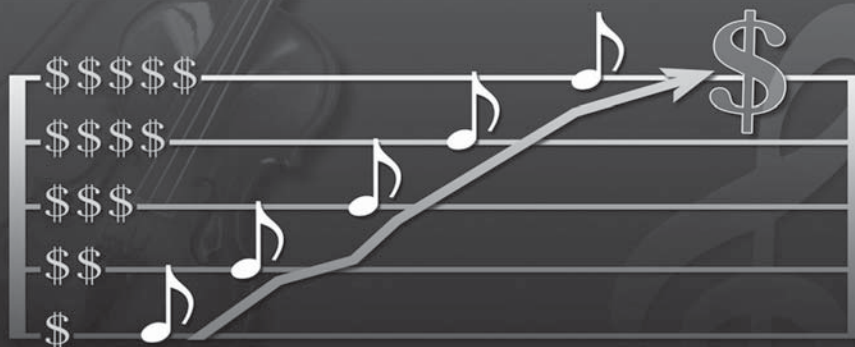
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Michael Kirman

Steve's Music Store
Montreal

Recognize when it's time to say, "This is old stock." It's not always by age. A product we got a month ago can become obsolete overnight. This requires constant communication between sales staff, managers and purchasing to send the information of trends back down the chain.

One of our key elements is to aggressively spiff the items. This works wonderfully with a well-trained sales staff because they tend to hone in on it. They'll call clients and offer the stock as a viable option for clients who are looking for a similar product. The same communication used to recognize the old stock is vitally important. We all want to avoid the used-car salesman persona.

>>>

Jill Starbird-Clarke

Starbird Music & Piano Gallery
Portland, Maine

I think everyone's been really careful about ordering. We don't have warehouses full of stuff anymore. When we see something getting old, we take a picture of me with the product, put it on cardstock and call it "Jill's Pick of the Month." We reduce the price and put the instrument in a visible place. It's been working like a charm. For a while, we did it on a regular basis. It never took more than a month to get off the floor.

>>>

Joe Caruso

The Music Emporium
Lexington, Mass.

Sometimes, the popularity wanes on a particular builder. Throwing a product on sale really hurts them, especially if they're a small company. We have a good sense of our customer base, repeat business or folks calling about certain things. We talk to them and say, "You were interested in this, and we're thinking of offering a deal. Would you be interested?" I'll try everything I can before I have to try it out there with a big sale sign because in the high-end world I don't think that works. In a market that isn't supporting a certain price, we come up with a discrete way of moving that inventory and rewarding customers.



>>>

Aaron Rathbone

Dirt Cheep Music
Smyrna, Ga.

How do you clear out old inventory?

We use one of three methods, and none of them involve discounting. First, we move the inventory to a new part of the store, especially if we can display it in a department with different instruments — a guitar in the keyboard room or a pair of speakers beside the books. This gets a fresh kind of customer taking a look at an item they wouldn't normally browse. We see small jam sessions break out because different instruments are displayed together. We have a lot of success with this simple method without needing to discount or devote extra time to an item.

Next, we make a point of using the item to dem-

onstrate another product. We always use the guitar we want to clear out to demo *every* amp, or we set up a particular MIDI keyboard to show off new software. By increasing demos with our old inventory, we have a greater chance of starting a conversation about what we're using.

Third, we will bundle the item we want to move in a promotional package with other desirable pieces. If we aren't having luck with a particular drum set, we'll build a package with cymbals, a throne and fancy sticks and put it front and center in our drum department. Our customers like the idea of packages, but packages carry higher price

tags and can be slower to move. Though this method can be successful, we always go to it third.

The last gasp isn't a method: It's a checklist. If we simply can't move the product any other way, we pitch the item, position it against the other choices as a great value and close by offering to sell it at a deep discount because we want to sell it that day. We hate training customers to expect heavy discounting when we can try three other things that are profitable and protect our pricing integrity. I think the historian Will Durant said, "Every custom begins as a broken precedent." Discounting is dangerous.

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